THE UNPROMISING HERO: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF ONE NASKAPI MYTH FROM LITTLE WHALE RIVER

By

CHARLES GUTHRIE BALLARD

Bachelor of Arts
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1957

Master of Arts
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1966

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Thesis Approval:

Thesis Adviser

Dean of the Graduate College

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PREFACE

This dissertation is concerned primarily with an analysis of one Naskapi myth from Little Whale River, Quebec, Canada. The ethnological theories which were discussed preparatory to the analysis were related to the American empirical approach and the European structuralist approach of Claude Lévi-Strauss. The empirical investigations, primarily the work of Franz Boas and his students, were concerned usually with the noticeable differences in various selections of Indian myths, while the structuralist viewpoint emphasized the similarities, essentially, and the "sensory language" of the myths. The structural procedures, in any case, were thoroughly analyzed and then applied to a single Naskapi myth. Selected variants from other regions of the continent were used to establish "a bundle of relationships," as prescribed in the structuralist epistemology. The preparation or initiation required of a young shaman was mainly the substantive matter, or the "armature," of the myth.

I should like to express my appreciation to the people who were instrumental in the completion of my work at Oklahoma State University. The chairman of my committee, Dr. Peter C. Rollins, has been most patient and helpful, while Dr. James H. Howard of the Sociology Department has often

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CHAPTER I

NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

Introduction

Whether chanted or spoken or expressed in ritual, myths are a manifestation of preliterate systematic thinking,[1] as well as being, according to another view, "a metaphor of some subtlety on a subject difficult to describe in any other way."[2] The distinction, too, between myths and folktales, or between myths and legends, is said by Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) to be the difference between "a seasonal performance and an act of sociability" (the folktale) and that which "opens up past historical vistas" (the legend). "'The myth,'" Malinowski writes, "'comes into play when rite, ceremony, or a social or moral rule demands justification, warrant of antiquity, reality, and sanctity.'"[3]

Malinowski's view of myth, it should be noted, is but one of several basic ways of looking at folkloristic material. The early myths of North America do not fall naturally into all of the above categories, nor is much actually gained by attempting to place them in certain slots. The urgent need is simply to rescue them from benign neglect, or to see them as keys to the past and not

as quaint reminders of yesterday's ignorance.

"As regards our data," Ernst Cassirer writes, "the chain seems to be closed; no essential link is missing. But the theory of myth still highly controversial."[4] It is the theory that attempts to say what the myth finally means, and it is the theory which offers an explanation of why the literature of the past is, in its own way, unique. The purpose of this study, therefore, will be to draw as near as possible to the myths themselves, first through an explanation of important ethnological theories and secondly by an examination of a Naskapi myth from Little Whale River (Quebec, Canada).

The structuralist theory of Claude Lévi-Strauss will receive primary stress in this study, although credit will certainly be given to Franz Boas and his students for pioneering work in the area of North American Indian mythology. Due largely to Boas, rigorous scientific procedures in the actual collecting and recording of oral literature began to replace the older and more amateurish attempts of European collectors by the year 1890. Before this date, as noted by Jacobs and Stern, "Most of the artistic aspects of the original literatures were hopelessly distorted or lost in the published translations."[5] After this date, too, the American Indian no longer roamed freely on the western lands: the collecting of myths could begin in earnest. My thesis, then, is that a structural coherence and an overall cultural unity in certain selected

Indian myths of North America can best be approached through the ordering process of semantic relationships, oppositions, and contrasting categories that express in mythological terms a view of man's place in the world.

The Approach to the Three Levels of Myth

Three statements about myths seem possible with this line of inquiry. First, the universality of myths presupposes similarities and differences but not a common origin in terms of continent or particular culture; rather, it can be said that all cultures make myths, for they have been found wherever there are human beings.[6] Second, in the light of conceptual tools associated with structuralist theory, it can be shown that myths compare favorably with a language system, myths being, in a sense, a meta-language.[7] Third, the matter of epistemology is a basic problem in myth analysis that must be resolved before the inner-workings, or the "message," of mythology can be understood.[8]

A corollary to these statements involves the further isolation of three specific levels of mythology that are a part of both a logical and an analogical viewpoint: (1) various phenomena of the world of nature and of man are classified, (2) important cultural values are highlighted, and (3) a cosmic order is expressed. These categories may be viewed, respectively, as the structural level of the myths, the cultural-historical level, and the ideological, or philosophical, level. In combination they denote the

emphases assigned to the tripartite scheme, nature-man-spirit.

These levels, by and large, have been treated separately by different investigators. Level three, clearly, is of more interest to the philosopher, or to the religious historian. Mircea Eliade, for one, has written brilliantly and extensively about the arcane symbols, the origin (or etiological) myths, and the religious rites of the past. Ernst Cassirer, the neo-phenomenologist, has offered a more philosophical and diachronic approach to the myths.[10] Level two is stressed primarily in the writings of Franz Boas and his students, because it was the symbolic nature of the myths which often pointed out the differences among cultures that shared a similar techno-economic base. Most anthropologists, in fact, are interested in relating particular myths to the specific culture. The structuralist interest, at level one, is not different in this respect. Lévi-Strauss is careful to group various myths according to their respective tribal regions. The structural level, however, is better understood as a more fundamental aspect of the strictly observable portions of any culture.

The Structural Level of Mythology

Lévi-Strauss begins his study of myth by showing that certain similarities exist between the elements of language as they are defined by a linguist and the series of images that one may find in certain related myths. The

structuralist view, therefore, suggests that a single myth, more often than not, is merely a partial account of a more understandable underlying theme. To grasp, in other words, the many dimensions of what is being expressed, a reader must attempt to pull the scattered dimensions together by analyzing a series of variants, or "a bundle of relationships." If these relationships—say, an overevaluation or an underevaluation of kinship—are arranged in a certain way, then it should be possible to isolate a logical meaning at the diachronic, structural level (the "diachronic" here is equivalent to Ferdinand de Saussure's langue—the language, as opposed to his concept of parole—the "synchronic," or the actual speech performance of an individual). Working with the "sensory language" of early myths, therefore, Lévi-Strauss finds that logic, pure and simple, always prevails. The myths, somewhat like musical notations, are understandable ways of ordering the world, and through a series of transformations they appear to be a part of a network of "messages" that reach from one end of the ancient world to the other.

The writings of Lévi-Strauss belong essentially to the third quarter of our century; therefore, the critical estimates only tentatively suggest that the structuralist approach is most effective in its handling of mythology (primarily the New World variety) and least effective when it offers an explanation for the ancient world's kinship systems.[11] These early returns are a bit unusual, perhaps

even damaging; they suggest that the various parts of the human cultures in question cannot be fully integrated into or explained by the structuralist strategy. Such a limitation, on the other hand, is to be expected; the very attempt to unify the diverse strands of culture, or to offer an explanation for the seeming inconsistencies in the social fabric, has opened up, nevertheless, new avenues of thought in the area of anthropological studies and has helped to prevent, at the very least, the mold of narrow specialization from becoming permanent.

The critic Ricoeur, from one perspective, has labeled Lévi-Strauss's writings on myth as "'Kantism without a transcendental subject.'"[12] Certainly it is true that the myth that Lévi-Strauss brings to the surface is not the one that the original story-teller, or the native listener, was conscious of; possibly the native in question could not intelligently discuss such a myth without a certain amount of preparation. Neither are we, for our part, aware of what chords are being used in the latest popular song, nor, for that matter, the specific grammatical rules which permit us to communicate. The great American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf once suggested that at this "unconscious" level there was little difference in ability between a Papuan headhunter and an Einstein. Yet it was also true, Whorf continued, that "all use their personal consciousness in the same dim-witted sort of way, and get into similar kinds of logical impasse. They are as unaware of the beautiful

and inexorable systems that control them as a cowherd is of cosmic rays."[13]

Lévi-Strauss, for his part, has said that "'myths think themselves in men, and without their knowing it.'"[14] It makes a difference, naturally, when myths are regarded as being more akin to music than to poetry. The fact that myths seem to lose little in translation and the fact that they thus become intellectually accessible to an outside observer is truly noteworthy. If the structure is also intact, which is to say, if a "bundle of relationships" is available, then the myths possibly reflect a form of thought that in turn may be compared to a dictionary from which the alphabetical word-entries have been removed. The lexical entries, belonging to another mode of discourse, must therefore be reconstructed through a series of careful comparisons and a study of various contrasts. When even a part of the definitions themselves seem to be missing, however, the task of analysis becomes an arduous one indeed. For this reason a wide range of ethnographical facts are utilized, as well as a precise selection of variants among the myths themselves.

A Selection of Anthropological Facts and Terms

At level two, if anthropological writings in general are considered, then the interest in mythology constitutes only a small part of the primary concern with the cultural

or societal organizations of the past. In ethnographical studies reference is made to the pre-Columbian, "aboriginal" life in the Americas, or to the "early" or the "precontact," the "preliterate" or the "nonwestern" peoples, who, formerly, were called "savages" or "primitives." This last term, for instance, was used in the developmental scheme of Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-81). Morgan envisioned human history as consisting of three major "ethnical periods"—Savagery, Barbarism, and Civilization. The terms are now roughly equivalent to the following classifications: hunting and gathering societies (Savagery); horticultural, tribal, and pre- or proto-state societies (Barbarism); and stratified, state-level organizations (Civilization).[15] Mythology as a term is also interchangeable today with "oral tradition," "folkloristic material," or, simply "early literature." In truth, most of these adjustments in terminology were suggested by various ethnologists, although, as Phyllis Kaberry writes, "Social anthropology straddles both the humanities and the social sciences."[16] Mythology certainly belongs to both disciplines, but it turns out that social scientists are rather reluctant to theorize about myths, or they are understandably more interested in the particular culture from which the myth originated. Of course, cultural facts are also essential to a strictly literary approach. For this reason some attention must first be given to the culture of the early Americans.

The overall picture of that former tribal life is

necessarily rather blurred in certain areas. A. L. Kroeber estimates, in terms of early population for both of the Americas, a grand total of approximately 8,400,000 persons. Mesoamerica was the population center with a ratio of about four-to-one when compared with either North or South America.[17] These figures are conservative. They indicate, decidedly, that North America was relatively sparsely populated; the figure is some 900,000 individuals north of the Rio Grande. Melville Jacobs also estimates that some 200 languages of food-gathering peoples were spoken from the southwestern states north to Alaska.[18]

The principal regional variations would possibly center on the Eskimo economic cultures—some twenty-five in number—that once extended from Northeastern Greenland to the Kenai Peninsula on the Copper River (Northwest Coast).[19] The historical note concerning these latter cultures is given by Robert Lowie when he cites the results of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition. "The tribes of Northwestern America," Lowie writes, "are proved to have had at one time intimate relations with the Paleo-Asiatics. Especially is there a parallelism of complex folktales between East Siberians and the Indians of British Columbia, while no such similarities ally the East Siberians with the Eskimo, who now occupy an intermediate position."[20] Boas, who organized the expedition, inferred that the Eskimo had driven a wedge between these two groups which once formed a continuous major block of population.

It should be noted that the width of the land bridge between Siberia and Alaska ("Beringia," as it is called by geologists) was in times past a thousand miles or so at its greatest extent, while the two likely periods that permitted a crossing (because of exposed land) occurred, first, from about 32,000 to 36,000 years ago, and again at about 13,000 to 28,000 years ago. In the second period of crossing, the land bridge was open but the "corridor" through the glaciers that covered all of Canada was closed.[21] Also, there are "affinities between the Eskimo-Aleut languages and such still-spoken northeast Asian tongues as Kamchadal and Chukchi; no such relationships can be demonstrated for American Indian tongues."[22]

In any case, below the latitudes forty to fifty-five, depending on the retreating glaciers, the various segmentary tribes, or hunting-gathering cultures, began to develop and to slowly spread across the continent. In 35,000 years, more or less, which amounts to about 1,400 generations, there was clearly time to move about, to build the cities of the south, and to adapt to various living conditions. Much of the data collected by anthropologists is concerned with the variety of life styles that were still extant at the time of "contact." Such material should not be slighted; it does, however, become steadily more technical and more concerned with various cultures, rather than with mythology. The very fact that certain differences were noticed among pre-literate people led to the first division between human

beings that were classified on the one hand as Savage, Barbarous, and Primitive, and those who were termed Civilized. "Such ideas," Carvalho-Neto states, "presupposes a scale of values, in other words, the classification of inferior and superior beings in the human species."[24] Those who did not think in terms of Aristotelian logic were therefore reported as being motivated mainly by individual feeling; their "'causality relation' was infantile"; they were at the mercy of the libido; they were, in Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's term, "prelogical."[25] A more influential and popular view was offered by Edward B. Tylor when he named this "ascientific mentality 'animistic,'" which is to say, characterized by certain kinds of spiritual beliefs which attributed reality to "human shapes which appeared in dreams and visions" and beliefs which assumed that the dual universe was incessantly interactive, spiritually powerful, and spiritually awe-inspiring. On the other hand, an early psychologist named Théodule Ribot (1839-1916) called this early mentality "affective," that is, a type of thought which relied on the emotions or the senses to draw relationships which did not agree with the principle of contradiction, or, in other words, Aristotelian logic. Later, Sigmund Freud was to use the term "narcissistic," which is to say, swayed by "auto-erotic exaggeration." Carvalho-Neto explains: "Autoeroticism creates situations making it possible to overvalue the ego. This egocentric 'hyperesteem' develops in such a way that the individual even comes to believe that

the ego can overcome the universe."[26] The individual also believes that he can dominate everything and that it is sufficient to think of an action for it to be effective. In Freud's words, the individual believes in the "omnipotence of his ideas."

Were all these writers attempting to describe a type of thought that was quite normal but simply had not been exposed to a scientific viewpoint, or was it rather a non-western, "artistic" mind that was causing all the speculation? The issue has, over a number of decades, somewhat withered on the vine. Anthropolcgists became more interested in objectively describing particular cultural traits. The question, by contrast, of the possible origin of such traits was felt to be finally unproductive. There was the suspicion also that cross-cultural evaluations too obviously served a deductive theory of human evolution; at least, to see the development of modern forms of religious thought by an examination, and in possibly culture-bound ways, of the "oddities" of nonwestern thought seemed to constitute another demonstration that unilinear evolution was at work.

What <u>has</u> been settled, after much reflection, is the "error in judgment" known today by the term "ethnocentrism," or "cultural ethnocentrism." It was, as one commentator remarked, the "'tendency to see the world and what goes on in it through the colored glasses of the primary group.'"[27] Tylor, for instance, suggested "that the development of

civilization is controlled by the so-called laws of evolution." The danger in espousing this view, however, is that a writer is liable to fall prey to a kind of racism, for, like Herbert Spencer, or any number of early thinkers, he may soon begin to use phrases like the "inferior race," or the "superior race."[28]

This understandable desire to explain human evolution, at least by many writers in the past, spawned a host of terms in the early literature. Tylor developed the theory of "convergence," also called "independent development," "parallelism," or "recurrence." "He [Tylor] aligned himself against the 'diffusionists' or 'historical-culturalists' or even 'geographic historians.' The latter were cultural monogenists, that is, those who upheld the hypothesis of a single origin for each cultural trait."[29] The parallelists, on the other hand, are "cultural polygenists." To them, the origin of events took place "'in various parts of the earth when the same causes and conditions were present.'"

In this same vein, the issue of diffusion versus independent invention must also be noted. Marvin Harris, the Columbia anthropologist, has perhaps most recently revaluated these positions. Harris points out, for instance, that the diffusionists stressed the idea that man was essentially "uninventive," while the evolutionists were portrayed as believing the opposite. The dichotomy was important, Harris suggests, to the "historical particularists" (meaning Boas and Lowie, essentially) because they were attacking the

evolutionist point of view and were also interested in establishing for themselves a middle course, or a line of thought which would not rely on the "overinventiveness" of Adolf Bastian or on the "underinventiveness" of Wilhelm Schmidt and Fritz Graebner of the German Kulturkreis school. The upshot of Harris's argument, then, is that the misleading statements of certain early writers obscured the merits of their particular point of view:

> In ringing up the balance between the historical particularists and the evolutionists, we must reckon therefore with an exaggeration by the historical particularists of the amount of disorder in history, which is at least as much in error as the exaggerated orderliness discerned by some but not all of the evolutionists. The errors of the evolutionists were committed on behalf of pushing a science of culture to (and beyond) its evidential limits; the errors of the historical particularists . . . were committed out of a spirit of scientific nihilism, which denied that a science of history was possible.[30]

Similarities and Differences in Mythology

The diversity of myths and their similarities are continually referred to in ethnological writings. Adolf Bastian (1826-1905) spoke of "elementary ideas" and "folk ideas." The former are thought of as limited in number and as likely to be found in primitive thought as in the speculations of philosophers. Yet, in all instances, they appear "in the special form given to them by the environment in which they find expression as 'folk-ideas' (Völkergedanken)."[31] For example, it is unlikely that a fugitive would throw behind him essentially the same objects (say, a comb which becomes a forest, or a vial of fluid which becomes

a lake) in order to magically escape from a pursuer; yet, this type of account, known as "the Magic Flight," is, according to Stith Thompson, "one of the most widely distributed motifs in folklore."[32]

Bastian formulated his concept in 1868, some three years before Tylor's Primitive Culture was published. Ethnologists, however, have turned again and again to Bastian's concept because to the extent that it suggests the presence of two ideational levels in the myths, the one perceived, the other inferred—or, one expression taken as two expressions—it also recalls the problem of the universal and the particular, or that which has homogeneity as opposed to that which has specificity. The singular event, in many modern inquiries at least, is often understood in terms of, or found to be related to, an underlying regularity.

An altogether different emphasis arises if an investigator attaches little significance to this underlying regularity. To say that some member of a forgotten culture must necessarily think like any other man is to say nothing specific or even intelligible about that person's different way of life. Franz Boas, therefore, emphasized the differences in cultures and in folkloristic material because the differences were primarily what he observed. He stressed the symbolic material—primarily mythology, language, and art, in that order—because in his area of study, the Northwest Coast, the various cultures "shared

fundamental technological and socio-economic features."[33] He searched also for general laws which would explain the Northwest cultures but gradually came to the viewpoint that it was not "'a promising undertaking.'"[34]

In spite of the profound influence that Boas has had, he has not been without his critics. Returning, then, to the matter of similarities and differences in mythology, Leslie White has pointed out that Boas did not make it clear to the reader "that one can address himself to one or the other, as he pleases; that there is no conflict between the two. Instead, Boas leaves the reader with the distinct impression that historical analysis and interpretation are to be preferred over general psychological interpretations."[35]

The full import of White's comment, however, must be weighed against the fact that speculation and generalization had not yet given way to a valid methodology when Boas came into anthropology in the 1880's. The confusion about racial superiority was a pressing matter of the times. In the literature of America the range of feelings and sentiments about the Indian had already run the gamut of emotions from outright disgust in Richard Johnson's Nova Brittania (1609) to the sickly-sweet encomiums of Longfellow's Hiawatha (1855).[36] In 1872 William Graham Sumner became a professor at Yale and began spreading the Spencerian message about progress and adaptation.[37] Boas, for his part, began to measure the human body. In 1888, when he was thirty, he met G. Stanley Hall, a professor of psychology and pedagogy,

and decided to take a position at Clark University at Worcester, Massachusetts.[38]

J. M. Tanner cites the various studies that Boas made on human growth over the years. His biometrical work was but another specialty that Boas later brought to bear on the study of culture and on man. One concluding passage by Tanner suggests that Boas, in his own methodical way, was somehow answering those who attributed all progress to heredity: "[Boas'] work on the children of immigrants to America gave the death-blow to belief in the fixity of head form, and was a considerable factor in bringing anthropologists to the modern viewpoint which sees heredity and environment as complementary in shaping physique." The insight "into population biology" which Boas derived from this area of study, Tanner goes on to say, was "altogether modern in flavor"; it enabled Boas "quite against the current of his time to assign to limbo the question of racial differences and replace it with statistical queries on the number and distribution of family lines."[39]

When Boas began to concentrate his studies on the tribes of the Northwest Coast and began to compile and publish the first of more than 10,000 printed pages about that region, the scientific measurements, as well as the visionary scheme, were already a part of Boas' overall approach.[40] Margaret Mead, remembering her student days and her impressions of Boas as a teacher, spoke of the "great panorama" that Boas saw. It was nothing less, she wrote,

than "the whole of the study of man—as he had once seen the life of the Central Eskimo (Boas 1884)—spread out in a great panorama, stretching back to the infrahuman world and forward as man gained control over those aspects of culture which he saw as cumulative—technological and scientific development."[41] His students were never permitted to forget man's oneness with the rest of the living world, or the problems that arose when man became the first domesticated animal. And within this "panorama" Boas saw the scientific task, once again, as one of dividing down, of progressive probing into a problem now of language, now of physical type, now of art style—isolating, painstakingly, the basic "elements," or the hidden laws which would finally illuminate the mass of information which was being measured and categorized. "No probe," Mead noted, "must go too far lest it lead to premature generalization—a development which he feared like the plague and against which he continually warned us."[42]

Data gathered in the field, under the actual conditions of Indian life, and in the people's own terms were also methodologically receptive to differences: "'the whole analysis of experience,'" Boas wrote, "'must be based on their concepts, not ours.'"[43] The mild distaste, however, with which he approached certain tasks in the field can perhaps be attributed to his particular temperament. In his letters from the Northwest, Boas often showed his impatience at the slow pace of the work of searching out

informants or of collecting artifacts. His first two stops, when he reached any small town or settlement, were made at the local jail in order to find possible Indian informants and at the local cemetery in order to search for likely specimens of human skulls. The following excerpts from letters sent from Ft. Rupert in 1894 tell of the excitement, the frustration, and the usual problems connected with fieldwork[44]:

> November 15, 1894. The Indians are just having a great winter dance. . . . I hope to be able to see some of the major parts.
>
> November 17: I invited all the Indians to a feast, which took place in the afternoon. That was a sight! There were about 250 Indians in the house—men, women, and children. They were painted red and black, and wore jewelry; each was dressed in his cedar bark cloak.
>
> November 18: This noon there was a big seal feed in which I also participated. I ate only the meat because I do not like the cooked blubber. I am going to these feasts in a blanket and headring, since I am on very friendly terms with the people.
>
> November 19: Every day brings a new feast. I could not have chosen a better time. . . . You really should see me in my blanket, eating with a spoon out of a platter together with four Indians! . . . When somebody did not eat, the Nutlamatl and bears came and pushed him and hit him. During the whole feast a very hot fire was maintained, so that the roof started to burn several times and somebody went up to extinguish it. That is part of every good feast!
>
> November 21: In the morning, I recorded with Hunt [his informant] the speeches which were given the day before.
>
> November 22: This morning I obtained a few more items concerning last night and also wrote down a few folktales. I wish I were away from here.
>
> November 28: This morning I invited everybody to an apple feast, for which they especially decked

> themselves out. . . . There is never a quiet moment here. I will be glad when this is all over. I am longing to get back to civilization. Then I can enjoy everything I have done here.

By the sixth of December Boas was on board the Boskowitz, bound for Victoria and planning to be in New York on January 5, 1895.

Such experiences, certainly, belonged not only to Boas alone but to the majority of American anthropologists in the early decades of this century. Melville Jacobs points out also that European professors such as Haddon, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, and Schmidt were not as interested, evidently, in instilling into their students the value of collecting folklore. Furthermore, when the students of Boas became professors, they, too, encouraged fieldworkers "to bring home notebooks full of myths and tales."[45] A partial list of those students or disciples who published folktales "in goodly quantity" should at least include the names of Paul Radin, Robert H. Lowie, A. L. Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, William Jones, Ella Deloria, George A. Dorsey, Frank Speck, Gladys A. Reichard, Ruth L. Bunzel, Elsie Clews Parsons, Leslie Spier, Gene Weltfish, Leonard Bloomfield, Leo J. Frachtenberg, Melville J. Herskovits, Edward Sapir, Archie Phinney, Livingston Farrand, Fay-Cooper Cole, P. E. Goddard, M. W. Beckwith, and Melville Jacobs. Essentially, the totality of the American anthropological effort in the area of folklore is but an extension and a reflection of the early investigations of Franz Boas.

The method of collecting and recording was thoroughly

scientific, while the theory, at its simplest, suggested that myths and folktales were a literary feature of a particular culture. The theory of culture was apt to change, but the theory of myth was and still is securely based on a standard empirical inquiry. Boas' earliest writing on method, for instance, "dismissed, as incapable of proof, theories about origins of plots and elements (1891). Instead, he suggested the need to study their history."[46] Because "similar plots or motifs" could be found in adjacent areas, the inference could only be historical: the plots or motifs diffused. Melville Jacobs states that Boas "never attempted to discover, discuss, or contrast the kinds of elements suitable for meaningful comparative researches":

> He [Boas] accepted familiar constructs of motifs, actors, themes, explanatory elements, and the like. These were his elements . . . [and the plan was to] collect many folktales from contiguous peoples and plot the distribution of elements to exhibit their various combinations. Theoretical work may then be possible. He never suggested when collecting, mapping, and hypothetical historical reconstruction had been sufficient to justify entertaining theory.[47]

Any theory of folklore should ideally present itself as a scheme, a system, or a set of rules which would attempt to clarify or to explain the apparent inconsistencies in a myth. Boas, however, said nothing about the scatological, the ribald, the seemingly monotonous, the possibly pornographic, the gruesome, or the sometimes heartless incidents in the myths. All these elements still exist in mainstream American literature; they are categorized, evaluated, and explained. Yet Boas and his disciples left open the door

to "uncritical Freudian, Jungian, and other psychological theoreticians" because "no maturing science founding its own structure of theory was available to discredit them." The result has been, as Jacobs indicates, a storeroom filled with "incomprehensible miscellanea":

> Boas had been in the vanguard in exposing deficiencies in method and theory which folklore publications contained before the 1920's. But the indefatigable collector and his many students and followers, who were the most tireless gatherers, cataloguers, and cartographers of folklore items outside Europe, had not pointed out the way toward a theoretical structure of meaningful units, processes, and relationships which were expressed in oral literature. Twenty years after Boas penned his last statement on folklore (1938), the discipline remains almost exactly where he left it: an immature science which possesses a towering mass of essentially incomprehensible miscellanea, most of them ticketed according to geographical provenience.[48]

The study of folklore in America, however, has gone forward and has had its outstanding scholars, among whom are Paul Radin, Robert H. Lowie, Victor Barnouw, and Melville Jacobs. Radin did his ethnographical work among the Winnebago, Lowie wrote mainly of the Crow, Barnouw has made a study of Chippewa folklore, and Jacobs has written of the Clackamas Chinook along the lower Columbia River. These investigators, with the possible exception of Barnouw, have not radically departed from the usual empirical methods of Boas; they have offered, nevertheless, certain refinements in their approach and certain insights into their particular subject matter, both of which warrant a closer look.

