

LIEBHABER'S MEMORY:
INDIGENOUS AND COLONIAL
MODES OF SPACE/TIME PERCEPTION
AND DISCOURSE
IN ELEVEN NOVELS
OF THE CANADIAN WEST


ACCEPTED

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department
of
English

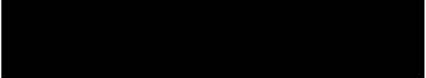
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ABSTRACT

A number of novels by western Canadian writers depict a confrontation between the rationalistic perspective of a colonial empire and the mythic world-view of a society that has been or is in the process of being assimilated into or destroyed by that colonial power. In some of these novels, the colonized society is one of the indigenous cultures of the region; in others, however, the colonized society is an analogous culture, such as the Irish people depicted in Jack Hodgins' The Invention of the World or the residents of the rural British Columbian village depicted in Hodgins' second novel, The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne. (For the purpose of simplicity, all such colonized societies will be referred to in this study as "indigenous" and what is said regarding the most commonly-depicted of these societies, the Native Indians and Métis of the west, will be understood to refer to all such peoples.)

The confrontation between colonizer and colonized depicted in the western Canadian novels with which this study is concerned is imaged as a confrontation between radically-differing modes of space/time perception. Modern European man (i.e. the colonists) perceives and conceptualizes space and time in terms of geometrical abstractions: space is seen as rectilinear, time as linear extension. So-called

"primitive" man, conversely, perceives his environment in terms of his relationship to the sacred: all space is seen as actually or potentially numinous, all time as a cycle. As time is seen as a cycle and space as being organized around the central point at which the sacred is manifested in the profane, "primitive" man's world is essentially circular. The central symbol of "primitive" society, then, is the circle; the world of western European man, on the other hand, is defined by the rectilinear form, the straight line, the grid.

Both indigenous and colonial cultures impose an ordering principle on the spatial environment in which they live, but each sees the other's sense of order as a lack of order, as chaos. For western European man, space that has not been "mapped" (organized in terms of geometrical abstractions) is seen as pre-Creational chaos; the world must be created by being transformed into abstractions--maps and names. For "primitive" man, space that has not been "consecrated" (organized around the point at which the sacred intrudes into the profane) is seen as formless, as the void. For colonial society, then, the wilderness is chaos, a fallen world to which he has been exiled, while for the indigenous culture, the colonial power's world is a world which has no centre and thus no order, a void into which he is inevitably set adrift by the colonists' appropriation of his land.


The colonial society that explored and settled the New World perceived space in terms of the abstractions of the map; it also, however, perceived the area that had not been "mapped" (i.e. assimilated into colonial society) as the un-created world, as chaos. This perception of the New World as chaos is reflected in the numerous depictions in western Canadian novels of the landscape as an ocean or a wasteland. Conversely, the indigenous culture perceives space and time that has not been "consecrated" in terms of its own sense of order as chaos.

The homogeneity and abstraction that characterizes the colonial society's perception of space and time is, according to communications theorist Harold Innis, directly related to western European man's dominant mode of communication: the written word. Alphabetic writing, according to Innis, provides man with a "transpersonal memory" and thus allows him to divorce his sense of space and time from his own perceptions: time becomes linear historical time and space the geometrical abstractions of the map. Thus the opposition of indigenous and colonial perceptions of space and time is rooted in the more fundamental opposition of the two cultures' dominant modes of discourse: the oral and the written.

In the study that follows, the opposition of indigenous and colonial modes of space/time perception and discourse is discussed in relation to eleven novels by five western Can-

adian writers: Sheila Watson, Howard O'Hagan, Rudy Wiebe,
Jack Hodgins and Robert Kroetsch.


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The history of western Canada is the history of the advance of a colonial empire into territory inhabited by an indigenous culture; the fact that we were once a colonial society and are now the inheritors of that legacy is the central aspect of our identity as western Canadians. This is also true of Canada as a whole, of course, and of the New World in general, but the western provinces have passed through the frontier-stage much more recently than has Ontario or Quebec; as well, the Canadian east has traditionally been seen from the western perspective as being synonymous with the colonial empire--it is, after all, the Canadians as much as Her Majesty's government against whom Riel rebels. Even within the Canadian context, then, the west is the paradigmatic frontier, the meeting place of a "civilized" western European empire and the nomadic, shamanic hunting cultures of the sparsely-inhabited west. If this conflict between radically-differing cultural perspectives is the central fact of our history, it is also--not surprisingly--the central motif in a number of important novels by western Canadian writers. The novels in question do not, however, invariably depict a confrontation between whites and Native Indians, as some are concerned with a conflict between colonizer and colonized in the broader sense. In all the novels we will be discussing here, though, the mythic perspective of an indigenous culture (or analogous society) is juxtaposed with the rational-historical perspective of a colonial em-

pire. It is this mythic perspective as opposed to the identity of a particular colonized people that is important to our discussion; consequently, what is said here of the Native cultures of the west can be taken to apply to the other colonized peoples depicted in the novels, as in either case the essentially mythic perspective remains the same, as does the attitude of the colonizers towards the colonized.

History is necessarily written history:¹ as the colonists belonged to a literate culture while the indigenous peoples were "pre-literate", our history is told solely from the imperial point of view; it is, as Tzvetan Todorov puts it, a history of "the discovery self makes of other".² To a great extent, Canadian literature, like Canadian history, has enshrined the colonial perspective. This fact has not, of course, prevented Canadian writers from portraying the Indian and his culture,³ but here again the Indian traditionally exists simply as other, as the shadow of our essentially western European way of life. As such, the Indian has often had a double, a bifurcated identity in our literature, as he has embodied both our fear of the other, of all that we, as a "civilized", literate culture are not, and our desire--desire to escape the constraints and limitations of what we are. Our western civilization is founded, to a great extent, on rational thought, on the predilection for abstraction that has given us mathematics, logic, and the scientific method,⁴ and however great the benefits our

civilization has brought us, our rationalistic bent has had its price. Rational thought is predicated on the ability to make distinctions, and the primary distinction that western man has made has been the distinction between nature and culture; western man perceives himself as being distinct from the natural world. So-called "primitive" man has made no such distinction: he sees, or wishes to see, culture as a part of the order of nature; his religious beliefs, rituals, and much of his mythology are dedicated to mediating between the two terms. As Ernst Cassirer explains:

To mythical and religious feeling nature becomes one great society, the society of life. Man is not endowed with outstanding rank in this society. He is a part of it but he is in no respect higher than any other member. Life possesses the same religious dignity in its humblest and in its highest forms. Men and animals, animals and plants are all on the same level.⁵

For primitive man, then, the rift between nature and culture is one that can be healed through the agency of ritual and myth; for modern European man, on the other hand, the disjunction between nature and culture is a given, however much he may yearn for a lost golden age when the two terms were one. The central distinction between indigenous and colonial perspectives, then, is that while the indigenous point of view focusses on the necessity of mediation between nature and culture, the colonial perspective emphasizes the disjunction between the two realms. This is not, it should be noted, quite the same thing as suggesting that

indigenous societies are identical with or an aspect of nature, though they may perceive themselves as such: both societies belong to the category of culture; it is in their perspective on the relationship between nature and culture that the two societies differ.

Desire and fear: our fear of the Indian is a function of our fear of nature, just as our desire to be like him-- to become him, to "go Indian" like Archie Belaney--is a function of our desire to bridge the gap between nature and culture, to return to an Edenic natural state.⁶ The former attitude informs what Northrop Frye refers to, in a famous phrase, as the "garrison mentality".⁷ while the latter perspective is, as Margaret Atwood has pointed out,⁸ equally pervasive in Canadian literature.

Both the romantic and "garrison mentality" perspectives on the colonial situation assimilate the indigenous/colonial antithesis to the disjunction between nature and culture. In either case, the indigenous culture is ~~identified~~--in fact, equated--with nature. If, from the romantic point of view, the Indian is seen as a prelapsarian Adam symbolic of nature-as-Eden, from the perspective of those within the garrison, he is the quintessential barbarian, the embodiment of what Atwood calls "Nature as Monster".⁹ Leslie Monkman delineates the difference between the two perspectives when he notes that

writers who depict the Indian as a savage

associate him with values opposed to white control, orthodox Christianity and ordered landscapes. The author who finds an alternative in red culture associates white culture with rational order, monotheistic religion, and technological supremacy; yet rather than identifying the Indian in terms of animalistic irrationality, pagan superstition, and nomadic disorder, the primitivist writer finds vital spontaneity, natural religion, and harmony between the red man and the natural landscape.¹⁰

What these antithetical perspectives have in common is that in either case the indigenous cultures are perceived from the colonial point of view; the result of this fact is that from either perspective the Indian is denied human status and reduced to a signifier--the symbol of a negatively, or positively, biased vision of the natural world. If, as well, the indigenous societies are considered to be identical with nature, then such societies can be denied status as autonomous civilizations. Obviously, both perspectives are grounded in the ethnocentricity of European man, and neither allows us to perceive the colonial situation from the indigenous cultures' point of view.

The garrison that protected the British soldiers from the New World and its inhabitants in Richardson's Wacousta was made of wood and stone, but the garrison mentality consists of the colonists' world-view--of their perception of the world in general and thus of the New World landscape. Neither colonial nor indigenous societies perceives the environment directly; each culture imposes an order on its experience of the phenomenal world--the ordering principle

employed by one culture is not, however, the same as that employed by the other. While the indigenous cultures of the west--and most so-called "primitive" societies--structure their perceptions of the environment in relation to their sense of the sacred, western European man orders space and time in terms of geometrical abstractions. It is this propensity for abstraction that has enclosed the colonists and their descendents within the walls of the garrison, walls that are constructed not of wood and stone but of geometric space and linear historical time.

In his thematic study of Canadian literature, Butterfly on Rock, D. G. Jones discerns in modern Canadian writing a desire to "abandon the garrison mentality, knock down the walls and let the wilderness in".¹¹ In a number of important western Canadian novels, this desire to transcend the limitations of the colonial perspective is reflected in the juxtaposition of indigenous and colonial modes of space/time perception. In these novels, the abstraction-based world-view of the European colonists is contrasted with the mythic, interpenetrative perspective of the indigenous peoples: the representatives of abstraction--the surveyor, the historian, the mimetic artist--are confronted by the embodiment of the Native American mythos--the shaman and the trickster; likewise, the geometrically-ordered landscape which is the visible result of the application of the colonial world-view to the New World environment is contrasted with the essen-

tially circular¹² world of the indigenous perspective, and the linearity of historical time, the colonists' vision of time as linear extension, is opposed to the circularity, the cyclical nature of time in the world of "primitive" man.

There is, however, an inherent paradox in the western Canadian novelists' desire to embody both indigenous and colonial perspectives in works of fiction. Western European man's mode of space/time perception, his abstraction-based perspective on his environment, is, according to Harold Innis and others, predicated on his culture's dominant mode of discourse: alphabetic writing. Written language has provided man with what Innis calls a "transpersonal memory"; the result of this is that western European man has come to perceive time as linear, homogeneous, abstract. Similarly, the transformation of perceptual space into abstract signs involved in the process of mapping and in the transcription of information regarding the physical landscape into written language has resulted in a perception of space as homogeneous and abstract. The disjunction between indigenous and colonial modes of space/time perception is, then, founded on a more fundamental disjunction: the opposition of oral and written modes of discourse. Clearly, then, in order to represent the rift between indigenous and colonial perspectives, western Canadian writers must also find ways of representing the opposition of oral and written language. But how does one embody the perspective of an oral culture

in writing? The authors of the novels we are concerned with here have, as we shall see, evolved a variety of strategies for dealing with this apparent paradox, and to a great extent these strategies have determined the narrative structures of their novels; in this sense, the novels embody the indigenous/colonial disjunction not only on the thematic level but also on the structural level and on the level of the discourse of which the novels are composed.

The association of oral language with the indigenous cultures of the west and of writing with European colonists is not, however, as straightforward as it might seem. The perspective of western European man on nature in general and on the New World environment in particular is, as we have seen, in fact not one but two perspectives--perspectives which, though they are both grounded in the disjunction between nature and culture that characterizes western civilization, are at least superficially antithetical. Both these perspectives--the romantic and the "garrison mentality"--treat the indigenous cultures of the west as if they were an aspect (or at least a symbol) of nature. From the romantic perspective, the Indian is seen as the representative of an Edenic nature, of a lost golden age in which nature and culture were one. Conversely, language--all language, written or oral--may be perceived as belonging to the post-lapsarian order of culture.¹³ As a result, in the romantic view, the Indian may be associated not simply with

oral as opposed to written language, but also with a pre-linguistic (thus Edenic) unity of object and sign. This distinction between romantic and "garrison mentality" aspects of the colonial perspective is also important to any discussion of the manner in which European man perceives and conceptualizes space and time; while a romantic may see the New World landscape as Edenic nature, from within the garrison that same landscape may seem a desolate and threatening vision of the fallen world. The result of this juxtaposition of radically-differing perspectives on the colonial situation is that we cannot grasp the significance of a particular image without referring it to a particular perspective. Consequently, a single signifier may take a variety of signifieds, each corresponding to a different perspective or "code". In some novels, this "layering" of codes is relatively straightforward: in some of Rudy Wiebe's novels, for example, we are presented with the indigenous and "garrison mentality" perspectives in sharp contrast, although even there the situation is complicated by the superimposition of Christian symbolism--as the title of The Temptations of Big Bear suggests--on the mythic world-view of the indigenous peoples. In Robert Kroetsch's works, on the other hand, this technique of "layering" becomes considerably more complex, although the sense of the indeterminacy of the value or "meaning" of any given signifier which results from this superimposition of contradictory

codes is suitable to Kroetsch's declared distrust of the process of "naming",¹⁴ of positing a fixed and finite relationship between language and the world it purports to represent.

