The land a Canadian symbol in theological perspective.

Peter Evans Wickerson
University of Windsor

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd

Recommended Citation
https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/4083

This online database contains the full-text of PhD dissertations and Masters' theses of University of Windsor students from 1954 forward. These documents are made available for personal study and research purposes only, in accordance with the Canadian Copyright Act and the Creative Commons license—CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution, Non-Commercial, No Derivative Works). Under this license, works must always be attributed to the copyright holder (original author), cannot be used for any commercial purposes, and may not be altered. Any other use would require the permission of the copyright holder. Students may inquire about withdrawing their dissertation and/or thesis from this database. For additional inquiries, please contact the repository administrator via email (scholarship@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone at 519-253-3000ext. 3208.
NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

Ottawa, Canada
K1A ON4

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS RECUE
THE LAND:
A CANADIAN SYMBOL IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

The Rev. Peter Evans Wickerson

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of
Religious Studies in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts at
The University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada
1979


TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER:

I. THE LAND IN CANADA: SYMBOL OF THE NUMINOUS
   (1) Introduction
   (11) The Land in Canadian Consciousness
        - An Overview
   (111) The Meaning of the Numinous

II. ROOTS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
    (1) Native Indian Spirituality
    (11) First Explorers, Early Settlement,
         French Canada
    (111) The Conquest and Beyond - English Canadian
         Attitudes Towards the Land until the time
         of Confederation

III. THE CONFEDERATION PERIOD
    The Emergence of a New National Feeling and its
    Relationship to the Land with an Emphasis on
    Canada's Confederation Poets
    (1) The Confederation Poets
    (11) Other Confederation Writers, Literary
         Critics and 'the Land'
    (111) Some Theological Reflections on the Land
         as Holy

IV. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
    (1) Frederick Philip Grove and The
        Promised Land
    (11) Poets Between the Wars: The
         Ambiguous Land
    (111) Poets of Mid-Century: The Land
         as Healer
    (1111) Poets of Contemporary Canada:
          Claiming the Land

V. CONCLUSIONS
    (1) Land as Sacred: Ethical Implications
        for Canadians in the 1980s

BIBLIOGRAPHY

VITA AUCTORIS
ABSTRACT

THE LAND: A CANADIAN SYMBOL IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

The Rev. Peter Evans Wickerson

This thesis attempts to show that 'the land', a salient feature of Canadian consciousness and a unifying symbol for Canadians, evokes a sense of the numinous, the idea of the holy. It draws largely on the insights of a number of Canadian writers, particularly poets, who have written perceptively about the land and combines these insights with several theological points of view pertaining to the sacredness of land and the mystery of creation. I also make the point throughout the thesis and particularly in the concluding chapter that the respect and reverence for the land that lies at the heart of the Canadian attitude towards it has important ramifications for the way man seeks to exploit, manipulate and manage the land and the lives of those who are sustained and nourished by it.

In chapter one, I introduce my thesis and acknowledge my debt to the Rev. Paul Gibson who sparked my interest in developing this topic. In an article entitled "Towards a Canadian Theology", Gibson noted the lack of any genuinely Canadian theology being written at the present time, i.e., "a theology woven out of the symbols of our own culture." This thesis is a response to his challenge. In this first chapter, I attempt to show the validity and importance of undertaking the study of
theology in a Canadian context and explain what I understand the Canadian reality to be. I then present an overview of how the land has impinged on Canadian consciousness by sampling a number of writers from across Canada and their views of the country. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of Rudolf Otto's 'idea of the holy', his concept of the 'numinous', and suggest that the feelings that the divine spirit evokes in man are akin to the feelings elicited by the land in Canadian consciousness.

In chapter two, I provide a general description of Native Indian religion and highlight the significance of the sacredness of land for native people. I contrast their understanding of man in relationship to his environment with that of the first explorers and settlers of French and English Canada. I point out how the land and nature generally in Canadian consciousness is, on the one hand, something terrifying and demonic to be overcome, and, on the other hand, something fascinating and compelling, to be enjoyed and wondered at.

In chapter three, I deal at some length with a number of major Confederation poets whom I regard as the voices of the new nation and other writers who have a deep feeling for the land and a grasp of how the land evokes a sense of the holy. I conclude this chapter by comparing their insights with the Israelite attitude towards the land as put forward by Gerhard Von Rad and Walter Brueggemann. What emerges here is the challenge to man to manage land in such a way that the sense of mystery is not lost.

Then in chapter four, picking up on the insights of the
theologians previously cited, I develop the tension which emerges in Canadian literature in this century between those who view the land as a catalyst for spiritual development, and those who regard nature as man's enemy and therefore as something which needs to be mastered. I point out how the wilderness of Canada today provides man with an opportunity for refreshment and renewal, how a canoe trip resembles a religious quest, and I conclude the chapter by citing a number of contemporary Canadian poets who have 'come home' to Canada and claim the inexorable land as their own.

In my concluding chapter, I suggest that to regard the land as sacred has important ramifications for Canadians as they deal with a number of social and moral issues. Among them are the concerns about Native People and northern development; a possible reformulation of the Canadian Constitution that would overcome the regional disparities that exist throughout the country; and an ecological awareness that will challenge the myth of unlimited economic growth as man's only viable lifestyle.

Notes

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Dr. J. Norman King, Dr. George Crowell and Dr. Louis MacKendrick for their advice and direction in the preparation of this manuscript. Dr. King took meticulous care in going over the first and second drafts of the thesis. He made some very astute observations and supplied a number of important books and articles to assist me in sharpening the focus of my paper as I went along. I was very pleased that he was able to serve as my director.

Dr. Crowell was of particular assistance in helping me keep the ethical dimension of my topic in view throughout the course of my work. His initial enthusiasm for my topic and encouragement to tackle a large and sometimes unwieldy theme kept me going at important stages in the writing of the thesis when I was beginning to think that I had bitten off more than I could chew.

Dr. MacKendrick's familiarity with Canadian literature and his watchful eye on my own literary style was of great help to me in making sure that I had dealt adequately with Canadian authors and expressed myself clearly.

I would also like to thank Canterbury College, its Principal, Rev. Dr. F. Temple Kingston, last year's Acting-Principal, Mr. Andrew Osler, and the Board of Directors for their encouragement and support in doing the work for my Master of Arts degree the past five years while I have been a full-time chaplain at the College and the University.
And lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Marilyn, and my children for understanding how much work a thesis involves and permitting me to disappear for certain periods of time over the past two years to concentrate on sections of my paper.
Chapter 1

THE LAND IN CANADA: SYMBOL OF THE NUMINOUS

(1) Introduction

In this paper, entitled The Land: A Canadian Symbol in Theological Perspective, I shall be investigating the characteristic Canadian attitude towards 'the land' which has come to provide a unifying symbol for Canadians while at the same time allowing for the expression of the peculiar Canadian quality of plurality in unity. At the heart of this attitude towards the land is a feeling of awe and reverence for it. There is a sense of the 'numinous' evoked by the land itself. I shall be examining this aspect of the land in particular and in my conclusions suggesting how, out of this basic experience of the land as a unity in diversity and as a sign of the sacred, a contemporary Canadian ecological and humanitarian ethic can perhaps be formulated. I shall be dealing with the theme of the land and the numinous specifically in terms of Canadian literature.