The Winnebago Trickster Cycle

Paul Radin's book The Trickster (1956) is rewarding for

the reader on several counts. The author presents first the forty-nine episodes of the Winnebago Trickster Cycle, as well as the summaries of the Assiniboine and Tlingit trickster myths. Radin then offers informed comment on various aspects of the cycle, based upon his extensive ethnographical study of this particular Siouan-speaking tribe of central Wisconsin and eastern Nebraska. But as if to underscore Jacobs' comment about an inadequate theory, the publishers have included an evaluative section by Karl Kerényi, the well known Greek scholar, and an additional commentary by Carl Jung.

The antics of the Trickster, of course, are well known to anyone who has even a nodding acquaintance with North American Indian myths. This shamelessly uninhibited mythical actor is capable of assuming any shape or form. He is certainly the earliest deity in mythology and perhaps the most embarrassing to the early investigators. Is it true, for instance, that a deity who created the world can be spiritually equated with a large white rabbit? Can such a god or demiurge be conceived as a coyote or a raven? Would any deity that held a central place in the affairs of men detach his penis and have it swim across a river to molest young girls? Would his left hand start a fight with his right, or would he break wind with such force that he was propelled along the ground? Paul Radin does touch somewhat on these questions, which stem mainly from other trickster myths in scattered areas of the continent. Radin states

that "only when Trickster has been definitely separated from the cycle connected with him, as among the Fox, the Ojibwa and the Winnebago, does he definitely become a deity or the son of one." The conclusion, in brief, is "that Trickster's divinity is always secondary and that it is largely a construction of the priest-thinker, of a remodeller."[49]

This conclusion does not explain why the "priest-thinker" felt that the Trickster should be a deity, or why the Trickster was usually accepted as such. The matter was in some measure more pertinent to the Algonkian tradition; the Winnebago had settled the question by assigning creative powers to a deity called Earthmaker. Solving the philosophical problem, therefore, the Winnebago myth-maker was perhaps more inclined to give his artistic senses freer rein. The sequence of episodes, the barbed social satire, and the very handling of the central actor clearly suggest the presence of a definite personality behind the scenes. In episode eleven, for example, the Trickster comes upon a lake and notices that a person in a black suit is standing on the opposite shore.[50] This person is seemingly pointing at him. Wakdjunkaga calls out, "Say, my younger brother, what are you pointing at?" He receives no answer, even though he asks several times. The man across the lake stands still and continues to point. "Well," the Trickster says, "if that's the way it's going to be, I, too, shall do that." And so he takes up his position, dons a black shirt, and begins to point back at the man. Time passes and

Wakdjunkaga's arm is almost breaking from the effort; still, he does not want to be outdone. He badgers the man on the opposite shore and finally suggests that they take a short break for food, after which they will resume their pointing. Still the man does not answer. Finally, in disgust, the Trickster walks away. Only then does he notice that the "man" he had been pointing at was a large black tree stump with one dead limb pointing in his direction.

The episode seems at first to be a slight bit of comic stupidity. Since the cycle had opened, however, with an unnamed chief about to go to war, the confrontation that Wakdjunkaga has by the lakeshore contains another meaning: not only is it a laconic thrust at a certain perverse strain in the human character but it is also a comment on the warrior's vaunted pride. "Wakdjunkaga," the myth-maker seems to say, "will now show you what it means _never to retreat_."

Karl Kerényi compares Wakdjunkaga of the Winnebago to Prometheus and Epimetheus, to Goethe's _Reynard the Fox_, to a combination of Hermes and Heracles, and to other figures of picaresque literature. The Trickster's true nature, Kerenyi states, can be expressed as "_the spirit of disorder, the enemy of boundaries_."[51] And the necessity for such a character in "late archaic" societies is just that his "disorder" is needed in a social system that is exceedingly strict. "Disorder belongs to the totality of life," Kerényi writes, "and the spirit of this disorder is the trickster." This actor's function in an archaic society, or rather the

function of his mythology, of the tales told about him, Kerényi says, "is to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render possible, within the fixed bounds of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted."[52]

Carl Jung writes that the Winnebago Trickster Cycle preserves the Shadow, a term Jung used for negative outgrown aspects of the self which have come to be rejected by the ego. The Shadow thus "points back to a very much earlier stage of consciousness which existed before the birth of the myth, when the Indian was still groping about in a similar mental darkness."[53] The view is acceptable, possibly, if diverse groups can be shown to resemble in some historical time their deities, but Jung intends his remark to be taken only generally. The modern age would hold in scorn, very likely, the medical remedies or the intelligence found in Medieval writings. On the other hand, what historical period among the Indians is comparable to a Medieval Age? It is a bit farfetched, therefore, to think that the Indian was once "groping about" like the trickster; it is equivalent to saying that the Americans were once like the Marx Brothers, or that the Spanish people were once like Don Quixote.

Lowie and the Myths of the Crow

The next writer who wrote occasionally of myths in the New World was Robert H. Lowie. In his last book Lowie reflected on a lifetime of work and especially on his apprenticeship under Clark Wissler of the American Natural History

Museum.[54] His fieldwork began in 1906 with a visit to the Lemhi Shoshone in southern Idaho. The next year he was in Canada on the Blackfoot reservation and later among the Crow Indians in southern Montana. The latter tribe was picked by Lowie for extended study, and he included in his book The Crow Indians (1935) four chapters on the literature of this particular people.

Lowie gives numerous examples of verbal competence and a curiosity about language among his Indian acquaintances. He mentions the repetitiousness and the listing of routine activities "such as camping, fire-making, cooking, eating, smoking, sleeping" as being characteristic of the Crow style; he says, in addition, that the listener "exacts a clear visual image, as definite a localization of the action as possible, and resents verbal inconsistencies."[55] The various stories, therefore, tend to linger on detail, on "the topography of the country," on the scenes of the hunt, while the action that would be of interest to the western listener is almost obscured. Because of the Crow language, each character also seems to move somewhat unnaturally, which is to say, "he must start, proceed, come, and arrive!"[56]

In one passage Lowie states that it is not at all easy to classify these tales. There are myths with a supposed truth content, stories that recount the deeds of Old Man Coyote and Old Woman's Grandchild; such myths deal explicitly with a condition of life different from that of recent times, and they account for the origin of a natural phenomenon or

of some established usage. Still the dividing line between these and more matter-of-fact tales cannot be sharply drawn, because, as Lowie states, "marvelous happenings belonged to the routine of life until a few decades ago, as shown by reports of visions experienced by men I personally knew."[57] Lowie then cites a number of Old Man Coyote tales and adds but does not comment on the fact that "this incorrible buffoon and unscrupulous lecher created the earth and instituted many Crow customs. Some even identify him with the Sun, the greatest of deities."[58]

It would seem from such passages that Lowie does not generalize to any great extent; yet, of all anthropologists, he seems to have captured the very rhythms and the very atmosphere of early Indian life. If his Crow informant is vague on some point of interest, then Lowie does not press the matter but simply offers other viewpoints that are equally relevant to the Indian mind. The myths of the Crow, therefore, seem to lean heavily on the fabulous deeds of the actors, as though the mysteries of this world are entertainment enough for those who are primarily men of action and whose thoughts are mostly concerned with social activities or with the hunt.

In another book entitled Indians of the Plains (1954), Lowie also devotes a section to Indian storytelling.[59] He cites a selection of Crow myths and adds examples from other Plains tribes. He points out that certain myths have been found in regions quite widely separated. The Cree

story of an adulterous wife killed by her husband "embodies the notion that her skull rolls after him and her children." Lowie states that this "curious idea" of a rolling skull occurs as far south as the Gran Chaco. Further, the Assiniboine have a story about a hunter who whittles one of his legs to a point and with it tries to impale his companion, and this "odd conceit" is likewise found in British Guiana. "More amazing still, the trickster simulating death in order to attain an incestuous union with his daughters turns up in Tierra del Fuego, among the Ona and the Yahgan, the southernmost natives of the New World."[60] Lowie, once again, does not offer an explanation for any of these oddities. He simply reports what he has found.

Barnouw and the Myths of the Wisconsin Chippewa

Victor Barnouw, in his book Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales (1977), has carefully recorded two extended Wenebojo myths, one from Lac du Flambeau and the other from Lac Court Oreilles, as well as stories about Matchikwewis and Oshkikwe, Windigo stories, animal tales, and a selection of tales of mixed origin.[61] Barnouw suggests that these stories convey information "about the belief systems" of the Chippewa, that a different conception of reality is presented in the myths, and that clues to a historical reconstruction of past events may be discovered. Any information about the social life of the precontact period, Barnouw adds,

would also be of value; little is known of the cultures of many of the more northern subarctic tribes because of their early associations with the trading companies. Finally, the myths can also serve as "psychological documents" which offer "clues to prevalent personality patterns."[62] It is this last area of inquiry which is mainly emphasized in the commentary upon the myths.

Three psychological explanations, therefore, for the actions of the Chippewa trickster are given in Barnouw's book: (1) Since Wenebojo is presented as a lesser being than certain upper, or sky, forces—called manidog—and similar underworld forces, then Barnouw suggests that the trickster may fall into Lévi-Strauss's category of mediator between men and gods; (2) Barnouw cites Carl G. Jung's view that the trickster may be a "representation of the Shadow"; and (3) Géza Róheim is cited to the effect that the trickster represents the id or the life principle—"Róheim claimed that the North American Indians were deeply disciplined persons with a strong superego, resulting from strict childhood training. The trickster thus represents a kind of protest against the restrictions of the superego."[63]

The very nature of these explanations might first be examined. At first glance the problem appears to be to locate somehow the "power center," the feature that is felt to be essential to the personality of the Trickster, or, perhaps, the elusive Trickster-quality which seems to be partly this and partly that. All three explanations,

therefore, tend to strip away the surface appearance of things and to isolate a type of intelligence that acts, perhaps, according to its own laws. Explanation one is a positive statement; two is a negative formulation; and three <u>may be</u> a negative formulation, since Barnouw feels that Jung's and Róheim's views are compatible. Further, it may be noted that all three explanations probe an <u>unconscious</u> or <u>pre-conscious</u> part of the mind, presumably at a level where one may expect to find Bastian's "elementary ideas." In any case, exactness in this mythological area depends largely on the explanatory capabilities of the theory being used, whether, in fact, the theory can guide us into what at first glance appears but dark, murky waters and can bring us back again with an understandable view of what might have been believed in a more remote past.

Since Barnouw initially refers to the view of Lévi-Strauss, then it should be stated that the French anthropologist's structural viewpoint leans more heavily on linguistic theory than it does on Freudian research. On the other hand, psychology of a disciplined kind should be associated with the structural approach itself; in Lévi-Strauss's writings it is incorporated simply into theoretical anthropology. For instance, Barnouw, in citing Lévi-Strauss, refers indirectly to the structural view which states that tricksters, messiah figures, and primordial twins can be classed as mediators.[64] Whether such mythical figures "mediate" strictly between gods and men alone should at

least be questioned. Often, when one applies structural theory, there is the feeling that a simple triangle is being used to describe all kinds of mountains. The feeling, naturally, must be resisted, for structural theory always stresses binary units, that is, the specific mountain comes first, followed by another specific mountain; then, and only then, is one justified in deriving the universal triangle as a structural element within the appearance of things. The same process, therefore, applies to the trickster, that is, his nature can only be intellectually derived as that which signifies a kind of control, a kind of boundary where organized thought begins to be felt and the Gargantuan forces of nature begin to yield. As a kind of "children's god," therefore, the Trickster is essentially an educator, for he shares in part the quality of the messiah who brings new life, new ways of existence, new beliefs, as well as the quality of the primordial twins who begin to demonstrate in themselves the division between that which is good and that which is bad, or that which belongs to organized existence (culture) and that which belongs to chaotic Nature. The structural element, therefore, is trickster-positive, and not, as appearances seem to say, trickster-negative. The reference to children, of course, should be understood only as one end of a broad spectrum; in an Indian community the concerns of an adult world were also the concerns of the young.

Barnouw next cites the Jungian remark about the

Trickster being somehow equivalent to the Shadow. This viewpoint was briefly discussed in connection with Wakdjunkaga, the Winnebago Trickster. It should be enough to say, perhaps, that the comments of both Jung and Róheim tend to cast the Trickster in a less than pleasing light. The primordial drives are somehow uncivilized; thus the Trickster is seen as a deity with few redeeming qualities; on the other hand, order is one of the principal ingredients of any art form, even when it attempts to describe a divine fool. It is this more "civilized" side of the Trickster which is often overlooked.

Jacobs and the Myths of the Clackamas Chinook

The empirical methods of Boas come full circle in this detailed analysis of eight selected myths from the Northwest Coast. Also in his book _The Content and Style of an Oral Literature: Clackamas Chinook Myths and Tales_ (1959), Melville Jacobs has summarized sixty-four stories and has included studies of titles, stylized introductions and closing sentences, humor, values, types of plays, formalized actions or plot expediters, and other traits of content and style which are not described or analyzed in the myth commentaries. The actual recording of the myths took place, Jacobs indicates, in 1929 and 1930; even then, it should be noted, the relevant ethnographic information that might have added somewhat to the literary analysis was in a last stage

of decline.[65] In this instance, therefore, the myths themselves become, possibly, like fragmented letters from the past. Jacobs, to his credit at least, handles them with care and is adept at reading between the lines.

The analysis also leans heavily on a vertical elaboration of ideas, which in this instance means that every twist and turn that is found in a particular myth is placed beside the information from another Clackamas myth or is evaluated in terms of the meager ethnographical information. At first sight this procedure seems entirely reasonable; a search for differences dictates that cultural boundaries of the lower Columbian and the lower Willamette River world of the Clackamas Chinook be defined as carefully as possible. The Trickster and the Transformer, for instance, are mentioned as "important Myth Era actors" in the earlier writings about the folklore of the Pacific Northwest. Franz Boas made use of the terms. Jacobs believes, however, that they are not ideal for the Clackamas myths and that in regard to a few of this tribe's "deific actors of great spirit-power" the term "Announcer" is a more apt designation. "Announcements devoid of deity-like transforming," Jacobs writes, "were a clearly defined kind of precultural behavior and were central in the Clackamas conception of the myth period."[66] Jacobs discovers, further, that the number of announcers "was at least twice the number of precultural persons who did transforming, although transformations and announcements were assigned to both sexes and to young and old."[67]

The many characterizations of Coyote in the Clackamas myths may serve perhaps as a distinguishing feature in the literature of this particular tribe. In the ninth myth that Jacobs collected, which is given only in summary, a development in a Coyote personality takes place.[68] The actor that is depicted begins as an unconscionable trickster youth who satisfies "food, sexual, anal, and sadistic urges" without a sign of restraint. He finds a way to kill and eat some of the children of Pheasant Woman, he copulates with a woman's prepubescent daughter, and he releases bees to sting a family. Next, because wish and reality are one and the same to this Coyote, he is deceived by the imagery of dancing girls; he then searches for non-existent people who he believes are cooking sturgeon. Some maturity is first displayed when he teaches a precultural man how to carry fuel and how to copulate. Yet, he also borrows a long penis, copulates across a river, manipulates the genitals of fifteen humiliated females, rapes a shrieking girl, and allows his inordinate desire for a Woodpecker to trap him inside a hollow trunk. The youth has to dismember himself in order to escape. In other escapades, he tricks Snail Woman into giving him her good eyes, tries on Skunk's anus, and enjoys fellatio. "Subsequently," Jacobs writes, "he became a fine man of great spirit-power. He saved women from a cannibal stew, killed Grizzly Woman and Earth Swallower, operated on mouthless people and taught them how to eat, instructed terrorized villagers to spear fish, and killed River

Swallower."[69] In his mature years this same Coyote served people well and they presented him with wives, but he departed unaccompanied in order to continue traveling and doing good works for the sake of additional villages. In short, the myth started with an irresponsible youth and closed with a teacher and benefactor of deific proportions.

The multiple Clackamas Coyotes bring together incidents, therefore, that are culturally embedded in the myths of tribes across the whole extent of the continent, the difference being that the Clackamas stressed primarily the social development of the actor. "For all the unrealism of the fantasy world of an imagined era of precultural creatures, the total understanding which Clackamas had of Coyote was their closest approach to realistic analysis of the personality structure of an adult man of the upper class, as well as of his development through the years."[70]

The more detailed commentaries that Jacobs presents also contain many elements related to village life and the activities that are at times disrupted by strange happenings or by the visit of some malevolent myth actor. The first two stories present rather opposite views of a Coyote being. He is seen first as a preposterous hunter who tricks his friend Skunk and, secondly, as a family-oriented, mature, and deity-like man. The third story, entitled "Fire and His Son's Son," is about the trouble that befalls one family when a second wife deserts her husband and child. Stories four and five tell of the feared Grizzly Bear people and

how in various ways whole villages are decimated. In "Flint and His Son's Son," the sixth story, a strange confrontation occurs between Panther Man and the dwarf Flint when the latter tries to conceal a potential human wife. The seventh story "Awl and Her Son's Son" is especially interesting because it offers a possible clue to the "odd conceit" that Lowie referred to when he mentioned the Assiniboine and the British Guiana stories about a person whittling one of his legs to a point and using it to attack others. Jacobs does not stress the almost dialectical exchange between Nature and Culture that occurs in many myths, but this particular motif of the sharpened leg would probably point out its presence, or force a reader at least to consider something more than a purely empirical or strictly ethnographical approach. The Clackamas story, for its part, suggests that a human wife is more acceptable than any housekeeping spirit-woman who happens also to be an awl. The title of the final story in the detailed set is roughly pronounced "Idya-bix-wash-wash." The myth is a perceptive essay of sorts on social status, vanity, and the iron cage that awaits all who aspire to the top position. Idya-bix-wash-wash lives on blood, is carried nightly by slaves to his many wives, and is in the habit of killing all his male offspring. Of course, one male child survives, grows up, defeats his father, and marries his father's favorite wife, Red Hair. The Oedipal theme in this account seems especially pronounced. In any case, the detailed commentaries in Jacobs' book end at this point.

Later, a statement of the world view of the Clackamas is presented by Jacobs but only when all sixty-four myths and the relevant ethnographical information have been thoroughly covered. This world view, Jacobs states, "focuses upon the near at hand, in the forms of relationships of various kinds, not upon the far and distant, in the forms of cosmological theory."[71] The remark suggests not that a small world is being described but a very specific world, a unique cultural region inhabited by the Clackamas Chinook. Elsewhere on the continent the cultural conditions and the myths were different; yet, the tributaries that might be associated with a mythical awareness flowed inevitably, perhaps, towards a common stream. Another view of those uncertain currents is therefore necessary and important to any specific understanding of New World myths.

The Myth of the Unpromising Hero

Level three, which is related specifically to a cosmological statement, is a category which is separate in name only. One writer has pointed out that even the vision quest, which was primarily a North American practice, was not purely a religious matter; "the object of the training and of the experience was success in life."[72] Early people, it should be noted, did not use religious concepts in the modern sense of escaping from things of the flesh. A certain pragmatic approach to the unknown, therefore, was usually present, as will be pointed out in "Ayas'i's Son,"

a Naskapi myth from Little Whale River (Quebec, Canada).

The designation of this myth from the Naskapi as "Motif L 101, the unpromising hero (male Cinderella), usually, but not always, the youngest son," is taken from Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk Literature.[73] In a related anthology Tales of the North American Indians,[74] Thompson has listed in a lengthy footnote some ninety-three myths that fall into this category. Four variant myths (arbitrarily designated as such) were chosen from Thompson's category and were placed in the appendix to this study. Another five variants from other collections of myths will be used only in parts. The first five myths that will be used in a structural approach to content, therefore, are as follows:

Kroeber version of M-1, Eskimo, "Qauaxsaqssuq."[75]

Teit version of M-2, Lillooet, "Nkîmtcamu'l."[76]

Golder version of M-3, Aleut, "The Raven and His Grandmother."[77]

McClintock version of M-4, Blackfeet, "The Origin of the Beaver Medicine."[78]

Speck version of M-5, Naskapi, "Ayas'i's Son."[79]

These myths will be referred to mainly by number (M-1, M-2, etc.), but also by the collector's name, the tribe, or the title of the myth. Thompson's listing of sources, of course, has made possible this selection to a great extent; the classifying of myths, no matter how "atomistically" done, is an indispensable aid to the student. And in regard to the Canadian region, where the ethnographical information is all but non-existent, it will be seen that an understanding

of a complex myth is still possible and that a structural approach is highly explanatory and theoretically sound.

END NOTES

[1]James A. Boon, From Symbolism to Structuralism (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 127.

[2]Carl Sagan, The Dragons of Eden (New York: Ballantine Books, 1977), p. 8.

[3]Quoted by Jaime de Angulo, "Malinowski: Myth in Primitive Psychology," American Anthropologist, 30 (1928), 325.

[4]Ernst Cassirer, The Myth of the State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), p. 4.

[5]Melville Jacobs and Bernhard J. Stern, General Anthropology (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1952), p. 223.

[6]This view is offered by Jacobs and Stern, pp. 222-35, but it can be derived from the writings of Franz Boas, esp. Race, Language and Culture (New York: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 402, 437, 480, et passim.

[7]A detailed description of this process will be offered in Chapter Two. The source is Claude Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke G. Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), pp. 206-31.

[8]The critical assessments of the structuralist approach are pertinent here, esp. Ino Rossi, ed., The Unconscious in Culture: The Structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss in Perspective (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974); Miriam Glucksmann, Structuralist Analysis in Contemporary Social Thought: A Comparison of the Theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Louis Althusser (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974); and Boon, see f. n. one.

[9]See esp. Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Random House, 1964). Shamanism will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

[10]See esp. The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. II, Mythical Thought (1955), trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press); Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946); The Myth of the State (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1946); and An Essay on Man (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1944).

[11]A sampling of the views of prominent British anthropologists can be found in Edmund Leach, ed., The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967). A critical point by point estimate of Lévi-Strauss's ideas about kinship is offered by Francis Korn, Elementary Structures Reconsidered: Lévi-Strauss on Kinship (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973). See also the rather barbed estimate of Lévi-Strauss and his approach to the kinship problem in the chapter devoted to Lévi-Strauss in Marvin Harris, The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968).

[12]Quoted by Boon, p. 34.

[13]Benjamin Lee Whorf, Language, Thought, and Reality (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1956), p. 257.

[14]Quoted by Boon, p. 97.

[15]Harris, pp. 181-86.

[16]Phyllis Kaberry, "Malinowski's Contributions to Fieldwork Methods and the Writing of Ethnology," Man and Culture: An Evaluation of the Work of Bronislaw Malinowski, ed. Raymond Firth (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 90.

[17]A. L. Kroeber, Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1939), p. 166.

[18]Melville Jacobs, Patterns in Cultural Anthropology (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1964), p. 121.

[19]Kroeber, p. 23 f.

[20]Robert H. Lowie, The History of Ethnological Theory (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1937), p. 149.

[21]Robert Claiborne and the editors of Time-Life Books, The First Americans (New York: Time-Life Books, 1973), p. 16.

[22]Ibid., p. 11.

[23]A few of these more technical matters cannot be avoided, but I have made an effort to pass over kinship terminology, totemism, various definitions of culture and society, technological skills, visions, art symbolism, music, language stocks, religious rites, cultural areas (to an extent), and unwritten laws. Most books written for the general public also go lightly on these items; consequently, useful or interesting bits of information may come from widely distributed sources. From one source, for instance, one

finds that thirty major tribes are listed for the Algonkian-speaking peoples; also, Oklahoma contains not only the greatest number of remnant Woodland tribes but nearly one-third of all Indians in the United States. See Robert E. Ritzenthaler and Pat Ritzenthaler, The Woodland Indians of the Western Great Lakes (Garden City, N. Y.: Natural History Press, 1970), p. 2 f.

[24] Paulo de Carvalho-Neto, The Concept of Folklore, trans. Jacques M. P. Wilson (Coral Gables, Flor.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1971), p. 41.

[25] Ibid., p. 40.

[26] Ibid., pp. 48, 53 f., and 75.

[27] Quoted by Carvalho-Neto, p. 41.

[28] Ibid., p. 42 f.

[29] Ibid., p. 43.

[30] Harris, pp. 173-9.

[31] Franz Boas, The Mind of Primitive Man (New York: Macmillan, 1938), p. 193 f.

[32] Stith Thompson, Tales of the North American Indian (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1929), n. 205, p. 333.

[33] Helen Codere, "The Understanding of the Kwakiutl," The Anthropology of Franz Boas: Essays on the Centennial of His Birth, ed. Walter Goldschmidt (San Francisco: American Anthropological Association, 1959), pp. 61 and 72. Hereafter cited as Centennial Essays.

[34] Ibid., p. 66.

[35] Leslie A. White, The Ethnography and Ethnology of Franz Boas, Bulletin 6 (Austin: Museum of the Univ. of Texas, 1963), p. 46.