Obviously, a great many western Canadian novels and other works of literature attempt to portray in one way or another the conflict between colonial and Native societies; a smaller number of works deal specifically with the opposition of the mythic world-view of the indigenous peoples and the rationalistic, abstraction-based world-view of western European man, and fewer still attempt to embody this mythic/rational opposition in the structure of the narrative itself. It is with this last group of novels, those which present the mythic/rational disjunction not at the thematic level but at the level of discourse, that we are concerned with here. While some of the novels discussed in this study explore the disjunction between indigenous and colonial perspectives within the context of a western Canadian setting, others go beyond the specifically Canadian context to explore an analogous conflict between the rationalistic perspective of a colonial power and the mythic world-view of an indigenous society. Similarly, while some of the novels dealt with here are concerned with the conflict between Native Indians and Europeans or their descendants, others explore an analogy between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British imperialism and the incursion of

American economic interests into western Canada, an analogy which rather ironically casts the descendants of British colonial society in the role of the indigenous culture faced with the prospect of assimilation at the hands of a colonial power.

The essay that follows discusses the distinction between indigenous and colonial modes of space/time perception and discourse in relation to eleven novels by five western Canadian writers. The earliest-published of these works, Howard O'Hagan's Tay John (1939), may be seen as a sort of paradigm of the uniquely western Canadian novel; O'Hagan's novel, with its half-Indian, half-divine hero and its layers of history, myth, and "tall tale", explores the theme of mediation between cultural perspectives in a way that is echoed in a number of later works. Sheila Watson's 1959 novel The Double Hook is also, as has often been said, a pioneering work in relation to the novels that follow. The remaining nine novels were all published in the nineteen-sixties and seventies, and thus may be said to belong to a particularly fertile period of invention or experimentation in the literature of the region. These more recent works are Robert Kroetsch's The Words of My Roaring, The Studhorse Man, Gone Indian, Badlands, and What the Crow Said; Jack Hodgins' The Invention of the World and The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne; and Rudy Wiebe's The Temptations of Big Bear and The Scorched Wood People.

Both Ernst Cassirer and Mircea Eliade have attempted to articulate the distinction between the manner in which members of so-called "primitive" and modern European societies perceive and conceptualize space and time.

Cassirer differentiates between three distinct modes of space-perception: these he terms "perceptive space", "geometric space", and "mythical space". The first of these, perceptive space, is simply space as we perceive it with our senses; we are less concerned here with this perceptive or sensory space than with the two remaining modes, which are the two opposing ways in which, in Cassirer's opinion, space has been conceptualized. Geometric space differs from perceptive space in that it is abstract (i.e. conceived in terms of mathematical abstractions) and therefore uniform and homogeneous. As Cassirer puts it, "Geometric space abstracts from all the variety and heterogeneity imposed on us by the disparate nature of our senses";¹ the result of this process of abstraction is that "Euclidean space is characterized by the three basic attributes of continuity, infinity, and uniformity".² Mythical space, as Cassirer explains, "occupies a kind of middle position between the space of sense perception and the space of pure cognition, that is, geometry".³ To the "mythical" consciousness, the phenomenal world is potentially or actually imbued with the sacred; space which is perceived as numinous is quite ob-

viously distinct from the space that surrounds it; therefore, mythical space does not have the characteristics of homogeneity and uniformity that distinguish the abstract space of mathematics:

In contrast to the homogeneity which prevails in the conceptual space of geometry every position and direction in mythical space is endowed with a particular accent--and this accent always goes back to the fundamental mythical accent, the division between the sacred and the profane.⁴

Cassirer makes a similar distinction between historical ("mathematical-physical") and mythical time to that which he makes between geometric and mythical space: "What we have found to be true of mythical space applies also to mythical time;--its form depends on the characteristic mythical-religious accentuation; the distribution of the accents of the sacred and profane".⁵ Both geometric space and historical time are associated with the rationalistic, abstraction-based mode of thought of modern European man. Just as modern man perceives space in terms of geometrical abstractions, so he imposes the abstract notion of uniform linear progression on his perception of time. It is this emphasis on linearity that distinguishes "historical" time as a mode of time-perception:

the historical consciousness of time contains very definite objective factors. It is based on a fixed chronology, a strict distinction of the earlier and later, and the observation of a determinate, unequivocal order in the sequence of the moments of time. Myth is aware of no such division of the stages of time, no such ordering of time into a rigid system.⁶

Eliade's analysis of the distinction between modern and "primitive" man's perception of space and time understandably differs from that of Cassirer; there are, however, some broad similarities between the two men's theories that are relevant to the topic at hand. For the purposes of our discussion, we may say that what Eliade calls "sacred" space is equivalent to Cassirer's "mythical" space, while Eliade's "profane" space may be equated with Cassirer's "geometric" space.⁷

In The Sacred and the Profane, Eliade distinguishes between space which has been "consecrated" by having been perceived in terms of religious man's sense of the sacred and space which, as it has no value in relation to the sacred, is uniform and therefore analogous to pre-Creational chaos. For religious man, Eliade tells us, it is necessary that the chaos of profane space be transformed into the order of sacred space through ritual consecration. Religious man cannot exist in the chaos of profane space, any more than he can exist without a sense of his own identity in relation to the world in which he lives. As Eliade puts it:

Every world is the work of the gods, for it was either created directly by the gods or was consecrated, hence cosmicized, by men ritually re-actualizing the paradigmatic act of Creation. This is as much as to say that religious man can live only in a sacred world, because it is only in such a world that he participates in being, that he has a real existence. This religious need expresses an unquenchable ontological thirst. Religious man thirsts for being. His terror of the chaos that surrounds his inhabited world

corresponds to his terror of nothingness. The unknown space that extends beyond his world--an uncosmicized because unconsecrated space, a mere amorphous extent into which no orientation has yet been projected, and hence in which no structure has yet arisen--for religious man, this profane space represents absolute nonbeing. If, by some evil chance, he strays into it, he feels emptied of his ontic substance, as if he were dissolving in chaos, and he finally dies.⁸

The ritual consecration of sacred space involves an intrusion of the sacred into the mundane world. The point at which this intrusion occurs, or can occur, becomes the centre of religious man's world: all space, then, is necessarily circular, as it is organized around this central point. This intrusion of the sacred into the mundane world reiterates and corresponds with the Creation of the world:

If the world is to be lived in, it must be founded--and no world can come to birth in the homogeneity and relativity of profane space. The discovery or projection of a fixed point--the centre--is equivalent to the creation of the world.⁹

The point at which the sacred intrudes into the mundane world--that is, the centre of sacred space--is symbolized by the axis mundi in its various forms: World Tree, World Mountain, lodge pole, lightning bolt, etc. This tree, mountain, pole, etc., becomes, for religious man, identical with the centre of the world. It is also a link between the three levels of the shamanic cosmology, and it is thus the medium through which the shaman may communicate between sacred and profane realms:

the irruption of the sacred does not only project a fixed point into the formless fluid-

ity of profane space, a centre into chaos; it also effects a break in plane, that is, it opens communication between the cosmic planes (between earth and heaven) and makes possible ontological passage from one mode of being to another.¹⁰

Space which has not been consecrated is, for religious man, formless and without value. Conversely, for modern European man, space which has not been "mapped"--that is, perceived in terms of geometrical abstractions, reduced to a sign or a system of signs--is regarded as the "wilderness", as chaos. The indigenous peoples cannot live in a world that has not been consecrated and thus made sacred; the colonial Europeans cannot survive in a world which has not been civilized, in space which has not been mapped. These two antithetical perspectives collide in the works of western Canadian writers: if the frontiersman, the Turner-esque "American Adam", is the archetypal denizen of America's western frontier, the surveyor extending the geometric space of civilization and his corollary, the Indian who sickens and dies in the profane space of cities and reservations, are his Canadian opposite numbers.

Religious man's perception of time is also founded on the possibility of an "irruption of the sacred" into the mundane world. Time must be "renewed" through rituals which take man out of profane time and reunite him with the sacred time of origins:

Religious man periodically finds his way into mythical and sacred time, re-enters the time of origin, the time that 'floweth not' be-

cause it does not participate in profane temporal duration, because it is composed of an eternal present, which is indefinitely recoverable.¹¹

This conception of time as being structured by the recovery of the eternal present, as being in effect cyclical or circular, contrasts sharply with European man's sense of time as linear extension. Rather than perceiving time as renewal, European man has committed himself to the idea of historical progress, to the notion that time moves us forward; this spatial metaphor allows European man to equate the advance of "progress" (i.e. of civilization) with the expansion of the colonial empire in space: thus the New World cultures are not only colonized in spatial terms but also "civilized"--pushed forward in historical time. The result of this spatial and temporal colonization, from the indigenous peoples' perspective, is that they are displaced from sacred space and time by being forcibly assimilated into the colonial culture, and are thus cast adrift into the chaos of profane space and time.

Religious man sees both time and space as circular, cyclical; for European man, time and space can be imaged in terms of straight lines and rectilinear (i.e. geometric) forms. In symbolic terms, then, the opposition of indigenous and colonial cultures' perceptions of space and time can be represented by the opposition of circular and linear or rectilinear forms. This contrast between

circles and straight lines or squares is, of course, to some extent literal as well as symbolic: European man's linear conception of space is concretely embodied in the rectilinear town plans, the squared-off fields, and the parallel lines of railway tracks that he imposed on the landscape of the west.' As Frye notes:

Civilization in Canada, as elsewhere, has advanced geometrically across the country, throwing down the long parallel lines of the railways, dividing up the farmlands into chessboards of square-mile sections and concession-line roads. There is little adaptation to nature: in both architecture and arrangement, Canadian cities and villages express rather an arrogant abstraction, the conquest of nature by an intelligence that does not love it.¹²

Atwood relates Frye's comment specifically to transformation of the western plains into farmland when she states that settlers

do not move through the land, they go to the hitherto uncleared part of it and attempt to change Nature's order (which may look to man like chaos) into the shape of human civilization...the order of Nature is labyrinthine, complex, curved; the order of Western European Man tends to squares, straight lines...and similar shapes.¹³

Given the antithetical nature of the two cultures' conceptions of space and time, it is obvious that the question of perspective is, when we come to the novels, of paramount importance. Both cultures impose an order on their spatial and temporal environment (the notion that indigenous peoples experience the world "directly", without ordering it, is, as mentioned earlier, a fiction associated with the romantic

view of such cultures); each sees the other's sense of order as a lack of order, as chaos: religious man sees civilization as the chaos of profane space; "civilized" man sees the "wilderness" in which the indigenous peoples live as chaos. In the novels in question, either version of chaos--wilderness or civilization--may be symbolized in terms of the stock mythological images for chaos: deserts, water, darkness, and so on. As well, as the indigenous peoples see the colonial society's perception of space (and actual manner of organizing space) as being characterized by the straight lines and right angles of fences, walls, planned cities, railways, and so forth, the chaos of profane space (i.e. the colonial society) may be imaged by them as a labyrinth of fences and walls.¹⁴ Moreover, as the frontier is necessarily defined by the circumference of the colonial culture, the frontier itself may seem to the indigenous peoples to be a kind of implacably-advancing wall. All these disparate images, then, may symbolize the chaos of space which has not been "ordered", either by (depending on one's cultural perspective) the consecration of sacred space around the mythic axis mundi or by the mapping of the wilderness and its subsequent assimilation into the homogeneity of geometric space.

The dialectic of linear and cyclical is most clearly worked out in The Temptations of Big Bear. There, as E. D. Blodgett points out, "the central semantic opposition...is between round and straight. The former is a sign of the

native world and the seasons that generated its ideological design...The white world, by contrast, is rectilinear".¹⁵

Throughout the novel, Wiebe identifies the native peoples with the image of the circle. Big Bear's son Kingbird articulates the significance of this circle-image as a symbol for the Indians' perception of the cosmos as a system of cycles when he refers to his people's way of life as a "greater way, and given him by the circle: the greatest way of all"¹⁶; similarly, Big Bear himself is identified with the circle: "In the circle of sun and sky and earth and death he stood complete" (129). As well, Wiebe has Big Bear make use of the image of the circle in his attempts to give voice to his fears about the encroachments of the white man and to his perception of the necessity of resisting assimilation. When he addresses the Sioux chief Sitting Bull and other native leaders at a council, he employs the opposition of circular and rectilinear to express his feeling that the natives' way of life is in the process of being overwhelmed by the abstraction-based world-view of the white man: "'Sometimes when I meditate and look...the sun no longer looks round. It's starting to look as if it had four corners...I want my children who aren't born yet to see our round sun'" (93); when exhorting his fellow Indian leaders to reject the white man's offers, he again uses the circle to represent the native world by advocating that "we all together make a life circle with our hands and face the

Whiteskins as one" (99).