Let me first define my terms. By 'the land' I mean primarily the inexorable vastness of the land mass that is Canada which by the sheer fact of its size alone overwhelms us. This is in contrast to a sense of the land as frontier, the image of the borderline between civilization and barbarity, and the sense of the land as island, with its compact self-sufficiency. I also use the term 'the land' to mean nature in a more general sense. Land is not only to be understood as pertaining to soil, but also to those factors such as climate, vegetation, sky, lakes and oceans that impinge on Canadian consciousness in an unique way and are related to one's sense of place. The
land, for the most part, is to be understood in the sense of rural wilderness where life is reduced to its bare essentials and is uncluttered by the noise and pollution of industrial society. However, 'the land' may also refer to the city if the city itself provides an environment in which to appreciate one's place in the more vast scheme of things by being seen against the background of the inexorable wilderness. By 'the land' I also mean particular regions of the country as seen in contrast to the country as a whole. These include Newfoundland, the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, Northern Ontario and Northern Manitoba, the Prairies, the Pacific Coast, and the Arctic. Within each region there is both the land which is settled and the more foreboding aspects of the inexorable land looming over it and the vastness of the whole country looming over each region.

By the 'numinous' I mean the idea of the holy, the sense of divinity that is manifested in nature. I will be exploring this term at more length later on in this chapter but suffice it to say here that it is the view that nature always expresses something that transcends it, that "the whole of cosmic life can be felt as a cipher of divinity," that is being applied to the land in Canadian consciousness.

When I refer to 'the land' as a unifying symbol for Canadians that expresses a unity in diversity as opposed to mere uniformity, I am referring to an historical development that comes to fruition in time and behind which lies the more basic response of man to the natural environment. These two
experiences taken together and guided and shaped by Judaeo-Christian and native Indian religious insights can lead to the formulation of the type of ethic alluded to above.

In the remainder of the introduction, I shall provide a rationale for exploring this particular topic, consider in more depth the specific choice of 'the land' as a symbol, and indicate how this symbol lends itself to theological treatment within the Canadian tradition. The rest of the chapter will provide an overview of the way the land has impinged on the Canadian consciousness, an analysis of the 'numinous', and a couple of specific examples of how 'the land' is seen as a symbol of the 'numinous'.

My interest in developing this topic was sparked by an article entitled "Towards a Canadian Theology" in which the author, the Rev. Paul Gibson, said he was conscious of the lack of any genuinely Canadian theology being written at the present time, i.e., "a theology which has been shaped by the quality and style of life which we encounter in our own country, a theology woven out of the symbols of our own culture." In other words, to undertake the study of theology in a Canadian context requires that we come to some understanding of what the Canadian reality is, that we interpret this reality in light of our understanding of who God is, and that we interpret our understanding of who God is in light of our experience of the Canadian reality. The validity and importance of such a task is mapped out by Antonio Guaitieri in an article entitled "Towards a Theological Perspective on Nationalism." He draws attention
in this article to certain insights and presuppositions of the biblical tradition as a justification for national affirmation. He suggests that not only is there a form of nationalism which is permissible for the Christian, "but that its affirmation is, in fact, a moral imperative in the exercise of the prophetic, ethical function of the Church." (p. 511) First of all, he points to the biblical assumption of the importance and worth of history. He notes that the history of all nations, not just the history of Israel, is seen as the result of a "dialectic between the divine intention and human response." (p. 511)

Nations are historical realities. They are the consequences of a people's common historical experiences of exploration, conquest, defense, cultural and institutional innovation and development as they aspire and struggle to carve out a satisfying life. Nations are bound by common language, institutions, heroes, vocation and destiny, and by loyalty to certain symbols that have served through the people's history to interpret their distinctive experience and human existence generally. (p. 511, emphasis mine)

As such, he continues, nations share in the general worth of history which from a biblical point of view is valuable in the divine perspective. Our common humanity, he notes, however, is not something abstract and detached from man's historical nature as a creature, but rather is "refracted through particular histories which leave their impress upon it." (p. 512) Secondly, he considers the role of society in salvation. Again he points out that according to biblical tradition "all national histories are potentially salvation history in as much as the ever present living God works through men and their
institutions in our own time." (p. 513) He acknowledges the church as a community that is not limited by racial, national or cultural boundaries, but points out that despite its pledge to universal fellowship the church does not obliterate certain natural distinctions among men. God continues to work in the secular history of nations as well as in the religious history of the church, he adds. (p. 514) His third theological point is that respect for culture is a corollary of love for persons. He notes that a person's selfhood - his perception of reality, his values, his interpretive symbols - are largely shaped by the historical tradition of the society in which he participates. (p. 515) And this is as it should be, especially today.

In the present period of increasing secularism, that is, of separation of religious traditions from national cultures, we must recognize the growing part played in the formation of selfhood by national heritages. These cultures transmit to their participants a way of understanding themselves and viewing the world. Moreover, they supply their members with symbols that allow them to express creatively their selfhood. (p. 515)

To assault a culture, he asserts, is to assault the individual persons who have been nurtured by that tradition and whole understanding of life has been moulded by it. Fittingly he notes the effect of a dominant white, technological culture on Canada's native population - reducing much of it to indolence and meaninglessness by depriving a people of something which had shaped their lives. What Gualtieri proposes is a realistic and humane nationalism that allows the retention of distinctive human heritages and histories that have "shaped the life, per-
spective and values of a distinct people." (p. 518) In so far as Canada is able to accomplish this, she will in turn come to embody the example of nationhood that is "the precondition of a responsible and mutually enriching internationalism." (p. 518) Only by securing its own identity can Canada contribute her gifts to the larger global community.

Both Gibson and Gualtieri stress the significance of symbols in giving shape to people's lives. The specific symbol in the Canadian experience that I have selected for treatment in this paper is 'the land' itself. Northrop Frye, Canada's foremost literary critic, has pointed out that the essence of whatever the word 'Canadian' means is "the tension between a political sense of unity and the imaginative sense of locality." Identity, he notes, is local and regional, rooted in the imagination and works of culture. Unity, on the other hand, is national in reference, international in perspective, and rooted in a political feeling. (p. 11) In Canada, he argues, the question of identity is not a 'Canadian' question at all [in a national sense], but a regional one. He asks:

...what can there be in common between an imagination nurtured on the prairies, where it is a centre of consciousness diffusing itself over a vast flat expanse stretching to the remote horizon, and one nurtured in British Columbia, where it is in the midst of gigantic trees and mountains leaping into the sky all around it, and obliterating the horizon everywhere. (p. 11)

On the other hand, "the essential element in the national sense of unity is the east-west feeling...expressed in the national motto, a mari usque ad mare." (p. 11)
Once the tension [between this political sense of unity and the imaginative sense of locality] is given up, and the two elements of unity and identity are confused or assimilated to each other, we get the two endemic diseases of Canadian life. Assimilating identity to unity produces the empty gestures of cultural nationalism; assimilating unity to identity produces the kind of provincial isolation which is now called separatism. (p. iii)

It is important, then, if we speak of Canadian unity not to think in terms of uniformity. A society where everyone belongs, thinks alike, behaves alike, Frye notes, is one "totally lacking in human dignity." Authentic unity, on the other hand, "tolerates dissent and rejoices in variety of outlook and tradition." (p. vi)

However, if Canadians are to pursue "real unity" - unity in diversity - and maintain the healthy tension between this "political sense of unity" and the "imaginative sense of locality", there must be some imaginative forms common to the whole country to inspire such a quest. Again Frye is helpful as he underscores a point that I will be making in this thesis; that there would be nothing distinctive in Canadian culture at all [and thus, no Canadian context in which to undertake the study and application of theology] "if there were not some feeling for the immense searching distance, with the lines of communication extended to the absolute limit which is the primary geographical fact about Canada and has no real counterpoint elsewhere."