[36] See Roy Havey Pearce's classic study of early American literature and the Indian, Savagism and Civilization (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), pp. 12 and 192, et passim.

[37] Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1945), pp. 26, 47, and 160-73.

[38] J. M. Tanner, "Boas' Contributions to Knowledge of Human Growth and Form," Centennial Essays, p. 76.

[39]Ibid., p. 107.

[40]Helen Codere cites this figure, p. 61.

[41]Margaret Mead, "Apprenticeship Under Boas," Centennial Essays, p. 29.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Quoted by Marian W. Smith, "Boas' 'Natural History' Approach to Field Method," Centennial Essays, p. 51.

[44]Ronald P. Rohner, ed., The Ethnography of Franz Boas: Letters and Diaries of Franz Boas Written on the Northwest Coast from 1886 to 1931, trans. Hedy Parker (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 176-90.

[45]Melville Jacobs, "Folklore," Centennial Essays, p. 122.

[46]Ibid., p. 124.

[47]Ibid., p. 125.

[48]Ibid., p. 128.

[49]Paul Radin, The Trickster (New York: Schocken Books, 1956), p. 164.

[50]Ibid., p. 13 f.

[51]Ibid., pp. 181-6. Kerényi's italics.

[52]Ibid., p. 185.

[53]Ibid., p. 202.

[54]Robert H. Lowie: Ethnologist, A Personal Record (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1959).

[55]Lowie, The Crow Indians (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1935), p. 106 f.

[56]Ibid., p. 110.

[57]Ibid., p. 111.

[58]Ibid., p. 112.

[59]Lowie, Indians of the Plains (Garden City, N. Y.: Natural History Press, 1954), pp. 137-42.

[60]Ibid., p. 141.

[61]Victor Barnouw, _Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales and Their Relation to Chippewa Life_ (Madison, Wis.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1977).

[62]Ibid., p. 5.

[63]Ibid., p. 51 f.

[64]Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Story of Asdiwal," _The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism_, ed. Edmund Leach (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967), p. 23.

[65]Melville Jacobs, _The Content and Style of an Oral Literature: Clackamas Chinook Myths and Tales_ (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 5.

[66]Ibid., p. 196.

[67]Ibid., p. 197.

[68]Ibid., p. 139.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Ibid., p. 140.

[71]Ibid., p. 198.

[72]George A. Pettitt, "The Vision Quest and the Guardian Spirit," _Readings in Anthropology_, 3rd ed., eds. Jesse D. Jennings and E. Adamson Hoebel (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 270.

[73]Stith Thompson, _Motif-Index of Folk Literature_ (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1935).

[74]Thompson, _Tales_, p. 327 f. This collection of Indian myths is still the best of its kind available, although it is now fifty years old.

[75]A. L. Kroeber, "Tales of the Smith Sound Eskimo," _Journal of American Folklore_, 12 (1899), 178.

[76]James A. Teit, "Traditions of the Lillooet Indians of British Columbia," _Journal of American Folklore_, 25 (1912), 327 f.

[77]F. A. Golder, "Tales from Kodiak Island," _Journal of American Folklore_, 16 (1903), 16-9.

[78]Walter McClintock, _The Old North Trail_ (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1968), pp. 104-12.

[79]Frank G. Speck, "Some Naskapi Myths from Little Whale River," _Journal of American Folklore_, 28 (1915), 70-4.

CHAPTER II

THE STRUCTURAL APPROACH TO MYTHS

From a general reader's point of view it should be noted initially that the word "structure," as Glucksmann remarks, was once associated until the seventeenth century with architecture and then by extension with the study of anatomy and grammar. "The term," Glucksmann writes, "always designated a whole, the parts of a whole and their interrelations and it was this focus that appealed to the developing 'exact' sciences."[1] Within the body or behind the walls of the Gothic cathedral, therefore, there were structures that could be viewed, although they were ordinarily hidden from sight. Should the rule be made, however, that the structures be always materially available to scrutiny, then the rigorous requirements of an empirically minded investigator such as Franz Boas or an A. R. Radcliffe-Brown would be in force. Should the rule be made again that the structures be always available to one's experience in some way, specifically through the Kantian categories of space, time, or number, then the observer would be moving towards the views of the phenomenologist. From this latter point of view, "It is possible," as Peter Munz explains, "to contemplate the phenomena that remain in consciousness

after all belief in the existence of the external world is suspended for the time being." And this viewpoint is held because "To the phenomenologist the act of consciousness is something that is provoked by the object."[2]

It is not profitable, of course, to lose oneself in the philosophical game. It is, on the other hand, important to note that the speculations at the drawing board, so to speak, constitute one area of difference between the "social anthropology" of the continent and the "cultural anthropology" of the West. Lévi-Strauss, for instance, considers that "social anthropology is a 'branch of semiology,' which would imply that its central concern is with the internal logical structure of the meanings of sets of symbols."[3] The view, also, that mind and spiritual values are fundamental in the world as a whole—in other words, idealism—is a concept that helps to explain certain aspects of structuralism. Idealism, then, is opposed to naturalism, that is, to the view that mind and spiritual values have emerged from or are reducible to material things and processes. Thus, there are certain naturalistic restrictions on the use of the word "structures" if the line of descent is perceived to come from the thinking of the empiricist Radcliffe-Brown. This British anthropologist, author of The Andaman Islanders (1922), thought of "structure" in reference "'to some sort of ordered arrangement of parts or components,'" adding also the specification that "'the units of social structure are persons, and a person is a human being considered as

occupying a position in a social structure.'"[4]

Such a naturalistic view is somewhat removed from the specific emphasis which Lévi-Strauss places upon structure. The term itself means "an operation, a relation," or "a universal unconscious reason" in the view of the Mexican analyst, Octavio Paz.[5] To Ino Rossi, "structure refers to the determining (though invisible) relations which account for visible empirical reality." Or, "In the final analysis, structure is nothing but that kind of model which (1) has a systematic character, (2) enables one to make a series of transformations and to predict the reaction of the model when its elements are changed, and (3) makes intelligible all the observed facts."[6] The outlines that Rossi gives are in fact identical to Lévi-Strauss's own explanation of a structure.[7]

Since with the structuralists the frame of reference is no longer architecture but cultural institutions, then certain implications of a controversial nature immediately arise. From the start it is clear that a search for a fundamental level of reality is underway and that this level of reality is not to be confused with <u>the appearance of things</u>. Anthropologists before Lévi-Strauss have classified social relationships—father-son, mother's brother's daughter—that is, the various kinship arrangements of numerous preliterate cultures; all can be listed in the category of the appearance of things, as can the usual contrast between "primitive" and civilized people, and culture and nature.

Thus, the structures have been situated in that portion of the mind where the automatic functions of biology are no longer automatic but can be said to operate in a specifically human, that is, possibly cultural, way. Lévi-Strauss explains, for instance, "that the human mind mediates between infrastructure or praxis (man's activity) and superstructure or practices (cultural institutions) by elaborating a conceptual system which is a synthesizing operator between ideas and facts; through this mediation facts are turned into signs."[8] What is random or seemingly chaotic in nature (and in man), therefore, is now subject to or possibly responsive to an ordering process such as the sound of phonemes of some particular language, or to any number of message-sending systems contained within any one culture. Since all of these operations take place without man's awareness (the structures are hidden), then the old opposition between nature and culture can hardly be said to hold. "The history of Western thought," Paz writes, "has been the history of the relations between being and meaning, the subject and the object, man and nature." Lévi-Strauss throws all of this "interminable monologue of the subject" out of the script and inverts the terms: "now it is nature which speaks with itself, through man and without his being aware. It is not man but the world which cannot come out of itself."[9]

Does this view, then, deny to the individual the right to sign his own name to a piece of work? The signature, one could say, would hardly have much meaning in a scheme in

which there were no superior cultures[10] and in which Western history was seen as merely another message-sending system which characterizes one type of culture, just as the practice of potlatching was peculiar to the Northwest Kwakiutl or a propensity for collecting and distributing yams was characteristic of the Trobriand Islanders.

The distinction that Rossi draws between structuralism and psychoanalysis hinges, at least, upon this unusual view of history, as well as the structuralist perception of the unconscious. To Lévi-Strauss, that is to say, "the unconscious does not refer to emotional content, energy, or principle of activity, but only to a form (or aggregate of forms), empty of any content. Its function is to impose structural laws upon psychic content, which by itself is inarticulate and originates elsewhere." The psychic content makes up the preconscious or the personal inventory of impulses, emotions, representations, and memories accumulated in one's life; the psychological lexicon becomes significant when it is transformed into language, that is, when it is structured by the unconscious. "The conception of the unconscious as a structuring activity," Rossi adds, "and the related emphasis on form over content brings into focus the root of the fundamental difference between the structuralist and psychoanalytic perspectives." Psychoanalysts, therefore, are interested in the question of the individual or collective origin of myth and in the historical sequence of events. Lévi-Strauss, on the other hand, considers these

questions of marginal importance "since they deal with the stock of representations or material of myth, which is of secondary interest in relation to the basic fact that its structural laws or symbolic function remains the same."[11]

There is a difference, also, between cultures which can be termed "hot" and those which can be called "cold," in the opinion of Lévi-Strauss. Both kinds clearly have a history; it is just that "modern societies interiorize history, as it were, and turn it into the motive power of their development."[12] Those cultures, by contrast, which seem to function like a clock are "cold" because their time is cyclic; their institutions, their inner stability need only to be annually "recharged" or "rewound" through myth and ritual in order to renew what once was, or what is necessary once again to make the present the same as the past.

At this level of analysis, it seems, Lévi-Strauss joins hands with Mircea Eliade, who suggests that the common element between the two types of culture, as far as history is concerned, is "the importance of precise and total recollection of the past":

> In the traditional societies it is recollection of *mythical events*; in the modern West it is recollection of *all that took place in historical Time*. The difference is too obvious to require definition. But both types of *anamnesis* project man out of his 'historical moment.' And true historiographic *anamnesis* opens, too, on a primordial Time, the Time in which men established their cultural behavior patterns, even though believing that they were revealed to them by Supernatural Beings.[13]

To remain at this "appearance" level, however, is only to invite various thought-systems, or philosophers—the

phenomenologists, the existentialists—to fill in the gaps. Appearances suggest that what changes, essentially, is man's perception of nature as it is involved with mythical events. Nature, in other words, seemingly takes flight, leaving to us a ghostly realm of ever hardening ideas about what we are or have become. No such separation, in brief, has anything to do with Lévi-Strauss's views. His structuralist position, as Edmund Leach points out, is less culture-bound, "less egocentric": "history offers us images of past societies which were structural transformations of those we now know, neither better nor worse. We, in our vantage point of the present, are not in a privileged position of superiority."[14]

Those distant transformations, then, become for Lévi-Strauss an indication of a certain kind of early thought, as well as a "hall of mirrors" where the images appear as so many variants one of another that no single image, no matter how striking, can fully reveal the kind of knowledge which is expressed by the total group:

> The characteristic feature of the savage mind is its timelessness; its object is to grasp the world as both a synchronic and a diachronic totality and the knowledge which it draws therefrom is like that afforded of a room by mirrors fixed on opposite walls, which reflect each other (as well as objects in the intervening space) although without being strictly parallel. A multitude of images forms simultaneously, none exactly like any other, so that no single one furnishes more than a partial knowledge of the decoration and furniture but the group is characterized by invariant properties expressing a truth. The savage mind deepens its knowledge with the help of imagines mundi. It builds mental structures which facilitate an understanding of the world in as much as they resemble it. In this sense savage thought can be

defined as analogical thought.[15]

The idea that one does not lift a single strand from the past, as it were, without discovering that all lines are stitched together like a net and that all talk of a vital center or a logical beginning and end is merely a Western or domestic penchant for analytically arranging ideas becomes, in fact, a vital part of Lévi-Strauss's structuralist approach and in particular a part of his epistemology. The "analogical thought" should indicate also to the observer that a literal interpretation of a myth may be unwarranted, that an oral transmission somehow "harmonizes" events by delivering a message that is repeated with variations (the multiple mirror images), and that an unscrambling process means that mutual consistencies and inconsistencies must be analyzed in order to know what is "really" being said.

The linguists, of course, have served in this regard as the main ego models. Out of the welter and cacophony of human languages, the patient and exacting students of the spoken and written word have established the morphology and phonology of many modern, as well as several important archaic and obsolescent, languages of the world. Nikolas S. Trubetzkoy (1890-1938), for one, was influential in the movement known as the "Prague School," and from Trubetzkoy and his study of the phoneme, certainly, two central ideas became important to structuralist thinking.[16] These ideas were, first, the concept of the "binary contrast," and, secondly, the set of variant sounds (and by extension, images)

with which the phoneme was associated. Both concepts can be recognized even in the following paraphrase of what was likely taught by the Prague School: "The phoneme is a bundle of simultaneous distinctive features consisting of binary contrasts or oppositions, being simply the sum of these binary contrasts, and having validity only in a given <u>and relative</u> set of phonetic contrasts."[17]

As important as the concept of the phoname may be, it must be noted, as Glucksmann points out, that Lévi-Strauss's structuralist theory is further enriched by the Saussurean ideas of "semiology, the crucial distinctions between signifier and signified, diachrony and synchrony, and langue and parole."[18] Each of these concepts is used by Lévi-Strauss in a manner uniquely his own. "Language," says Saussure, "is concrete."[19] And so for early man is there a logic, according to Lévi-Strauss, which can be termed "concrete." "If, then, <u>anything</u>," James Boon writes, "is not abstract (i.e. is concrete), it must be the 'sign'; and if 'signs' (which are, after all, merely a state of connectedness) can <u>be</u> any<u>where</u>, they must be in the brain. Surely this is how Lévi-Strauss means to say that 'structures' are <u>real</u> and that they exist in the brain."[20]

When Lévi-Strauss begins to pick up oppositions such as "raw and cooked," "honey and tobacco," "the fox and the woodpecker," "the capybara and the ant-eater," "the rotten and the burnt," "slow and quick," etc.,[21] then, as Nur Yalman notes, "'it is difficult to know whether they are merely

heuristic devices to order the symbolism or whether they are categories of the native mind which evoke the myths by their interplay.'"[22] The answer, as Boon states, is that it is "in fact an impossibility," for who can examine in depth anyone's mind? Lévi-Strauss uses binary opposition, the logically simplest heruistic device "as it seeks out systematization without worrying whether its own process of discovery repeats any process of formation which yielded the systems in the first place."[23] Lévi-Strauss "describes the aim of the method he calls 'structural' as being to 'set up an inventory of mental enclosures' as it seeks to prove 'the existence of a logic of sensory qualities.'"[24]

This last phrase, "the logic of sensory qualities," carries with it, it seems, an epistemological slant in that a translation of material is necessarily involved. Are we hearing the same myths that the natives hear? Certainly the language of myth is easily translatable into any language, but it is strange, one might say, that the myths held a central place among various early cultures; evidently "they read" these passages differently. With the translations in mind, therefore, Lévi-Strauss suggests that myths—that is, in what comes through to us—are more like music than poetry. Paz, in fact, expands of Lévi-Strauss's idea and presents the image of a "concert" that "began millennia ago" and is only now being heard for the first time:

> The situation which Le Cru et le cuit [The Raw and the Cooked] describes is analogous to that of musicians performing a symphony while kept incommunicado and

> separated from each other in time and space: each one would play his fragment as if it were the complete work. No one among them would be able to hear the concert because in order to hear it one must be outside the circle, far from the orchestra. In the case of American mythology, that concert began millennia ago, and today some few scattered and moribund communities are running through the last chords. The readers of Le Cru et le cuit and the first to hear that symphony and the first to know that they are hearing it.[25]

In other words, those who patiently follow Lévi-Strauss's investigations are privileged to hear a special "reading" of the myths and are usually pleased to find that for the first time "a part" of the myths is responsive to their kind of thinking.

To demonstrate how this responsive part of a myth can be isolated, then, Lévi-Strauss chooses initially the familiar Oedipus myth. He searches, that is, for "gross constituent units," or "mythemes," which are comparable to the constituent units of a language but on a "higher and more complex order." Also, because of the reversible and non-reversible character of mythological time, he hypothesizes that "the true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but bundles of such relations. It is, then, these bundles of relations which "produce a meaning."[26]

An orchestra score, Lévi-Strauss suggests, provides an example of the kind of problem he faces. How is an orchestra score to be read? It is a notational arrangement which goes down and across at the same time; in other words, it proceeds "diachronically along one axis—that is, page after

page, and from left to right—and synchronically along the other axis, all the notes written vertically making up one gross constituent unit, that is, one bundle of relations."[27] The Oedipus myth, therefore, can be arranged in a unilinear series to reflect the musical score; and if numbers are used, the following chart would result[28]:

1	2		4			7	8
	2	3	4		6		8
1			4	5		7	8
1	2			5		7	
		3	4	5	6		8

Or, the actual semantic units may be further condensed and arranged in the following manner:

Cadmos seeks his sister Europa, ravished by Zeus			
		Cadmos kills the dragon	
	The Spartoe kill one another		
			Labdacos (Laios' father) *Lame* (?)
	Oedipus kills his father, Laios		Laios (Oedipus' father) *Left-sided* (?)
		Oedipus kills the Sphinx	
Oedipus marries his mother, Jocasta			Oedipus *swollen-foot* (?)
	Eteocles kills his brother, Polynices		
Antigone buries her brother, Polynices, despite prohibition			

With these four bundles of relations, or four vertical columns, the reader could either reconstruct the actual myth by disregarding the columns and reading the "rows from left to right and from top to bottom." To understand the myth, on the other hand, a reader would "disregard one half of the diachronic dimension (top to bottom) and read from left to right, column after column, each one being considered as a unit."[29] Examination of each column, too, should reveal a common element, e.g. (1) the overrating of blood relations, (2) the underrating of blood relations, (3) the slaying of monsters, and (4) the reference, through names, to physical defects.

At this point, Lévi-Strauss explains that the last two columns require a slight adjustment in order to establish a more understandable relationship. Both monsters, for instance, are obstacles of sorts which must be overcome: "The dragon is a chthonian being which has to be killed in order that mankind be born from the Earth; the Sphinx is a monster unwilling to permit men to live. The last unit reproduces the first one, which has to do with the autochthonous origin of mankind."[30] This fact, Lévi-Strauss suggests, helps to explain the fourth column because, from mythology in general, it appears that those who emerge from the depths, or are "born from the Earth," usually "cannot walk or they walk clumsily." The third and fourth columns, then, are re-designated as (3) the denial of the autochthonous origin of men and (4) the persistence of the

<u>autochthonous</u> <u>origin</u> <u>of</u> <u>man</u>.

The correction, then, permits Lévi-Strauss to set up the following equation: "column four is to column three as column one is to column two." In terms of meaning, these relationships, Lévi-Strauss suggests, reflect the inability for a culture "which holds the belief that mankind is autochthonous (see, for instance, Pausanias, VIII, xxix, 4; plants provide a <u>model</u> for humans) to find a satisfactory transition between this theory and the knowledge that human beings are actually born from the union of man and woman."[31]

Two corollaries to this interpretation should be noted. Should one desire, Lévi-Strauss says, to add certain elements from "the earlier (Homeric) versions of the Oedipus myth . . . such as Jocasta killing herself and Oedipus piercing his own eyes," then they would logically be placed in column three and four, which is to say, the first is but "a new case of auto-destruction," while the second can be subsumed "as another case of crippledness." The second corollary is related to the first in that it suggests (because related "images" can be added to the myth) the <u>absence</u> of a "true version, or the earlier one." In short, myth is defined by Lévi-Strauss "as consisting of all its versions." Even the Freudian "use of the Oedipus myth" is ideally a variant because the problem posed is again that "of understanding how <u>one</u> can be born from <u>two</u>."[32] What Lévi-Strauss does does not mention at this point is that he has suddenly made room for a great expanse of time and has treated it

a-historically. These relationships, with the "appalling monotony" that Bastian spoke about, have seemingly clicked off the centuries like a biological clock.[33] Both Lévi-Strauss and Freud have somehow seen that these relationships, in this particular myth, are connected in some way with birth and the after-effects of birth.[34] And the role of the conscious mind, perhaps, has simply been to "unfold" like a bifurcating plant. Still, does not this dual "line of travel," or development, leave in doubt the question of interaction between the two? How is it that change comes about? And how far can this Parmenidean view of the mind be pushed? Perhaps at this point these questions are too broadly and too inexactly stated. The matter of the psychological level and the linguistic data will come later.

Even at this stage, however, it is clear that Lévi-Strauss, as E. Michael Mendelson notes, has offered by way of his analyses a definition of knowledge—that is—knowledge consists in the perception of relations between ideas, while "discursive," syllogistic knowledge lies only in the agreement or disagreement of ideas.[35] Can "primitives," then, still be said to think like children? Piaget perhaps inherited this comparison from Freud, or perhaps from Lévy-Bruhl. Gardner states, in any case, that the structuralist psychologist in his early work "drew explicit analogies between the reasoning of children and of primitive peoples. Both, he said, exhibited in their thinking animism, artificialism, realism, and other irrational mergings between

aspects of the environment and their own thought processes."[36] This view, naturally, drew heavy fire from Lévi-Strauss, who maintained that "the five-year old's thought was qualitatively similar to that of the adult's, since both, for example, perceived the world in terms of opposition and contrasts." The support for this particular emphasis, Gardner says, may have been Susan Isaacs, a contemporary of Piaget's, "who had found wisdom in the words and acts of kindergarteners." Lévi-Strauss argued, nevertheless, that "the content of what children say may reflect insufficient familiarity with the surrounding culture but that their forms of reasoning are like those of adults. The mind is programmed to reason in certain ways, but it takes time to become acquainted with the elements of one's environment, knowledge of which cannot be programmed."[37]

This bit of ethnocentrism that Lévi-Strauss is arguing against is a strange diversion to say the least. Such a patronizing and no doubt historically older view is probably not confined solely to European circles. Lévi-Strauss patiently points out the "parallels between the Western view of primitives as children, and the primitives' view of Westerners as children—a comparison based in each case on the failure of both the strangers and the group's own children to have assimilated the culture of the adults." In both cases, Lévi-Strauss implies, this lack of assimilation "for children as for foreigners" is due "to the strangeness of the environment rather than to intellectual deficiencies."[38]

The controversy has led to caution on both sides. "Lévi-Strauss," as Gardner notes, "no longer draws close analogies between five-year-olds and adults, and has allowed that there are two kinds of science, the science of the concrete and Western science." The former may be compared roughly "to concrete operations" in Piaget's system; "the primitve is able to deal systematically with the objects and percepts of his environment but restricts his concern to their manifest, surface qualities." The Westerner, on the other hand, has in his possession a science which focuses upon underlying structures and offers classifications and explanations at a more abstract level. "Lévi-Strauss still claims that the two sciences differ more in content than in kind; he would probably deny the existence of intellectual operations which Western man but not the primitive can perform."[39]

The argument, perhaps, should be rephrased; that is, is there a difference in any culture between a child and an adult, or does any culture exist which cannot teach or need not learn? Ethnocentrism, hopefully, will continue to decline. Still, the meeting between East and West was no doubt a traumatic moment for both sides. The new-comers, in time, saw only a crude, almost unmentionable trickster being who embodied somehow, even ridiculously, a religious content. But consider carefully the truly remarkable words of Earthmaker, the Winnebago deity, to that tribe's breaker-of-rules, Wakdjunkaga:

> Firstborn, you are the oldest of all those I have created. I created you good natured: I made you a sacred person. I sent you to the earth to remain there so that human beings would listen to you, honour you and obey you and that you might teach them by what means they could secure a happy life. This was the purpose for which you were created. What happened to you after you reached the earth that you brought upon yourself alone. It is because of your own actions and activities that you became the butt of everyone's jest, that everyone took advantage of you, even the smallest of insects. How is it then that now you are presenting as a model to be followed that very individual, Hare, who did do what I told him to? You, although you were given the greatest of powers, made light of my creation. It was not anything I told you to do. It is therefore your own fault if people call you the Foolish-One. I created you to do what your friend Hare actually did. I did not create you to injure my creation.[41]

Here, then, is fatherly bewilderment directed at one of the strangest and most ancient figures in mythology. He is no longer, as in the Ojibwa myths, related to the origin of things. Earthmaker, more austere, more remote, has assumed the creator's rôle, while Hare, founder of the Medicine Lodge (equivalent to the Ojibwa Midewiwin ceremony), has taken on the "helpful" characteristics that Wakdjunkaga had so thoughtlessly misused.[42] But such sensory qualities as are assumed to be present when one isolates the structures should be well noted. It is only after "decoding" these sensory qualities, in other words, that Lévi-Strauss is able to pinpoint the trickster as one of a series of mediating devices which are always present in mythology.