Given the topography of the environment in which Wiebe's novel is set--the western plains--the circle can operate as a symbol of both perceptive and mythical space (to return to Cassirer's terms), effectively uniting these two distinct concepts. Thus while the circle represents the circumference of perceptive space in a predominantly flat landscape--"Big Bear sat in the sky's circle" (91)--it can also represent the deployment of sacred space around the central axis mundi: Sitting Bull evokes the mythic World Mountain when he laments the loss of the "Black Hills, which ...is the centre of the world" (94). The Center Tree around which Big Bear's people perform the Thirst Dance is another axis mundi symbol.

Wiebe relates the circle-image to the temporal dimension as well as the spatial. As Blodgett has pointed out, the native peoples' perception of life as being essentially circular or cyclical is grounded in their dependence, as a hunting culture, on the seasonal cycles of birth, death, and regeneration. As the last of the plains Indian leaders to resist signing away his people's birthright, Big Bear is engaged in a rear-guard action to retain his people's status as an independent hunting culture, and thus to retain their connection to the cycles of the seasons and the order of nature. Acceptance of the provisions of the treaties offered by the white men would make the natives dependent upon

the white colonists for their sustenance, as their confinement to a reservation and the depletion of their game stocks would deprive them of their status as hunters; at best, they would become members of an agrarian society, although even this seems unlikely given their lack of experience at farming and the poor quality of the land which had been allotted for reserves. Deprived of their dependence upon and sense of identity with the land and the animals, the native peoples would lose their connection to the order of nature and thus to the circularity of mythic time.

Opposed to the circle with its superimposed levels of significance--perceptive space, mythical space, mythical or sacred time--is the straight line or rectilinear form in the spatial dimension and the linearity of historical time in the temporal. Big Bear, as Dick Harrison notes, "sees the basic absurdity of the abstractions they (the white men) and their surveyors would lay over the land to serve their unnatural greed".¹⁷ The Europeans' sense of space as geometric rather than perceptive or mythical is exemplified by the image of the "four corners" of the sun, noted earlier, and by the squared sections of reserve land onto which the whites wish to move Big Bear and his people. This chopping up of the land into rectangular sections is, of course, a function of the European institution of the private ownership of land, a concept which is understandably nonsensical to members of a nomadic hunting culture: as Big Bear says,

"No one can choose for himself a piece of Mother Earth. She is. And she is for all that live, alike" (28). The perception of land as something that can be possessed as if it were a product of culture as opposed to an aspect of nature is in turn a function of the agrarian background of modern European civilization; that the Indians would not want to "dig up a small piece of land to grow food" (35) seems as incomprehensible to the agrarian whites as the prospect of working a farm does to the native hunters. The eventual ascendancy of the European point of view is testified to by Wiebe's comment that "when you fly over (the prairie) you see the man-made checkerboard pattern"¹⁸ of the geometrically sectioned-off farms.

The natives' view of time as the wheel of the seasons is the antithesis of the Europeans' notion of "progress". Big Bear comments on the difference between these two opposing perceptions of time when he notes that:

Whites were only certain in changing; unless they took an Indian woman and she dragged him to a stop--maybe the only way to hold them tight was by the penis?--they kept on wanting something here or there and then another and wanting to change still another forever that kept them running forever and frantic. They never had rest. (101)

From the Indians' point-of-view, the loss of their sense of mythical or sacred time and space is also the loss of their connection with the order of Nature. They do not perceive the white men's concepts of geometric space and linear historical time as an alternate order, but rather as

the lack of order, as the chaos of profane space and time: as Big Bear states, "there was no order in the white world" (62). The disjunction between nature and culture occasioned by this loss of a sense of location within mythical space and time is symbolized by images of division and alienation from the landscape. As Blodgett says, the

rectilinear world is by nature divisive ...and it separates one from oneself as integral being. Both the railway and the survey that went before run "between him (Big Bear) and where he was born". Thus one's sense of self and its relation to the past and the human community becomes discontinuous.¹⁹

Wiebe has Big Bear articulate this idea in somewhat more concrete terms when the Native leader decides that "though the land appeared the same, something was wrong with it. As if just under the edge of his vision a giant blade was slicing through the earth, cutting off everything with roots, warping everything into something White-skin clean and straight" (91).

The opposition of circular and rectilinear forms is repeated in The Invention of the World. Donal Keneally, the mythic hero of that novel, is associated with the circle of mythical space and time, while Julius Champney, a retired town planner who lives on the site of Keneally's colony, represents (as is appropriate to his former occupation) the imposition of rectilinear forms on the landscape.

Keneally's association with the circle of sacred or

mythical space begins with his birth. Born out of the earth at the top of an Irish hill that is clearly intended to symbolize the mythic World Mountain, Keneally emerges from a "tight muddy circle of...boulders the size of altars, where ancient men had come to pray or offer up their sacrifices" (72). The association of axis mundi symbolism with Keneally's birthplace is reinforced by the fact that the hero's mother, before being swallowed up by the earth, pauses "just long enough to fix the four lonely directions in her eye" (72), an action evocative of the function of the axis mundi in establishing the four cardinal directions within the order of sacred space.²⁰ At the moment of becoming a part of the earth, and thus of the order of nature, she stands "crouched over in the centre of the circle" (72); it is from this circle at the top of the World Mountain, sacred to the hunting cultures of pre-colonial Ireland, that Keneally will emerge.

The association of Keneally with the image of a circle continues throughout the hero's life. When Keneally sets up his Revelations Colony of Truth on Vancouver Island, he arranges the buildings in the form of a circle, at one point regaling his followers with a "lengthy explanation of the habits of the neolithic men who seemed to have some fondness for the circle as a symbol" (124): the contrast between this arrangement and the rectilinear grid of many towns planned and erected by the British throughout their

empire is noted by Lily Hayworth, who says that "when I saw that circle of buildings (it) seemed funny to me. I was used to cities...and straight streets, blocks of houses facing each other across parallel lines" (249). When Keneally disappears back into the earth from which he emerged, it is also Lily who notices "the circles, the perfect red rings on his skin, as if someone had pressed the mouth of a small water glass hard against him several times" (283).

If Keneally represents the mythic perspective and the corresponding concept of sacred or mythical space, then Julius Champney represents the rationalistic, linear mode of thought symbolized by straight lines and rectilinear forms. Champney, who has spent "a lifetime as a surveyor, an engineer and eventually a town planner" (223), is described as being "a great believer in reason" (55). The use of the figure of the surveyor as a metaphor for the primacy of geometric space in European-colonial society is, as mentioned earlier, a familiar ploy in western Canadian novels, but Champney's final occupation, that of town planner, can also be readily associated with the straight lines and rectilinear forms of geometric space. Like the parallel lines of railway tracks and the checkerboard patterns of prairie farms, the cross-hatched grids of the of the right-angled streets of planned towns and cities imposed the rigidity of rectilinear forms on the landscape

of the New World. Throughout the British Empire, many towns were laid out in a purely geometric manner, with parallel streets intersecting at right angles and with no regard for the vagaries of the local terrain. As historian James Morris notes,

in their overseas possessions the British allowed themselves to be more formal and methodical than they often were at home. There were no sentimental yearnings for the crooked way, the rolling way. Right angles were de rigueur in the imperial towns, streets were often numerically named: many cities were built to a grid.²¹

Champney himself seems to recognize the fact that such geometric town plans were foreign to the environment, as he points out that the streets in the Vancouver Island town to which he has retired were laid out "in England, more than a hundred years ago by a man who'd never set foot on the island" (223). Although Champney feels that "he'd be better off back in his office drawing lines on paper, inventing his own patterns, shaping the low natural world into geometric blueprints and maps" (234), he does seem to realize the absurdity of attempting to "draw proper lines on this ungovernable landscape" (223): as he puts it, "straight lines looked ridiculous here" (229).

Champney's rationalism has, of course, done him no more good than Keneally's mythic-hero status does the hero himself or his followers: while Keneally burrows back into the earth from which he was born, Champney winds up retired to Vancouver Island, with, as he says, "no love

for it at all, and no desire to get off" (229), a rationalist marooned in a place that he accuses of "defying geometry" (229). Both Champney and Keneally are guilty of, in Hodgins' terms, living in "invented" worlds--one in myth and the other in rational thought. The opposition of these two characters is further underlined by the fact that, while Keneally's skin is marked with circles, Champney's sweaters conceal "a small tattoo, an intricate pattern of overlapping rectangles." (239).

The use of circles and straight lines to symbolize the opposition of Native and white cultures can also be found in Howard O'Hagan's Tay John. The members of the Shuswap tribe into which the hero is born sleep "lying about their fires, each man wrapped in his robe, alone like the separate spokes of a wagon wheel" (24). The woman with whom Tay John finally allies himself, Ardith Aeriola, was "born on the great plains of Central Europe, where the people wear for ever the unchanging ring of the horizon upon their shoulders" (195). When Ardith elects to go with Tay John and refuses to return with Sergeant Flaherty to "the railway, to town, to people, to music, to her own kind", she signals her break with colonial society by tracing a "circle with a neat moccasined foot through the grass" (256).

O'Hagan evokes the circle of sacred time when he states that

Men walk upon the earth in light, trail-

ing their shadows that are the day's memories of the night. For each man his shadow is his dark garment, formed to the image of his end, sombre and obscure as his own beginning. It is his shroud, awaiting him by his mother's womb lest he forget what, with his first breath of life, he no longer remembers. Sometimes when we are older there is a glimpse. It appears we are returning. We have made the circle. (162)

Tay John's life is itself a kind of circle: born out of the earth, he returns in the end to the earth out of which he came; as Margery Fee puts it, "the mythic ending balances and echoes the mythic beginning"²². Opposed to this vision of recurrence and return to origins is the colonial European's sense of time as "progress", as linear extension. This colonial perspective finds its avatar in Alf Dobbie, a character who is Tay John's opposite number in the same way that Champney is the opposite of Donal Keneally:

Dobbie didn't live to-day. No. He lived in to-morrow. And Tay John--well, to-morrow was a word he had heard upon men's lips. But to-day, to-day, that was the very front of time and he must assail it. (167)

Ardith, like Tay John, lives in the experiential present, not in the illusory future which so fascinates people like Dobbie: "it was to-day she lived--and to-day was a dagger against her breast" (197).

Dobbie's vision of progress, of a "metropolis" in the west is given its most striking symbolic embodiment in O'Hagan's description of the New York that Ardith has left to come west, a city which he refers to as "that sculptured city...that outpost of man in time...that white tombstone of

the future" (197).

The image of the city as a necropolis, as a monument to a culture which has cut itself off utterly from the order of nature, is repeated in The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne. In that novel, in which western European man's addiction to progress is represented by the aptly-named Damon West, a latter-day Alf Dobble (like Dobble, he is an American) who wishes to transform a village in the British Columbia backwoods into an updated version of Dobble's Lucerne, the future is depicted in a cartoon in the local newspaper as "a wide expanse of skyscrapers full of miniature people shooting one another and men jumping out of windows and crowds stompin right over top of fallen children, and naked men chasing naked women who were eating their babies as they ran" (225). However extreme these depictions of urban life may be, they succeed in portraying the end-point of progress as a dystopia rather than the utopia that colonizers such as Dobble and Damon West envision. From the mythic perspective of the indigenous peoples and their analogues (rural Canadians in danger of being colonized by American economic interests, for example), such progress can only result in dystopia, in the indigenous peoples' loss of cultural autonomy and exile into the chaos of profane space.

In The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne, profane space is represented by the loss of the proper interrelation of the four elements which make up the cosmos in shamanic mythology.

The irruption of the sacred into the mundane world which consecrates space also establishes the correct relationship between these elements, relating each to one of the four cardinal directions. As Cassirer notes,

Space as a whole is divided into seven zones, north and south, east and west, the upper and the lower world; and every reality occupies its unequivocal position, its definitely prescribed place, within this general classification. The elements of nature, the physical substances as well as the separate phases of the world process, are differentiated accordingly. To the north belongs the air, to the south fire, to the east earth, to the west water...²³

The confusion of the four elements--air, water, earth, and fire--gives the novel much of its "magic realist" atmosphere: When the novel begins, the village of Port Annie has just been struck by a giant wave" that "had swept in with enough force to leave salt water and sand, stunned the fish and shreds of tortured driftwood on the streets and front yards of houses" (3); at the end of the novel, the earth descends from the air in the form of a mudslide, a "wall of gravel and muck" (250) that puts an end to the expansionist schemes of West and his Canadian hirelings; in the final scene, a former stripper named "Flaming Jenny" dances, "afire again" (270), to rekindle the sense of community that the incursions of foreign developers had threatened to take away.

Hodgins' "Port Annie" is the western frontier as defined by the limits (the local limits, at least) of American

economic imperialism. The threatened assimilation of that small British Columbia community into the American Empire echoes the assimilation of the west as a whole into the British Empire a hundred years earlier. That earlier process of assimilation is represented in The Scorched Wood People by the straight lines of the advancing British troops who defeated Riel and his followers. The tactic of advancing in uniform lines was, of course, quite genuinely a characteristic of British military practice in the nineteenth century, and Wiebe is on one level simply reporting historical fact when he records the Métis' impression of that red line advancing inexorably toward them. The symbolism is, however, inescapable: The line of red-coated troops, like the straight lines of railways and the squared walls of forts, is undeniably evocative of the advance of geometric space, ironing out the curvilinear forms of the western landscape and negating the indigenous peoples' sense of space and time as circular. The same symbolism is applied to the colonial culture itself in the scene in which Riel journeys to the Houses of Parliament and encounters a statue of Queen Victoria set beneath a symmetrical dome; he gazes at the dome and decides that he feels as if he "might have been staring down into some perfection, into a stone-polished symmetry that horrified him as nothing that he had ever felt before" (134). This demonic symmetry pervades the colonial civilization against which Riel rebels: even its

religion seems to him to be founded on "the mathematical legalism of a calculable God" (52).