It is the vastness of the land, its inexorability, that leads Margaret Atwood to say that we are all immigrants here.

We are all immigrants to this place even if we were born here: the country is too big for any-
one to inhabit completely, and in the parts unknown to us we move in fear, exiles and invaders. 6

As I noted earlier, the land simply overwhelms us. As Atwood writes elsewhere, this vastness often generates an "almost intolerable anxiety" in contrast to the excitement and sense of adventure or danger that 'the land' as frontier holds out, or the smugness and sense of security, everything in its place, that 'the land' as island offers. The land looms over us; it is part of the background of every Canadian's experience no matter how civilized and settled he may be in any given region.

This intolerable anxiety produced by the prospects of having to cope with this inexorable land, this undeveloped wilderness, coupled with the fact that Canada has been the victim during its short political history of voracious colonization, leads Gibson to say that what is most true of Canada is that it has 'hung on', that it has 'stayed alive', and echoing Atwood, that it has 'survived'. But survival, as Atwood notes later, is more than merely staying alive. It is the "freedom to live a life which realizes to the full its available human possibilities, no more, no less, and to live that life by participating in one's own place." It is Gibson's contention that there is a whole world of authentic Christian spirituality within our Canadian tradition which we have too long ignored.

It is the spirituality of simplicity, of thankfulness for enough, the spirituality that enables man to try to cope with the immediate problems and situations, rejecting conflict and ag-
gression as virtues and progress as an idol while concentrating on the task at hand. It is this "kingdom within"—men living and acting in the present with the resources they have already acquired—which is the positive side of survival. Gibson defines spirituality as "theology being lived." It is now my task to examine the spiritual impact the land has had on the Canadian consciousness, to discern the concept of God that underlies this perception and to discuss the ethical ramifications of this understanding of the Canadian reality.

(11) The Land in Canadian Consciousness—An Overview

I have already noted a number of the general features of the land as they impinge on Canadian consciousness, but now more systematically I would like to present an overview drawing on the literary talents of a cross-section of contemporary Canadian writers who regard the land as being of the essence of Canada. William Kilbourn's edited anthology of Canadian essays, entitled Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom, offers a good sample of such writers and their points of view on the land. It is a book intended to serve as a "travel companion for explorers of the Canadian spiritual landscape," and brings together perceptions of the land from every region in the country. One is able to experience in these writings the tensions alluded to in the introduction between a political sense of unity and an imaginative sense of locality, between the various regions of the country and the country as a whole. In Kilbourn's introduction, he notes that "the inexorable land, like the Canadian
climate, has always commanded the respect of those who have tried to master it. It is simply overwhelming." (p. xiii)

Survival itself for Canadians is a virtue and a triumph. But Canadians, even if they have not fully tamed nature, have also learned to live with her and derive strength from her "terrible grandeur." Our painters, for example, from the Group of Seven to contemporary abstract expressionists have been profoundly influenced by the Canadian landscape. (p. xiv) He quotes Northrop Frye as saying that "everything that is central in Canadian writing seems to be marked by the immanence of the natural world." (p. xiv) By this I understand Frye to mean that the natural world is part of the essential character of the Canadian experience. The struggle with nature is so much a part of our Canadian tradition that Frye has suggested that this tradition, as revealed in the literature, might well be called 'A Quest for the Peaceable Kingdom'. He recalls a painting by that title which depicts a treaty between Indians, Quakers and a group of animals illustrating the prophecy of Isaiah - "a haunting serene vision of the reconciliation of man with man and man with nature." (p. xvii) The point here is that only as man is able to be reconciled to his fellowman who may have quite a different world view [the contrast between Indian and Quaker, for example] and is able to be reconciled with nature [the land and all the non-human life forms that it supports] can there be peace on earth. The Canadian experience in which diversity has been fostered and the land has been so dominant in the imagination helps one to see the appropriateness of this
painting in shedding light on our tradition. The spiritual connotations of the painting are enhanced when one thinks, too, of the country's title - Dominion of Canada. Here is evoked yet another biblical image from the Psalms of men flourishing upon the earth, of the abundance of grain in the land, of peace and righteousness, of deliverance, of God's dominion from sea to sea. (p. xviii) Within the Canadian experience is this vision of peace on earth, the reconciliation of man with man and man with nature but also the "terrible grandeur" of nature which can never fully be tamed looming over that vision of serenity. A sampling of Canadian writers from the anthology brings out this tension which Margaret Atwood refers to as a "violent duality."

Hugh MacLennan, novelist and essayist, comments on our national neurosis brought about by the harsh loneliness of the land, the tensions between races, the suppression of minority desires, the mixed-up histories of Canada and the United States. He points out that our artists must describe the causes of the neuroses - "lift them out of the dark of the mind and make them visible" - so that Canadians might emerge from the agony of always talking about their troubles and frustrations and be healed in the process. (p. 9) As an example of this, he notes how the Group of Seven painters not only revealed but made tolerable and beautiful one of the chief sources of the Canadian neurosis - "the stark, sombre, cold and empty land." (p. 9) The land, MacLennan writes elsewhere, is our overwhelming common denominator.
It is a land of dramatic contrasts with an undeveloped, and perhaps undevelopable frontier. Little more than four percent of the whole country is under cultivation; only seven percent ever can be. All indications point to a country where the population will be congregated in a number of densely populated areas, "a culture of cities like a colossal ancient Greece, with nature picturesque and largely unspoiled just outside them," a combination of urbanity and wilderness in a land "too precious to be put at auction." (p. 20) This land, he concludes, is far more important than we are. "To know it is to be young and ancient all at once. Its virginity is our visible link with the beginnings of the race...." (p. 17) I would suggest here that although MacLennan does not speak of the vast wilderness of Canada as a violent thing, this is due to the fact that he has come to see it in a particular light. He is at home with it; he lets it have his way with him; he does not try to tame it and exploit it. It looms over him to be sure; it is a reminder to him that he is only a part of something much bigger, much more mysterious than he can ever comprehend. But he does not fear it; rather he stands in awe.