From various collections of Southwestern myths, for instance, Lévi-Strauss arranges the bundles of relations in the usual four columns and discovers that a life-death opposition is a central problem in the myths. Using this

same opposition, Lévi-Strauss sets up a "mediating structure" to show why the role of trickster is always assigned to either coyote or raven. If the idea is always kept in mind "that mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their solution," then the reason for choosing either coyote or raven becomes clear. "We need only assume," Lévi-Strauss writes, "that two opposite terms with no intermediary always tend to be replaced by two equivalent terms which admit of a third one as a mediator; then one of the polar terms and the mediator become replaced by a new triad, and so on." The oppositions, then, can be arranged in the following way[43]:

Initial Pair	First Triad	Second Triad
Life		
	Agriculture	
		Herbivorous animals
		Carrion-eating animals (raven; coyote)
	Hunting	
		Beasts of prey
	Warfare	
Death		

It is stated in this chart, then, that "carrion-eating animals" are similar to "beasts of prey" because they eat animal food, but they are also similar to "food-plant producers" (the rabbit gatherers) because the latter do not kill what they eat. "But it is also clear," Lévi-Strauss

says, "that herbivorous animals may be called first to act as mediators on the assumption that they are like collectors and gatherers (plant-food eaters), while they can be used as animal food though they are not themselves hunters."[44]

The latter mediators, at least, cause one to wonder about the exact "triad" that might be involved. Probably Lévi-Strauss's mediating structure can be extended as follows:

Second Triad	Third Triad
Herbivorous animals	
	good for food
	gatherers
	scavengers (not good for food)
Carrion-eating animals (raven; coyote)	

Each culture, in any case, tends to use a different set of sensory qualities, some of which will perhaps always remain a mystery. John Boyle writes, for instance, "Hare flesh was forbidden under the Mosaic Dispensation on the ground that while the animal resembled the edible ruminants in chewing the cud (a natural mistake, as Evans and Thompson have shown), it differed from them in not being cloven-footed."[45] Also, the Venerable Bede reports that the hare was "the 'favorite animal and attendant spirit' of the Anglo-Saxon goddess Eostre," who represented spring fecundity, and love and carnal pleasure that leads to fecundity.[46] This particular line of development can be surmised if one

remembers the London eighteenth-century "Cunny House" and a contemporary "Bunny Club." Among the Siouan tribes of the Great Plains, the "gatherer-quality" is retained while the sensory appearance of the trickster is that of a spider: "Ikto, Iktomi, or Uñktomi," and "Ictinike" among the Dakota tribes, "Ictinike" among the Omaha and Ponca.[47] J. Owen Dorsey states that "among the Siouan tribes we find myths which tell of several beings, all of whom resemble the Nanibozhu or Manabush of the Algonkian family." Dorsey lists three, which are fully differentiated in the myths—the Rabbit; Ictinike, the great enemy of the Rabbit; and Haxige (Há-ghi-ge), who in one myth finally becomes a deer.[48]

Lévi-Strauss states that the mediators, in any case, can be isolated either along a vertical or a horizontal axis. An instance of the first would be the well known Star-Husband's wife, an "Unsuccessful mediator between Earth and Sky," while examples of the second would be "scalp between war and agriculture (scalp is a war crop)." Also, there is "corn smut between wild and cultivated plants . . . garments between 'nature' and 'culture' . . . refuse between village and outside; and . . . ashes (or soot) between roof (sky vault) and hearth (in the ground)."[49] Further, a comparison is drawn between the American Ash-Boy cycle and the Indo-European Cinderella: "Both," states Lévi-Strauss, "are phallic figures (mediators between male and female); masters of the dew and the game; owners of fine raiments; and social mediators (low class marrying into high class)." Still,

they are impossible to interpret through recent diffusion, as has been contended, "since Ash-Boy and Cinderella are symmetrical but inverted in every detail." Hence the following chart[50]:

	Europe	America
Sex	female	male
Family Status	double family (remarried father)	no family (orphan)
Appearance	pretty girl	ugly boy
Sentimental Status	nobody likes her	unrequited love for girl
Transformation	luxuriously clothed with supernatural help	stripped of ugliness with supernatural help

Lévi-Strauss, it is seen, passes over a bit too easily the reference to "masters of the dew and the game." Nevertheless, after reading the myths with the structuralist ideas in mind, the reader soon perceives that the vitalistic, as opposed to the sometimes mechanical, universe of early humans had an explicit effect on the way "things in nature" were conceived. The early aesthetic sensibility of man, seemingly, was more concerned with nature as an expression of "life-power" than with nature as an expression of beauty (although objects that are beautiful are at times cited in the myths). Thus, the myths that speak of the very stones of the earth becoming aroused and beginning to roll—usually because of some violation of proper conduct on the part of the trickster—express, then, not only the idea of the sacredness usually attached to power but the idea that

power, or the life-quality of the cosmos, could be found in the most innocuous and humble of the earth's "silent sentinels."[51] Those men, therefore, who often were successful in the hunt or in warfare were neither more lucky nor more skillful than others—they were simply blessed with more power. Even the abused orphan at the edge of the village—that is, the unpromising hero—could gain power if he would only listen to or align himself with those forces which "in nature" could be found on every hand. Thus, it is appropriate that the land regions usually referred to as the Plateau and the Great Plains and the Woodlands—generally all of North America, with the Southwest being the only doubtful area—should be called, in terms of cultural configurations, the area of the Vision Quest.[52]

It is from the Southwest region, however, that Lévi-Strauss draws important structural insights. Without pressing the point, then, it does seem that a material base of some kind (economic?) has not been totally ignored; the priestly clans of the Pueblo and Zuni are a logical development of religious thought which is more individualistic in the vision-quest area proper, or where the "philosophy" may be controlled by a council of elders (that is, war veterans), or simply by a "respected elder" of the tribe. Paul Radin, at least, suggests that realistic advice may be given at the conscious level, in spite of "supernatural warrant":

> The Indian will tell you simply enough that if a deity has bestowed his power upon an individual in a vision and permitted him to go on a warpath, he may do so. Yet if one visualizes concretely the hazardous nature

> of such an enterprise in a small tribe, it is but natural to assume that any community allowing a young man to risk his own life and possibly that of others on the strength of communication in a dream, must be profoundly imbued with a religious spirit. Unfortunately this whole picture is wrong. It changes as soon as we obtain fuller details about the matter. Then we discover that no individual is ever allowed to proceed on even a private war party unless his dream-experience has been communicated to the chief of the tribe or else to some highly respected elder. Such men are always exceedingly devout. They certainly may be expected to take religious sanctions at their face value. Yet it was just these custodians of the tribal tradition who were most careful to see that the practical aspects of the situation did not militate too markedly against success. If, in their opinion, the undertaking was unwarranted—whether because they thought the leader too inexperienced, the possibility for adequate preparation unfavorable, the strength of the enemy possibly too great, or what not—they refused to give their sanction and forbade it. Quite naturally they couched this prohibition in a religious phraseology. 'The spirits have not blessed you with sufficient power' is the Winnebago formula, for instance.[53]

Here, then, the mechanical universe is beginning to "assert" itself. The passage is interesting, too, because it shows a kind of thought which is fully in charge of possible cultural directions that may be taken. Such considerations, in the main, also allow Glucksmann to say that Lévi-Strauss "does not examine in any satisfactory way the interaction between conscious behaviour and unconscious structure, but assumes as a matter of course that the one lies beneath the other."[54]

It is difficult, also, to see how knowledge as an awareness of relationships could have any impact at all in the myths or in the social sphere if no one in the past was consciously aware of their presence. And if the past is also to include the Greek myths, then on what basis were the

myths finally rejected? More importantly, by what structural transformations do we arrive at the disbeliever? Lévi-Strauss's structuralism "leads him automatically to postulate an original mythical form of thought, found in bastardized versions elsewhere, and to erect thinking man as natural and universal, and savage thought as a pure category."[55]

Still, the "original mythical form of thought," as described by Lévi-Strauss, offers much that was previously overlooked. Drawing still from the Southwest, Lévi-Strauss presents, for instance, a series of mediators derived from the myths, "each of which generates the next one by a process of opposition and correlation":

messiah > dioscuri > trickster > bisexual being > sibling pair > married couple > grandmother-grandchild > four-term group > triad[56]

Such a series allows Lévi-Strauss to comment on the often puzzling characteristic of "mythical figures the world over, namely, that the same god is endowed with contradictory attributes—for instance, he may be *good* and *bad* at the same time." Further, a certain hierarchy of contrasting values may develop in the myths (say, from "helpful" to "harmful") and be reflected by the same mythical figure, depending on whether the god appears alone or in association with another god.[57]

If the myths, finally, are arranged in "a whole series of variants," the investigator, Lévi-Strauss says, may then

attempt to formulate the law of that group. Noting, too, that only an approximate formulation may be justified "at the present stage," Lévi-Strauss nevertheless suggests "that every myth (considered as the aggregate of all its variants) corresponds to a formula of the following type":

$$F_x (a) : F_y (b) \simeq F_x (b) : F_{a-1} (y)$$ [58]

Essentially, this formula states that there will be an "inversion of terms and relations" if (1) a term is replaced by its opposite (a and a-1) and (2) an inversion is made between the function value and the term value of two elements (y and a).

This definition of myth, one may speculate, will probably not replace many definitions of myth that are presented in plain English. In fact, earlier in this chapter, a quotation from Lévi-Strauss was presented in which he spoke of mirrors in a room that reflected a series of images; that example, which is another way of wording the above formula, is possibly a more understandable definition of myth. Other writers, nevertheless, have apparently been inspired to build upon the Lévi-Strauss formula. Pierre Maranda, for example, writes, "Myths display the structural, predominantly culture-specific, and shared, semantic systems which enable the members of a culture area to understand each other and to cope with the unknown. More strictly, myths are stylistically definable discourses that express the strong components of semantic systems.[59]

James Boon, on the other hand, sees myths as

"symbol-filled 'texts'":

> Myths indicate how meaning is to be. They can be seen by the analyzer as symbol-filled 'texts' which articulate a people's 'social discourse.' The most critical point to remember is that throughout these transformations of contradicting terms, nothing is ever really solved. The contradiction is merely displaced, but by becoming so, it expands a culture's store of signification.[60]

Non-instrumentality is usually associated with a certain view of aesthetics; the point that Boon brings out is important, however, because it suggests that the "disbeliever" is always potentially present. Mircea Eliade's definition of myth, although it is more widely quoted, makes little allowance for this kind of change: "Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings.'"[61]

By contrast, Robert A. Georges, editor of an anthology about myths, summarizes what seems to be predominantly an American, pre-structuralist view of myth:

> (1) A myth constitutes, in one sense, a closed or self-contained system—i.e., to a large extent, a myth is complete in itself.
>
> (2) Each myth presents . . . an event or series of events during which a problem or series of problems is presented or arises.
>
> (3) This problem/series of problems motivates one or more of the agents to act in order to alleviate the state of disequilibrium which results from the existence/creation of the problem(s).[62]

These definitions should demonstrate that American anthropologists, as a rule, are not the ones to turn to if a serious study of mythology is contemplated. With the exceptions of the four anthropologists cited in the preceding

chapter, few investigators on this side of the Atlantic have done more than collect examples of myths from the field. Therefore, if Lévi-Strauss, who has profited somewhat from the absence of American theoretical work, has nevertheless failed to turn the study of mythology into an "exact" science, then the depth of insight and the explanatory capabilities of structuralism are not invalidated by that fact.

Lévi-Strauss examines the mythology of the New World and discovers a mind which has always functioned well. The difference has been, he suggests, just those "new areas" to which the forces of the mind may be applied:

> The kind of logic in mythical thought is as rigorous as that of modern science, and . . . the difference lies, not in the quality of the intellectual process, but in the nature of the things to which it is applied. This is well in agreement with the situation known to prevail in the field of technology: What makes a steel ax superior to a stone ax is not that the first one is better made than the second. They are equally well made, but steel is quite different from stone. In the same way we may be able to show that the same logical processes operate in myth as in science, and that man has always been thinking equally well; the improvement lies, not in an alleged progress of man's mind, but in the discovery of new areas to which it may apply its unchanged and unchanging powers.[63]

To understand, therefore, how this logical process operated in the myths, it is necessary to go beyond the Greek World and its more classical myths to an example that truly belongs to the distant past.

A few critics have cited Lévi-Strauss's famous first myth from _The Raw and the Cooked_, as well as the equally astounding analysis of the "Asdiwal" myth from the

Tsimshians in the Northwest. In Lévi-Strauss's second book about the myths of South America, however, there is a remarkable tale about a youth named "Haburi." The story comes from the Warao tribe of Guiana and is listed by Lévi-Strauss as myth number 241, "The Story of Haburi."[64]

The myth speaks first of two sisters who lived alone in the jungle. As they had no man to look after them, they were puzzled to discover one day that the starch of the palm tree, ite (Mauritia), they had felled the evening before was already prepared. Next day the same thing happened, and then it happened again and often so they decided to keep watch. About the middle of the night they saw a manicole palm tree (Euterpe) bend gradually over until it touched the cut they had made in the trunk of the ite tree. Both sisters rushed up and caught hold of it, begging it earnestly to turn into a man. It refused at first but, as they begged so earnestly, it did so. He became the husband of the elder of the two sisters and by and by she gave birth to a beautiful baby boy, whom she called Haburi.

Now, the myth continues, the two women had their hunting-ground near two ponds; one of these ponds belonged to them, and so they used to fish there. The other belonged to Jaguar, and they advised the man not to go near it. He did so nevertheless, because the jaguar's pond contained more fish than theirs. But Jaguar came along and, in order to be revenged, he killed the thief. He then took the husband's shape and returned to the spot

where the two women were camped. It was almost dark. Jaguar was carrying his victim's basket, which contained the stolen fish. In a coarse, rough voice which surprised the sisters, the false husband told them they could cook the fish and eat it, but that he himself was too tired to share their meal. All he wanted was to sleep, while he nursed Haburi. They brought the child to him and, while the women were eating their dinner, he started to snore so loudly that he could be heard on the other side of the river. Several times in his sleep, he uttered the name of the man he had killed and whom he was pretending to impersonate. The dead man was called Mayarakoto. This made the women anxious and they suspected some act of treachery. "Our husband never snored like that," they said, "and he never called his own name before." They gently removed Haburi from the arms of the sleeper, slipping in a bundle of bark in his place. They quickly made off with him, taking with them a wax light and a bundle of firewood.

While making their way through the jungle, the myth says, the two women hear Wau-uta, who at that time was a witch, singing and accompanying her song with her ceremonial rattle. The women went on and on, quickly too, for they knew that, once they arrived at Wau-uta's place, they would be safe. In the meantime the jaguar had woken up. When he found himself alone, holding a bundle of bark in his arms instead of a baby boy, he became extremely angry. He changed back into his animal shape and hurried after the

fugitives. The women heard him coming and hurried still more. Finally they knocked at Wau-uta's door. "Who is there?"—"It is us, the two sisters." But Wau-uta would not open the door. So the mother pinched Haburi's ears to make him cry. Wau-uta, her curiosity aroused, asked: "What child is that? Is it a girl or a boy?" "It is a boy, my Haburi," replied the mother and Wau-uta opened the door immediately and asked them to come in.

When the jaguar arrived, Wau-uta told him she had seen no one, but the beast knew by the scent that she was telling a lie. Wau-uta suggested he should find out for himself by poking his head through the half-open door. The door was covered with thorns, and as soon as Jaguar put his head in, the old woman closed it and killed him. But the sisters began to grieve for their dead husband and cried so much that Wau-uta told them to go and gather manioc in the plantation and make beer, so that they could drown their sorrow. They wanted to take Haburi, but Wau-uta insisted that there was no point in doing so and that she would take care of him.

The myth, in its middle developmental section, now picks up the evil designs of the old sorceress. While the sisters were in the fields, it is said, Wau-uta made the child grow by magic into a youth. She gave him a flute and some arrows. On their way back from the plantation, the women were surprised to hear music being played, for they did not remember there being a man in the house when they

left. And though ashamed, they went in and saw a young man playing the flute. They asked after Haburi but Wau-uta maintained that the child had run after them as soon as they had left for the field and that she thought he was with them. All this was a lie, because she had made Haburi grow up with the intention of making him her lover. She still further deceived the two sisters by pretending to take part in the search for the little boy, having previously ordered Haburi to say she was his mother, and given him full directions as to how he must treat her.

Haburi was a spendid shot; no bird could escape his arrow, and Wau-uta directed him to give her all the big birds he killed and to give his mother and his aunt all the little ones which he had to pollute first by fouling them. The object of this was to make the sisters so vexed and angry that they would leave the place. But this they would not do; they continued searching for their little child. This sort of thing went on for many days; big birds and dirtied little birds being presented by Haburi to Wau-uta and the two women, respectively.

One day, however, Haburi did miss a bird for the first time, his arrow sticking into a branch overhanging a creek where the otters, the hunter's uncles, used to come and feed. It was a nice, cleared spot and here Haburi eased himself, taking care to cover up the dung with leaves. Then he climbed the tree to dislodge the arrow. Just then the otters arrived and, scenting the air, they at once suspected

that their worthless nephew must be somewhere about. They discovered him on the tree branch and ordered him to come down and sit, and they would tell him a few home truths: he was leading a bad life, the old woman was not his mother, and the two younger ones were his mother and aunt respectively. They impressed upon him that it was wicked of him to divide the birds unfairly. He must do exactly the opposite, give his real mother, the elder of the two sisters, the larger birds and tell her he was sorry and apologize for his wickedness, which was due entirely to ignorance on his part.

So Haburi made a clean breast of it to his mother and gave the dirtied little birds to Wau-uta. The latter worked herself into a great passion, told Haburi that he must be mad and blew in his face (in order to drive out the evil spirits); so angered and upset was she that she could eat nothing at all. All through the night she nagged Haburi. But the next morning, the latter again gave the big birds he had shot to his real mother and the dirtied little ones to Wau-uta who gave him no peace. Haburi therefore made up his mind to get out with his mother and aunt.

Haburi built a canoe from bees' wax, but by next morning a black duck had taken it away. He made another little clay canoe, which was stolen by another kind of duck. In the meantime he cut a large field and cleared it so quickly that the women could grow enough manioc for their proposed journey. Haburi would often slip away and make a boat,

always with different kinds of wood and of varying shapes, but just as regularly a different species of duck would come and steal them. The last one he made was from the silk-cotton tree and this particular one was not stolen. Thus it was Haburi who first made a boat and who taught ducks to float on the surface of the water, because it was with his boats that they managed to do so. "Indeed," the informant comments at this point, "we Warao say that each duck has its own particular kind of boat."

What was even more curious, the myth continues, was that the next morning the last boat was found to be bigger than it was the night before. Haburi told his mother and her sister to collect all the provisions and put them aboard, while he continued to plant manioc cuttings along with Wau-uta. At the first opportunity, he slipped secretly back to the house, took his axe and his arrows and proceeded down to the waterside, having previously ordered the posts not to talk, for in those days the posts of a house could speak and, if the owner of the house were absent, a visitor could thus find out his whereabouts. Unfortunately Haburi forgot to warn the parrot in the house to keep silent, and when Wau-uta returned, the bird told her which way Haburi had gone.

Wau-uta rushed down to the landing and arrived just in time to see Haburi stepping into the boat to join his mother and aunt. The old woman seized hold of the craft screaming: "My son! My son! You must not leave me! I am your mother!"

and she refused to let go her hold, although they all repeatedly struck her fingers with the paddles and almost smashed them to pieces on the gunwale. So poor Haburi had perforce to land again and, with old Wau-uta, proceeded to a large hollow tree, where bees had built their nests. Haburi made a small hole in the trunk with his axe and told the old woman to go inside and suck the honey. As it happened, she was made about honey and, although crying very hard at the thought of losing Haburi, she crawled through the little opening, which the latter immediately closed in upon her. And there she is to be found to the present day, the Wau-uta frog, which is heard only in hollow trees. And if you look carefully, you will see how swollen her fingers are from the way in which they were bashed by the paddles when she tried to hold on to the gunwale. If you listen you can also hear her lamenting for her lost lover: Wang! Wang! Wang! (Roth I, pp. 122-5).

This myth, first of all, is one of numerous others which are in some way connected with honey. As can be seen, the bit about honey comes in only towards the last and almost as an afterthought. In his first book on the South American myths, <u>The Raw and the Cooked</u>, Lévi-Strauss commenced his study by showing that certain structural elements underlying various myths about a young man who was forcibly stranded in the jungle were not so much about a process of growing up as they were about the origin of fire for cooking, or of water which rained down (the storms) or gushed up from

below. As minimal as the actual structural "message" seemed to be, it nevertheless established certain basic movements or directions or themes which were picked up by tribal myths across the whole extent of the Amazon region. In the main, the general movement at the structural level was towards culture, or towards that which meant culture to those involved.

The analytical process which brings this movement, or these structures, to the surface is quite unusual when seen in actual operation and, further, is to some extent modified in actual practice. First, the process is unusual because the reader is exposed to a new "language" from the very beginning. The hero of Myth Number One (M_1), for instance, rapes his mother, is half-eaten by vultures, becomes a lizard, four birds, a butterfly, a deer, and then proceeds to kill his father.[65] How is the reader to take these happenings? Have we indeed, and without warning, come face to face with the unpromising hero? His actions, as bizarre as they appear, would seem to say yes. "Emphatic statement," Lévi-Strauss writes, "is natural to them [the myths]; it is a direct expression of their properties; it is the visible shadow of a hidden logical structure."[66] At least, it is this sensory language which adds substance to what on the structural level is referred to simply as "an account of the phases of the moon and seasonal changes." Secondly, Lévi-Strauss speaks of <u>armature</u>, <u>code</u>, and <u>message</u> as more convenient ways of drawing comparisons between the myths.[67]

Armature refers to a combination of properties that remain invariant in two or several myths. Code, on the other hand, refers to the pattern of functions ascribed by each myth to these properties; and message, lastly, refers to the subject matter of an individual myth. Also, the vertical columns used to analyze the Oedipus myth are still retained in principle, but now they are better seen as binary units that are used elaborately in tables and charts.

By the time the reader has haltingly reached the second book From Honey to Ashes, has somewhat uneasily adjusted to the new language, and has partially digested a very thorough lesson in the habits and characteristics of diverse animal species, he suddenly realizes, after not too many pages, that a massive shift in the structures is underway. Lévi-Strauss describes this shift as "taking us round the back, as it were, of South American mythology," or, as a viewpoint which allows us to see "all the major mythical themes on the reverse side."[68] Lévi-Strauss, interestingly, uses the image of a tapestry which is now turned over. Because the "picture" is now blurred, the task of interpreting becomes "more arduous and complex." Some twenty pages, more or less, are needed to clear up various structural relationships in the Haburi myth, for instance. The tapestry, or network of structures, too, deserves a comment. Fruitful analogies are always a difficulty; the image of the tapestry is better than most. But if the image were dynamically transformed, then it might appear as a large and

bustling city at night. Such a "city" is situated, ideally and physically, in the Freudian depths of the unconscious. The blinking traffic lights are like the myriad binary units at work, while the traffic itself helps form the eventual "pictures" that one perceives. An unusual situation would be a major intersection. One line of traffic, hypothetically, could flow from east to west, while another equally important line of traffic could go from north to south. Essentially, this crosscurrent, perhaps, is what Lévi-Strauss is referring to when he compares his first and second book and the 353 myths that they contain. In terms of the tapestry, then, Lévi-Strauss asks if "both sides" have equal significance?

> But what is the meaning of wrong side and right side in this context? And would the meaning of the two sides not simply have been reversed if I had chosen to begin at the other end? I hope to show that this is not so. The wrong side and the right side are defined objectively by the native way of looking at the problem, in which the mythology of cooking develops in the right direction, i.e. from nature to culture, whereas the mythology of honey proceeds contrariwise, backwards from culture to nature; in other words, the two courses link up the same points, but their semantic charge is very different and consequently there is no parity between them.[69]

Some significance, therefore, is attached to the term "honey," even though it appears only a minor role, seemingly, at the end of the Haburi myth. Honey, as Lévi-Strauss stresses, anticipates culture because, as a natural food, it appears "cooked" by the processes of nature.[70]

With this general structural movement in mind, therefore, the reader is now somewhat prepared for the structural

analysis of this particular myth, "The Story of Haburi." First, Lévi-Strauss comments on the novel-like quality of the myth and suggests that the theme of an older woman who has designs on a young man is one which French literature will only come to centuries later. Such literary features must be left, however, to "specialists . . . to continue": of course, Lévi-Strauss knows that they cannot be simply left to specialists; the study of mythology has long been stymied for lack of any decoding apparatus. What is the literary critic to make of a hero who defecates at "a nice, cleared spot" by the river for no apparent reason and an aunt who seems a useless appendage in the story? The usual approach would be merely to classify this myth as a composite tale, or a type of etiological myth. It seems to contain trickster elements—the jaguar pretends to be a father—there is a chase scene, suggesting inevitably the magic flight incidents, and if Freud is to be used, it echoes the Oedipus myth because the son ends up with his mother and aunt in a boat all alone. At best it is a "rite of passage," the story of a boy who becomes a man. This interpretation, at the literary level, may not be too far removed from what is intended, but so many loose ends are present that the observer can only suggest that it is all an amateurish attempt. Indeed, it is best, then, to see what can be gained from an ethnographical study _à la française_ (the parts of which will be numbered).

(1) Lévi-Strauss begins with the two sisters who

become wives of the supernatural man from the tree. Two previously discussed myths are cited (M_{238} and M_{235}) to show that the presence of two women is not always an ideal arrangement; yet, remembering how myths "play endlessly on the contrast between the thing and the word . . . the literal sense and the figurative sense," the reader might see that the duplication here (the two wives) may have a connection with an Arawak myth (M_{242}) which purports to explain bigamy among Indians. The point of the latter myth is that the first wife tends to become "a kind of metaphor of the wifely function and a symbol of the domestic virtues."[71] This description fits the first sister in M_{241} (Lévi-Strauss's numbering system will be used to refer to the Haburi myth and to others); the second sister appears merely as "a wife," not, that is, as a "reduplication of the first."

(2) From the palm trees that are being felled for the extraction of starch, Lévi-Strauss determines that this myth refers probably to the end of the dry season, which is to say, generally in the last quarter of the year. The time, however, is not as important as the food extraction process itself, for here is also a natural food in nature which must be "emptied" into "an already existing trough, instead of the trough disclosing its contents while it is in the process of being made" (that is, softened by having water poured over it). Thus, says Lévi-Strauss, "we again encounter the dialectics of container and content, of which the Chaco 'honey' myths first provided an illustration."[72]

The reference here is to honey that is found in a tree.