In this novel, as in the others we have been discussing, the straight lines and "mathematical" symmetries of the European mind are opposed to the circles and cycles of the indigenous perspective. Dumont sees the Metis Eden envisioned by his friend Riel as a circle--"the circle where it might be, if it existed at all, was growing smaller and smaller" (199)--a circle which is constantly being diminished by the incursions of colonial society. Riel himself--the historical as well as the fictional Riel--evokes the cycles of mythical time when he states that a "century is but a spoke in the wheel of everlasting time" (140).

Perhaps the most striking evocation of the chaos of profane space and time that can be found in a western Canadian novel is the opening sections of The Double Hook. In that novel, set in the interior of British Columbia, the characters occupy a space and time in which all sense of order has been lost: alienated from the landscape of the west, which they associate with the indigenous trickster-figure Coyote, they cannot, until the end of the novel, come together as a community in order to "consecrate" space and time and thus to move from chaos to the order of sacred space and time; they are equally alienated, however, from the linearity of historical time--they are adrift with no sense of "progress", continuity, or purpose--and from the

comforting order of geometric space. The frontier state depicted in The Double Hook unites the negative aspects of both colonial and indigenous perspectives; exiled from both the geometric/linear space and time of the colonial world-view and the sacred space and time of the indigenous perspective, the characters are unable--until the end of the novel, and then only equivocally--to unite themselves into a self-determined social and cultural entity. In this sense, Watson's novel moves the post-colonial dilemma to a spiritual or religious level: neither indigenous nor European, the denizens of the frontier-state lack the coherent world-view that would provide them with a sense of identity; they drift in a landscape that is both spatially and temporally indeterminate, caught between God and Coyote. God. The chaos of profane space is symbolized in the early sections of the novel by a sense of indeterminacy regarding the characters' relation to the space in which they live:

If a man lost the road...he couldn't find his way by keeping to the creek bottom for the creek flowed this way and that at the land's whim. The earth fell away in hills and clefts as if it had been dropped carelessly wrinkled on the bare floor of the world.

Even God's eye could not spy out the men lost here already...He had looked mercifully on the people of Ninevah though they did not know their right hand and their left. But there were not enough people here to attract his attention. The cattle were scrub cattle. The men lay like sift in the cracks in the earth. (22)

The characters see the world that surrounds them as chaos: Lenchen, attempting to escape from a confrontation

with Greta, is stopped by her feeling that "outside was night...outside was floorless, roofless, wall-less" (66). The spatial relationship between objects and the landscape is vague, indeterminate: "night bound the floating images of things" (54).

The Double Hook combines two traditional images for chaos: the world as desert and as ocean. The first of these images is derived from the Biblical perception of the fallen world as desert or wasteland; the second is a symbol for pre-Creational chaos common to Biblical, Classical and various other mythologies. The association of the unmapped (hence "uncreated") space of the west with the ocean is, as R.W.B. Lewis notes, as old as James Fenimore Cooper's The Pathfinder; or, The Inland Sea. John J. O'Connor, in an essay sub-titled "The Prairie as Sea in Western Canadian Literature",²⁴ has pointed out the prevalence of aquatic imagery in the fiction of the region; numerous Canadian writers have, like Cooper, explored the affinity of the ocean with what Lewis calls the "uncreated world beyond the frontier".²⁵ The unusual thing about The Double Hook and other western Canadian novels is that they juxtapose desert-imagery with aquatic imagery, so that, however paradoxical it may seem, the landscape of the west becomes both arid wasteland and pre-Creational flood. In Watson's novel, as in The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne, the elements that make up the cosmos are distinct,

refusing to meld into a cohesive whole: The landscape seems at once afflicted with drought and with an over-abundance of water; while the earth is, as Beverly Mitchell puts it, "parched and without water",²⁶ it is also host to the creeks and pools in which James' mother and Felix go fishing. Both water and desert are images which may be symbolic of the chaos of profane space; the apparent inability of these two elements to combine into a fertile whole is an indication of a lack of order of sacred space. Again, these images depict a landscape which is neither geometric space nor sacred space: as water or desert, it is the chaos of unmapped space; as a world in which the elements are fragmented, it is the chaos of profane space.

One aspect of the "garrison mentality" is the need of colonial societies to build walls between themselves and what they perceive as the threatening chaos of the wilderness that surrounds them. The characters of The Double Hook reiterate this attitude on a personal as opposed to a societal level: many attempt to wall themselves in, to divide themselves from their neighbours. Kip, who, as Coyote's "servant" is distinct from the others and thus presumably able to see them from the perspective of an outsider, comments that "people go shutting their doors. Tying things up. Fencing them in. Shutting out what they never rightly know" (58). Though the characters attempt to put walls between themselves and a landscape they perceive as chaos,

they remain outside the ordered geometric space that characterizes colonial civilization, a civilization which is represented in the novel by the town to which James goes in his attempt to break out of the undifferentiated chaos of the landscape represented by Coyote, that "brown figure he sought to escape". The town, a "crisscross of streets and alleys leading out to nothing" (92), proves to be as inhospitable as the landscape that surrounds it: love is prostitution, friendship theft, language the prattling of a parrot, time the mindless ticking of a clock.

If the majority of the characters in The Double Hook are trapped between the chaos of Coyote's wilderness and the geometric labyrinth of the neighbouring town, they are also trapped between the temporal indeterminacy of a landscape in which time has no order or structuring principle and the linearity and abstraction of historical time, here represented by the omnipresent clocks, watches, and calendars of the townspeople. In the countryside in which the central characters live, time is indeterminate; even the predictable cycles of nature seem to have become erratic: Willam laments that:

The most unaccountable thing...is the way the sun falls. I've seen a great cow...throw no more shadow for its calf than a lean rabbit. (22)

Surrounded by the desert of the fallen world, by the waters of pre-Creational chaos, the characters are trapped in stasis; time has ceased to have any discernible relation

to the events of their lives. Of Lenchen, Heinrich comments that "she's been around here always, like the rest of us" (24); Widow Wagner asks "What is time...but two hands shaking us from sleep. Fifty years or twenty. Forty years in the wilderness" (116). When James goes to the town, Watson is suddenly concerned with making us aware of the time of day as each scene unfolds: time is everywhere measured out in minutes and hours. The first thing James sees at the hotel in town is the "clock on the wall opposite the door". Later we are told that the "calendar marked the month. The clock the hour. It was quarter to five" (100).

When, at the end of the novel, a sense of community is --however equivocally--established among the characters, it is symbolized not only by Biblical or Arthurian images of the regeneration of the wasteland, but also by the image of the axis mundi, centre of sacred or mythical space: Ara, turning from James and his newborn child, sees out the window "the sky stretched like a tent pegged to the broken rock" (134).

Several of Kroetsch's novels make use of the same desert and aquatic imagery employed in The Double Hook. Just as in Watson's novel, both indigenous and colonial perspectives are juxtaposed in Kroetsch's work: images evocative of the chaos of the unmapped wilderness co-exist with symbols of the chaos of the profane space of colonial civilization. Similarly, while the romantic view of the Indian

as an aspect of a benign nature can be found in the novels, so can the "garrison mentality" view of nature as chaos, as "Monster". Typically, the hero is a trickster-figure who embraces the chaos of the western landscape: his quest, however comic, is to re-consecrate space and time, creating a uniquely western order out of a land that his colonial forebears regarded as nothingness, as the pre-Creational void. As this quest involves the hero's breaking away from the colonial society to embrace the chaos of the west, both indigenous and colonial perspectives are involved. As well, in a number of the novels the hero's attempt to establish cyclical time and "circular" sacred space is enclosed within the exoskeleton of the rationalistic narrator's linear-historical narrative, a fact which further necessitates the juxtaposition of the two contradictory perspectives.

The Words of My Roaring is structured around the image of the west as the fallen world and the colonial east as Eden. Kroetsch has stated that he "grew up hearing about this Edenic world called Ontario",²⁷ and Johnny Backstrom, the hero of the novel, refers to the east as the "green lush old Eden" (58); the only patch of green in the drought-stricken Alberta community in which he lives is the garden belonging to his mentor and political rival old Doc Murdoch, who is seen as a representative of the east.

If Murdoch's garden is the lost Eden of the colonial

east, then the prairie west is the fallen world into which Backstrom has been exiled. Doc Murdoch's garden is, as Robert Lecker notes, "barred to the prairie farms whose life is characterized by drought".²⁸ If the east is a lush Eden, the west is a parched desert. Like the desert-as-fallen world we encountered in Watson's novel, it is also, paradoxically, covered in places by water: enough water, in this case, for Backstrom's friend Jonah Bledd to drown himself. Just as in The Double Hook, however, the water here does not seem to provide nourishment for the drought-stricken land; the elements remain separate, and they cannot be conjoined.

Doc's garden is the ordered, rational east; the west is irrational, chaos, the void. Johnny Backstrom, his wistful memories of the Edenic east notwithstanding, admits to a "longing for the old chaos. That old earth, without form and full of the void" (101); it is this longing for chaos that identifies Johnny, finally, with the nomadic/shamanic hunting cultures of the west and that opposes him to the ordered east that his mentor (and, metaphorically at least) his father and creator) Doc Murdoch represents. Jonah, on the other hand, is a character who, as Thomas points out, "exemplifies the life of responsibility, caution, and dogged faith in the rightness of the social and economic order;²⁹ as Lecker puts it, "Bledd has capitulated to history and order".³⁰ Cut off from the ordered life of the railway for

which he worked, Jonah is, as his name implies, swallowed up by the Leviathan of pre-Creational chaos.

The use of the apparently-contradictory images of water and desert as symbols for the chaos of unmapped space outside the garrison culture of the colonial east is continued and elaborated on in two of Kroetsch's later novels, The Studhorse Man and Badlands. One of the several layered "codes" of which The Studhorse Man consists is a parody of the Odyssey: Hazard's apparently-random peregrinations about the Alberta countryside are, as is well known, roughly parallel to the adventures of Ulysses, and the landscape of the west is the ocean over which he makes his way; this epic "sub-text" obviously accounts for the presence of at least some of the aquatic imagery we encounter in the novel, but we can by no means relate all or even most of the images of water in The Studhorse Man to this Homeric parallel.

Perhaps the most striking example of an image from the novel that superimposes nautical connotations on the arid environment of the west is the ramshackle "mansion" in which Hazard lives. This house, which resembles a "sternwheeler" and must be reached by means of a gangplank" (51), is the former home of an Englishman who completed its construction "on the day Queen Victoria died" (52) and who, refusing to believe that WWI has ended, holes up in the house until he finally drowns in a cistern he was digging in the basement. Here we have the most comically exaggerated embodiment of

the "garrison mentality" we have yet encountered, the loyal Briton whose house is a ship asail on the sea of the unsettled prairie³¹ and whose desire to remain within the garrison cannot save him from death by drowning--not even the garrison mentality, it seems, can offer protection from the chaos of unstructured space. Hazard's mansion is, significantly, perched on the shore of Wildfire Lake, where, as it was built at the turn of the century, it must have been the day Jonah Bledd was drowned.

The same aquatic imagery which, from the colonial "garrison mentality" perspective, symbolizes the chaos of the unmapped wilderness can also, from the indigenous (or the colonial-romantic) perspective, be seen as the waters of life or of origin. (Obviously, these two interpretations of water-symbolism overlap: pre-Creational chaos, however threatening, is also, in mythological terms, the ground from which Creation must emerge.) Both these aspects of water-symbolism are fused in the image of the Indian who emerges from Wildfire Lake to present Hazard with the first "Lepage horse". Thomas' interpretation of this scene emphasizes Poseidon's function as Hazard's shamanic totem-animal or tutelary spirit: "The Cree has fasted in his 'grave,' made the descent to the Mother of Animals under the water, and recovered Hazard's animal identity/ancestor/totem";³² while this interpretation is doubtless valid, it is also possible, given the prevalence of the prairie-as-sea imagery in the

novel, to identify the Cree who emerges from the lake with the horse as a symbol of nature and of the mythic perspective of the indigenous peoples of the west (as both the Indian and the notion of the west as an unstructured "sea" are images of unmapped, uncolonialized nature); we may, therefore associate the "Lepage horse" with the mythic perspective and with nature as opposed to culture, an idea that relates directly to Hazard's quest to preserve the unbroken lineage of his special breed of horse. There are then (quite apart from the shamanic associations pointed out by Thomas) a number of linked concepts evoked by the image of the Cree and the horse coming up out of Wildfire Lake: the lake may be seen as the unstructured chaos of nature, the generations of the Lepage horse as the cycles of mythic time, and the Cree as the Indian-as-benign nature. Hazard, then, who like Backstrom and Kroetsch's other heroes aligns himself with chaos (the chaos of the unmapped space of the west), seeks to preserve the mythic cycle of Nature in the form of the Lepage horse; however comic his "odyssey" over the prairie-as-ocean, he is linked to the pre-Creational chaos that those waters represent. If, as the woman he encounters while fighting in France prophesies, the sea is Hazard's "murderess" (12), it is because like Tay John he must complete the circle and return to the waters of pre-Creational chaos from which his shamanic guide emerged. The "sea" into which Hazard will vanish is, of course, the

mer/mère/mare of death and regeneration, identified in both indigenous and European mythologies with the female principle: in this case, it is Martha (whose name, like that of Marie Eshpeter, belongs to the same phonological complex as the puns on "mare" mentioned above) who is Hazard's destiny; although, ironically, it is Poseidon who is the agent of his demise, it is, as Lecker notes, "Martha who fulfills the prophecy".³³

Like Tay John and Donal Keneally, who return to the earth from which they were born, Hazard returns to the waters of pre-Creational chaos from which his shamanic guide emerged. It is not only in his death, however, that Hazard achieves his purpose of re-establishing the continuity of cyclical time: during his union with Martha in the ice-house, his erect phallus is described as the axis mundi, centre of sacred space-- "There was no tree of knowledge to equal that one...no ladder and no hill. Axis mundi, the wise men tell us, and on it the world turns" (153). The association of the hero with sacred space mirrors his desire to "re-consecrate" sacred time, a feat which is accomplished when the episode in the icehouse results--or so Demeter Proudfoot tells us (174)--in the conception of Hazard's daughter, D.Lepage, a female (and thus fertile) Demeter who can continue the Lepage line.