James Reaney, poet and dramatist, brings out this tension between regional feeling and the country as a whole although he, too, is no longer intimidated by the land. He identifies himself as a Canadian because of his love of the countryside where he was born, through county and township history. He claims from his travels in Canada that there is no part of the country where he could not develop anew a repetition of his
original loyalty to south-western Ontario and where he did not see some people with the same sort of rootedness. It is precisely because Canada is so vast, he writes, because it is so hard to imagine it all as one's home that Canadians see their whole nation "in the local grain of sand." (p. 26) But the impact of the country as a whole is not lost on Reaney. Among the five elements that he believes defines what this country is are the country, the land itself, and the native Indian response to it. Of the landscape he writes:

I never fail to find books on the physiography of the country exciting, particularly ones about my native province. The moment you start thinking about the history of the land's shape you start to think of a poem. 18

With reference to native people, he points out how totem poles and mounds "seem so effortlessly to come out of the look of the country", whereas our culture, in contrast, as yet does not.

When you compare Michelangelo's gigantic statues of Day and Night, Twilight and Dawn... with the tense coloured oblongs by which in their ritual sand painting the Indians describe the same eternal truths, the difference and the genius of this continent and the genius of Europe becomes evident with a flash. And that difference contains the answer to the riddle of being an artist in this country. (p. 120-1)

He implies that our culture should come out of the look of the land and points to the achievement of Canadian artists like Emily Carr with the distorted shapes and designs in her painting and Frederick Philip Grove with the eccentric characters that appear in his novels as examples of how, in fact, this has taken place. Reaney also makes the point that one gets a new version of Christianity in North America, that one can read
the Bible with North American eyes. Noting that some very sim-
ple and wrongheaded people are already doing it, for example,
the new sects of the Protestant left, he suggests that "perhaps
it's time that some sophisticated and rightheaded people tried
it too." (p. 121) Many of Reaney's own poems knit these ele-
ments together and express a distinctive Canadian attitude to-
wards the land. "To the Avon River Above Stratford, Canada" is
one such poem. The river does not flow "with English accents,"
"taste English," nor "sound/like Avon/or swans & bards." It is
rather like "the sad wild fowl/in prints drawn/by Audubon." The
sentence of its voice is "silver and light...with a soprano
continuous cry." The "rain and snow" of the poet's mind is what
supplies the "spring of that river/forever." He yearns to know
what the Indians called the river; but failing that he does
claim to know its coat of arms and motto:

...A shield of reeds and cresses
Sedges, crayfishes
The hermaphroditic leech
Minnows, muskrats and farmers' geese
And printed above this shield.
One of my earliest wishes
"To flow like you." (ll. 45-51)

One is caught up here in the peaceful serenity of a regional
scene but in the background is the cold northern climate feeding
the river and the search into antiquity for a name that does
justice to its flow. Likewise, in another poem entitled "Lake
Erie," Reaney contrasts the shallowness of the water along the
lake's many beaches where people line the shore with the "grand
gigantic thunderous tragic exit" of the lake at the Falls of
Niagara. The awesomeness of the scenes depicted here is de-
rived from this peculiar tension between a regional perspective in the foreground and a more national and historical perspective in the background.

In contrast to MacLennan and Reaney, both native-born Canadians deeply rooted in their own particular region of the country, it is interesting to note John Hirsch's observations in coming to Canada from Hungary and "trying to become a Canadian." He made a point of travelling across Canada and writes that "seeing the land gave me my first and most deeply felt impression of what this country is about." (p. 80) He felt he had to know the land, the whole of it, and actually felt that most Canadians did not know their country at all, nor could have feeling about it "because they did not grasp the physical realities of this place." (p. 81) To him Canada was overwhelming and to cope he had to be able to stretch himself to comprehend it all. Here he found room to stretch. Here he found a kind of freedom of mind, spirit and creative energies he had never experienced before. Here anything could be possible. (p. 81)

Kildare Dobbs, another immigrant, writes of the effect of the sound of a train whistle upon him when he first heard it.

A lonely sound. I imagined the train rushing on into the dark, past sleeping farms and fields, through forests and by lakes and across the vast prairies to the west, running westward, running to the far mountains and beyond them to an ocean on the other side of the world. It spoke rather of voyages than journeys, seafaring overland, an ocean of loneliness scattered with villages and cities like lighthouses winking from shores of sleep.  22

This is the Canadian sound, he remarks, suggesting vastness and
emptiness, hinting at a destination as yet unimagined. "That is the place I am restlessly faring to, riding westward, running to Paradise." (p. 86) Hirsch and Dobbs both bring into the foreground that inexorable sense of the land that looms in the background of the other writers so far mentioned. A further sampling of those writers who reflect on particular regions within the country will show to varying degrees the impact of the land on their consciousness and the extent of the tension between the regional identity and a sense of place within the country as a whole.

Farley Mowat writes of Newfoundland's past and of the courage, resourcefulness, endurance and pride of "outport" men and women whose predecessors lived hard lives in a hard land along the six thousand miles of rock-ribbed, sea-roaming coasts.

The Newfoundlanders early evolved into a unique people - a true 'People of the Sea' who eventually ringed the island with more than thirteen hundred outports...Most of these settlements had no contact with one another or with the world outside except by water...The odds against them were terrible...They struggled for survival as few human beings in our time have had to struggle...." 23

Even though Newfoundland is an island, it is important to notice that there is here no smugness or sense of security. In keeping with the dominant sense of the land in Canada as something which hovers over us, evoking both feelings of anxiety and dread, the emphasis here is on the struggle against nature with a wilderness of land [the interior of Newfoundland and the distance between outports] and the sea pressing in upon the people. Mowat notes that although the Newfoundlander's life has become
much easier since the island entered Confederation thirty years ago, what is to be lamented is the loss of reliance on those very virtues of courage and resourcefulness that produced an unique people. Newfoundlanders have a particular identity which is part of the diversity of Canada. Newfoundland itself is vital to a Canadian sense of unity stretching from sea to sea. The tension between the two is what defines Canada, as Frye has pointed out.

Charles Bruce describes the Maritimes as a land-sea economy of intense diversity. Fertile valleys, granite hills, misty glens, rocky shores, giant pine forests, the common sound of water — this is the Maritimes. One learns to adapt to survive. As Joseph Howe, the voice of Nova Scotia, wrote in 1828:

We have no wish to represent Nova Scotia as a second El Dorado... or a land flowing with milk and honey... [but] we often delight to withdraw our mind from all the world beside, and allow it to rest and refresh while contemplating the advancement of our native land, and the security and happiness it yields....

A more optimistic note is sounded here, the positive side of survival, as one learns to adapt to new surroundings and draw strength from its particular resources.

Anne Hébert writes of Quebec, the original heart of the country, a country within a country, the core. She likens Louis Hébert and Marie Rollet who built the first dwelling, tilled the first land, reaped the first grain and made the first bread in Quebec to Adam and Eve, the 'parents' of the human race. She writes eloquently of the land:

The river is salt like the sea... Here the wind
blows free for ten leagues around. The adventure is boundless... One must shout it... The banks narrowing together are thickly black with trees. It is on no human scale... Whoever speaks will speak savagely. With a voice of earth and water mixed...Helter skelter land of wood and sea.... (p. 106, my emphasis)

The aspect of the land that is emphasized here which I would especially draw attention to is the transcendent dimension, its being "on no human scale." Man is overshadowed by the thick, black trees but is not burdened by an intolerable anxiety. Rather he wants to shout the land's praise. Something of divinity is suggested in this evocative description.