Variants of M_{241}, Lévi-Strauss says, have been collected by J. Wilbert which show the younger sister as the mother of Haburi. These variants stress the younger sister's physical strength, while the husband is portrayed as being no longer of supernatural origin. The ogre (the jaguar) does not change in the Wilbert version; the Indian is killed, roasted, and offered as meat to the sisters, who recognize their husband's penis "which has been placed on top of the bundle." Further differences relate to the killing of the jaguar and the episode of the excrement. In two variants (M_{243} and M_{244}) the latter incident takes place respectively "in the village of the Siawana, in whose cooking-pot Haburi relieves himself" and "at the house of Haburi's 'aunt' whose food he also pollutes."[73]

These two Wilbert versions also introduce, in their latter parts, adventures "which soon take on a cosmological character," the most important of which is the discovery by Haburi (after he shoots an arrow into the ground) "of a subterranean world where abundance reigns." The passageway to this world, though, is blocked by a pregnant woman. Lévi-Strauss writes, "They push her, her anus gives way and becomes the Morning Star. Those who were behind the pregnant woman were unable to reach the underworld and, as these were the best shamans, men are now deprived of their help."[74] The preparing of pith from the palm tree and the acquisition by the animals of their specific characteristics

date from this period. The importance of the "culinary process" and the possible role that Haburi plays in the myth is thus underscored in several ways.

(3) The matter of the two ponds is more complex. Because a distinction is drawn among different kinds of honey, some poisonous, some edible, and various animals and people associated with it, then certain relationships are seen to hold also between honey and water, for one is easily dissolved in the other. Honey, in other words, is like stagnant water, but "high" as opposed to "low" and devoid of fish, naturally, as contrasted with a pond. The oppositions established in the following units, therefore, are "horizontal," "vertical," and "economic":

[stagnant: running]::[high: low]::[fish(-): fish (+)][75]

What further significance is here? The first opposition especially is important because it seems to hold "throughout the entire American continent." At this point, then, Lévi-Strauss picks up various taboos connected with this primary opposition from as far away as Puget Sound and from the Southeastern part of North America. In all instances, running water "constitutes the 'marked' term," which in terms of M_{241} means that "the tenuous link established between a supernatural person and a human being" is broken. But it is broken, Lévi-Strauss suggests, within an "inversion of the signs" that apply to this particular myth:

> From M_{235} to M_{239}, the water which was first stagnant, then high, was congruous with a supernatural and beneficent character; the water which was running at first, then low, was congruous with a human

> and maleficent character. In M241, the reverse is the case, because of the inversion of the signs affecting the supernatural partner which, in this instance, is the Black Jaguar, a cannibalistic monster. Symmetrically, the human character is given a beneficent role. So it is the water which contains only a few fish, and which is weakly stressed in respect of the search for food, which corresponds to the relatively high water where the bee and the frog ought to have continued to bathe [referring to previous myths], and where the man ought to have continued to fish. For, in that case, things would have remained as they were.[76]

This discussion, as roundabout as it seems, does allow Lévi-Strauss to identify the armature of the myth. The ponds in the Roth version (that is, M241) are seen as images that operate at "low frequency," or images that merely suggest what in the Wilbert versions is more fully described, namely, "the cosmological theme."

The opening scene of the myth, therefore, should be read as life in the upper world, or as a reference to a Golden Age which once was experienced by the forefathers. The decision to fish in the low pond suggests that a migration to another "level of reality," or an actual migration, once took place. The danger that the tribe could not foresee, then, was the formidable carnivore, the Black Jaguar. Lévi-Strauss writes as follows:

> In the episode of the ponds, the husband of the two sisters gives up safe but poor fishing in a pond which, as we have just seen, corresponds to the stagnant and relatively high water in the myth previously studied, because he prefers good but dangerous fishing in another pond, which corresponds in the same myths to running and relatively low water. Now at the end of the Wilbert version, Haburi and his companions, the forefathers of present-day Indians, make the same choice but on a much larger scale: they give up a quiet and humble life in the upper world under the spiritual guidance of their priests because, in the

> luxuriant palm groves and herds of wild pigs which they had glimpsed in the underworld, they see a promise of more abundant food. They do not yet know that they can only attain the food after surmounting the great dangers represented by the Spirits of the Waters and the Woods, the most formidable of which is, as it happens, the Black Jaguar.[77]

(4) In previous myths that were analyzed, the "deceiver" was a fox who was depicted (in a Toba myth) as "mad about women," whereas in the Chaco myths, Woodpecker plays "the part of the husband who is a food-supplying hero." In the Chaco myths, however, the dry-season food is honey; in Guiana, which is the origin of the Haburi myth, the dry-season food is fish because "fishing is easier when the rivers are low." But honey does appear at the end of M_{241}, so the time of year is fairly well established.[78]

What is not so well established is the similarity between Fox and Black Jaguar. "In fact," Lévi-Strauss writes, "Black Jaguar begins by behaving in the opposite way from Fox, since he [Black Jaguar] brings the women copious supplies of food: fish in the Roth version, pieces of their husband's roasted flesh in the Wilbert versions."[79] Black Jaguar, also, is lacking in "any erotic motivation," which is a sharp distinction because Fox, in his myth, is presented as a lusty character. This last detail, though, does shed light on Black Jaguar's actions, especially if it is imagined that a kind of cultural line has been crossed: Black Jaguar, that is, assumes the role of an Indian father and is consequently "mad about children," just as Fox was "mad about women." Lévi-Strauss does not specify the

"cultural line" which may be present; I would speculate that it is the fact that Black Jaguar refuses culturally prepared food (signifying that something of his real nature was still intact).

In The Raw and the Cooked, the jaguar was a "master of fire" and as such was seen as an animal which moved consistently away from culture, while his "skills," through various encounters with humans, were brought towards culture. His presence, then, in the Haburi myth suggests that a "structural intersection" has been reached, "that the jaguar behaves in this instance as a food-supplying father, because, in the group [of myths] which is perpendicular to the one we are studying, he plays the reverse role: that of a seducer who takes mothers away from their children."[80] In the Haburi myth, however, the invisible "cultural edge" seems always present. When Jaguar falls asleep, his former person seems to speak; he declares, as Lévi-Strauss says, "what he is not." It amounts to a moral confession, just as Fox, in other myths that Lévi-Strauss analyzes, declares "what he is by a physical reaction."[81]

(5) The frog in the story, called Wau-uta, belongs to the cunauaru species and is associated in a Munducuru and in a Tucuna myth with shamanistic powers.[82] Lévi-Strauss presents the Tucuna myth which tells of a whimpering child who wanders off into the jungle and is adopted by a frog. The skills brought back by the child were connected with the magical arts. In the Haburi myth, however, the old

sorceress wants to know if the child is a boy or a girl. Lévi-Strauss writes, "The whimpering child who resists 'socialization' remains obstinately on the side of nature and awakens the lust of similarly orientated animals: those who are mad about honey, a natural food, or those mad about women or boys, which are sexual 'foods.'"[83]

(6) The jaguar is killed by being trapped in the thorny door of the hollow tree in which Wau-uta lives. This incident is also recounted in other myths, but the direction there is concerned with the origin of tobacco. Lévi-Strauss, too, notes the type of tree involved; strangely enough, the myth-maker has seemingly combined the features of two different trees to suit his purpose. More importantly, however, "after trying to build a canoe with wax, then with clay, and after experimenting with various different species of tree, the hero achieves his purpose by using the 'silk-cotton tree,' which is a member of the bombax family (Bombax ceiba, Bombax globosum)."[84] The latter type of tree was in fact used for the building of large canoes "capable of taking from seventy to eighty passengers (Roth 2, p. 613)."

(7) "There is nothing much to be said," Lévi-Strauss writes, "about the flute and arrows that Wau-uta gives to the boy when he reaches adolescence, except that these are normal attributes of his sex and age, the arrows for hunting, the flute for love-making, since the instrument is used in courting."[85] These objects, of course, may not

be useful at the structural level; viewed in another light, however, or from a more literary angle, one can perhaps discover in these objects an unsuspected significance. Such a discovery, it should be pointed out, would not be opposed to the structural approach because it has been noticed by others—indeed, by Lévi-Strauss himself—that deep structure meaning is usually in contrast to that found at the surface level.

Lévi-Strauss, rightfully then, turns his attention to the episode of the otters and the human excrement. Why, in mythical terms, are the otters annoyed at the smell of "human" excrement? The answer that Lévi-Strauss gives is at first a cautious one: "It is perhaps because they [the otters] were blocked in former times and knew nothing of the excretory functions. . . ."[86] This partial explanation comes after Lévi-Strauss has gathered unusual notions about otters—and those other "aquatic seducers," frogs and dolphins—from across two continents. To be <u>blocked</u>, as Lévi-Strauss says, is to be without an anus, or to possess "small eyes" so that one is "deprived of an opening onto the outside world." Further, because the otters are "masters of fish," they "'have the habit of going to the water and bringing fish after fish to their eating place, where, when a sufficient quantity has been heaped up, they start eating.'"[87] The Indians, it seems, are aware of this habit of the otters and turn it to "their advantage." To defecate "in such a spot as Haburi does is not only to show

that you are a bad fisherman . . . It is also to relieve nature symbolically in the animals' 'cooking pot,'" an act that Haburi "commits literally (M_{243}, M_{244}) in the village of the Siawana and in his 'aunt's' house."[88]

It should be noted, too, that the otters are referred to as "uncles." Lévi-Strauss does not dwell on this point; he does go into detail to show that otters were held in high regard among most Indians, first, because they are always considered in the myths to "belong to the male party," whereas women in many myths are considered to be "ex-fish"; secondly, because the otters are the subject of very similar beliefs that "persist in the most remote areas of the New World," a fact which would indicate the presence of a very old tradition, the reader begins to understand that this tradition may be reflected in the Haburi myth when these animals, in effect, counteract the magic of Wau-uta.[89]

Finally, a strangely amusing part of the myth is the explanation of why ducks float. Lévi-Strauss calls the ducks "ex-canoes"; that is, he sees that they "represent a progression from nature to culture."[90] Yet, if the armature of the myth suggests a movement from high to low, from the ideal to the actual, from a kind of emptiness to a kind of plenty, from no danger to danger, then the ducks would seem to reflect also these oppositions. In any case, with one last comparison relating to the possible identity of Haburi, Lévi-Strauss offers a brief structural interpretation of the myth to the effect that the disappearance of a

superior culture is ultimately the basic issue at hand:

> In Brett's transcription, Haburi bears the name, Aboré, and he is presented as the 'father of inventions.' If he had not had to flee from his aged wife, the Indians would have enjoyed many other fruits of his ingenuity, in particular, woven articles of clothing. One variant mentioned by Roth even relates that the hero sailed away until he finally came to the land of the White men (to the island of Trinidad according to M_{244}) to whom he taught all their arts and manufactures (Roth I, p. 125). If it is possible to identify Haburi or the Warao Aboré with the god whom the ancient Arawak called Ahibiri or Hubuiri, we should attach a similar kind of significance to Schomburgk's remark that 'this character does not trouble himself about men.' With the exception of navigation, the only civilized art that the natives seem to claim as their own, what the myths are dealing with is undoubtedly the loss of culture, or of a culture superior to their own.[91]

Several references to the Haburi myth come later in Lévi-Strauss's book, but nothing materially new is added to the above explanation; and at this point there are other questions that arise and other myths that take Lévi-Strauss in another direction.

In conclusion, then, it can be observed that the structural approach of Lévi-Strauss relies heavily on ethnographical data and on a precise epistemological scheme, as well as a set of conceptual tools (such as armature, code, message, to name only a few) which apply specifically to an analysis of the myths. Whereas Lévi-Strauss emphasized earlier in his work that myths solve problems, he seems content to show in his two books related to South American mythology that myths have a logical structure that may be understood if a series of variant selections are carefully compared. This approach differs from other theories of myth in that a hidden level of reality is said

to be unearthed.

Other investigators have similarly restricted their studies to one aspect of myth in the hope that they have isolated the essential mythic quality that would explain all the rest. Cassirer took the view that "there is a 'mythopaeic' form of thought, rooted in the 'perception of expression' which is essentially fantasy and does not comprehend real objects."[92] Cassirer did, however, see the value of linguistics to the study of mythology and he did offer a more comprehensive view of knowledge. On the other hand, if the "works" of man are distinctively human, then he failed to recognize the contribution from the side of nature. Malinowski, too, suggested that the "works" were a functional expression of man's biology (his needs) and of his culture (the myths serve only to publicly notarize certain rules). In this view, however, the individual can hardly be isolated from the group (a charge that can also be leveled at Lévi-Strauss, except that his synchronic approach is also tied to phenomenological and hence diachronic data taken from the sensory language). The myths, in any case, take on meaning with the structural approach; with Malinowski's functional approach they have, essentially, no intellectual content. Sigmund Freud, on the other hand, saw myths in relation to day-dreams. The symbolism was stressed but was reduced to an almost value-free concern with such universals as sex, aggression, and incest.

If Lévi-Strauss's structuralism has a weakness, then

it is also related to the area of psychology. Glucksmann suggests that the problems center mainly on "the fact that Lévi-Strauss's main interest is almost exclusively the logic of myth, and the unconscious mental structures on which it depends." In the main, therefore, the sin of omission is leveled against Lévi-Strauss:

> This [sole concern with the logic of myth] accounts for the pattern or structure of myth, but not for its content. Nor does he [Lévi-Strauss] pay much attention to the purpose of myth, which must have a social as well as an intellectual dimension. His study of myth is analogous to Freud's interpretation of dreams, but whereas Freud was successful in integrating the mechanisms of the dreamwork with a study of the derivation of its content so as to be able to 'explain' both the content and structure of the particular dream of a particular patient, Lévi-Strauss is not so successful. His can only be a partial account of myth. This omission is less apparent in *Mythologiques* where Lévi-Strauss integrates form, structure and content by showing how different codes function to express logical propositions. But he must also examine why particular codes are chosen, and their relation to social practice.[93]

Critics, of course, are inclined to wonder why this genius or that thinker did not perform miracles for their further edification. If the "purpose of myth" has a "social" dimension, then it is probably religious in nature—and that is better left to the historians of religion. If myth has an "intellectual dimension" at an observable level, then it is no doubt artistic in form and that was "the mountain pass" that Franz Boas reached. Also, who has dealt more centrally with the "intellectual dimension" in terms of logic than Lévi-Strauss? If, like Freud, Lévi-Strauss should "explain" both the "content and structure," then he also must assemble a collection of "patients" from the past.

Only then could he determine why certain "codes are chosen" and what their "relation to social practice" actually is. If a door to the past is partially opened, in other words, then it is not always a fault that it was not flung wide.

The vision of Lévi-Strauss is comprehensive enough and scientific enough for any who would care to enrich his understanding of the past. Not every relevant detail has been listed; there is a point beyond which all conceptual tools are no longer of any use. The picture fades. Meaning becomes non-meaning. The direction, at that distant point, must then be reversed. In a concluding passage from Lévi-Strauss's From Honey to Ashes, he points out that the "inevitable causality" of a line of development, or successive "states of thought," within a culture may be questioned, for the "growth rates" depend upon an "infinitely complex pattern of conditions":

> The lesson to be drawn from the South American myths is then of specific value for the resolving of problems relating to the nature and development of thought. If myths belonging to the most backward cultures of the New World bring us to this decisive threshold of the human consciousness which, in Western Europe, marks the accession to philosophy and then to science, whereas nothing similar appears to have happened among savage peoples, we must conclude from the difference that in neither case was the transition necessary, and that interlocking states of thought do not succeed each other spontaneously and through the working of some inevitable causality. No doubt, the factors which determine the formation and the respective growth-rates of the different parts of the plant are present in the seed. But the 'dormancy' of the seed, that is, the unforeseeable time which will elapse before the mechanism begins operating, does not depend upon its structure, but on an infinitely complex pattern of conditions relating to the individual history of each seed and all kinds of external influences.[94]

In other words, the crossing over from an archaic or primitive state to a classical one is an accident of sorts because it cannot be repeated. It happened once; the fuel was found to turn the small flame into a conflagration. The fuel that eventually proved important for the modern age was, of course, the New World.

END NOTES

[1]Miriam Glucksmann, *Structuralist Analysis in Contemporary Social Thought* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 15.

[2]Peter Munz, *When the Golden Bough Breaks* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 97.

[3]Edmund Leach, *Claude Lévi-Strauss* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), p. 105.

[4]Quoted by Glucksmann, p. 17 f.

[5]Octavio Paz, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, trans. J. S. Bernstein and Maxine Bernstein (New York: Dell, 1970), p. 132 f.

[6]Ino Rossi, "Structuralism as Scientific Method," *The Unconscious in Culture*, ed. Ino Rossi (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974), p. 90 f. Hereafter cited as *UCS*.

[7]Richard and Fernande DeGeorge, eds., *The Structuralists* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1972), p. xxv.

[8]Rossi, "Intellectual Antecedents of Lévi-Strauss' Notion of Unconscious," *UCS*., p. 10 f.

[9]Paz, p. 131.

[10]Taken from S. de Gramont, cited first by Lévi-Strauss and secondly by Howard Gardner, *The Quest for Mind* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 213.

[11]Rossi, "Intellectual Antecedents," p. 18.

[12]Georges Charbonnier, ed., *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1969), p. 39.

[13]Mirea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 138.

[14]Leach, p. 7.

[15]Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. George Weidenfeld and Nicholson, Ltd. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 263.

[16]John T. Waterman, Perspectives in Linguistics (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 68.

[17]Ibid., p. 72.

[18]Glucksmann, p. 61.

[19]Ferdinand de Saussure, "Course in General Linguistics," The Structuralists, eds. Richard and Fernande DeGeorge (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1972), p. 66.

[20]James A. Boon, From Symbolism to Structuralism (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 69 f.

[21]Lévi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), passim. Hereafter cited as RC.

[22]Quoted by Boon, p. 125.

[23]Ibid., p. 126.

[24]Ibid., p. 2.

[25]Paz, p. 40.

[26]Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke G. Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 211. Hereafter cited as SA.

[27]Ibid., p. 212.

[28]Ibid., p. 213 f. This number chart and the following sentence chart follow Lévi-Strauss exactly.

[29]Ibid., p. 214 f.

[30]Ibid., p. 215.

[31]Ibid., p. 216.

[32]Ibid., p. 216 f.

[33]Quoted by Franz Boas, The Mind of Primitive Man (New York: Macmillan, 1938), p. 165.

[34]See The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed., A. A. Brill (New York: Modern Library, 1938). Totem and Taboo, selection no. five, discusses the Oedipus myth.

[35]E. Michael Mendelson, "The 'Uninvited Guest': Ancilla to Lévi-Strauss on Totemism and Primitive Thought," The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism, ed. Edmund Leach (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967), p. 125.

[36]Gardner, p. 182.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., p. 182 f.

[39]Ibid., p. 183.

[40]Carl G. Jung, "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure," a commentary in Paul Radin's _The Trickster_ (New York: Greenwood Press, 1956), p. 203. Hereafter cited as _TR_.

[41]Radin, _TR_., p. 150 f.

[42]Radin, _The Road of Life and Death_ (New York: Pantheon Books, 1945), p. 72.

[43]Lévi-Strauss, SA., p. 224.

[44]Ibid.

[45]John A. Boyle, "The Hare in Myth and Reality: A Review Article," _Folklore_, 84 (1973), p. 317 f.

[46]Cited by Boyle, p. 323.

[47]J. Owen Dorsey, "Nanibozhu in Siouan Mythology," _Journal of American Folklore_, 5 (1892), p. 300.

[48]Ibid., pp. 293 and 304.

[49]Lévi-Strauss, _SA_., p. 225.

[50]Ibid., p. 226.

[51]See, for instance, "The Offended Rolling Stone" (Pawnee) in Stith Thompson, _Tales of the North American Indians_ (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1929), p. 64.

[52]Robert H. Lowie, _Indians of the Plains_ (Garden City, N. Y.: Natural History Press, 1954), pp. 170-75 and 226.

[53]Radin, _Primitive Man as Philosopher_ (New York: Dover Publications, 1957), p. 21 f.

[54]Glucksmann, p. 90.

[55]Ibid., p. 91.

[56]Lévi-Strauss, _SA_., p. 226.

[57]Ibid., p. 227.

[58]Ibid., p. 228.

[59]Pierre Maranda, ed., Mythology (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 12 f. Italics in the original.

[60]Boon, p. 102.

[61]Eliade, p. 5.

[62]Robert A. Georges, ed., Studies on Mythology (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1968), p. 225.

[63]Lévi-Strauss, SA., p. 230.

[64]Lévi-Strauss, From Honey to Ashes, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 180-84. Hereafter cited as HA.

[65]Lévi-Strauss, RC., p. 35 f.

[66]Ibid., p. 339.

[67]Ibid., p. 199.

[68]Lévi-Strauss, HA., p. 236.

[69]Ibid., p. 236 f.

[70]Ibid., p. 296.

[71]Ibid., p. 185 f.

[72]Ibid., p. 186 f.

[73]Ibid., p. 187 f.

[74]Ibid., p. 188.

[75]Ibid., p. 189.

[76]Ibid., p. 190 f.

[77]Ibid., p. 192.

[78]Ibid., p. 193.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Ibid., p. 194.

[81]Ibid., p. 195.

[82]Ibid., p. 195 f.

[83] Ibid., p. 196.

[84] Ibid., p. 197.

[85] Ibid., p. 199.

[86] Ibid., p. 203.

[87] Ibid., p. 201.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid., pp. 202 and 212.

[90] Ibid., p. 213.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Glucksmann, p. 79.

[93] Ibid., p. 83 f.

[94] Lévi-Strauss, _HA_., p. 474.

CHAPTER III

THE UNPROMISING HERO

The final myth to be presented is again embedded among a cluster of motifs and mythological themes that seemingly stretch across the continent. The possible "messages" of the variants, after a quick glance, seem to arrange themselves once more in a three-part scheme. For example, the strongest or most recognizable statement of a cosmological viewpoint is clearly made by the McClintock version (M-4), although it must be remembered that the sensory language is not fully intelligible until the structural elements are brought into full view. The message from Akaiyan, therefore, may be tentatively stated as follows: <u>Nature is the repository of sacred knowledge which may be of benefit to humans</u>.

The reverse of this theme from M-4 is given in no uncertain terms by the Aleut myth from Kodiak Island (M-3). The Raven struts proudly on the back of the whale, but death for everyone is the final result. The message, therefore, may be as follows: <u>Nature can be harmful to humans in the extreme unless certain prescribed rules are followed</u>. Once again, the structural elements, when seen, will necessitate an adjustment in this theme. As for the Kroeber

and Teit versions (M-1 and M-2), these myths also seem to make a positive and a negative statement—this time about the character of the hero himself. The Lillooet myth suggests that young men may succeed if they train themselves and follow correct actions. The Eskimo myth, on the other hand, seems to carry a message that is as blunt as the forbidding region from which it comes: strong men have enemies.

These last two themes also fall more into the level-two category that was mentioned at the beginning of this study; that is, the messages direct themselves at a social or cultural aspect of existence, whereas M-3 and M-4 project one's thoughts outward towards the environment or towards the universe. The task that remains, therefore, will be to examine the structural level of these variants as they apply to the Speck version of the unpromising hero myth. Some background material about the Naskapi will first be presented, followed by a brief summary of the final myth and an attempt to bring the structural level into view.

The Naskapi of the Labrador Peninsula

The first copyright date of Frank Speck's book Naskapi: The Savage Hunters of the Labrador Peninsula, was in 1935.[1] The former student of Franz Boas presents an account of the religious life of the Montagnais-Naskapi primarily, based first on the generally uninformative Jesuit reports and

then on the scanty information available from scattered oral sources. At the beginning of the book there is mainly a dismal recital of pestilence and famine at such places as Escoumains, Lake St. John, Chicoutimi, and Tadoussac (all of which, on the map, may be located north of present day Quebec). The author, unfortunately, does not make much headway with his central topic, Naskapi religion, unless the reader shares his strangely benighted view that the "savages" seem to cling incomprehensibly to their superstitions in spite of the conscientious efforts of the Church:

> When the hunters have returned to the interior, they are again under the thrall of the spiritual forces of the forest; and, except for some acquired rules of conduct, and an attempt, always too vague for their theological comprehension, to imitate the services of the far-off 'prayer-house,' their orthodoxy becomes an exotic memory. One might observe that their conversion is, actually, equivalent to baptism, submission to tithing demands and the monogamous regulation. Among some of the interior bands on the north and northeast of the peninsula the effect of these influences is still nothing. Subordination to sacerdotal authority—which means only the abolishment of polygyny, conjuring and the performance of individual 'pagan' rites of divination, dream control, drumming and dancing—holds sway only for limited periods.[2]

Speck does offer, however, a thorough discussion of the Naskapi concept of the soul.

Several words for the soul, Speck notes, seem to be used by the various bands, the central of which is Mista'peo, "Great Man"; "it is the equivalent of the life embodied in human beings and [besides being located in the heart] possesses the characteristic of surviving the body, which entitles these Indians to be ranked among those people in a primitive state of culture accredited with the almost

universal belief in immortality."[3] The Naskapi, too, believe that the stars are souls, that the Milky Way is the "ghost trail," and that these same souls "congregate in a dance and illuminate the night sky as the northern lights. . . ." The "hero-transformer of Labrador mythology," that is, Tsəka'bec, also "at the termination of his career among the people on earth became transferred to the sun or to the moon, according to the version, and assumed his place as the supreme soul-luminary of the sky."[4]

Tsəka'bec, Speck notes, may possibly mean "'young man who trails a line behind him' from tsəka'beo, 'he who trails a line' (Mistassini); another [possible meaning], 'small man.'"[5] Further down the coast on the Atlantic side, the reader encounters among the Wabanaki and the Penobscot the name Gluska'be, "'Deceiving-Man,'" while directly west of the Naskapi, the "great mythical personage of the Cree, northern Ojibwa Algonquin, and some central Algonkian peoples" is Wisa'kadjak (and its variants).[6] If the discussion about "mediators" in the last chapter is recalled, then it can be seen that we are now some distance from the agricultural Southwest and a sensory language that speaks of "gathering" as an attribute of the trickster. In fact, as Speck indicates, it would be more accurate to say that one has now entered the land of the "Transformer," or at least the land of a mythical personage who has definite attributes of the Northwest Transformer.