Hazard's quest is to re-consecrate the cyclical order of mythical time; his peregrinations are, however, paradoxical.

ically enclosed within the profane time of Demeter's linear-historical narration. Demeter admits at the beginning of the narrative that he has devoted his life to "the making of his (Hazard's) present into history" (10), but his comic attempts to impose order on the haphazard events of the trickster-hero's life are not the only image of profane time in the novel. Hazard, "terrified of history" (33), is taken by the "artist" P. Cockburn into "an exact replica of the chief factor's bedroom as it existed in the...main residence of the Hudson's Bay post" (32); the room is populated by wax figures--produced, one assumes, by P. Cockburn herself--representing stock characters from Canada's past: Indian chief, explorer, Mountie, missionary, etc. Here time has been frozen, transformed into a motionless tableau, the "whole image of the vanished past" (34) for which Demeter yearns.

Profane time--the linear-historical reduction of life-experience to a sequence of neatly-ordered "facts"--is also represented (or burlesqued) in Kroetsch's next novel, Gone Indian. Jeremy Sadness, who like Hazard "defies...his^o story",³⁴ is taken to the home of Bea Sunderman, a house which is, as Lecker notes, "significantly named 'WORLDS END'".³⁵ Here Jeremy, whose story, like Hazard's, is filtered through the structuring influence of a rationalistic narrator, is confronted with a roomful of clocks:

Two granddaddies, one on either side of

the head of the bed. Wall clocks with roman numerals on their faces. Arabic numerals. Calendar clocks that showed...the day and the date. Banjo clocks and lighthouse clocks. Lyre clocks and steeple clocks. Someone didn't trust the sun. (32)

Bea's house, which is at once an "imprisoned garden" (31) and a "cavern of time",³⁶ combines the linearity of the Europeans' rationalistic mode of thought with the garrison mentality's need to shut out the chaos of unorganized, un-intellectualized nature. As Lecker puts it:

Worlds End is antinature...and filled with artificial time. It stands as a potent example of precisely the kind of world in which Madham wants to put Jeremy: one dominated by time, days, dates, number, history, and closure.³⁷

In Badlands, his next novel, Kroetsch returns to the "prairie-as-sea" metaphor he explored in his earlier works. Just as in The Studhorse Man, there is in Badlands what Lecker calls "a sustained parody of the quest motif".³⁸ Dawe, as his myth-making daughter Anna presents him, is a divided figure, both shaman and explorer/historian; his quest leads him across the prairie-as-sea to the source of historical time, but it may also be seen as a type of shamanic descent to the land of the dead. Dawe, a rationalist from the "civilized" east, "different from and indifferent to all the real and natural world" (56), sails his raft "off the map" (95) into the chaos of the uncharted west. Again, as in The Double Hook, the western landscape, unassimilated into the geometric space of "civilization" as represented by the east from whence Dawe came, is depicted as at once a

desert (the "Badlands") and an ocean: O'Connor notes that Dawe's raft is referred to in the novel as a "strange ark with which to venture out onto the dry prairie" and that the prairie is at one point referred to as "undulating and ocean-green".³⁹ Dawe's attempt to impose the linearity of history on this landscape--to "go down in history" in every conceivable sense of that phrase, to sail both metaphorically and literally down the time-line of the river--is mocked both by the fact that he is, paradoxically, sailing away from the source (of the river) while he attempts to sail toward the source (of historical time) and by the figure of the photographer, Sinnott, who effectively demonstrates that time cannot be organized or resurrected, only transformed into signs such as his photographs, Dawe's field notes, Anna's tale.

The indeterminacy of the western landscape is again emphasized in What the Crow Said. Like the world depicted in The Double Hook, Big Indian belongs neither to the order of geometric space nor to the alternate order of sacred space; likewise, it seems to lurch fitfully between linear historical time and cyclical time. As the chaos of unassimilated nature, it is by turns desert, flood, and snowfield as blank as a page upon which nothing has been written; conversely, as mapped geometric space it is so indeterminate that it wanders from one province to another. Similarly, while on one hand the cycles of nature are so hopelessly out

of whack that the "seasons are confused; winter erases summer",⁴⁰ on the other hand historical time, while represented in the form of dates, clearly stated timespans, genealogies and so forth, is sufficiently confused that, as Thomas notes, "the temporal linearity stretches in various ways, so that births, deaths, marriages, the growth of children into maturity, take place in an elastic time-band which apparently leaves Liebhaber and Tiddy unscathed by age".⁴¹

John Skandl, a character who fits Campbell's description of the master shaman in that he is "the builder of Babel, careless of God's wrath",⁴² tries on two occasions to organize the equivocal space of the frontier: these two attempts correspond to the two modes of spatial organization we have been discussing--he first attempts to organize the formless whiteness of the unseasonable prairie winter around the axis mundi, erecting a tower of ice to serve as a "fixed point in the endless winter" (33); after the tower collapses, he reverses his strategy and proposes that the government build a network of roads which will connect the municipality to "paved highways of the kind he'd heard were being built in other countries, on other continents" (63).

Skandl's ambition of connecting Big Indian to the highways of the greater world reflects the process through which the circular space of autonomous communities was lost to the linear space of imperial societies in Europe and elsewhere. W. G. Hoskyns, in his English Landscapes, quotes John

Steane's comment regarding the effect on the village of Helpston (home of the poet John Clare) of the connection of the village lanes to straight roads leading to the outside world: "The ancient...lanes vanished. Helpston was connected to the outside world with straight roads. The parish now simply became a place on the way to somewhere else. The linear landscape replaced a circular one".⁴³ Skandl, having failed to establish sacred space, advocates the assimilation of the community into geometric space; in the spatial and temporal indeterminacy of Big Indian, however, his attempts can only fail.

Each of the novels, then, reflects the conflict between two mutually exclusive ways of conceptualizing space and time. While the contrast between the circular world of the mythical perspective and the linear world of rationalistic western European man is embodied in a number of the novels, others depict the manner in which colonial man sees the landscape of the west--as chaos--or the indigenous cultures' perception of the rectilinear world of colonial society--as a labyrinth of walls, fences, railways, and roads.

The disjunction between colonial and indigenous societies is also a disjunction between oral and written modes of discourse. In European colonial societies, the dominant mode of communication was and is the written word, while in the indigenous societies of North America, which in pre-contact times were without a system of writing, the spoken word was the sole means of communication. This disjunction is represented in the novels we are concerned with here, and is, as we shall see, relevant to the opposition of indigenous and colonial modes of space/time perception discussed above.

The effect of the shift from oral to written communication in the evolution of civilizations has been detailed by Harold Innis in his Empire and Communications. One effect that Innis notes is that the rise of writing as the dominant mode of communication brings about a fundamental change in the way in which members of a society perceive and conceptualize space and time. As Innis puts it:

...the art of writing provided man with a transpersonal memory. Men were given an artificially extended and verifiable memory of objects and events not present to sight or recollection. Individuals applied their minds to symbols rather than things and went beyond the world of concrete experience into the world of conceptual relations created within an enlarged time and space universe. The time world was extended beyond the range of remembered things and the space world beyond the range of known places.¹

It is not difficult to relate the above passage to our discussion of the antithetical modes of space/time percep-

*Places don't exist until they have been
named and mapped!*

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tion of indigenous and colonial cultures in the preceding section. If, as Innis asserts, the manner in which European man conceptualizes space and time (i.e. in terms of linear or geometric abstractions) is a function of his reliance on written language, it should come as no surprise that novels which juxtapose European man's linear and geometric conceptions of space and time with the circular/cyclical space and time of the indigenous peoples are also concerned with the opposition of oral and written modes of discourse.

The role of written language in the assimilation of indigenous cultures into colonial empires has been discussed by Innis and others. Tzvetan Todorov notes that "language has always been the companion of empire"² and Levi-Strauss echoes this sentiment when he states that the "only phenomenon with which writing has always been concomitant is the creation of cities and empires, that is the integration of large numbers of individuals into a political system, and their grading into castes and classes".³ Innis encapsulates the process through which written language helps to bring about the foundation of colonial empires when he states that

Writing enormously enhanced a capacity for abstract thinking which had been evident in the growth of language in the oral tradition... Man's activities and powers were roughly extended in proportion to the increased use and perfection of written records...The written record signed, sealed, and swiftly transmitted was essential to military power and the extension of government. Small communities were written into large states and states were consolidated into empire. The monarchies of Egypt and Persia, the Roman empire,

and the city-states were essentially products of writing.⁴

While we may not wish to go quite so far as Lévi-Strauss, who contends that "the primary function of written communication is to facilitate slavery",⁵ it is not difficult to envision the negative effect on the integrity of an oral culture which would result from contact with a literate culture. Stan McMullin, in a review of The Scorched Wood People, puts it succinctly when he comments that

literate cultures are able to command territorial space in a way not possible for oral cultures. Bureaucracy becomes possible because of literacy, and vast spaces come under the control of a centralized power which uses the written word to rule. Literate cultures, when they encounter oral cultures, destroy them.⁶

In some of the novels we are concerned with here, the conflict between literate and pre-literate cultures is presented through the juxtaposition of poetic (i.e. oral) prose and rationalistic/realistic (i.e. "written") narrative. In The Temptations of Big Bear, for example, the subjective, poetic language of the native characters is contrasted with the dry, legalistic language of treaties, court transcripts, official proclamations, and so forth. Like the heroes of many of the other novels mentioned earlier, Big Bear is distinguished by his orality, his poetic diction and "powerful resonant voice".⁷

The Temptations of Big Bear presents the conflict between indigenous and colonial societies as a conflict between literate and preliterate modes of discourse. The

white men are, by and large, portrayed as existing in a world of abstract signs (Lieutenant-Governor Morris, as Carla Visser points out, "admits that he cannot see the land otherwise than in miles, or in the form of a map")⁸ while the Indians, far from dwelling in a world of abstractions, maintain through their "mythic" or religious perspective a sense of unity with the landscape they inhabit. As Visser notes, "the opposition between White and Indian discourse... is itself a sign of the confrontation between two totally different ways of interpreting reality".⁹ Throughout the novel, the conflict between the two civilizations is, as Blodgett points out, "projected as an impasse of speech... a radical difference between oral and written discourse".¹⁰

While the connection between the indigenous/colonial and oral/written oppositions is clear in The Temptations of Big Bear, other western novels which do not directly address the conflict between native and white cultures are also concerned with the distinction between oral and written modes of discourse. The interest exhibited by the authors of these novels in the differences between literate and pre-literate cultures may perhaps be explained by the fact that at least some of them regard themselves as having grown up in a world in which oral storytelling was as important as, or more important than, communication through the written word. Kroetsch has stated that "my father was a famous story-teller and I grew up in that kind of oral culture";¹¹

Wiebe, similarly, says of the place where he grew up that "our community...had a great tradition of getting together and telling stories";¹² and Hodgins notes that the Vancouver Island of his youth was "very much an oral society".¹³ The emphasis on storytelling in the writers' backgrounds is not surprising; history, in western Canada, has rarely been written history, even to the present day. In the absence of reliable or comprehensive written documents, and in the face of a general apathy toward western Canada's past in school curricula until recent times, westerners have relied on oral history, and thus the storyteller's art has remained a vital one. Hardly surprising, then, that the heroes of many of the novels we are concerned with are endowed with the poetic or prophetic voice associated with oral as opposed to written discourse.

The conflict between oral and written modes of discourse is represented in the novels in a variety of ways. One of the more obvious ways in which this disjunction is presented is the juxtaposition of a rationalist historian-narrator who is associated with writing and a mythic hero who is distinguished by his orality, by his facility for the spoken word and his overwhelming voice.

In a number of western Canadian novels, the rift between oral and written modes of discourse is represented by the juxtaposition of two linked characters, one of whom is a "mythic" figure and the other a would-be historian. Typical-

ly, the narrative structure of the novel centres on the un-
successful attempts of the historian-narrator to reduce the
 exploits of the mythic hero to a core of empirical facts.
 The inability of the historian-figure to "trap" the hero in
 a net of words can be used as an analogy for the inability
 of language to contain our experience of the world; the his-
 torian-figure's apparent impotence in the face of the irra-
 tionality of myth is also a mirror-image of the inability of
 European rationalism to come to terms with the landscape and
 cultures of the New World. Ironically, by transforming the
 exploits of the hero into written language, the historian-
 narrator does not "make sense" of these exploits, in other
 words reduce myth to history; he simply continues and ela-
 borates upon the myth; ultimately, he either, like Kroetsch's
 Demeter Proudfoot, attempts to become the trickster-hero,
 or, like Strabo Becker of The Invention of the World, he
 closes his notebooks and loses his faith in facts.