William Kilbourn echoes some of James Reaney's feelings about southern Ontario. Although the whole society is predominantly urban, the first and lasting image of the region is still the pastoral one - "a mild and temperate land, between the lower edge of the Rocky Shield and the rim of the Great Lakes, full of... lush fields, cedar swamps and slow meandering rivers...." One notices how the area suited for human habitation is ringed by the formidable Canadian Shield and the Great Lakes which loom over the temperate landscape. "And lurking behind and beneath, half hidden through it all," writes Kilbourn, are "the names and the legends inherited from the original, the deepest possessors, the Indians." (p. 115) The vast, inexorable Canadian land, exemplified by the Shield in space and the Indians in time, is seen over against the settled region and as such underscores the basic tension between a particular region and the country as a whole which I have been examining.

Douglas Fisher's article on northern Ontario draws attention
to the striking paradox of that particular region: a land both
promising in terms of natural resources and forbidding in terms
of their extraction and utilization. He writes:

The area is Russian or Texan in scope but the low,
rocky terrain, the dearth of mighty, navigable ri-
vers, the scattered and partial nature of the mer-
chantable timber, the vicious winters and the
brief growing season all have inhibited widespread
or intensive settlement. (p. 118)

Again there is the tension between a land that can provide many
of the raw materials that man needs for his comfort and security
and a land that is hard and impregnable and does not lend itself
to the exploitation of its non-renewable resources. However,
for a large number of Canada's native population, this land is
home.

W. O. Mitchell has provided us with an indelible impression
of Prairie life with these stark, simple lines:

Here was the least common denominator of nature,
the skeleton requirements simply of land and sky -
Saskatchewan prairie. It lay wide around the
town, stretching tan to the far line of the sky,
shimmering under the June sun and waiting for the
unfailing visitation of wind. . . . 29

Here life is stripped to its bare essentials. Man comes face
to face with his immost self. The wind is a symbol of the Spirit
of God. Kildare Dobbs corroborates Mitchell’s feeling about the
Prairies in these lines:

It was like the open sea, that wide flat land un-
der the vast sky, a brown sea now, though winter
would soon cover it in greyish white, its loneli-
ness more than earthly, more than mortal. Like
the loneliness of God before he made the universe. 30

Again it is the vastness, the emptiness, the 'aloneness' that is
accentuated. This is the 'background' effect of the country
upon its inhabitants. But as other prairie writers point out, in reality Saskatchewan prairie is also rich in physiographical diversity. Edward McCourt writes:

The great southern plains are seamed deep by gullies and creek beds and frequently ridged by low hills which at a distance appear bathed in a romantic blue-green haze; two hundred miles north of the border the plains merge into pleasant, rolling parkland which in turn yields after another two hundred miles or more to a vast forest-lake-and-muskeg belt impinging on the subarctic terrain of the barren lands. 31

This is Saskatchewan in the foreground of her inhabitant’s experience. And it, too, evokes a sense of divinity in man. As McCourt expresses it in this essay:

...everywhere there are things to be seen and felt that exalt or sooth the sensitive spirit... [here] a man sees all the kingdoms of the earth stretched out at his feet and feels himself a creature of utter insignificance in the sum of things or else the very centre of the universe. (p. 85)

This polarity, on the one hand feeling quite insignificant in the total scheme of things and on the other feeling oneself to be the very centre of the universe, is at the heart of our understanding of the 'numinous' and the place we occupy before the holy, as I shall be explaining shortly.

But first let us complete the east-west sweep across the country and focus our attention on the North. Roderick Haig-Brown describes British Columbia as seen from the air as a "spectacular array of mountain ridges, seamed and furrowed with snow, more or less heavily timbered on the lower slopes, the deep and narrow valleys floored by the reflected blue or steel-grey of the long lakes." It was, he notes, a hard place to discover; a hard place to explore. (p. 125) But as settlement developed,
it became apparent that there were soft, gentle places among its awesome mountains - mountains with a beauty that inspired affection as well as fear. (p. 125-6) Again there is a tension between the habitable land and the formidable Rockies that tower over it. There is both awesomeness and affection evoked by the landscape within the region of the west coast.

And of course there is the most overwhelming region of all that looms over all the provinces - the Canadian Arctic - encompassing one million, seven hundred thousand square miles, half the total area of Canada. This bleak expanse of frozen sea and dreary wilderness of frozen plain has led to a powerful Canadian myth of the north although it is part of the country that people seldom have had any direct contact with. It has had a profound effect on the Canadian imagination [to say nothing of the way people from outside Canada still see the Arctic as indicative of the whole country], but as Farley Mowat points out its true character is still not all that well known. He draws attention to the fact that this region fronts on the Arctic Ocean, a true Mediterranean Sea, in exactly the same way that North Africa fronts on the European Mediterranean. This, he acknowledges, is a startling idea for people accustomed to thinking of the Arctic as being at the top of the world, but it is an accurate one. The polar region is actually the centre of the northern hemisphere and the geographic centre of Canada is in Kee-watin, two hundred and fifty miles north-northwest of Churchill, Manitoba. Only when Canadians come to appreciate the North's true significance will they become a nation at the centre of the
continent. (p. 130) In other words, only as Canadians come to shift their centre of gravity from the forty-ninth parallel to the true geographic centre of the country will they come to have a correct perspective of themselves as a 'northern people' and learn to regard the Arctic as part of the Canadian reality and not as something alien or unrealistically mythical. It will still be awesome, but it will also be home. Mowat demonstrates how the Arctic actually displays as much variety as do other regions within Canada although the predominant image is one of bleakness, the background image that feeds the Canadian imagination. In reality it is comprised of massive mountains on the east and west, undulating hills between, the largest number of lakes on earth, lowlands and one of the world's greatest rivers, the Mackenzie. The Arctic archipelago, nine hundred thousand square miles of lands constituting the largest island group on earth, some of them mountainous, others grassy plains, still others bald stone and gravel deserts, is situated north of the mainland. The Arctic climate is not as hostile as is commonly believed nor is it lifeless. (p. 130-2) All this needs to be kept in mind when one contemplates the Far North.

What is significant in this general sweep across the country for my purposes is the way in which certain words, phrases and ideas frequently occur in the descriptions of the land: Words such as 'inexorable', 'overwhelming', 'haunting', 'serene', 'vast', 'stark', 'cold', 'empty', 'lonely', 'lurking', 'beauty', 'fear'; descriptive phrases such as 'terrible grandeur', 'the common denominator', 'on no human scale', 'far more important than we are'; and associations
of the land with biblical themes of reconciliation and God's dominion. These are richly connotative terms which call to mind certain words, phrases and ideas employed by theologians who have tried to articulate the idea of the holy or the 'numinous'. It is to this 'idea of the holy' that we now turn.

(iii) The Meaning of the Numinous

In what follows, I will set out a clear and concise statement of what is meant by the 'numinous' with reference to such men as Rudolf Otto, Sam Keen and Frederick Streng and then seek to examine how that which characterizes the numinous gets expressed specifically in Canadian reflections on the land.