The myths of the Naskapi region, therefore, are said

by Speck to make use of "transformation" and "metamorphosis." The "evolutionary theory" of the Indians suggests that in primordial times there were only humans and that animals were descended from men. Also, incredibly, Speck says that a survey of the available Montagnais-Naskapi tales "betrays little indication that they serve any religious end beyond providing explanations of existing phenomena in the natural world."[7] To Speck, therefore, the myth that he recorded about "Ayas'i" was merely an explanation of how a frog and a robin came to be. In fact, the very shape of the land in this northern area was "largely the result of _transformation_," as Speck indicates:

> The explanatory motive averages fairly high in the stories. Existing conditions, the forms and behavior of animals and the geography of the country, are largely the result of _transformation_. Consequently, transformation becomes an abstract principle in the system of thought of the nomads. We see how mammals, fish, birds, and natural landmarks are produced in their present guise by metamorphosis under the power of the conjuror, a shaman of a mythical period. Another important fact is that the trend of Montagnais-Naskapi evolutionary theory is from man to animals. We have a declaration on this point from the old Mistassini ex-shaman, Ka'kwa: 'The animals were once like the Indians and could talk as we do. But some of them were overcome by others while in some animal disguise and forced to remain as such. Others assumed animal shapes so much that involuntarily they became transformed permanently.'[8]

This particular "evolutionary theory," in fact, is quite widespread.

Much else of interest could be cited from Speck's book, especially the material on Naskapi games and on _scapulimancy_, or the practice of scorching an animal's shoulder blade for the purpose of obtaining an answer to a question and for

divination of the future. Such information would no doubt take the reader far afield; it is better, therefore, to absorb what seems relevant from Speck's book and turn directly to the myth that he has collected.

Speck explains that this particular myth was obtained from one John Turner, a native of Moose Factory (a settlement on the east coast of Hudson's Bay), in the summer of 1913. Indeed, he gives a precise fix on the geographical location where the story was told: it was narrated, Speck states, "on the east coast of Hudson's Bay, near Richmond Gulf, longitude 78° west, latitude 56° north."[9] He entitles the myth, simply, "Ayas'i." I have taken the liberty of calling it "Ayas'i's Son," which seems more in keeping with my emphasis on the unpromising hero.

The reader will notice from the example in the appendix that this myth—M-5, Naskapi, "Ayas'i's Son"—begins with a formularized violation. The hero, through no fault of his own, is placed in a state of repudiation. This initial conflict is then followed by an exile and a difficult return, after which the hero comes into his own. The departure, the initiation, the return—these three rather standard movements of the myth are brought to a close by a simple transformation that rather recapitulates the principal action of the myth. The movement away from the village is a signal that the first transformation has occurred. The young hero is called upon to leave his childhood and to enter the adult world, to come to terms

with, in other words, the world's complexities, its temptations, and its rewards. In a rather stilted classical mode, therefore, it is the father who is maneuvered into the role of antagonist. One generation must follow another, but the transition is not always one of gracefully leaving or of humbly accepting what is to be.

The unwarranted exile of the hero, again, should be understood as a means of moving the youth towards his initiation. The myth makes it clear that this hero is blameless at the beginning. He does not show that he is ambitious, as does Nkîmtcamu'l in the Lillooet myth (M-2), nor that he is born with some special power as was Qauaxsaqssuq in the Eskimo myth (M-1). He shares, perhaps, a certain innocence with Akaiyan in the Blackfoot myth (M-4), but Ayas'i's son overcomes this innocence whereas the reader is not certain whether Akaiyan does or not. Partly this difference can be attributed to Ayas'i's son's special struggle with his father, for both heroes are subjected to an essentially similar initiation. Each is called upon to make a symbolic movement upward in the Platonic direction and downward in the Freudian direction. The terms of this initiation are more clear-cut in the Naskapi myth, but the rite of passage for both myths involves a psychic thrust into the world of birds and into the world of frogs. Generally, then, an atmosphere of exotic magic seems to pervade the Naskapi myth; the more mystical overtones of the McClintock version of M-4 are completely missing. This

difference, too, suggests that a tentative statement of theme for the Speck version of M-5 should be phrased as follows: A young man must make use of Nature's gifts in order to strengthen himself.

The last qualifying part to this theme, if it is found to be justified, is important for this whole group of myths. The following analysis, at least, will work towards this idea of the self-sufficiency of the hero.

(1) Shamanism. In the Naskapi myth the narrator makes a point of calling the hero's father a "great chief and trickster," while the Fox in this same story refers to Ayas'i as "very tricky and strong." The heroes in all these myths have some relationship with power, curing power (M-4), hunting power (M-2), physical power (M-1), fishing power (M-3), and magical power to some degree in all the myths but especially observable in M-5. Qauaxsaqssuq, further, is called specifically "a great angakoq (shaman)" in his myth and, like Ayas'i, is "much dreaded and feared." The difference between the two seems to be that Qauaxsaqssuq has been born with his power, whereas the hereditary aspect is only indirectly stated in M-5; Ayas'i's son, that is, develops or discovers his power as the myth proceeds. The fact, then, that "special gifts" are felt to be hereditary (M-1, M-3), or that they result from training in the mountains (M-2), or that they are discovered on magical islands (M-4, M-5), suggest that certain features of the vision-quest and that certain aspects of shamanism play a part in these

myths. Both "practices" will be discussed; the latter, and perhaps the more "northerly" of the two, will be taken first.

Shamanism is best understood as a product of Siberia and Central Asia, where its essential elements are more fully integrated than in any other region on the globe. These elements involve (1) special relations with "spirits," (2) ecstatic capacities permitting of magical flight, (3) ascents to the sky, (4) descents to the underworld, and (5) mastery over fire. The shaman, then, was an early religious figure in the tribe; like a doctor, he was called upon to cure; like a magician, he performed miracles "of the fakir type"; he is best understood, however, as a "psychopomp."[10] As a "spirit-sender," then, "the shaman, and he alone, is the great master of ecstasy."

Various reactions, mostly negative, to these older, highly individualistic shamans of the North (primarily) can be gleaned from the literature. Eliade states that Paul Radin, for one, emphasized the "'epileptoid or hysteroid psychic structure of most medicine men, citing it to support his thesis of the psychopathological origin of the class of sorcerers and priests.'"[11] Eliade, on the other hand, stresses the normal, and usually above average, intellect of the shaman, as do a host of others who are acquainted with the northern regions.[12] More importantly, the distinction that is partly discernible between North American and Siberian shamanism is said to be a difference between "a <u>deliberate quest</u>" and a divine election:

> It has been sought to distinguish between the initiations of North American and Siberian shamans by asserting that, for the former, there is always a deliberate quest, whereas in Asia the shamanic vocation is always in some sort inflicted by the spirits. Bogoras, using the findings of Ruth Benedict, sums up the acquiring of Shamanic powers in North America as follows: To enter into contact with the spirits or to obtain guardian spirits, the aspirant withdraws into solitude and subjects himself to a strict regime of self-torture. When the spirits manifest themselves in animal form, the aspirant is believed to give them his own flesh to eat. But offering oneself as food for animal spirits, an act accomplished by dismemberment of one's own body, is only a parallel formula to the ecstatic rite of dismembering the apprentice's body.[13]

Withdrawing into solitude and offering one's own flesh to animal spirits should especially be stressed. The first must be seen in relation to the symbolism of the "Center," or to those symbolic images of the connection between heaven and earth (rainbow, bridge, stairs, ladder, vine, cord, "chain of arrows," mountain, etc.) which Eliade suggests are "merely variants of the World Tree or the *axis mundi*." Further, Eliade speaks of "a primordial 'situation' accessible to [shamans but possible for] the rest of mankind only through death." It is this "journey to heaven" that the shaman, finally, attempts to achieve *in actuality, in concreto*; and the attempt, Eliade suggests, has possibly brought about the gradual decadence of shamanism.[14]

Certainly the yearning to experience *in concreto* the actual journey to heaven is understandable enough. It may be possible, also, that the shamans taught their listeners only too well, that, in short, the inevitable laicizing process was set in motion, and that, where population density

increased, the "archaic techniques of ecstasy" were incorporated, in a modified way, into the value inventory of the culture. Even this speculation, however, is suspect. Over the many millennia, who can say how many "borrowings" there were or in what directions they went?

These remarks about shamanism and the symbolism involved permit the reader, then, to attach significance to certain aspects of the central myth, as well as to certain features that now stand out in the variants. First, each of the heroes, with one exception, is either exposed to, or discovers for himself, the Center. Qauaxsaqssuq in M-1 sleeps, as a child, in the "lamp-hole." Nkîmtcamu'l in M-2, as a youth, huddles near the fire and later trains in the mountains. Akaiyan in M-4 and Ayas'i's son in M-5 are both left stranded on an island. Only the Raven can be said to be already "in" Nature; the other heroes, in various ways, cross the cultural line and absorb or take their power from Nature.

(2) <u>The Potiphar theme</u>. This device for getting quickly into the action of the story seems common enough; there is, however, a possible difference between its use in M-4 and M-5. In the Naskapi myth a line of shamanistic succession is in question; the conflict suggests that a new generation has come of age and that a power struggle will ultimately be involved. Tentatively, this "changing of the guard" will be adopted as the armature of the myth. Certain other points, however, need to be added before it

can be realistically established as the dominant movement of M-5. Also, from remarks made by Lévi-Strauss, the observer learns to question more closely the various roles that are given to women in the myths. It would be stretching matters perhaps if the role of the second wife in the Naskapi myth (M-5) was said to be a way of "calling the future shaman." Yet, women often seem to be closely connected with or to speak sometimes for Nature in the myths; in the Lillooet myth (M-2), Nkîmtcamu'l climbed onto the roof of a house and spat down on the navel of a young virgin. The fertility potential that was signified by the act was also expressed, or reflected, in his nightly trips to the mountains, where he killed many marmots; the young virgin, in other words, was a distant echo either of the Eskimo Sea Mother (Sedna,[15] or, as she is called by Eliade, Takánakapsaluk[16]) or simply of the inland life-giving Earth Mother. Note, too, that Qauaxsaqssuq in the "lamp-hole" was somewhat in the same position as Nkîmtcamu'l when the latter impregnated the virgin. Also, the concerned mother in the Speck version (M-5) is scorched by her husband Ayas'i, an act which symbolically moves her also towards the centrally located fire of any dwelling, towards the fire in general, and towards the Center. What is burnt, in structural terms, is also that which is transformed.

In the Blackfoot myth, Akaiyan is pitted against a brother, Nopatsis, who is eventually lost. A close variant of this myth, which will now be listed as the Grinnell

version of M-6, Blackfeet, "The Beaver Medicine,"[17] also has a young wife of an older chief; in this myth, however, the young lady causes the hero to act by wearing his old clothes in public, thus exposing him as a young warrior who has done nothing to bring honor upon himself. The young man is shamed into action, the outcome of which is the origin of a more deadly kind of warfare. In this myth, also, Api-kunni—for this is the name of the hero—spends a whole winter in a beaver house. The song which is taught to him by the beaver chief is given in the myth. It is as follows:

> I am like an island,
> For on an island I got my power.
> In battle I live
> While people fall away from me.[18]

The armature of the Akaiyan story (M-4), therefore, is still very close to the movement found in the last myth (M-5). In M-4 and M-6 (the Blackfoot myths), however, the hero, in both instances, reports at the end to an elder of the tribe, whereas Ayas'i's son confronts his father face to face. The primary difference between the Naskapi and the Blackfoot myths, therefore, seems to be the distinction that can be drawn between shamanism and the vision-quest. If so, then the loss of the brother in the McClintock version (M-4) suggests, from one point of view, that a physical exchange was made with the spirit world, which is to say, a sacrifice, whereas Akaiyan only symbolically was "sacrificed." The "payment" that is always due, at least, may take on strange forms in the sensory language. To enter the belly

of a whale, the temple interior, the cave, the home of the beavers is, in a sense, a form of self-annihilation. At least it is only the hero "whose attachment to ego is already annihilate" who is able to pass "back and forth across the horizons of the world, in and out of the dragon, as readily as a king through all the rooms of this house."[19]

(3) Animal helpers, including birds. If the crossing of the boundary that encircles the human zone means that for the hero an important step towards manhood or spiritual awareness has been taken, then the actual meeting with a "helper" from those powerful animal and avian tribes in Nature is an experience that can change one's life. Only after a prolonged period of purification does the event usually occur. Ayas'i's son, therefore, speaks to the gull and rides for a while on its back. He is found to be too heavy, so the gull returns with him to the island, presumably indicating that his training is not yet complete. Ayas'i, it should be remembered, ordered his son to go far "inland." As the island itself is seen as a Center and as the search from the beginning was for eggs, then the psychic direction is upward towards the highest nests in the shaman's World Tree. The bird of the shaman, at least, is "one of particular character and power, endowing him with an ability to fly in trance beyond all bounds of life, and yet return." A shaman of the North, in one interview, emphasized this very point:

> 'Up above there is a certain tree,' said a shaman of the Tungus, who was questioned at his home on the

> Lower Tunguska River in the spring of 1925. 'There the souls of the shamans are reared before they attain their powers. On the boughs of this tree are nests in which the souls of the shamans lie and are attended. The name of the tree is 'Tuuru.' The higher the nest is placed in this tree, the stronger will the shaman be who is raised in it, the more will he know, and the farther will he see.' The shaman, then, is not only a familiar denizen, but even the favored scion, of those realms of power that are invisible to our normal waking consciousness, which all may visit briefly in vision, but through which he roams, a master.[20]

It should be noted that Akaiyan on his island also made use of birds; the myth states that he "made a warm robe for himself by binding the skins [of birds] together with alder bark."

To better understand the power that is attached to this Tree of Life, it is necessary to consider a rather different kind of hero. The backside of the "tapestry," in other words, may demonstrate the significance of a meeting with a spirit bird. Such a being in disguise is very likely the central actor in the Aleut myth (M-3).

The question of who was at fault seems somehow central to the action of this particular myth, that is, the whole village was lost except for the Raven, his human wife, and his grandmother. If the myth, therefore, does pose a problem of sorts, then the listener, perhaps, is left with several alternatives which he may take. First, the superficial answer might be that this myth demonstrates how this or that clan came to have the Raven as a totem ancestor. The answer would be acceptable only if one ignored certain significant elements of the shaman's ideology. It has already been pointed out that the Raven is "of" Nature, that

he is ideally seen as being at the Center. The myth that makes this point doubly understandable will now be listed as the Franz Boas version of M-7, Tsimshian, "Raven Becomes Voracious."[21]

The Tsimshian myth (M-7), which is here condensed, tells of a family of mythical animals that once lived when the whole world was covered by darkness. The family protrayed had an only child, a boy, who was much loved but who died as a youth. His intestines were removed and burned, but the body was kept on a special bed that was built for him. One morning his mother found that another youth, as "bright as fire," was lying where the body of her son had been. Immediately she thought that "the shining youth" was her own son who had come back to life. As the days passed, however, the parents noticed that the boy ate nothing at all. One day the chief also discovered that the corpse of his son was still in his special bed. "Nevertheless," the myth says, "he loved his new child."

A kind of transformation comes about one day when two "human" slaves who worked in the household reluctantly gave the youth a small bit of scab to eat, this being at his request, for he noticed that the slaves were always hungry; the eating of scabs from their shin bones was given as the reason for their appetite. The expected, of course, soon happens; the shining youth became voracious and began to eat everything in sight, so much so that his father reluctantly had to send him away; the youth had "devoured almost

all the provisions of his tribe." The myth continues as follows:

> 'My dear son,' the chief said, 'I shall send you away inland to the other side of the ocean.' He gave his son a small round stone and a raven blanket and a dried sea lion bladder filled with all kinds of berries. The chief said to his son, 'When you fly across the ocean and feel weary, drop this round stone on the sea, and you shall find rest on it; and when you reach the mainland, scatter the various kinds of fruit all over the land; and also scatter the salmon roe in all the rivers and brooks, and also the trout roe, so that you may not lack food as long as you live in this world.' Then he started. His father named him Giant.

Is the Raven in the Golder version (M-3) a mythical reflection of the powerful Raven in the Tsimshian myth (M-7)? The identification is seemingly made in several ways: first, by the ease with which the Raven brings the whale to the village (the Boas version states symbolically that this bird is a "master of fish"), and, secondly, by his actions when the villagers begin to butcher the whale, for it is said in the myth, "His importance was not lost on the raven, who hopped up and down the whale's back, viewing the scene of carnage and gorging below him. Every now and then he would take out a pebble from the tool bag which he had about him, and after a seeming consultation put it back." The scene, in other words, reminds the Raven of the appetite that was given to him by humans; the pebble, perhaps, recalls the fact that he was expelled from a more perfect realm. Yet, he had asked for only a bit of scab to eat: with it had come all the human urges and drives, as well as the insatiable demands for food.

Why, then, were those early "miserable" human slaves

reluctant to share even a bit of scab? The Golder version sheds light on that first mythical meal; the forces of Nature require that a number of girl babies be sacrified, or placed out on the snow, in order that the larger group may survive. The ideology suggests that this sacrifice must be made willingly; the "bride" of the Raven, therefore, is called upon to make a journey from which there is no return. This village, however, only reluctantly complied, with the consequences that, in this particular clime, were bound to happen.

The Boas version, too, gives a more precise demonstration of the "hatching process" that occurs at the shaman's World Tree. The "shining youth" is born from the disemboweled corpse, which is to say, the "shell" has been left behind in the "nest." The inner light that comes from the youth is not only a fairly good definition of the term applied to Qauaxsaqssuq, that is, "angakoq," but is probably "solidified light," that is, "quartz crystals," for this type of rock, as Eliade notes, "plays an essential role in Australian magic and religion, and it is no less important throughout Oceania and the Two Americas."[22] "The Kwakiutl shamans receive their power through quartz crystals. . . . [and] elsewhere the same stones bestow the power to fly—as, for example, in an American myth recorded by Boas, in which a young man, climbing a shining mountain, becomes covered with rock crystals and immediately begins to fly."[23] The idea, then, that the "celestial vault" is solid also

explains "the virtues of meteorites and thunderstones." Such items, as well as rather "common" rocks that are round and that are found on mountain tops, "are impregnated with a magico-religious virtue that can be used, communicated, disseminated; they form, as it were, a new center of uranian sacrality on earth."[24]

No significance, however, can be attached to the stone with which Ayas'i's son strikes the Catfish; the stone is not distinctive in any way; possibly, in a literary sense, it foreshadows the eventual death of the sea creature. Still, the boy who rides upon the back of the fish has rather classical overtones. There _is_ significance, though, in the fact that Ayas'i's son has found a means of transportation, that he is beginning to make good use of the animal "powers" surrounding him, and that he is moving at last away from the Center and on a homeward journey. Trials still await him; however, in this particular myth the nature of these trials, as well as the episode of the Catfish and its death, seem a bit enigmatic, and, as myths go, a bit arbitrary. In order to clarify the action, then, certain relationships from another close variant need to be examined. This close variant is here listed as the Alanson Skinner version of M-8, _Cree_, "The Jealous Father."[25]

The Skinner version follows the Naskapi myth almost word for word, except for the latter parts in which the trials are slightly different. Also, the Catfish is replaced by a Walrus and Ayas'i's name is now "Aioswé."

The Walrus, of course, belongs to the far north; more importantly, this particular animal offers a possible clue to the lightning that strikes just as the "son of Aioswé" is nearing the mainland. The reason is related to another variant; therefore, the matter will be brought up later. The immediate problem is to determine what significance, if any, the various trials have. In the Naskapi version there are three: the fish-hooks from the sky, the monster-dogs guarding the path, and the matter of the vagina dentata.

The Cree myth (M-8) changes all three of these trials slightly and combines two of them; the myth also demonstrates by another device how the listener should interpret the events. First, the women who had "sharp teeth set in their vulva" (M-5) are changed to "two old blind hags" with "sharp bones like daggers protruding from the lower arm at the elbow." Their purpose, though, is still to kill anyone they meet. Next, the fish-hooks from the sky are changed to human bones "hung across the path so that no one could pass by without making them rattle." Should anyone disturb the human bones, then a group of people and "big dogs" in a nearby tent would run out and kill the stranger, no matter who he was.

It will be remembered also that a Fox (female) was the animal helper in the Naskapi myth. In the Cree myth, the Fox is changed to an "old woman"; further, the Cree myth states specifically that the appearance of this "old woman" was caused by "a wish" on the part of the mother of the

hero. The myth-maker thus emphasized the magical aspects of the hero's journey. Of the death of the Walrus, for instance, the myth states, "This thunderstorm was sent to destroy Walrus by Aioswé's father, who conjured it. Walrus, on the other hand, was the result of conjuring by his mother, who wished to save her son's life."[26] Such statements, then, tend to confirm the fact that this myth is essentially concerned with a power struggle between two shamans, a father and a son.

The device that is used in the Cree myth to escape the dogs is a "stuffed ermine skin." The "old woman" of the myth advised the hero to dig "a tunnel in the path under the bones." The hero grows careless, however, and rattles the bones; immediately the people and the dogs come running out. The myth states at this point that "Aioswé's son was under ground in the tunnel." The people could not see him, so "after they had searched for a while they returned" to their tent. The dogs, though, continued to search. The myth reads as follows: "At length, they found the mouth of the hole Aioswé's son had dug. The dogs came to the edge and began to bark till all the people ran out again with their weapons. Then Aioswé's son took the stuffed ermine skin and poked its head up. All the people saw it and thought it was really ermine. Then they were angry and killed the dogs for lying."[27]

The ruse seems trivial in itself; in relation to the Naskapi myth, however, it becomes an important statement.

"The presence," Eliade writes, "of a helping spirit in animal form, dialogue with it in a secret language, or incarnation of such an animal spirit by the shaman (masks, actions, dances, etc.) is another way of showing that the shaman can forsake his human condition, is able, in a word, to 'die.'" Further, Eliade continues, "Shamans challenge one another in animal form, and if his alter ego is killed in the fight, the shaman very soon dies himself."[28] Ayas'i's son, at this point in the myth, has already won his battle, in other words. His training, it can be seen, is essentially complete; he is able to travel in the air, under the water, and under the ground. He has added to his collection of animal helpers the gull, the fox, the ermine, the catfish (or walrus), and he has demonstrated that he can hold his own against an odd assortment of evil powers. Only the final confrontation remains, but, because the "turning point" has been given, the reader now knows what is ahead. The more dramatic closing passage of the Cree myth shows that Aioswé's son (and Ayas'i's son) has indeed come into his own:

> Aioswé's son escaped again and this time he got home. When he drew near his father's wigwam, he could hear his mother crying, and as he approached still closer he saw her. She looked up and saw him coming. She cried out to her husband and co-wife, 'My son has come home again.' The old man did not believe it. 'It is not possible,' he cried. But his wife insisted on it. Then the old man came out and when he saw it was really his son, he was very much frightened for his own safety. He called out to his other wife, 'Bring some caribou skins and spread them out for my son to walk on.' But the boy kicked them away. 'I have come a long way,' said he, 'with only my bare feet to walk on.'

> That night, the boy sang a song about the burning of the world and the old man sang against him but he was not strong enough. 'I am going to set the world on fire,' said the boy to his father, 'I shall make all the lakes and rivers boil.' He took up an arrow and said, 'I am going to shoot this arrow into the woods; see if I don't set them on fire.' He shot his arrow into the bush and a great blaze sprang up and all the woods began to burn.
>
> 'The forest is now on fire,' said the old man, 'but the water is not yet burning.' 'I'll show you how I can make the water boil also,' said his son. He shot another arrow into the water, and it immediately began to boil. Then the old man who wished to escape said to his son, 'How shall we escape?' The old man had been a great bear hunter and had a large quantity of bear's grease preserved in a bark basket. 'Go into your fat basket,' said his son, 'you will be perfectly safe there.' Then he drew a circle on the ground and placed his mother there. The ground enclosed by the circle was not even scorched, but the wicked old man who had believed he would be safe in the grease baskets, was burned to death.
>
> Aioswé's son said to his mother, 'Let us become birds. What will you be?' 'I'll be a robin,' said she. 'I'll be a whisky jack (Canada jay),' he replied. They flew off together.[29]

Being a master of fire is the one attribute that directly links the shaman to Nature's power source.

Ayas'i, therefore, receives his just desserts because, as the myth suggests, he misuses his power. He is deceived by his young wife, he symbolically moves away from the Center (the island is blown further away), and, as a keeper and user of fire, he wrongly burns his older wife, a fate that in time, and in terms of the Cree myth, also falls upon him. In the Naskapi myth, he is consigned to an anti-fire existence. Thus, each incident that occurs in this myth has a logical explanation, that is, in terms of the sensory language that is employed. Further, such images as are presented by the myth need not be interpreted as mere

fantasy (as Cassirer suggests) unless one can imagine that cultures situated great distances from each other can fantasize, so to speak, in a common musical key. The lightning that strikes the Catfish (or the Walrus) can be seen as a "mythical reminder," or an allusion to a more authoritative text, that is, to a variant that will now be listed as the Franz Boas version of M-9, Eskimo, "Sedna, Mistress of the Underworld."[30]

It would be too tedious to recount all the details of this myth; it is mentioned, afterall, only to clear up a minor point. The gist of the story, then, is that Sedna, like the first bride of the Raven in M-3, is unhappy in her marriage to a fulmar, another type of arctic bird. When her father attempts to bring her home, however, the fulmars cause a heavy storm on the sea. They were enraged because Sedna's father had killed her fulmar husband. When the storm begins to form, then, the father panics and decides to throw Sedna overboard. She, of course, holds to the side of the boat for dear life. The father, then, takes his knife and cuts off the first joints of her fingers. "Falling into the sea," the myth states, "they were transformed into whales, the nails turning into whalebone. Sedna holding on to the boat more tightly, the second finger joints fell under the sharp knife and swam away as seals; when the father cut off the stumps of the fingers they became ground seals."[31]

The myth shows next that Sedna did punish her father;

more importantly, however, the point is made that all of the life of the sea belongs to Sedna (the Indian's evolutionary scheme extends even to this realm). If a seal or a walrus is destroyed, then, in mythical terms, it is but one of Sedna's fingers which is lost. The element of sacrifice, therefore, is expressed in the Naskapi myth; just as Sedna lost her fingers, so it behooves man at certain times to sacrifice one of his. We have seen, however, that the shaman ritually "dies": "He who loses his life in this particular fashion," the myth seems to say, "shall find it." This paradox, which belongs also to a western religious tradition, should not be too difficult to understand.