The relationship of the mythic hero to the historian-
 narrator is analogous to the relationship between two linked
 figures common to much Native Indian mythology: the trick-
 ster and the priest-thinker. In a number of Native American
 myths, the humourously-chaotic activities of the trickster
 are contrasted with what Radin calls "systematizing and re-
 organizing activity of the priest-thinker".¹⁴ The priest-
 thinker plays a secondary role in several Native Indian
 trickster cycles, acting as a sort of rationalistic counter-

part to the elemental energy of the trickster. Although the priest-thinker is associated with logic as opposed to the trickster's pure procreative energy, he is to some extent responsible for the existence of the trickster as a mythic figure, as it is he who recounts and re-shapes the trickster's exploits. As Radin says, "Trickster's divinity is always secondary and...is largely a construction of the priest-thinker, of a remodeller".¹⁵

This combination of trickster-hero and logical priest-thinker can be found in several of the novels. Perhaps the most obvious example of a trickster/priest-thinker pairing is the juxtaposition of the narrator, Demeter Proudfoot, with the hero, Hazard Lepage, of The Studhorse Man. As Rosemary Sullivan notes, Hazard "is explicitly the trickster figure...the embodiment of eternal creative rebellion grounded in 'hazard', in absurdity".¹⁶ Lecker calls Hazard "the quintessential Kroetschian trickster energized by outrageous phallic energy. Defiant of history, order, and closure, Hazard's tricksterism is the volatile, post-modern anti-thesis of Demeter's dream of Hazard--a dream characterized by a longing for structure, evidence, verisimilitude, 'fact'".¹⁷ Dick Harrison refers to Demeter as "the historical consciousness attempting to impose reason and significance on the wandering of Hazard".¹⁸

As Hazard's "biographer", Demeter has set himself the unenviable task of imposing the linearity of history upon

the circularity of myth. While Hazard's apparently-chaotic activities are clearly motivated by a desire to preserve the cyclical nature of sacred time by finding a mare for Poséidon and thus ensuring the repetition of the cycle of death and rebirth for another generation, Demeter "sees himself as the author whose task it is to shape time, to structure Hazard's biography in such a way that it has a sense of dramatic development".¹⁹ This urge to restructure myth according to the "rules of traditional narrative" underlines the analogy between Demeter as narrator and the author, who is engaged in an equally impossible attempt to embody New World experience in an Old World form. As Lecker says,

Demeter's concerns are closely aligned with the principles of nineteenth-century realism ...a concern with verisimilitude; detailed rendering of particular time and space; rounded characters developed in terms of cause and effect; logical unfolding of plot; an attention to fact, information and data; the discovery of 'truth' associated with identifiable consequences and supported by reference to actual experience".²⁰

As the realistic novel cannot contain the apparent randomness and paradox of myth, Demeter's narrative is doomed to consist of scattered fragments, rather than the logical and comprehensible whole that he desires; as Demeter himself complains, "we who assemble fragments long for a whole image of the vanished past" (34).

The dichotomy of historian-narrator and mythic hero is repeated in The Invention of the World. There Strabo Becker,

named for the Roman historian, is engaged in an attempt to document the extraordinary career of another mythic hero, Donal Keneally. Strabo, like Demeter, is a parody of the historian, a would-be omniscient God who seeks to locate verifiable facts in the welter of lies and inventions offered up by his informants. As Becker says, "His (Strabo's) research into the Keneally legend allows him to organize the 'debris' of history and comment upon the oral and written tales which relate to his Irish subject's life...Like Keneally, Becker believes that he is a visionary who can create a new world for his audience".²¹ Much of Strabo's difficulty seems to stem from the fact that he is attempting to impose the linearity, particularity, and emphasis on fact of written discourse on what is essentially an oral culture. The fragments from which Becker wishes to assemble his history of Keneally's colony are not fixed in written language; they have been told and re-told and embroidered in the telling. As Edward Guthrie, one of the characters from whom Becker hopes to find out the truth about Keneally, tells him,

You're a fool...if you believe a word anybody tells you about that Keneally. They'll make it up, they'll lie just to please you, they'll pass on what some other stupid bugger told them and call it gospel, and the truth is they don't know nothing. Nobody does. (206)

Richard Ryburn, another of Becker's informants, states that

...when people feel that their own lives and life around them is basically dull, they begin

to spin tales that will turn a slightly eccentric neighbour into a mythological creature of epic proportions and start to imagine life in the nearest exclusive group as exciting and perverse and perhaps dangerous. (196)

Becker's attempt to transform myth into history, to impose the finality of the written document on the open-endedness of oral discourse, is as doomed as that of Demeter Proudfoot; the best he can hope for is to continue to add to his heterogeneous collection of cassette tapes and notebooks, all of them enshrining a story that is more myth than history and that may consist chiefly of out-and-out lies. Lecker outlines Becker's predicament clearly when he states that

Although Becker may at first seem to be a kind of prophetic artist who can organize the detritus of time and give shape to the ancestral story which he hopes to unfold, and although he believes that he will 'absorb all this chaos' (p.xi), what he is really organizing is a 'confusion of tales and lies' (p.xi).²²

Becker, like Demeter, is able to do no more than "assemble fragments" while longing for a "whole image of the vanished past"; by the end of the novel, he is forced to concede that "Words only nibble at reality" (321). In the final chapter, Becker admits that Keneally's story "has returned to the air where I found it, it will never belong to me, for all my gathering and hoarding" (341).

Jeremy Sadness, like Lepage and Keneally, is a shaman/trickster identified with the indigenous cultures at the edge of colonial empire. Although he is born in the civil-

ized (in this case American) east and named for the rationalist philosopher Jeremy Bentham, he identifies with the Englishman-turned-Indian Archie Belaney, who in the interest of promoting environmental concerns transformed himself into the ersatz-Native Indian Grey Owl. A romantic of the Frederick Jackson Turner school (the novel's epigraph is from Turner's famous essay on the frontier in American history), Jeremy "believed that his whole life was shaped and governed by some deep American need to seek out the frontier" (5). His opposite number is the novel's narrator, Mark Madham, who has abandoned his western Canadian background to move to the American east. Madham and Jeremy embody the oral/written antithesis: while Sadness suffers from an exaggerated form of writer's block, producing little more than titles for the endless succession of doctoral dissertations on which he pretends to be working, Madham, with his "logical mind" (11), is a successful academic who, as Thomas points out, "represents the whole post-lapsarian intellectual tradition".²³ Jeremy records his adventures in the frontier-state orally onto a tape recording; Madham transforms Jeremy's exploits into writing, imposes order, rails against the insufferable illogic of Jeremy's quest. Madham's name associates him with written language: he is a "Mark" on paper; he is also "the old mad Adam of the original day" (92), an Adam-figure who represents the process of "naming", the referential function of language, the assimilation of the

New World landscape into the Old World language and tradition. Madham, like Demeter, is trying to "recapture everything that was gone" (92). As Lecker notes,

in his attempt to order Jeremy's chaotic experiences and to capture in words what is essentially a psychic voyage that cannot be captured, Madham continues the Demeter Proudfoot tradition of injecting reason, versimilitude, and coherence into the story of a man who, like Hazard Lepage, defies precisely those notions of causality, closure, and explanation that his biographer/narrator so fervently pursues. While Madham inhabits what Kroetsch sees as a sterile, named East characterized by...written form, Jeremy...becomes both the oral poet and the trickster bent on deconstructing the written codes and codified worldview Madham embodies.²⁴

In The Scorched Wood People, the indigenous culture is once again associated with oral discourse while the colonial society is equated with writing. The juxtaposition of characters representing these two modes of discourse is more complex in this novel than in any of the above-mentioned examples, however. While there are characters or groups of characters who are clearly associated with either written or oral communication, the hero of the novel, Louis Riel, is caught between writing and speech. Riel is a mediational figure in that he embodies both white and native perspectives, and he is also a mediator with respect to language. As Stan McMullin puts it,

Riel, unlike Big Bear, was to some degree a literate man. Trained in Quebec's educational system, he was a Métis who had re-acquainted himself with the traditions of his French ancestors. It is because of his literacy that he becomes a spokesman for his Métis brothers, most

of whom have drawn their cultural inspiration from the oral traditions of the plains Indians. Riel is thus a "half-way" man caught between two cultures.²⁵

Post-colonial history is often largely the history of the victorious empire as opposed to the conquered or assimilated indigenous peoples; part of Wiebe's intent in writing The Scorched Wood People and The Temptations of Big Bear is undoubtedly to redress, in a small way, this fundamental imbalance in our recorded history by supplying or asserting the effaced indigenous perspective. In The Scorched Wood People, he accomplishes this feat by filtering the historical events depicted in the novel through the consciousness of the novel's narrator, the Métis balladeer Pierre Falcon. Falcon is a suitable choice for the role of representative of the indigenous perspective in that not only is he Métis, he is also a singer and (in Wiebe's incarnation of Falcon, at least) epic poet, and is thus directly associated with oral as opposed to written language.

The singer Falcon's orality is also, then, the orality of his people. Despite their divided heritage, the Métis people who follow Riel and Gabriel Dumont are depicted as being largely an oral culture, as being people who associate writing with the colonial east. Falcon describes the signing of a petition, at which the Métis, Dumont among them, stand "wordless and motionless as our people always are before the mystery of words written" (211); similarly, the

balladeer/narrator states that "letters are dangerous. I never knew a Métis except Riel who liked them, though I ~~wrote~~ wrote a number myself. The words crouch black on pale paper, unchangeable and deadly" (170).

Only Riel, divided man that he is, seems immune to the Métis' distrust of written discourse. The literate leader of a pre-literate society, he attempts to transform the oral discourse of his people into written history:

and he was writing; words to fill the leather suitcase, to give his unwritten people a place on paper before the frozen earth closed them away one by one and no one would hear them, the words they cried to each other lost like the cry of the gulls turning trackless over the river, words to be used against him, for every written word called to judgement. (245)

Riel transforms the spoken words of the pre-literate Métis into writing; Falcon the poet-narrator, looking as it were over the hero's shoulder, in turn transforms Riel's history into song, and in doing so supplies the lost perspective of the (oral) indigenous culture on the events of the Riel rebellion, the history of which has hitherto existed only in the written records of the colonial power that defeated the Métis.

The opposition of characters who embody oral and written modes of discourse is also made use of in The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne and Tay John. Bourne, like Hazard Lepage, Jeremy Sadness, and Donal Keneally, is associated with oral discourse, as he is a poet and radio announcer;

he is also a mythic figure whose past is, at the beginning of the novel, unknown to the other inhabitants of Port An-nie. Bourne's past is unearthed, however imperfectly, by town librarian Larry Bowman. Bowman is not, however, a rationalistic historian-figure of the same order as Becker or Madham or Demeter Proudfoot: his identification with the written word is enclosed within his association of literature with myth and romance--he is less concerned with making history out of Bourne's life than with introducing an element of romance into his own. In this sense he is, like Demeter at the end of The Studhorse Man or Dawe in the badlands, a priest-thinker who attempts to become a shaman, to cast off the strictures of his rationalistic, literate culture and embrace the poet's muse.

The narrative structure of Tay John is complex. The novel begins with a section entitled "Legend", in which Red Rorty's mission to the Shuswap and the birth and early career of the hero are recounted through omniscient narration. The second section, "Hearsay", begins with the omniscient narrator's account of the background of Jack Denham; Denham then recounts "Jackie's tale", the story of his first encounter with Tay John, and in the process becomes the novel's first-person narrator. The emphasis in this section, as the section heading suggests, is on orality, "the unceasing movement of human lips and tongues" (114), on the conversion of fact into "tall tales" by the process of tell-

ing and re-telling that necessarily characterizes communication in an oral culture. In the final section, "Evidence--Without a Finding", Denham's tale is continued, but the hero's final return to earth is told not by Denham himself but by a trapper named simply "Blackie", whose voice has a "resounding quality, like a voice out of a cave" (259). The movement in the novel, as the section-headings indicate, is from myth to history (or almost to history; no "finding" is reached) by way of the blended genre of the "tall tale", in which history and myth are combined--with the story of Tay John's demise offered by Blackie returning us to myth just as the hero himself is returned to the earth from which he came. The opposition of myth and history embodied in the narrative structure of the novel is echoed by the opposition of such orally-biased informants as Blackie and the other frontier-figures ("your backwoodsman is a thorough gossip" 114) who provide Denham with versions of Tay John's activities and the rationalism and empiricism of the colonial mentality represented by the American entrepreneur Dobble, who at one point informs Denham that "we live in a world of facts" (224). Denham himself straddles both worlds, the literate Englishman who has at least partially "gone Indian" and who is content to record Tay John's life only in the form of an oral tale.

The oral/written antithesis in Tay John is also represented by the association of the two priest-figures in

the novel, the brothers Red and Thomas Rorty, with the two modes of discourse. Red Rorty is distinguished by his resonant and powerful voice; he was, we are told, "thought by himself and some others to be a strong man because sometimes on a still day he could be heard shouting from five miles off" (13); when he preaches to the Shuswap, they feel that "no man had spoken with such a great voice before" (24).