Let us first consider Otto's analysis of the holy by which he means the 'non-rational' or 'supra-rational' in the depths of the divine nature. Holiness, he points out, is a category of interpretation peculiar to the sphere of religion, the specific element of which remains inexpressible or ineffable in the sense that it cannot be understood fully in terms of concepts. (p. 5) The term he chooses to stand for this 'ineffable' element in the meaning of holy, above and beyond the meaning of goodness, is the 'numinous' - a 'sui generis' category of value which, he says, "can only be evoked, awakened in the mind, as everything that comes 'of the spirit' must be awakened." (p. 6-7) There are a number of important elements in the numinous. One is what Otto calls 'creature-consciousness' or 'creature feeling'.

It is the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast
to that which is supreme above all creatures. (p. 10)

This creature feeling is what is aroused in man as a response
to the presence of the numinous which he experiences as an ob-
ject outside of himself. (p. 11) As Streng points out, "The
Holy is the ultimate reality - both the source of man's experi-
ence and yet radically different from anything man normally
experiences materially...[It] is radically different from every-
day existence and yet that everyday existence is dependent upon
[it]." I would add further that it is through everyday exist-
ence as well that the holy is manifested.

To describe the nature of the numinous, Otto employs the
term 'mysterium tremendum'. 'Mysterium' denotes mystery, some-
thing hidden, beyond conception and understanding, that "sig-
nifies blank wonder, an astonishment that strikes us dumb, a-
mazement absolute." (p. 26) In the religious sense, that which
is mysterious is the 'wholly other':

...that which is quite beyond the sphere of the
usual, the intelligible, and the familiar, which
therefore falls quite outside the limits of the
'canny', and is contrasted with it, filling the
mind with blank wonder and astonishment. (p. 26)

Before this 'wholly other', whose nature is incommensurable with
our own, "we recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb."
(p. 28) 'Tremendum' denotes fear, or more precisely, awefulness
or dread. It is something supra-rational which "throbs and
gleams, palpable and visible...prompting to a sense of 'terror'...."
(p. 19) It suggests absolute unapproachability. It also sug-
gests an absolute overpoweringness or majesty. This contrast
between the overpowering aspect of the numinous and our own feeling of being but 'dust and ashes' is what Otto asserts gives rise to the feeling of religious humility. (p. 20) And thirdly, it contains the element of energy — a will, a movement, a force which is active, urgent, compelling and alive. (p. 23) Streng elaborates on this notion of 'tremendum' by pointing out that the dread which is aroused in man in the apprehension of the holy is not simply the sense of alarm or concern brought about by some concrete danger.

'Dread', rather, includes the exuberance of sensing infinite possibilities together with the awareness that man is a conditioned creature who is limited most profoundly by those things of which he is often unaware. Thus, man stands in awe of the Holy, for it is overpowering. The vastness of the Holy reveals the smallness of the individual. 36

Man, however, is not repelled by the overpoweringness of the numinous despite its aspect of terror. There is, rather, an unique attractiveness and fascination about the numinous as Otto points out.

The mystery is for [the creature who trembles before it] not merely something to be wondered at but something that enhances him; and beside that in it which bewilders and confounds, he feels a something that captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment.... (p. 31)

Such fascination is manifested in states of bliss and beatitude where man experiences a positive relationship to the numinous, the source of his being. Without such a relationship, Streng notes, "man loses his creative energy and turns to waste."

But when he recognizes the holy as the "originator and controller
of life he is "blessed," "loved," "protected," and "saved."

In this foregoing analysis of the holy, one finds words such as 'ineffable,' 'overwhelming,' 'mystery,' 'fear,' 'majesty' and 'fascination' appearing frequently. These words evoked by the contemplation of the holy are very much like the words used by Canadian writers to describe their thoughts and feelings about the land. It is my contention that the Canadian response to the land has been and continues to be, in large measure, however imprecise, a response to the numinous - that object in our religious consciousness that is experienced as existing outside ourselves and yet which evokes within us both awe and fascination through our careful awareness and contemplation of the created world. For the person who experiences a positive relationship to the land, it is a source of inspiration, an effectual sign of God's grace; a silent and awesome word to remind us that nothing, even life itself, is ultimately and finally ours by right; something that reminds us that we are part of something much bigger, much more mysterious than we can ever comprehend; something which we can never master. As such, the land is a sign of the sacred itself, a symbol whose primary meaning [inevitable vastness] makes us share a hidden meaning [the apprehension of the holy] and "thus assimilates us to the thing symbolized without our being able to grasp its similarity intellectually." The symbol "provides," "evokes," "suggests" and in the opinion of philosopher-theologian Paul Ricoeur it is "ultimately... a hierophany, a manifestation of
A person who is unable to have a positive relationship to the land, on the other hand, may respond to what is awesome in nature by a fear that needs to dominate, control and even destroy. However, it is the positive relationship which I believe characterizes the Canadian attitude towards the land as the writers to whom I have already alluded would indicate.

One particular writer who articulates the sense of mystery which the land evokes is journalist and historian Bruce Hutchison. In his essay, "The Canadian Personality," Hutchison maintains that among the dominant characteristics of Canadians are a national humility and a feeling of loneliness due in part to

...our being awed by the immensity of space around us, by the cold sweep of the prairies, by the stark presence of mountains leaning upon us, by the empty sea at our door, and the fierce northern climate which colours and toughens the weather of our spirit. (p. 72)

This land sense, he writes, dominates all our national thinking. The deep instinct for the land, our constant feeling of struggle against a harsh environment, and our concentration on the mere task of survival are among the most deeply shared and fully accepted Canadian traits. (p. 72) A nation has been built here against all odds - geographical, economical, racial and the pull of America - as a result of "the unshakeable will to make a nation...a dim, impalpable and dumb thing beyond our power to express and even name." (p. 74, my emphasis) Hutchison concludes his essay with these numinous reflections:
There is the hard, silent and unyielding core of Canada, the final mystery which, like all other things that matter in life, like life itself, is forever unexpressible and can only be intimated in myths and parables which, so far, we have been too busy and too reticent to invent. They will come in time, but the thing itself which they will vainly try to voice is already here and has been here since Champlain shivered on a rock of Quebec in that first cruel Canadian winter...a dream of high mountains and deep forests and prairie sky, of summer crops and winter snow...the truly common denominator - the space, the beauty, the free life of Canada itself. (p. 74, my emphasis)

The mystery of life, man's bond with the sacred, the awesomeness of the land, and the positive Canadian response to the environment all come together here. It is in the sense that the land evokes this awareness of a mystery at the depth of life which grasps us, holds us and arouses in us a sense of wonder, that it serves as a symbol of the numinous. For the numinous is the mystery, the source of the very feelings which the land evokes. It is precisely because the land in Canadian consciousness evokes a sense of awe and mystery that Canadians themselves are able to be responsive to the mystery of life itself, the numinous. How Canadians respond to the land is very similar to how Otto and others say man responds to the holy. He is both overwhelmed and terrified, yet attracted and entranced. If he allows the land and the numinous to have its complete way with him, man will be spiritually the richer.