A Final Comment on the Myths

The highly structured synchronic approach that has been used in this chapter has resembled in no small way a very complex switchboard; circuits that are plugged in instantly connect the listener with other continents, with forgotten cultures that speak from remote corners of the globe. Clearly, the "calls" that were placed to this unfamiliar region or to that broad continent were not exhausted; other calls could have been made. The white beaver chief in the Blackfoot myth (M-4) was understanding and helpful—why? Because—and this citation of source will be the final call on the switchboard—his name is "Che-Che-Puy-Ew-Tis" and he was once a young man quite like Akaiyan himself. This variant is here listed as the Robert Bell version of M-10,

Northern Cree, "The History of the Che-Che-Puy-Ew-Tis."[32]

Should the reader "step back," finally, to the level of symbolic forms, then it seems that Cassirer was partially correct when he suggested that these certain "works" of humans have a way of objectifying unidentified phenomena in Nature. What exactly it was that myth and religion (as symbolic forms) were objectifying he was unable to say; the matter, however, is a bit clearer when the structural approach is used. The unpromising hero, the observer notices, seems to step forth here and there in the myths as a hero in his own right. In the Naskapi myth he is still functioning entirely within the context of older beliefs; his destiny is somewhat fixed, his journey is, to a great extent, predetermined, his life is but a reflection of a hundred previous lives that were ruggedly deposited in the bitter North, and his energies seem dedicated primarily to "playing the game well." When all the variants are considered, however, then the "improvising" and the gradual breaking away from an older tradition can be noted. Nkîmtcamu'l in the Lillooet myth (M-2) can hardly be destined for the usual religious life; he is interested in material things, in appearances, in class distinctions. Akaiyan, also, in the Blackfoot myth (M-4) seemingly has no interest in magic in the usual sense; what powers he retrieves from Nature are for the benefit of the people. If he seems, finally, a priest of sorts, then he seems, also, more open about the whole process. It is only when one reads the myths of the

far north that the religious and secular issues appear somehow to change. Nature, or a side of Nature that is relentless and formidable, seems unexplainably present, always, somehow, capable of extinguishing life at a moment's notice. What does Qauaxsaqssuq have to say about his fate? There is not the faintest hint; the silence suddenly descends and the words stop. And is there an answer to the question that the Aleut myth (M-3) seems to ask? If it is one of the functions of art to make reality palatable, then in certain instances all that art can do is attempt to cover up, or to hide what no one really cares to contemplate. Only if a baby girl is not given a name is it liable, it is said, to be exposed to the elements.[33] Possibly it is not a religious question at all, simply a matter of survival. Myth, however, deals with issues, the stress-points in a society, and it is in the business of giving answers, even if, sometimes, the question has not been specifically asked. Of course, the reader may assume that at the structural level the questions are always asked, for events and objects are being structured and defined and classified.

Should the extraordinary happenings of myth expand and like a river begin to overrun its banks, then the organizer one day will appear. He will say that the island in this myth has a purpose, that the changes that happen can be tidied up, highlighted, made clearer: the nymph Calypso belongs here, Circe there, Cyclops elsewhere. Such organizers, clearly, were also present on the North American

continent. Indeed, as we have seen, there was material enough to work with. But, depending on how one looks at it, time suddenly came to an end for the myth-makers, or, *time began*.

END NOTES

[1]Frank G. Speck, _Naskapi_ (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1977). This book is volume ten in _The Civilization of the American Indian Series_.

[2]Ibid., p. 20 f.

[3]Ibid., p. 34 f.

[4]Ibid., p. 44 f.

[5]Ibid., p. 48.

[6]Ibid., p. 49.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Speck, "Some Naskapi Myths from Little Whale River," _Journal of American Folklore_, 28 (1915), 70.

[10]Mircea Eliade, _Shamanism_, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 4-6.

[11]Quoted by Eliade, p. 26.

[12]Ibid., p. 27.

[13]Ibid., p. 108.

[14]Ibid., pp. 492-94.

[15]Stith Thompson, _Tales of the North American Indians_ (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1929), p. 3.

[16]Eliade, p. 294.

[17]George Bird Grinnell, _Blackfoot Lodge Tales_ (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1962), pp. 117-24.

[18]Ibid., p. 121.

[19]Joseph Campbell, _The Hero with a Thousand Faces_ (Princeton Univ. Press, 1949), p. 93.

[20]Campbell, *The Flight of the Wild Gander* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1960), p. 167 f.

[21]Thompson, pp. 19-21.

[22]Eliade, p. 139.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 138 f.

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 139.

[25]Thompson, pp. 116-20.

[26]*Ibid.*, p. 118.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 119.

[28]Eliade, p. 93 f.

[29]Thompson, p. 119 f.

[30]*Ibid.*, p. 3 f.

[31]*Ibid.*, p. 4.

[32]Robert Bell, "The History of the Che-Che-Puy-Ew-Tis," *Journal of American Folklore*, 10 (1897), 1-8.

[33]Asen Balikci, *The Netsilik Eskimo* (Garden City, N. Y.: Natural History Press, 1970), p. 148 f.

CHAPTER IV

THE FLOWERING TREE

A Summary of the Evaluative Approaches

Franz Boas saw myth as a species of literature, as an "out-flow of . . . literary activity." As such, this oral literature, he suggested, would incorporate the rules of conduct, the hopes, the fears that had a bearing on the particular culture involved. On the other hand, it would not reflect in some subtle fashion the relevant "history" of the tribe, nor would it serve as a text to explain the phenomena observed in Nature. The folk-tales, too—if a distinction, that is, between forms is felt to be necessary—were said by Boas to be "analogous to modern novelistic literature."

Does this highly empirical point of view, then, suffice? The answer is—partially. Certainly the literary function—entertainment and broadening-of-consciousness, or instruction and delight—accounts for the largest portion of myth. But it is also a literature which is largely lost to the present day listener. Why is this so? Boas, wisely perhaps, failed to address himself to this particular question. More importantly, an emphasis on the artistic aspects of myth suggests that the "similarities" among myths, that

the "regularities" attributed to myths have little interpretative value and that a rigorous scientific approach in this area would have little if any meaning whatsoever. Indeed, the Boasian view admits that a scientific approach to the study of mythology is limited to peripheral concerns: collecting, translating, annotating, classifying. The interpretation of myth, it is perhaps felt, requires another disciplinary approach.

To define the science of mythology in some fashion, however, is no small undertaking. Boas, it can now be seen, was hampered by the lack of relevant data from other disciplines and from his own area of interest. Naturally, such matters were of immediate concern. His limitations, therefore, can be associated somewhat with the body of available knowledge in his own time. Neither was he one who would try out various theories. What was presented, finally, was the available fact and the solid fact. Consequently, the study of myth, especially that branch of mythology found in the New World, was given a strong <u>scientific</u> <u>underpinning</u> which endures to this day. Primarily because of Boas a world that was rapidly fading was somewhat regained.

Four regional studies of American Indian myths were cited to show that investigations in this particular field have continued into the present. An important aspect of the mythological studies of each writer concerned particularly the character, or the mythic actor, known as the trickster. Being a blend of both helpful and harmful

characteristics, the trickster seems to embody especially the perverse in the world of the myths; his multiple-presence, that is in various forms, no doubt highlights the unpredictable, the chaotic, and at times the crude. Too often overlooked, however, is the side of the trickster's nature which has some connection with order and regularity. In Paul Radin's The Trickster, the former good intentions of this popular demiurge are at least suggested. As an example of how not to act, the trickster often teaches a valuable lesson. Unfortunately, like the Raven in the Tsimshian myth, the trickster's tragic flaw seems to be his early and possibly damaging contact with humans. Robert Lowie, in his studies of Crow mythology, finds the trickster thoroughly immersed in the all too human activities of earthly existence. Thus Lowie duly classifies "this incorrible buffoon" as a possible deity of sorts and proceeds to speak of the oddities and the widespread similarities of other New World myths.

In Victor Barnouw's study of Chippewa myths, the psychological approach to the trickster's nature is presented. Anal and oral themes are discussed, as well as incidents in the myths which show aggression in one form or another. The trickster, probably, is considered "to be a representation of the id or the life principle." The view is somewhat explanatory. In my opinion, however, one of the most important lines in Barnouw's book is the opening sentence: The Sun Impregnates a Girl. From this union springs the

trickster and his brothers (most often in Algonkian myths, it is twins, rather than triplets, Barnouw notes). In spite of the trickster's supposed divinity and his otherwise mysterious powers, this human birth establishes and canonizes, perhaps, the "earth-dark connection." Such a paradoxical figure, therefore, may be a provider of "drastic entertainment" and may be a carrier of the most ancient mythological strains, but his nature is also defined by and subject to a dimly perceived "Chain of Being" or an ancient theory of degrees. This concept of a gradation of things is suggested particularly by the northern myths that were analyzed, for what seemed to be at issue here and there was a concern with light and darkness, or a concern with the purity of light, or an equation between light and life, such that, finally, the pertinent philosophy seemed to be related to a religion of light.

If in the dim reaches of antiquity there were this "northern orthodoxy," the outlines of which are irretrievably blurred, then it is also true that the life of the continent went blissfully on, that the widespread vision-quest had its own contribution to make, and that even the trickster began to fade somewhat in certain myths of the Northwest. Melville Jacobs surveys the oral tradition of the Clackamas Chinook; he offers a selection of myths to demonstrate the unique character and the imaginative energy of this Lower Columbia River world. He suggests, also, in certain passages of his book, that the human side of the

trickster was winning out, that the Clackamas Coyotes were being equated with the headmen of the village, and that the specific transforming function was giving way merely to announcing. In any case, each of the four writers cited offered important viewpoints which together contributed to a better understanding of the trickster and of the mythology of which he was a part. The differences in myths that result from an empirical investigation are a necessary complement to any approach which makes extensive use of the similarities in myths.

The structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss, by contrast, is primarily an epistemology. Glucksmann stresses "the unconscious mental structures" that seemingly are uncovered in an analysis of myth, as well as the presence of "idealism and psychologism" in any philosophical evaluation of Lévi-Strauss's work. Language, however, is real to Lévi-Strauss, as it was to Ferdinand de Saussure. When Glucksmann, then, states that Lévi-Strauss's "structures are not tied to a material base," then he seems to speak from the viewpoint of empirical science, a viewpoint that is said by Lévi-Strauss to be somewhat limited because it is tied mainly to the appearance of things. The argument, if seen as somehow central to our century, may be merely in its initial phases. Certainly rationalism seems to be coming into its own again, or the type of data being considered may require, very simply, new approaches. To me, the argument that Lévi-Strauss presents seems formidable. Language seems at least as real

as an electric charge; ultimately there may be a connection between the two. The structural approach, also, has had specific and satisfying results; a way has been found to retrieve a certain kind of archaic knowledge; once again, in fact, the New World has had to yield somewhat to a capable and influential explorer.

The dualistic category proposed by Bastian for the peculiarities of myth and the tripartite scheme presented in chapter one to categorize the various approaches to myth must finally be seen as heuristic devices when compared to the structural approach. The postulated statement of structuralism, for instance, is not dualistic: the sensory language, being the _permanence of change_, is clearly "erected upon" the structural level of thought, which can be seen as the _permanence within change_. This last psychological, but not strictly biological, level is _real_ as opposed to the _pseudo-reality_ of man's theology, or what in essence has been a philosophical coordinator for the regimented group, or for the tribe, as well as much more that is rather too dismal to recount. Man, in short, has primarily been a follower throughout the milleniums; the wolf pack, afterall, has survival capabilities. The structural elements, then, pick up the sameness, the repetitions, the patterns, the endless monotony that characterize man's thinking. _The unified view, therefore, stresses worldly renown, power, possessions, virility, pleasure, and occasionally creativity, altruism, and a quest for knowledge._ The myths, presenting

actors larger than life, often speak of those who break the mold, of those who are helpful, of those who are wise. The injunction to swim upstream rather than drift is, no doubt, in some way a vital part of our rich animal heritage. The specific way in which we have carried out the injunction has been, perhaps, distinctively human.

The structural approach, finally, will in time become a part of the general scientific apparatus with which men and women view the world. From the critical comments and evaluations scattered throughout the relevant literature, I gather that many would agree that its value is now an established fact.

A Historical View of the Myths

The more perfect world that is very likely there among the stars, according to the interpretative analysis of the Naskapi myth (M-5), has been termed, finally, a pseudo-reality, a magico-religious view which is to some extent laicized in the variants that were recounted. Such labels must be understood as the evaluative pronouncement of one value-system, in this instance the scientific value-system. From the time of its first historical articulation in specifically western terms (during the Greek centuries of Thales and Plato), the scientific value-system has steadily oriented itself towards the world, towards Nature, towards things in Nature, and has taken as its special prerogative an assessment, a retrieval, and a definition of knowledge.

Very simply, then, shamanistic mysticism, or polytheism, or merely shamanism, does not qualify as knowledge in the scientific sense. It may, however, qualify as knowledge in a special pre-scientific sense, and in terms of the sensory language shamanism may have definite logical characteristics. The term "science of the concrete," or "concrete logic," used by Lévi-Strauss, seems an entirely acceptable way of describing the knowledge of early humans, if it is remembered that technical skills and a host of early classificatory schemes are involved.

The brief exposure to this older knowledge that is the result primarily of a structural analysis of the myths suggests that a series of mystical or religious statements has been made by the ancient hunters from the very earliest times. The central statement, perhaps, is as follows: *other worlds are available, or the end of life as we know it is finally inconceivable*. As expressed by the myths that were analyzed, the view is unusual because the deities, or the supernatural figures, are conspicuous by their absence. The image of the Center—sometimes visualized as a mythical tree, as noted by Eliade—seems older than the shamans who visited it in vision, older than the palm tree sisters who found a husband there in "The Story of Haburi," and older than the powerful Raven named Giant in the Tsimshian myth (M-7). The reader need not look far, in fact, to find examples of the World Tree, or its various manifestations. "*Wága ca*^{h}," the cotton wood tree, was used as

the central pole in the Sioux Sun Dance; also, in the vision of Black Elk, the holy man of the Oglala, one passage reads as follows: "And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy."[1]

From a structural point of view, therefore, the old tree has not disappeared. The Christmas tree still graces many an American home during the last weeks of the year. What is not so well known is a summertime Christmas tree of sorts which is known to Native Americans as a powwow. Many Indian participants, probably, would be mildly surprised if this winter and summer relationship were pointed out. Why are the costumes at most Indian dance-gatherings made of the feathers of birds? The so-called "fancy dance" costume, with its feathers and bells, evolved in certain areas of Oklahoma sometime after statehood. But why was it so readily accepted in the "powwow areas" of the state? The Center, naturally, can be anywhere; there is little need to explain this point (at its simplest it is understood as a "prayer"). In another fashion, therefore, the mythical tree can also come to life when people gather about the powwow drums each summer. For most, the event has little religious significance any longer; the laicizing process is all but complete. Certainly there are some whose energies can only find an effective outlet at various Indian "doings."

And at times the older elements—the sharing of goods, the leveling of social distinctions, the emphasis on deeds, on blood-ties, on family lineage, and the emphasis on a special kind of music—seem to remind one of the more rigorous unity that once prevailed in various parts of North America not so very long ago. For one who is acquainted with the myths, such "hints" or "survivals" from the past can be, in their own way, interesting, as well as useful, especially in relation to Native American literature.

To emphasize only the religious aspect of the myths, however, is to highlight only the "cold," anti-historical side of America's early cultures. It may be useful for Lévi-Strauss to refer to most ancient societies as essentially "cold," as opposed to a typically record-keeping, energy-burning "hot" western culture, but the terms, in my opinion, are better applied to institutions, to value-systems, even to individuals and family groups. The Naskapi myth (M-5), for instance, seems both "cold" and "hot" in the sense that it refers the listener back, initially, to the self-repeating viewpoints of shamanism in which a fabulous extraterrestrial existence is classified, finally, as a permanent reality. Yet, the unpromising hero is confronted with a series of trials <u>in</u> this world. It was pointed out how the myth-maker introduced the shamanistic "conjuring" and the "animal powers" to explain, possibly, the eventual success of Ayas'i's son. Still, the fact that there were trials of any kind should suggest the "hot"

features of the world of the hero, as opposed to the "cold" world that descends at times from somewhere and thus has an effect upon what the hero seems to see with his eyes. Should variants of the Naskapi myth which were not mentioned and which are to be found in all parts of North America be examined, then it would be seen that the "trials" of the hero take almost every conceivable form. It means, certainly, that there is "work" enough in this world for the mythical heroes. It means, too, that the magical stuff will inevitably be compared again and again with the purely human abilities. There will be a hero with great strength, as in the Eskimo myth (M-1), and there will be a hero with a hunter's crafty mind, as in the Lillooet myth (M-2). And the latter hero, especially, will question the "powers," will eventually reject the magic, will finally dismiss as irrelevant the very gods themselves. The disbeliever will emerge. The feeble beginnings of such heroes can be dimly seen in the unpromising hero. Afterall, the many trials that the unencumbered and self-willed hero underwent—such a personage as Odysseus or Gilgamesh—are partially known to us. Also, certain myths of North America help us to retrace his steps, even though, perhaps, his journey in time and in other forms is not yet done.

Conclusion

The examination of myths in this study was restricted necessarily to a few examples which were drawn, however,

from widely separated parts of the North American continent. The investigation centered specifically on a Naskapi myth from Little Whale River (Canada). The problem essentially was to analyze the evaluative approaches and to use those which would best explain the myths. Several conclusions can be drawn after following this approach:

(1) The scholarly and empirically-minded work of Franz Boas is valuable as a pioneering scientific study of North American Indian mythology; his theoretical findings, however, are too few and too meagerly stated to be of any great use.

(2) Paul Radin's study of the Winnebago Trickster Cycle is a seminal presentation which isolates one of the central figures in American Indian mythology. The absence of a complete theoretical approach, however, leaves unanswered important questions about the trickster's place in a larger historical context.

(3) Robert H. Lowie's description of Crow mythology and the characteristics of Indian myths in general tends to emphasize the worldly side of this particular literature. The diversity and the possible unity of New World myths are suggested, but myth as entertainment is primarily stressed.

(4) Victor Barnouw's psychological approach to Chippewa myths is partially explanatory; the value of his study is in the selections presented and in the demonstration of a different approach to myths.

(5) Melville Jacobs analyzes thoroughly eight myths from the Clackamas Chinook and finds a world that is largely

complete in itself. Various comments made by Jacobs shed light on many features of Indian mythology and also suggest that important changes in this oral tradition were once taking place in the Northwest.

(6) The structural approach of Claude Lévi-Strauss is seen as the most informative, the most precise, and the most complex way to analyze an ancient myth. An understanding of the analytical tools used by Lévi-Strauss is a necessary first step towards an adequate and thorough understanding of myth, and, in this context, the idea of a "bundle of relationships" seems to be a decisive stage or an essential point in the whole approach. The sensory language, through which the structural elements are realized, is seen, finally, as part of a logical system that can be uncovered in a series of careful comparisons. In short, structuralism seems indispensable to any study of New World mythology.

(7) The view of man that results from an analysis of one Naskapi myth suggests that a magico-religious outlook on the world is dominant. The addition of related variants tends to modify this view somewhat, for features related to the vision-quest are clearly discernible, as well as a more materialistic point of view. The differences, then, suggest that a unified view must stress the religious influence of shamanism, as well as the cognate version of the northern Plains, in which case another religious label is applied. In spite of the heavy religious influence in the Naskapi myth and its variants, it is possible to give a more <u>worldly</u>

interpretation to these myths. The hero, for instance, is engaged in a series of trials. These "tests" are indicative of human capabilities, in spite of the magical emphasis in the Naskapi myth. In the variants, the strictly magical stuff is less conspicuous. Thus, two possible lines of development seem present, the religious emphasis as opposed to the more worldly emphasis. The unified view, in any case, suggests that the universe has order and that man, if he is wise or is "blessed," will align himself with this cosmic regularity.

END NOTES

[1]John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), pp. 36 and 80.

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APPENDIX

A. L. Kroeber states that the story of Qauaxsaqssuq was one of a set of tales collected during the winter of 1897-98 when a group of Smith Sound Eskimos (northwest Greenland), under the sponsorship of the American Museum of Natural History, was in New York City. Also, in a footnote, Kroeber lists several variations of the name of the hero; in Greenland, for instance, it is "Kagsagsuk" or "Kausaksuk," in Labrador it is "Kaujakjuk," and in Baffin Land it is "Qaudjawdjuq." He does not, however, give the meaning of the name.

M-1, Eskimo, "Qauaxsaqssuq"

Qauaxsaqssuq was a boy that was maltreated by all. In the daytime his mother hid him in the beds, but at night she had to take him out. Then he slept either in the doorway or on the roof, over the lamp-hole, in order to get at least a little warmth. He was generally lifted and carried by the nostrils, the crooked fingers being inserted in them. He always remained small, but his feet grew very large. He was a great angakoq (shaman), and was very strong. Finally he grew tired of the bad treatment he received, and showed his strength, after which, though he never killed any one, he was much dreaded and feared.

Once he was indoors, lying on the bed without any boots on, when a man arrived inquiring for him. 'Qauaxsaqssuq has gone into the house over there, and is inside,' he was told. Then the man called to Qauaxsaqssuq from outdoors, 'Qauaxsaqssuq! Three large bears have come over from the land, and are now on the ice. Come out!' 'Yes,' said Qauaxsaqssuq, and hastened to dress and put on his boots. Then he came out and saw the three bears. Holding only a knife in his hands,

he ran after them. He had no dogs to harry the bears and bring them to bay, but he soon caught up with them. He first seized the old one and twisted off its head, so that it was immediately dead. Then he took the cubs and knocked their heads together, and twisted their necks until they were dead. Then he took them up, the old one on one side, the cubs on the other, and carried them home. He brought the three bears to the assembled people, who proceeded to cut them up, put them in pots, cook them, and eat them.

Qauaxsaqssuq was immensely strong, and what was heavy for others was very light for him. In spite of his small size, he could easily lift the largest rocks. He had enemies, who however were afraid to do anything against him openly. So once, when he went away to Qavanganiq, where he had a kayak, they secretly cut a hole in the skin-covering of his kayak. When Qauaxsaqssuq got into his boat, and out into the water, the boat began to fill with water, and thus it was that Qauaxsaqssuq drowned.

Turning now to the Lillooet myth and to one of Dr. Boas' collectors, James A. Teit, we have the myth of "Nkimtcamu'l," whose name evidently means "he who eats scraps of food." The Lillooet bands are located in British Columbia north of present day Chilliwack and west of Kamloops.

M-2, Lillooet, "Nkimtcamu'l"

An orphan lived with some people who took little or no care of him, and treated him very meanly. They gave him nothing to eat: so he had to subsist on the bones and refuse which they threw away. Neither did they provide him with clothes or blankets: so he slept naked beside the fire at night. Not content with starving him, they also beat him, and called him hard names. Even the neighbors treated him badly, and despised him because he was naked, dirty, and ugly. They nicknamed him 'Big-Belly' because of his distended abdomen.

When the boy grew older, he determined to become a great man, and make the people ashamed of their treatment, and envious of his success. He continued living with the same people, but used to go away at night to the mountains, where he passed the time in training himself. Every morning he was home before the people awoke: consequently they always found him sleeping beside the fire, as usual. For years he continued this practice, unknown to the people, and had become a wise

and athletic young man. He spent many of his nights now in hunting, and succeeded in killing great numbers of marmots, deer, and other animals, the skins of which he made into robes, and which he hid away.

Now, there was a young girl who was still a virgin, who lived in another village, and who had refused all offers of marriage made by the young men of the country, because she considered them her inferiors. Nkimtcamu'l, for that was the name by which the orphan boy was generally known, resolved to marry this girl: so he went to her village one night, and, knowing the underground lodge in which she lived, he tore a hole in the roof, just above where she slept, and spat down on her navel. She became pregnant, and in due time gave birth to a son; but neither she nor any of the people knew who was the father of the child.

When the boy was a few years old, the girl's father called all the men of the country together, and told them he wished to find out who was the father of his grandson. He asked each one to make a bow and arrow, and give them to the boy. The men did as they were requested; but the boy disdained each of their weapons, and threw them away. The grandfather asked if every man had given his bow and arrow; and they answered, 'Yes, every one except Big-Belly, who cannot possibly be the father of the child.' The old man insisted that Nkimtcamu'l should also present a bow and arrow: so he made very rough ones out of fir-branches, and handed them to the boy, who at once was delighted, and cried out, 'Father!'

The people were all disgusted when they knew that the naked, despised Nkimtcamu'l was the father of the boy. The old man gave his daughter to Nkimtcamu'l; and all the people made fun of the girl, and laughed at her because of her husband. Now, Nkimtcamu'l made a house for his wife and child, and going to his caches in the mountains, brought home many fine skins, and presented his wife with several of the best marmot robes. Thenceforth he clad himself in the finest skins, and no longer went naked. He soon showed the people that he was a better hunter than any of them, and his family was always the best provided for of any in the village. He became rich, and had many children, and the people envied his success and wealth.