Red's brother Thomas, conversely, is described by Denham as having a voice that was "never more than a whispered hoarseness" (183); he communicates with his congregation through signs--"the Cross, the Holy Water, the Virgin Mary" (184)--and teaches "the writings of the Catholic Church" (184).

When Thomas communicates his feelings for Ardith Aeriola, he does so in a letter in which he tells her that his "writing is endless" (215) and contrasts himself with his brother Red, who "would not have written letters" (215). Before his death, in which he transforms himself into a symbol, he seems at war with the signs through which he has lived, with the linearity of written discourse and historical time, writing that he fears "this cabin where I write to-night, my hand, shadowed by the candle, moving great upon the wall. Above me, the clock face, that exultant visage of forever" (214). When he dies, in his attempt to put the symbols of his religion before his human desires, he is depicted as nature martyred to linearity, "impaled upon the tree like time upon the hour" (220). In accordance with the narrative

structure of the novel, which blends and juxtaposes myth and history, both oral and written modes of discourse and the characters who represent them are demonstrated to be equally limited: Red is crucified by the Shuswap, a stone stuck between his jaws "like a word he tried to utter" (28), while Thomas also dies in silence--"He opened his mouth to shout and snow fingered the back of his throat" (220).

As Tay John demonstrates, oral discourse can be associated with myth, while written signs are associated with history. The opposition of mythic and historical perspectives is central to The Words of My Roaring. Johnny Backstrom, as Lecker points out, "literally voices himself and his world into existence, a fact that suggests he fulfills the role of the oral poet";²⁶ Backstrom's mythic perspective is opposed to the linearity of Doc Murdoch's colonial East. As Lecker puts it (quoting Kroetsch), "Whereas Murdoch reflects a central Canada that 'speaks out of its sense of history,' Backstrom roars for a western Canada that 'speaks prophetically out of its sense of myth'".²⁷

If Backstrom and Murdoch are associated with, respectively, myth and history, the two "heroes" of Badlands, Web and Dawe, represent the corresponding modes of discourse: the oral and the written. Dawe, who comes from the civilized East to the frontier, is initially associated with the historical-rational, written discourse of colonial civilization. He is the representative of a culture which, as his

daughter Anna laments, has been "raised not on love letters or lyric poems or even cries of rebellion or ecstasy or pain or regret, but rather on old hoards of field notes" (2). Like Demeter, like Madham, Dawe is engaged in a hopeless attempt to catch and hold the vanished, vanishing world: "'Nothing vanishes. Everything goes on.'" (117), he tells the photographer Sinnott, refusing to admit that like Sinnott he is a "charlatan" who is endeavouring to substitute for the world of experience the counterfeit world of signs. Dawe's written field notes are contrasted with the orally-biased "tall tales" of his counterpart Web, whom Thomas calls Dawe's "unrestrained doppelgänger".²⁸ Web is, as Lecker says, "the oral poet as trickster",²⁹ and as such he is one with Kroetsch's other oral-poet heroes. Mediating between these two positions is the novel's narrator, Dawe's daughter Anna; while she seems at the outset to have taken on the task of the historian, recovering and ordering the detritus of her father's past, the history she creates is in fact a work of the imagination, a myth: "I...imagined to myself a past, an ancestor, a fate" (2).

In each of the aforementioned novels, the oral/written and mythic/historical oppositions are embodied in pairs of characters, each of whom represents or is associated with one side of the opposition. In most cases, the oral or mythic aspect of the dichotomy seems to be presented in the more favourable light: many of the heroes of the novels

are, in Kroetsch's phrase, "voicemen, booting silence out of heaven",³⁰ oral poets and mythic figures who, even when they are depicted in as negative a manner as Hodgins depicts Keneally, seem to be bursting with procreative energy and wild imaginative force, while their literate, historian-figure counterparts are for the most part portrayed as inept, stiff-necked shadows, skulking along with their notebooks in the trickster-hero's wake. Oral language is not, however, invariably presented in such a positive light: in some of the novels, oral discourse is represented as being no more than a dry lexicon of empty stock-phrases and hollow clichés. In The Double Hook, the dialogue seems to consist either of what Felix calls "ritual phrases" (51)³¹--what Stephen Scobie terms "an aphorism for every occasion"³²--or of purely referential language that never transcends its utilitarian function sufficiently for the characters to communicate with one another on anything but the most mundane and inconsequential level:

This was the way they'd lived. Suspend-
ed in silence. When they spoke they spoke of
hammers and buckles, of water for washing, of
rotted posts, of ringbone and distemper. (43)

The oral discourse employed by a number of the characters in What the Crow Said also seems to consist largely of hollow catch-phrases, as if the language of everyday conversation had become ossified, hardened into clichés. As Thomas points out, such characters as Martin Lang and John

Skandl communicate (or fail to communicate) only in "sub-proverbial language", "the comic truisms of common speech, impregnably circular and self-contained".³³ Lang, as Geert Lernout notes, "expresses himself almost exclusively in formulaic language", while many of the female characters also "speak in formulas".³⁴ The failure of oral discourse as a means of communication is further symbolized in the novel by the frequent inability of the characters to speak or to hear. As Lernout points out, "Alfonse Martz claims he is 'deef in one ear...and I can't hear out the other.' Skandl's ears have been eaten, and again and again people have trouble hearing one another...JG does not speak at all, the crow calls Heck 'dummy' and Straw all but loses his voice when he meets Vera".³⁵

If oral discourse is generally ineffective, it is also associated with the few occasions on which the characters do succeed in mediating between the oppositions that structure their world. The novel is, as Lernout notes, framed by three cries: Vera's orgasmic cry, the scream of the male card players, and Joe Lightning's cry as he falls to the earth.³⁶ Each of these cries marks a moment of mediation between opposites--Vera's between herself as culture and the bees as nature, the men's between life and death, and Joe Lightning's between the telluric and the uranian. It is as if the mediative act gave each of these characters his or her voice, freed him or her into orality. Written

discourse, on the other hand, is seen as a trap; Liebhaber's quest is to free himself from the linearity of writing and thus from the linear, abstraction-based world-view of Western European man. His battle with language is symbolized by his attempts to perceive the blocks of type with which he prints the local newspaper as objects, divorced from their function as signifiers. On one occasion, he tries, as Thomas states, to "free O from its ascribed meaning",³⁷ to perceive the letter O as "a mere circle" (74). Similarly, he tries to "mock out of meaning" (54) the word OUT (both O, as zero, as silence, and OUT are evocative of his desire to escape the virtual time and space of written signs³⁸), but he finds that however he tries to separate or confuse the letters, "Out was still OUT" (54). As well, he parodies his own entrapment within language, forming the blocks of type into a forlorn message: "I'M NOT ALONE. REALLY...I'M NOT" (55). That it is the linearity of written language against which Liebhaber rebels is made clear by the fact that we are told that it was the "domestication of those free, beautiful letters...the absurdity of their recited order that afflicted him" (69); his quest, then, is in one sense to free himself from the "tyranny of rote" (69).

The distrust in the process of signification apparent in Liebhaber's battle with the blocks of type extends, in some western Canadian novels, to the analogous process of mimesis. In the post-colonial setting, the quintessential

act of mimesis is the replication by the colonial society of the conditions of the home country of the colonial empire. Alf Dobbie, O'Hagan's embodiment of American economic imperialism, attempts to transform a group of shacks in the Canadian Rockies into a new Lucerne; Damon West, who is surely a spiritual descendent of Dobbie, attempts a similar transformation in the Vancouver Island bush. Wade Powers, one of the central characters of The Invention of the World, goes Dobbie and West one better by creating the illusion of Western Canada's colonial history: he makes his living by luring feckless tourists into a home-made replica of a colonial-era fort. Ironically, Wade, who considers Art to be no more than a simple mimetic replication ("I could do better with a camera" he tells his friend Virginia Kerr when she shows him one of her paintings) is himself replicated by the advent of his doppelgänger, Horseman. Jacob Weins, Mayor of the village of Port Annie in The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne, like Powers replicates history in order to make a profit, in his case by dressing up as an explorer or a shaman. The replication of colonial history also figures in The Studhorse Man, where P. Cockburn, noted mimetic artist, has created a roomful of personages from prairie history. In a comic burlesque of the sign/object relationship, Poseidon attempts to mount the equine aspect of a bronze equestrian statue--a statue, suitably enough, of the Great White Mother of the British Empire. Jeremy Sadness,

arriving in Notikeewin, is confronted by a tableau of ice sculptures depicting a trapper with a dog-team and a scene from a buffalo hunt. Jeremy's wife Carol is also associated with replication; she works in the xerox room at his university. Sinnott, the photographer encountered by Dawe and his cohorts on their voyage into the badlands, is also engaged in an act of replication; his task is to replace the diachronic flow of lived experience with the synchronic world of signs. Like all mimetic artists, he creates not life but illusion; in this sense he is, as he puts it, a charlatan.

Liebhaber is not alone in his desire to escape the linearity of alphabetic writing. Johnny Backstrom, as Robert Lecker notes, "escapes writing by defining himself as Voice".³⁹ Anna Dawe's contention that her father had "come to the end of words" is analogous to his statement that he and his crew were "sailing off the map" (95) in their journey into the badlands and to Anna's assertion that during that journey he "removed himself from time" (139). During his brief idyll with Anna Yellowbird (whose penchant for singing identifies her with oral discourse), Dawe loses track of linear time ("It was the fourth day, the fifth day perhaps" 189) and becomes "careless of the entries in his field notes" (189)--freeing himself from writing, he begins to make use of his voice, declaiming "proudly and vainly the words mined from deep within his immobility, the loud words freed from the matrix of a lifelong silence into his hand,

his voice" (189). Dawe's sojourn with Anna Yellowbird releases him from time and memory; making love to her "erased the ticking clock" (195). After they make love, it requires "all the fury of his body" in order for Dawe to return to "the memory of the civilized east" (195). His transformation from historian to shaman remains incomplete, however; deciding that he must "remember to remember" (195), he retreats into the virtual space and time of his fictional field notes. Near the end of the novel, we see him straddling a coffin-shaped box, "motionless and writing", on a boat that floats "on its own image" in the river. Like Liebhaver rearranging the blocks of type in a futile attempt to free them from meaning, Dawe struggles to break out of the complex of signs that contains him. Drifting along in his own mimetic mirror-image above the waters of the "uncreated world", Dawe rips "a page out of his field book, crushing it and hurling it into the water" (240); when this gesture proves ineffective, he begins to write again, "smashing the period down onto the page as if he would pierce it, penetrate, nail the book to the box" (241).

Dawe and Liebhaver attempt to free themselves from writing and thus from linear time and geometric space--to "abandon the garrison", in Jones' words. Some of the central characters in The Invention of the World embark on a similar quest, casting off the symbols of abstraction--Maggie Kyle's map of Ireland, Strabo's notebooks--while standing atop the

mythic World Mountain from which Donal Keneally, the mythic "hero" of the novel, was born. In this instance, however, it is not merely written language that is seen as counterfeit, but all language, and beyond that the material world itself:

If words won't do, and symbols fail, maybe only the instinct, some kind of spiritual sense, can come close...Maybe all our lives that instinct is in us, trying to translate the fake material world we seem to experience back into pre-Eden truth, but we learn not to listen. (321)

What Liebhaber, Dawe, and the other characters mentioned here⁴⁰ have in common, then, is that each attempts to free himself from abstraction, from the process of substituting sign for object, signifier for signified. This need to escape from the virtual reality created by signs or to avoid or subvert the process of signification may be symptomatic of a predicament common to post-colonial writers in Canada and elsewhere.