Of all the writers included in Kilbourn's anthology to which I alluded earlier in this chapter, one in particular draws attention to the correspondence of the land and the numinous
and expresses this in specific Christian terms. Pierre Trotti-
tier, in an article entitled "Return to Winter," suggests one
way to uncover the spiritual dimensions at the depth of our
tradition, particularly as exemplified in our preoccupation
with the environment. He urges us to look on winter with new
eyes. Instead of fearing winter as a time of strangulation of
the spirit, as Canadians, he says, are prone to do, one should
"establish what it is we can build upon the ice and snow." (p. 83)
He urges us to think about the space we occupy - penser notre
espace - to take cognizance of the space around us, to be pre-
sent in it with all our weight instead of allowing ourselves to
be abstracted from it, drawn away from it, or inhibited from
facing it. (p. 84) In other words, instead of being frightened
by the frigid land, one should learn to respond to it in a po-
sitive way appreciating its attractiveness and enchantment. Af-
ter six years away from Canada, Trottier returns and reflects
on Canadian winters comparing them with others he has expe-
rienced abroad. He notes that in Canadian winters there are days
of "sombre anger" [the more terrifying aspect] but also days
of "peace and brilliance." Canadian winters, he writes, are
remarkably clear and bright unlike Europe's winters which are
grey and surly, or Italian winters which reflect too much sea
and evoke in the viewer an ancient dream of beauty and love.

This Canadian sky, reflecting the snow, was of a
paler blue than that found in Italy, but seemed
translucent before the infinite which traversed
it and descended upon it, as if calling for a hu-
man presence on the earth as an act of faith. (p. 84)
More so than anywhere else, he adds, the sky in Canada, reflecting as it does the snow-covered earth, represents the infinite. The holy is pictured as traversing the sky and descending upon the earth in such a way that one has the impression of an integrated nature symbolism comprised of both earth and sky. One does not dominate the other; they are together a whole. As such, the winter sky, the ice and snow are no longer burdens, prisons, or tortures; rather they are a new form of freedom. (p. 84) The world is reduced to essentials, not to nothingness, and becomes a source of meditation; for in Canadian winters we have also an eye to the explosion of spring.

Since it is in the bosom of winter that this explosion is born, death and whiteness and virginity - no longer seen as so many sterile negations in the style of conceptual thinking - can be interpreted as real, concrete, and fruitful. (p. 84-5)

Trottier then goes on to interpret winter in specifically Christian terms. As winter makes the earth hard and prevents burials, it represents the refusal of death in so far as it is finite. "Winter," then, he adds, "is the season of the return to the infinite, to the incomplete that is man, for whom the flowers and fruits, having completed their cycle, offer unbounded possibilities." (p. 85) It is a return to the infinite but also a return from the infinite in the sense that it is in this season, too, that we are reminded of the Christian mystery of God becoming man.

Return to, return from; these two expressions mean basically the meeting between the infinite which is in God and the infinite which is in man and which, in the final analysis, are made to link up and touch one another. (p. 85)
Trottier's description of winter and the "indispensable condition of fertility which hides behind its exterior of death, whiteness and virginity" (p. 85), linked as it is with the mystery of the Incarnation, does what Ricoeur maintains all symbols aim at: "reinstating man within a whole, the transcendent whole of sky, the immanent whole of vegetation and death and rebirth." Trottier's attitude towards winter typifies the Canadian attitude towards the land in that there is both a bleak and deadly aspect hovering over everything and yet within and a part of this overwhelming and terrifying dimension there is enchantment and peace, hope and life.

Sam Keen expresses Trottier's sentiment in theological terms building upon Otto's notion of the holy and shedding light upon aspects of the land as a symbol of the numinous. He maintains that to be truly human requires having a sense of wonder, the "admiration which develops into an appreciative contemplation and graceful celebration of an object's or person's uniqueness, value and mystery." The 'wondrous' is like Otto's the 'holy' in the sense that it is a mystery towards which we ambivalently feel both fear and attraction. To wonder is to rejoice in the presence of things and to find holiness in the depths of everyday life. But to wonder is also to feel the pain of limitation and the tragic character of life as well. (p. 9)

The Canadian tradition combines this rejoicing and the experience of pain. The land evokes both, in its vivid grandeur and its harshness. For the person who is able to respond to the
land in all its varied aspects, to respond to life in this environment with all its vicissitudes in trust and confidence, with gratitude and wonder, there is a deep spiritual satisfaction which Gibson refers to as a spirituality of contentment, of simplicity [the essentials], of thankfulness for enough.

In the next chapter, I will begin to investigate from an historical perspective the impact of the land on Canadian consciousness to show how the seeds of the Canadian tradition have been sown and nurtured and how they have indeed become symbolic both of Canada and of the holy.
Chapter I - Footnotes


3 Antonio Gualtieri, "Towards a Theological Perspective on Nationalism," in *Religion and Culture in Canada*, ed. Peter Slater (Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1977), pp. 507-519. Quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.


5 Frye, "Letters in Canada," *University of Toronto Quarterly* as found in *The Bush Garden*, p. 10.


8 Gibson, "Towards a Canadian Theology," p. 2.


10 Gibson, "Towards a Canadian Theology," p. 3

11 ibid.

12 ibid., p. 4.


15 Hugh MacLennan, "After 300 Years, Our Neurosis Is Relevant," in Kilbourn (ed.) *Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 8. Other quotations from this essay are indicated by the page numbers in the text.

Other quotations from MacLennan's book are indicated by the page numbers in the text.

17 James Reaney, "Local Grains of Sand" in Kilbourn, ed., Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom, p. 26. Other quotations from this article are indicated by the page numbers in the text.

18 Reaney, "The Canadian Poet's Predicament," in A. J. M. Smith (ed.) Masks of Poetry, New Canadian Library (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), p. 122. Other quotations from this article are indicated by the page numbers in the text. Besides the land itself, Indians, the achievements of Canadian artists in fields other than poetry and the new vision of Christianity in North America, Reaney includes the juxtaposition of national and local historical events among the five distinguishing elements of this country.


20 Reaney, "Lake Erie" in Alan Dawe Profile of a Nation (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969) p. 84.

21 John Hirsch, "On Becoming Canadian" in Kilbourn, ed., Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom, p. 80. Other quotations from this essay are indicated by the page number in the text.

22 Kildare Dobbs, "Running to Paradise" in Kilbourn, ed., Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom, p. 86. Other quotations from this essay are indicated by the page number in the text.


26 Anne Hébert, "Quebec: The Original Heart" in Kilbourn, ed., Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom, p. 105. Other quotations from this essay are indicated by the page number in the text.

from this Kilbourn essay are indicated by page numbers in the text.

28 Douglas Fisher, "Ontario's Ancient North" in Kilbourn, ed., Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom, p. 117-120. Quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.


31 Edward McCourt, 'Prologue' to Saskatchewan in Alan Dawe, Profile of a Nation, p. 84. Other quotations from this selection are indicated by page numbers in the text.

32 Roderick Haig-Brown, "British Columbia: Loggers and Lotus Eaters" in Kilbourn, ed., Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom, p. 124. Other quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.

33 Farley Mowat, "The Canadian Arctic" in Kilbourn, ed., Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom, pp. 129-132. Quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text. See also Farley Mowat, Canada North, The Canadian Illustrated Library (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967)


36 ibid., p. 51.

37 ibid., p. 52.

38 Paul Ricoeur, "The Symbol...Food for Thought", Philosophy Today, Vol. IV, No. 3-4, Fall 1960, p. 200.

39 ibid., p. 207.