The third variant was obtained by F. A. Golder at Unga Island, Alaska, and was told originally in the Russian language. Golder explains that these natives of the island of Kodiak call themselves "Aleuts" and are generally recognized

as such, although the real Aleuts are farther to the west of Kodiak.

M-3, <u>Aleut</u>, "The Raven and His Grandmother"

In a barrabara (native home) at the end of a large village, lived an old woman with her grandson, a raven. The two lived apart from the other villagers, for they were disliked by them. When the men returned from fishing for cod, and the raven would come and beg a fish, they would never give him one. But when all had left the beach, he would come and pick up any sick fish or refuse that may have been left there. On this he and his grandmother lived.

One winter was very severe. Hunting was impossible; food became scarce to starvation, and even the chief had but little left. One day he (chief) called all his people together, and urged them to make an effort to obtain food, or all would starve. He also announced that he desired his son to marry, and that the bride would be selected from the village girls, who were requested to wash and dress up for the occasion. For a time hunger was forgotten; and in a short time the girls, dressed and looking their best, were lined up under the critical eye of the chief, who selected one of the fairest for his son. A feast of all the eatables the chief had followed; the village was merry for a short time, and then starved again.

The raven perched on a pole outside, observed and listened attentively to all that passed, and after the feast flew home, and said to his grandmother, 'Grandmother, I too want to marry.' She made no reply; and he went about his duties, gathering food for his little home, which he did each day by flying along the beach, and picking up a dead fish or a bird. He gathered more than enough for two, while in the village the hunger was keener each day. When the famine was at its worst, the raven came to the chief, and asked, 'Chief, what will you give me, if I bring you food?'

The chief looked at him a while, and answered, 'You shall have my oldest daughter for a wife.' No other reward would have pleased him better; he flew away in a joyful mood, and said to his grandmother: 'Clean out the barrabara. Make everything ready. I am going to get food for the people, and marry the chief's oldest daughter.'

'Ai, Ai, Y-a-h! You are not going to marry. Our barrabara is small and dirty. Where will you put your wife?'

'Caw! Caw! Caw! Never mind. Do as I say,' he screamed, at the same time pecking her.

Early next morning he flew away, and later in the day appeared with a bundle of 'yukelah' (dried salmon) in his talons. 'Come with me to the chief's house, gradmother,' he called to her. He handed the fish over to the chief, and received the daughter in exchange. Telling his grandmother to bring the bride home, he preceded them, and cleared out of the barrabara all the straw and bedding. When the two women arrived, they found an empty barrabara, and the old owman began to scold him:—

'What are you doing? Why are you throwing out everything?'

'I am cleaning house,' was his curt reply.

When the time for retiring came, the raven spread out one wing, and asked his bride to lie on it, and then covered her with the other. She spent a miserable and sleepless night in that position. The odor of his body and the breath of his mouth almost smothered her, and she determined to leave him in the morning. But in the morning she decided to stay and try and bear it. During the day she was cheerless and worried, and when the raven offered her food, she would not eat it. On the second night he again invited her to lay her head on his breast, and seek rest in his arms, but she cried and would not; and only after much threatening did he prevail on her to comply with his wish. The second night was not better than the first, and early in the morning she stole away from him and went back to her father, telling him everything.

On awaking and finding his wife gone, the raven inquired of his grandmother whether she knew aught of her whereabouts. She assured him that she did not. 'Go, then,' he said, 'to the chief, and bring her back.' She feared him, and did his bidding. When she came to the chief's house, and as soon as she put her foot into it, she was pushed out. This she reported to the raven on her return.

The summer passed, followed by a hard winter and famine. As in the winter before, the raven and his grandmother had plenty, but the others suffered greatly for lack of food. With the return of the hard times, the grandson's thoughts turned to love. This time it was a girl, young and beautiful, at the other end of the village. When he mentioned the subject and girl to his grandmother, and asked her to 'go and bring the girl here—I want to marry her,' she was quite indignant, and told him what she thought about it.

'Ai, Ai, Y-a-h! Are you going to marry again? Your first wife could not live with you, because you smell so strong. The girls do not wish to marry you.'

'Caw! Caw! Caw! Never mind the smell! Never mind the smell! Go—do as I say.' To impress his commands and secure obedience he continued pecking her until she was glad to go. While she was gone, he was very restless

and anxious. He hopped about the barrabara and near-by hillocks, straining his eyes for a sight of the expected bride. At last he saw them coming, his grand-mother accompanied by the girl. Hurriedly he began cleaning out the barrabara, throwing out not only the straw, but bedding, baskets, and all. The old woman on her return scolded him, but he paid no attention to it.

The young bride, like her predecessor, was enfolded tightly in his wings, and like her predecessor had a wretched and sleepless night, but determined to endure it if possible; for with him she would have enough to eat, at least. The second night was as bad as the first, but she stayed on, and concluded to do so until spring. On the third day the raven, seeing that she was still with him, said to the old woman: 'To-morrow I will go and get a big, fat whale. While I am gone, make a belt and a pair of torbarsars (native shoes) for my wife.'

'Ai, Ai, Y-a-h! How will you bring a whale? The hunters cannot kill one, and how will you do it?'

'Caw! Caw! Caw! Be quiet, and do what I tell you: make the belt and torbarsars. I will do what I say,' he angrily exclaimed, also using his more effective method of silencing her.

Before dawn next morning the raven flew away over the sea. In his absence the old woman was busily en-gaged making the things for the young bride, who was watching and talking to her. About midday they espied him flying toward the shore, carrying a whale. The grandmother started the fire, and the young woman tucked up her parka (native dress), belted it with the new belt, put on the new torbarsars, sharpened the stone knife, and went to the beach to meet her husband. As he drew near, he cried: 'Grandmother, go into the vil-lage, and call the people; tell them I have brought a big, fat whale.' She ran as hard as she could, and told the joyful news. The half-dead village of a sud-den became alive. Some began sharpening their knives, others to dress; but most of them ran just as they were and with such knives as they had, to the beach where the whale was. His importance was not lost on the raven, who hopped up and down the whale's back, viewing the scene of carnage and gorging below him. Every now and then he would take out a pebble from the tool bag which he had about him, and after a seeming consultation put it back. When the chief or any of his relatives came near, he drove them off, and they had to satisfy themselves with watching and feasting with their eyes from the distance, while the others were revelling in fat and even carrying off the blubber to their homes.

The raven's first wife, the chief's daughter, had a son by him, a little raven. She had it in her arms on this occasion, and walked in front of the raven where he would have to notice her. 'Here is your child, look

at it,' she called. But he acted as if he heard not. She called several times, and continued forcing the baby before his eyes until he said, 'Come nearer, nearer still'; and when quite close to him, he turned around and excreted on them, almost covering up the child. She turned away, and left him without a word.
Death was the result of the feast. A part of the people ate so much fat on the spot that they died soon after; the rest had eaten so much and filled their barrabaras so full of blubber that during the night they suffocated. In the whole village only three were left, the raven, his wife, and his grandmother, and there they live to this day.

The fourth variant, obtained by Walter McClintock, is a part of his book The Old North Trail, or Life, Legends and Religion of the Blackfeet Indians. McClintock lived among the Blackfeet near the turn of the century and was adopted by an Indian named Mad Wolf. The latter person is the story-teller; McClintock says that Mad Wolf spoke in a low voice, with eyes half closed, saying, "What I will tell you happened long ago, when our people made all of their tools and weapons from stone, and when they used dogs instead of horses for beasts of burden."

M-4, Blackfeet, "The Origin of the Beaver Medicine"

In those days there were two orphan brothers. The younger, named Akaiyan (Old Robe), lived with his brother Nopatsis, who was married to a woman with an evil heart. This woman disliked Akaiyan and continually urged her husband to cast him off. One day when Nopatsis came home, he found his wife with her clothes torn and her body lacerated. She explained that, during his absence, Akaiyan had treated her brutally. Nopatsis said nothing to his younger brother, but planned how he might be rid of him for ever. It was midsummer, the time when the ducks and geese dropped their feathers. He proposed to Akaiyan that they should go together to an island in a large lake and said, 'At this time there will be many ducks and geese there, and we can gather

the feathers they have dropped to be used for arrows.' When the brothers came to the lake they built a 'skatstan' (raft), binding together logs with buffalo raw-hide and then floated on it to an island, far out in the lake. As they walked along the shores of this island looking for feathers, Akaiyan wandered off alone. He was returning with his arms full, when he beheld his brother out on the lake, going towards the shore of the mainland. He implored Nopatsis not to abandon him to perish on the lonely island. But his brother only called back, that he deserved no pity because of his brutal treatment of his sister-in-law. Akaiyan besought him to return, solemnly declaring before the Sun that he had not injured her. But Nopatsis replied heartlessly, 'You can live alone on the island all winter. In the spring, when the ice melts in the lake, I will return to gather your bones.' Akaiyan sat down and wept. He thought his time had come to die. Then he called upon the animals and the under-water spirits for assistance. He also prayed to the Sun, Moon and Stars, saying,

> 'Haiyu! Mistapixit Mekape Natotsichpi!'
> 'Behold, O Sun! I cast away whatever of bad
> I have done,'
> 'Kokumekis! Kokatosix Kummokit Spummokit!'
> 'O Moon! O Stars! pity me! Give me strength!'

After this prayer Akaiyan felt relieved and strengthened. He walked around the island and found a few branches, with which he made a shelter. He also gathered many loose feathers, piling them up and making a bed that fitted his body so well that he slept warmly on the coldest nights. He killed many ducks and geese before their time for leaving the island to fly south, shooting the wild ones with his arrows and striking the tame ones upon the head with long sticks. He kept some for his winter food, but he skinned others and made a warm robe for himself by binding the skins together with alder bark.

One day, when he discovered a beaver lodge, he lay for a long time watching it and weeping to himself, because he had been abandoned. Finally, a little beaver came from the lodge, and said to him, 'My father wants you to come into his lodge.' Akaiyan followed the little beaver into the lodge, where he saw a big beaver with his wife and family seated around him. This beaver was white from the snows of many winters, and so large that Akaiyan knew he must be the chief of all the beavers. The Beaver Chief bade him be seated, and asked him why he was living alone on the island. Akaiyan told him how cruelly and unjustly he had been treated and left alone to die. The Beaver Chief pitied Akaiyan and counselled with him, saying, 'My son, the

time will soon come when we will close up our lodge for the winter. The lake will freeze over and we cannot come out again for seven moons, until the warm winds of spring will break up the ice. Remain in our lodge while the snows are deep. We will teach you many wonderful things and, when you return again, you can take knowledge with you, that will be of great value to your people.' The beavers were so hospitable, Akaiyan decided to remain with them. He took with him into the beaver lodge many ducks and geese for food and his bird-skin robe to keep him warm. They closed their lodge before it became cold, leaving a hole for air at the top. During the coldest days the beavers kept Akaiyan warm by lying close to him and placing their tails across his body. He made friends with all of them, but he liked the youngest and smallest beaver best of all. He was the cleverest as well as the favourite child of the Beaver Chief. Akaiyan learned their habits and manner of living. They taught him the names of the herbs and roots, which we still use for the curing of the people. They showed him also the different paints, and explained their use, saying, 'If you should use these, they will bring to your people good luck and will ward off sickness and death.' They gave him the seeds of the tobacco (origin of tobacco), and taught him how they should be planted with songs and prayers. They made scratches with their claws on the smooth walls of the lodge to mark the days, and when the days completed a moon they marked the moons with sticks. He witnessed many dances belonging to their medicines, and listened carefully to the songs and prayers. The Beaver Chief and his wife (Wise Old Woman) taught him the prayers and songs of their medicine and the dances that belonged to them, and said, 'Whenever any of your people are sick, or dying, if you will give this ceremonial, they will be restored to health.' He noticed that the beavers never ate during the ceremonial, and that they beat time for the dances with their tails, always stopping when they heard any suspicious noise, just as they do when they are at work. They told him that they counted seven moons from the time when the leaves fall before they prepared to open their lodge in the spring. When they heard the booming of the ice breaking in the lake, they knew it would soon be time to leave their winter home.

Little Beaver told Akaiyan that, before he parted with them, his father, the Beaver Chief, would offer him a present and would allow him to choose anything within the lodge. Little Beaver also advised him, saying, 'When my father asks you for your choice, say that you will take me, for he prizes me above everything he owns. He will ask you four times to choose something else, but take me with you, for I will have more power to help you than any of the others.'

The ducks and geese were flying north, when the beavers finally opened their lodge for the summer, and the Beaver Chief said to Akaiyan, 'You will soon leave us now, because it is time for your older brother to return. But, before you start, I will allow you to choose anything in my lodge to take away with you.' Then Akaiyan, remembering the advice of Little Beaver, asked for his youngest child. The Beaver Chief made many excuses and endeavoured to persuade him to take something else, but Akaiyan would have no other gift. After the fourth trial, the Beaver Chief said, 'My son, you show your wisdom in selecting your little brother to go with you. I am sorry to part with him, because he is the best worker and the wisest of my children, but, because of my promise, I now give him to you.'

The Beaver Chief also told Akaiyan that, when he returned to his people, he should make a sacred Bundle similar to the one he saw them using in their ceremonial. He also taught him the songs and prayers and dances that belonged to the Bundle and informed him that, if any of the people were sick, or dying and a relative would make a vow to the Beaver medicine, the sick would be restored to health.

One evening, when the Beaver Chief returned from his cutting, he said to Akaiyan, 'My son, remain in hiding and do not show yourself. To-day, when I was among the trees on the main shore, I saw your brother's camp.' The next day Akaiyan, watching from the beaver lodge, saw Nopatsis coming to the island on the raft. He saw him land and walk along the shore hunting for his bones. Then Akaiyan ran, with Little Beaver under his arm and took possession of the raft. He was far out in the big lake before Nopatsis saw him. He at once realized that his younger brother had secured power superior to his own and had become a great medicine man.

Akaiyan now returned with Little Beaver to the tribal camp. He went at once to the head chief's lodge and told his story. All the people received him with the greatest honour, when they heard of the wisdom and power that had been given him by the Beavers. Akaiyan gathered together a Beaver Bundle as the Beaver Chief had directed. He and Little Beaver had remained all winter in the camp, teaching the people the songs, prayers and dances given him by the beavers. When Spring came, Akaiyan invited all of the animals to add their power to the Beaver Medicine. Many birds and animals of the prairies and mountains came, offering their skins and taught him their songs, prayers and dances to accompany their skins, just as the beavers had done. The Elk and his wife each contributed a song and dance, also the Moose and his wife. The Woodpecker gave three songs with his dance. The Frog alone of all the animals could neither dance nor sing, and it is for this reason he is not represented in the Beaver Bundle.

The Turtle could not dance and had no song, but is represented in the Bundle, because he was wise and borrowed one from the Lizard, who owned two songs.
In the following spring Akaiyan returned to the island with Little Beaver to visit the beaver lodge. He saw his brother's bones on the shore and knew the beavers had not helped him. The Beaver Chief welcomed Akaiyan warmly and when he gave back Little Beaver to his father, the old chief was so grateful that he presented him with a sacred pipe, teaching him also the songs, prayers and dances that belonged to it. When Akaiyan returned again to the Indian camp he added this pipe to the Beaver Bundle. Every spring Akaiyan went to visit his friends, the beavers, and each time the Beaver Chief gave him something to add to the Beaver Bundle, until it reached the size it has to-day. Akaiyan continued to lead the Beaver ceremonial as long as he lived and was known as a great medicine man. When he died, the ceremonial was continued by his son, and has been handed down ever since.

The final myth comes from a region which is classified as a part of the subarctic forest zone. This broad land area reaches 2,500 miles across Canada, from Labrador on the North Atlantic, along the southern shores of Hudson's Bay, where it follows the Mackenzie River lowlands north, past the Arctic Circle. The region, too, had in the past the lowest population density in North America, lower even than the Eskimo area (where the supply of sea mammals was more plentiful). The following figures are based, supposedly, on the best estimates of population density in pre-Columbian times:

Canadian hunter	1.35	per 100 square kilometers
Eskimos	4.02	" " " "
California	43.3	" " " "

The Naskapi—sometimes combined with the Montagnais as the Montagnais-Naskapi—were, in any case, the most northeasternly of the Algonkian tribes. Besides a note or two relating to their medical treatment by shamanistic

incantation and the fact that they married without ceremony, not much else, relatively speaking, is available.

M-5, Naskapi, "Ayas'i's Son"

Ayas'i was a great chief and trickster. He was an old man and had two wives,—an older one, his first wife; and a younger one, his second. By the older one he had a grown-up son, and several younger ones by the other wife. Now, the young woman was very jealous of the older wife, because she thought that Ayas'i would give the chieftainship to his son by his first wife; in other words, to his oldest son. She tried in different ways to invent stories against the son to poison Ayas'i's mind against him. She kept telling Ayas'i that the oldest son was trying to seduce her. Although Ayas'i liked his oldest son, he came at last to believe the younger woman's stories, and began to suspect the boy. But the stories he heard were not proved. The boy was very quiet and well-behaved.

One day the young woman was out in the bush and saw a partridge, and then she thought of a plan to trap the boy. She hurried back to the camp, and told the son to come and shoot the bird for her. 'Oh, no!' said he, 'there are plenty of younger boys here. Get some of them to go and kill the partridge.' But she coaxed him to come, saying that he was so much more able. At last he consented, and went with her and killed the partridge. Then the young wife pulled up her dresses, took the dying bird, and made it scratch her between the legs until she was lacerated around her lower parts. Then she went back to the camp. That night Ayas'i lay beside her and desired to cohabit. 'No, no!' she said, 'I'm too sore. I'm all cut up from my struggles with your oldest son.' Ayas'i was surprised. Then she showed him the scratches and wounds, and told him how he had struggled with her in the woods and raped her. So Ayas'i grew bitter against the boy.

The next day a big canoe crowd arrived at the camp, as Ayas'i was a great man and often had visitors from far away. He got the crowd together, and said to them, 'Now, to-morrow we will all go to the islands and collect eggs for a great feast for my son, as he wants eggs from the islands.' Ayas'i was a great chief, so whatever he said had to be done. The next morning he told his son, 'You must come too.' — 'No,' said the son, 'I don't want any eggs, anyway.' But Ayas'k made him go too. So he got his canoe; and they embarked, and paddled toward a big island, Ayas'i at the stern, and the son paddling at the bow. When they saw a big island, the son asked, 'Is that the island?' — 'Yes,'

said Ayas'i. Then he blew his breath and blew the island farther ahead. The son could not see his father blowing, and wondered why the island could not be approached.

At last, however, they reached the island when Ayas'i thought they were far enough from home. 'Now, go ashore and gather eggs,' said Ayas'i. His son began gathering eggs near the shore. 'Now go farther up. There are some fine eggs over yon rise. Don't stop so near the shore,' said Ayas'i. Every time the son would look behind to see how far he was from the shore, Ayas'i would send him farther inland. Then, when the boy was some distance in, Ayas'i jumped into the canoe and paddled away home. The son called after him, 'Father, father, you are leaving me!' — 'Well, you have been making a wife of your step-mother,' cried Ayas'i; and away he went, leaving his son behind. So the boy was left on the island, and wandered about, crying.

One day the boy met a Gull. 'O grandchild! what are you doing here alone?' asked the Gull. 'My father left me,' said the boy. 'You won't ever see the mainland again,' said the Gull; 'but I'll try to take you myself. Get on my back, and I will try.' So the boy got on his back, and the Gull tried to fly up. But the boy was too heavy, and the Gull had to turn back. 'But go over to the other end of the island, and there you will find your grandfather. Maybe he can help you,' said the Gull.

So the boy wandered on, crying, and soon came to the other end of the island. There he saw a big Catfish (?). 'What are you doing here?' said the Catfish. 'My father left me,' said the boy. 'What do you want?' said the Catfish. 'To get ashore to the mainland,' said the boy. 'Well, said the Catfish,' maybe I can take you over. Is it clear?' (The great Catfish was afraid of the thunder.) — 'Yes,' said the boy. 'Are there no clouds?' asked the Fish. 'No,' said the boy. 'Are you sure? Well, then take a stone in your hand and get on my back. Hold on tight to my horns (the Catfish had two horns on his head); and when you find me going too slowly, hammer with the stone, and I'll hurry faster, especially if it begins to look cloudy. Are you sure there are no clouds? Well, hold on tight, now!' And with this they started like the wind. Every little while the boy would hit the Fish a rap with the stone, and he would go still faster. Soon it began clouding up. 'Is it clouding up yet?' asked the Fish. 'No,' answered the boy, even though he heard thunder. 'What's that I hear? Is it thunder?' asked the Fish. 'Oh, no!' cried the boy, and hit him harder with the stone.

Just then they reached the mainland; and the boy just had time to jump ashore, when a thunder-bolt came

and smashed the Fish to pieces. But the boy got safely ashore, and began wandering about until at last he came to a small wigwam. He walked up and lifted the door-cover. There inside he saw a Fox sitting before a small kettle over the fire. When the Fox saw him, she said, 'Well, grandchild, what are you doing here?' — 'My father left me,' the boy told her. Said the Fox, 'I don't think you will ever succeed in getting home, as your father is very tricky and strong. Nevertheless I will try to help you.'

In the mean time the boy's mother, the first wife of Ayas'i, felt very bad over the loss of her son. She cried all the time. She would go away in the woods by herself all day and cry; and every night, when she came home, Ayas'i would meet her outside the door and throw embers from the fire on her and burn her. So this went on day after day.

Now, the Fox agreed to help the boy. She transformed herself into a person and guided him along the trail. Soon they came to a place where a lot of hooks (like fish-hooks) were hanging down from the sky. There was no way of getting past without being impaled. Then the Fox turned herself into a small animal, and went up into the sky where the hooks were hung, and jerked them up. She told the boy to jump by when she jerked them up; and he did so, and got safely by.

As they went along farther, they soon came to a place where two monster-dogs were guarding the path. It was very narrow, and there were a lot of rocks. The Fox turned herself into a weasel, and turned the boy into another small animal. Then she wriggled in and out among the rocks, and the dogs began barking fiercely. 'I'm barking at Ayas'i's son!' cried the dogs. The Fox in her weasel form popped up here and there among the rocks until the dogs were frantic. They barked so much, that their master got angry at them, and came out and killed them for making such a noise about nothing; for every time he looked to see what caused them to bark, he could not see anything. When the dogs were dead, the Fox led the boy through safely. Now, these obstacles were all put along the trail by Ayas'i to prevent his son from getting back.

As the boy and his guide, the Fox, passed on, they soon came to a place where there was a flint stone, rounded on the end, and three-cornered on its sides. Then the Fox-Woman said, 'Carry that stone with you, you may need it.' So the boy took the stone. Soon they came to a wigwam where lived two women who guarded the way. These women had sharp teeth set in their vulva, with which they killed anybody who cohabited with them. This every one had to do before he could pass them. The Fox-Woman told the boy that he would have to cohabit with these women, but to use the stone. So that night, when they intended to kill him, he used

the long stone on them, and broke all the teeth in their vulvas. Then he cohabited with them, and afterward passed safely on. So they started on again.

In the mean time the boy's mother continued her mourning. When she went into the woods, she would hear the little birds singing about her where she lay down. Their song would say, 'Mother, I'm coming back.' When she first heard it, she thought it was her son returning, and she would look up to meet him; but when she saw it was only little birds, she would cry all the harder. Then, when she would go back to camp at night, Ayas'i would burn her again. At last she became so down-hearted that she would pay no attention to the birds, who said, 'Mother, I'm coming back.'

At last one day the boy, after passing all the trials, did come back; and the Fox-Woman guided him to where his mother lay crying. When he saw her, he cried, 'Mother, I'm coming!' but she would not look up, thinking it was only the birds mocking her grief. Then the boy went up to her, and she saw him. He beheld her face, all burnt and scorched. 'What has caused your face to be burnt?' he asked. 'Your father did it. He says my son will never come back,' she replied. 'Well,' said the son, 'go to camp, and tell Ayas'i that I am back.'

So they went along back to the camp. When Ayas'i heard the woman coming again, he jumped up to get coals of fire to throw on her, as usual. 'Your son will never come back!' he cried. 'Yes, he is back now!' Ayas'i was so surprised that he dropped the fire; and when he looked, there stood his son. So the son said to his father, 'You have been cruel to me and to my mother, all for nothing. You left me on an island, and I am back. Now I will be cruel to you. You shall creep all the days of your life.' So he turned Ayas'i into a frog. He then said to his mother, 'You shall be the best-looking bird in the world. People will never kill you. You shall be the robin.' And he turned his mother into a robin, the handsomest bird in the world. That is the origin of the frog and the robin. That is the end.

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VITA

Charles Guthrie Ballard

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE UNPROMISING HERO: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF ONE NASKAPI MYTH FROM LITTLE WHALE RIVER

Major Field: Higher Education   Minor Field: English

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Quapaw, Oklahoma, June 4, 1930, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Ballard Sr.

Education: Graduated from Quapaw High School, Quapaw, Oklahoma, in May, 1947; received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Oklahoma State University in May of 1957 with a major in English; attended Oklahoma State University in summer sessions and received the Master of Arts degree in May of 1966; attended Oklahoma State University in summer sessions intermittently and was in residence from the Fall of 1977 until the completion of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in July of 1979.

Professional Experience: Teacher of English, Westcliffe Consolidated High School, Westcliffe, Colorado, 1959 to 1960; Teacher of English, Chilocco Indian School, Chilocco, Oklahoma, 1962 to 1969; Instructor of English, Northern Oklahoma College, Tonkawa, Oklahoma, 1969 to 1973; Lecturer in English, Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho, 1973 to 1977; Graduate Associate, Oklahoma State University, 1977 to 1979.

Professional Organizations: Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association, National Council of Teachers of English, and Oklahoma Educational Association.