One of the problems that writers from post-colonial societies must face is the inescapable sense of the essential foreignness of the language in which they write. As Kroetsch has stated:

The Canadian writer's particular predicament is that he works with a language, within a literature that appears to be authentically his own, not a borrowing. But just as there was in the Latin word a concealed Greek experience, so there is in the Canadian word a concealed other experience, sometimes British, sometimes American.⁴¹

The problem outlined by Kroetsch is, as Russell Brown

notes, one which has "occupied Canadian critics almost since the beginning of writing in Canada",⁴² and it is also one that is of concern to writers in other post-colonial societies. The Spanish-American critic Juan Marinello, writing in 1932, stated that

the American writer is a prisoner. First, language. Later, the learned fetters of Europe...If it (language) were only a means of expression, a translating medium, it would not be a prison. It would be a slave, not a master. But language is a living thing, with inexorable, immortal life...We are through a language that is our own while being foreign.⁴³

The task of the post-colonial writer is, in some ways, given the inappropriateness of his language to his environment, the reverse of that of the original explorers and colonists, whose primary task was to map and to name: by naming, they assimilated the New World landscape not only into their language but also into the linearity of historical time, into the "transpersonal memory" of their literate culture; by mapping, they assimilated perceptive space into the homogeneity of geometric space. The myth of the colonist as New World Adam has always been an important aspect of the cultural mythology of colonialism: the colonist, going like Adam through the unmapped, uncreated space of the New World, creates his world by naming; just as space has no reality to him until it is mapped, and thus assimilated into the geometric space of the colonial culture, so the landscape itself does not exist until it is named. As O'Hagan writes in Tay

John, "it is physically exhausting to look on an unknown country. A name is the magic to keep it within horizons. Put a name to it, put it on a map, and you've got it" (80). The post-colonial writer, conversely, does not seek to name the landscape, to establish a fixed referential relationship between the New World landscape and the Old World language, but to embody the inappropriateness or even impossibility of such a relationship. If the colonist is a frontier Adam, "giving things their names", the post-colonial writer is an anti-Adam, an Adam in reverse; as Kroetsch puts it, "at one time I considered it the task of the Canadian writer to give names to his experience. I now suspect that on the contrary it is his task to un-name".⁴⁴

The solution to the post-colonial writer's dilemma is not, in Kroetsch's words, to "give names to his experience, to be the namer",⁴⁵ as it is not simply the inappropriateness of the language of the colonial society that threatens to invalidate his experience, it is the process of naming itself: the Adamic task of "giving things their names", of mapping and naming the uncreated New World environment is, as we have seen, the process through which that environment is colonized, assimilated into the geometric space and linear historical time of the colonial empire. As Donna Bennett comments, "any naming, indigenous or foreign, invalidates itself and is therefore both dangerous and false".⁴⁶

It is important, then, to distinguish between the asso-

ciation of written discourse and its analogues (maps, mimetic art) with the colonial perspective and the more general distrust of the process of signification which in some western novels--notably those of Kroetsch and Hodgins--seems to transcend the specific issue of the disjunction between indigenous and colonial perspectives. The rejection of the counterfeit, "invented" world of signs which is so important to Hodgins' first two novels goes beyond the symbolic casting off of road maps and notebooks or the burlesquing of manufactured history such as Wade's fort or Mayor Weins' costumes: in the essentially Platonic world-view offered up in Hodgins' works, the material world itself is seen as a complex of signs, as a counterfeit for an eternal (i.e. spiritual) reality. While Kroetsch's "un-naming" is, as Brown asserts, "concerned with the unrecognized (alien) languages that we inherit, and with the consequent need to clear a space in order to perceive and free ourselves from them",⁴⁷ it is also concerned with what Brown describes as a "sense of all language as 'translation,' as something that holds us perpetually at one remove from reality".⁴⁸

Kroetsch's view of the relationship between language and reality is obviously radically different from that of Hodgins: his concept of "un-naming" is derived from Heidegger, and the aim of Heidegger's "un-naming" is, as George Steiner notes, "not to devalue the substantive world, as does Platonic idealism. On the contrary, it is to immerse

oneself in the full 'thereness' of things; for it is only in their unconcealment that Being, though itself hidden, is revealed".⁴⁹

However distinct Hodgins and Kroetsch may be in terms of the motivation for their distrust of written language and of mimetic art, that distrust itself is common to the work of both writers, and to the other novels discussed in this study. This distrust is, as mentioned above, at least partially grounded in the post-colonial sense of the inappropriateness of the colonial language to the New World environment. The colonial language--the language of western European man, specifically of the British empire--is characteristically written language, written as opposed to oral discourse. Written discourse, as Innis asserts, provides man with a "transpersonal memory" which allows him to divorce his conception of space and time from both his own limited perceptions and his sense of the sacred, to replace both the circles of perceptive space and the cycles of nature, as well as the linked circles of the cosmological levels (organized around the central axis mundi) and the circles of mythical time (eternally returning to the sacred time of origins) with the homogeneity, secularity, and impersonality of abstract geometric space and abstract historical time: the world of abstraction, then, replaces both the world of lived experience and the world of the gods.

Innis' theory of the relationship between the written

word and the colonization of time and space, the replacement of personal perception with the homogeneity of the "transpersonal memory", is embodied in Liebhaber's memory. Liebhaber is explicitly an Adam-figure--"and in the night he was the inventor of the world's words" (215)--but he is also the post-colonial anti-Adam, attempting to free the world from abstraction, to release the object from meaning, from its function as a sign. Liebhaber's battle with meaning is more specifically a battle with written signs; alphabetic writing is personified in the novel, appropriately enough, by the figure of Gutenberg.⁵⁰ "Gutenberg did this to me", Liebhaber complains (115), and it is the blocks of type from his printing press that he associates with the "intricate knot of language that bound him to death" (54).

Gutenberg, we are told in What the Crow Said, "made all memory of the past irrelevant" (68), a statement that must inevitably bring to mind Innis' theory of the transpersonal memory. Cut off from a past that has been "colonized", abstracted into linear historical time, Liebhaber perversely develops the ability to "remember the future": "only the future, and that just barely, was free of Gutenberg's vast design" (116). With Liebhaber's memory, we have come to the end-point of a process that began with the colonization of the "wilderness" and the assimilation of the indigenous peoples outlined in The Temptations of Big Bear and Tay John; here the process of colonization is complete, or very

nearly so--the Alf Dobbles have succeeded in transforming the world into signs and in replacing the circles of sacred space and time with the linearity and abstraction of geometric space and historical time. It remains for Liebhaber, and for the post-colonial writer, to attempt to free the world from linearity, from abstraction, from meaning--to "un-name" the landscape of the colonized New World.

Introduction

1. E.A HAVELOCK equates the birth of history with the advent of "alphabetic technology". See Eric A. Havelock, Preface to Plato (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), p.294.
2. Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), p.3.
3. As Leslie Monkman notes, "interest in the literary potential of red myths and legends appears in English-Canadian literature by the mid-nineteenth century". See Leslie Monkman, A Native Heritage: Images of the Indian in English-Canadian Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p.128.
4. Ernst Cassirer contrasts European man's abstraction-based world-view with the mythical world-view of "primitive" man. See Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man (New Haven: Yale, 1962), pp.42-55.
5. Ibid., p.83.
6. For a discussion of the romantic view of Native culture, see Margaret Atwood, Survival (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p.49-50.
7. Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p.225.
8. See Atwood, p.50.
9. Ibid., pp.49-66.
10. Monkman, p.5.
11. D.G.Jones, Butterfly on Rock (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1970), p.10.
12. Both Cassirer and Mircea Eliade assert that "primitive" man sees his world as being essentially circular. See pp.13-17 below.
13. The romantic ideal being, as Christopher Norris puts it, "a pure, unmediated vision, a perfect correspondence between idea, language, and reality". Christopher Norris, The Deconstructive Turn: Essays in the Rhetoric of Philosophy (London: Methuen, 1983), p.130.

14. Robert Kroetsch, "Unhiding the Hidden: Recent Canadian Fiction", Open Letter, Fifth Series, No.4 (Spring 1983), pp.17-21.

Part One

1. Cassirer, Essay on Man, p.45.
2. Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale, 1955), vol.2, p.83.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p.85.
5. Ibid., p.118-119.
6. Ibid., p.110.
7. To be more accurate, "profane" space is "geometric" space seen from the point of view of the indigenous culture.
8. Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, trans. Willard R.Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), p.64.
9. Ibid., p.22.
10. Ibid., p.63.
11. Ibid., p.83.
12. Frye, p.224.
13. Atwood, p.120.
14. Though the image may owe something to the authors' acquaintance with the image of the city in some Romantic literature--the London of The Prelude, for example, or the labyrinth of streets through which de Quincey searches for his lost Anna.
15. E.D. Blodgett, Configuration: Essays in the Canadian Literatures (Downsview, Ont.: ECW, 1982), p.209.
16. Rudy Wiebe, The Temptations of Big Bear (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p.84. All subsequent references to primary sources listed in the bibliography will be cited parenthetically in the text.

17. Dick Harrison, Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1977), p.203.
18. George Melnyk, "The Western Canadian Imagination: An Interview with Rudy Wiebe", in W.J.Keith, ed., A Voice in the Land: Essays By and About Rudy Wiebe (Edmonton: NeWest, 1981), p.205.
19. Blodgett, p.210.
20. Cassirer, Philosophy, pp.86-87.
21. James Morris, Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire (London: Faber and Faber, 1968; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), pp.325-326.
22. Margery Fee, "Howard O'Hagan's Tay John: Making New World Myth", Canadian Literature, 110 (Fall 1986), p.16.
23. Cassirer, Philosophy, pp.86-87.
24. John J.O'Connor, "Saskatchewan Sirens: The Prairie as Sea in Western Canadian Literature", Journal of Canadian Fiction, 28/29, pp.157-171.
25. Quoted in O'Connor, p.159.
26. For a discussion of elemental symbolism in The Double Hook, see Margaret Morriss, "The Elements Transcended", Canadian Literature 42 (Autumn 1969), pp.56-71.
27. Alan Twigg, For Openers: Conversations with 24 Canadian Writers (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour, 1981), p.115.
28. Robert Lecker, Robert Kroetsch (Boston: Twayne, 1986), p.40.
29. Peter Thomas, Robert Kroetsch (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1980), p.41.
30. Lecker, pp.44, "The Double Hook" in the Rockies is also described as being "like some ship foundered in a
31. Interestingly, "Alfred Dobble's "Lucerne" in the Rockies is also described as being "like some ship foundered in a
32. Thomas, p.60.
33. Lecker, p.49.

34. Ibid., p.61.
35. Ibid., p.69.
36. Thomas, p.78.
37. Lecker, pp.69-70.
38. Ibid., p.84.
39. O'Connor, p.162.
40. Thomas, p.101.
41. Ibid., p.113.
42. Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God, 4 vols. (New York: Viking, 1959), vol.1, p.280.
43. Quoted in Gabriel Josipovici, The World and the Book (London: Meutheun, 1971; London: Paladin, 1973), p.127.

Part Two

1. Harold Innis, Empire and Communications (London: Oxford, 1950; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1972), p.10.
2. Todorov, p.221.
3. Claude Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Atheneum, 1974), p.299.
4. Innis, p.10.
5. Lévi-Strauss, p.299.
6. Stan McMullin, "Wiebe, History & Fiction", Journal of Canadian Fiction 28/29, p.249.
7. Monkman, p.118.
8. Carla Visser, "Historicity in Historical Fiction: Burning Water and The Temptations of Big Bear", Studies in Canadian Literature 12/1 (1987), pp.90-111.
9. Ibid., p.95.
10. Blodgett, p.209.

11. George Melnyk, "Kroetsch, Leaving a Comfortable Exile", Quill and Quire 42/95 (Nov. 1976), pp. 19-20.
12. Brian Bergman, "Rudy Wiebe: Storymaker of the Prairies", in Keith, p. 164.
13. Geoff Hancock, "An Interview with Jack Hodgins", Canadian Fiction Magazine 32/33 (1979/80), p. 36.
14. Paul Radin, The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 165.
15. Ibid., p. 164.
16. Rosemary Sullivan, "The Fascinating Place Between: The Fiction of Robert Kroetsch", Mosaic XI/3 (Spring 1978), p. 172.
17. Lecker, p. 48.
18. Harrison, p. 209-210.
19. Lecker, p. 50.
20. Ibid., p. 51.
21. Robert Lecker, "Haunted by a Glut of Ghosts", Essays on Canadian Writing 20 (Winter 1980), p. 93.
22. Ibid.
23. Thomas, p. 70.
24. Lecker, Robert Kroetsch, p. 31.
25. McMullin, p. 250.
26. Lecker, Robert Kroetsch, p. 38.
27. Ibid., p. 40.
28. Thomas, p. 93.
29. Lecker, Robert Kroetsch, p. 92.
30. Robert Kroetsch, The Crow Journals (Edmonton: NeWest, 1980), p. 41.
31. A distinction must be made between Felix's "ritual phrases", which are an embodiment of his specifically

Christian perspective, and the empty catch phrases of many of the other characters.

32. Stephen Scobie, Sheila Watson and Her Works (Downsview, Ont. : ECW, n.d.), p. 30.
33. Thomas, 105-106.
34. Geert Lernout, "Twenty-five Years of Solitude", Canadian Literature 104 (Spring 1985), pp. 52-64.
35. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
36. Ibid., p. 57.
37. Thomas, p. 109.
38. One of Liebhäber's attempts to free the blocks from meaning results in the transformation WATER/MATER, a repetition of the mer/mère homology found in The Studhorse Man; the pun is now graphic rather than phonological, but the connection between woman and the waters of origin/chaos remains the same.
39. Lecker, Robert Kroetsch, p. 78.
40. e.g. Strabo, Thomas Rorty.
41. Kroetsch, "Unhiding the Hidden", p. 17.
42. Russel Brown, "Seed and Stone: Unhiding in Kroetsch's Poetry", Open Letter, 5th Series/Nos. 8-9 (Summer-Fall, 1984), p. 156-7.
43. Juan Marinello, Americanismo y cubanismo literarias, (Havana; 1932), quoted in Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria, Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home (Ithaca, New York: Cornell, 1977), p. 51.
44. Kroetsch, "Unhiding the Hidden", p. 17.
45. Quoted in Donna Bennett, "Weathercock: The Directions of Report", Open Letter, 5th series/ Nos. 8-9 (Summer-Fall, 1984), p. 118.
46. Ibid.
47. Brown, p. 159.
48. Ibid., p. 156.

49. George Steiner, Martin Heidegger (New York: Viking, 1978), p.67.
50. Gutenberg is re-incarnated in the novel in the form of Liebhaber and/or Skandl's son J.G. (Johan Gutenberg); that J.G. does not speak underlines the loss of a personal voice that is the result of our bias toward written discourse--his lack of a voice also emphasizes the connection between silence and alphabetic writing in Kroetsch's novels.

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OF SPACE/TIME PERCEPTION AND DISCOURSE
IN ELEVEN NOVELS OF THE CANADIAN WEST

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STEPHEN GUPPY /

Feb. 21, 1988