40 Bruce Hutchison, "The Canadian Personality" in Gill and Newell, ed., Prose for Senior Students, rev. ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 69-74. Quotations from this essay are indicated by page numbers from the text. This essay was written in 1948 and in a recent publication, Hutchison reiterates how important he feels the environment has been in the shaping of Canadian consciousness. In his
autobiography, he writes:

I have always believed, as one of the few constant beliefs of my life that the land itself, not man's grimy marks upon it, had shaped, coloured and nurtured the total mind of Canada—
a crude theory, to be sure, a mere hunch and
vagrant notion good enough for books or newspaper columns but denied by all the economic
figures, the best sociologists, and the ant-hill society of our time. Still, the fact of
the land has endured, pervasive, inescapable
and dominant as it will be to the end after our
scratches have been expunged. (Bruce Hutchison,
The Far Side of the Street (Toronto: Macmillan,
1976), p. 204.

41 Pierre Trottier, "Return to Winter" in Kilbourn, ed., Canada:
A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom, pp. 82-85. Quotations
from this essay are indicated by page numbers in the text.

42 Ricoeur, "The Symbol...Food for Thought", p. 207.

43 Donald Evans, "Keen on Authentic Man", Studies in Religion,
Vol. 3, No. 1, Summer, 1973, p. 1. Other quotations from
this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.
Chapter 2

ROOTS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter, I shall begin to trace the historical development of this land sense which has come to dominate the Canadian consciousness. I shall begin by considering Canada's aboriginal people's attitude towards the land, discuss the impact of the environment on the first European explorers and early French and English settlers, and conclude this section with a sampling of the views of a number of pre-Confederation writers who tend to unite poetic sensibility, a growing sense of national pride and religious feeling evoked by nature.

(1) Native Indian Spirituality

In the opening chapter, I alluded a number of times to Canada's aboriginal people and drew particular attention to their important place within our historical tradition. I noted, for example, how much of the native population has been reduced to indolence and meaninglessness by a dominant, white, technological society. I called to mind the importance of their inclusion in any achievement of reconciliation between man and man and man and nature and I pointed out how their culture comes out of the look of the country - the shape of the land.

I will now explore more fully the native Indian's understanding of himself in relation to the land as a way of illustrating how profoundly the natural environment and native spirituality are bound up together. It is this understanding that the native people had of their relationship to the land that Euro-Canadians did not adequately comprehend and which led them to deprive the native people of a great deal of their cultural and
religious heritage. Chief Dan George of the Burrard Indian Reserve in British Columbia silenced a jubilant crowd of 32,000 in Vancouver's Empire Stadium on July 1st, 1967, Canada's centennial year, with a moving and bitter soliloquy in which he lamented the plight of Indian people throughout the land. He recalled in his speech a time when the forests, streams and rivers of Canada provided food in abundance and the Indian spirit, "like the winds, once roamed the good lands." (p. 252) In contrast, he noted how since the white man came the Indian's freedom has disappeared as the native population has been oppressed by alien customs.

When I fought to protect my land and my home, I was called a savage. When I neither understood nor welcomed this way of life, I was called lazy. When I tried to rule my people, I was stripped of my authority.

My nation was ignored in your history textbooks.... I was ridiculed in your plays and motion pictures, and when I drank your fire-water, I got drunk...and I forgot. (p. 252)

But Dan George is prepared to forget what is past and gone. He looks forward to a time when his race shall be built into the "proudest segment of your [Canadian] society." (p. 253)

For Dan George's vision to be fulfilled, Canadians will have to learn what they failed to understand in previous generations that to the native Indian, land is sacred. One finds the central importance of the sacredness of land noted by virtually every contemporary native writer. I will sample only three among the better known of these writers who articulate the importance of the land in native Indian consciousness.

Wilfred Pelletier, who was born and raised on Manitoulin
Island, writes of the land in his autobiography:

You don't live off it, like a parasite. You live in it, and it in you, or you don't survive. And that is the only worship of God, there is. When you buy land you are dispossessed by an act of purchase. The whole transaction is a lie that says, "This is my land. It belongs to me," when the truth is that you belong to it...."

One notes here how the idea of land and native spirituality are inseparable.

Harold Cardinal says of Canada that its name stems from a Cree word 'Ka-Kanata' which literally means "that which is clean." He maintains that the Cree describe their country as the clean land because it belongs to the Creator who is a "clean being." When a Cree-speaking person describes him or herself as a Canadian, he or she means that they are members of a nation of people who are part of the four seasons of Mother Earth, that they are part of the land, and because they are part of the land they are also part of the Father's creation. (p. 10) Cardinal goes on to say that when an Indian person describes the land as "clean", he is implicitly defining his responsibility of maintaining a balanced relationship with the land. (p. 11)

This signifies recognition of the fact that this land belongs to, and was created by a clean being; a being known as God to some people...perhaps Manitou to others.... Whatever the name used, the Creator's existence is recognized, and because people believe that He is clean and pure, and that all things he has created are clean, then one has to be pure in order to relate to Him. (p. 11)

George Mandel, in the introduction to his book The Fourth World: An Indian Reality, notes that wherever he has travelled in the Aboriginal World he has found a common attachment to the land. The North American Indian is part of that world.
The land from which our culture springs is like the water and the air, one and indivisible. The land is our Mother Earth. The animals who grow on that land are our spiritual brothers. We are part of that Creation that the Mother Earth brought forth. More complicated, more sophisticated than the other creatures, but no nearer to the Creator who infused us with life. (p. 6)

He asserts that all the structures and values of Indian culture have developed out of a spiritual relationship with the land on which Indians have lived.

Our customs and practices vary as the different landscapes of the continent, but underlying this forest of legitimate differences is a common soil of social and spiritual experience. (p. 7)

What I find striking in these contemporary statements of native people is the ease with which they relate to the land and the straightforward association which they make between the land, themselves and the Creator. This perhaps appears to the non-native reader as overly simplistic and even naive, but what I would propose is that this understanding of reality is really quite remarkably profound and is the result of many hundreds of years of wrestling with the environment and responding to a sense of the holy in life that not only transcends creation but is immanent within it.

Noted anthropologist Diamond Jenness provides us with an account of Indian religion that puts the contemporary Indian understanding of the relationship between land and spirituality in historical perspective. One can see from his account that it is a sense of mystery evoked by the natural world that promotes a religious understanding of life. He points out that although there were at least fifty Indian tribes in Canada before Euro-
pean settlement which differed widely in the outward forms of religious observances, there was a remarkable similarity in the inner beliefs on which these observances were founded. The basic doctrine was the kinship of man with nature. (p. 71) The Canadian Indian recognized no distinctions between animate and inanimate objects. All aspects of nature possessed personalities [souls, spirits] similar to those of the Indians themselves. These spiritual forces, inhabiting external things, could be either friendly or hostile. The forces inherent in the winds, thunder, earth and the sun filled the Indian with a sense of mystery. These forces were especially revered. (p. 72)

But it would be a mistake to think that native people were simply animists. Although a few tribes in Canada's north believed their universe to be a playground for these spiritual forces, each acting independently, the majority believed in a gradation of power, higher powers subordinating lower powers, culminating in the conception of a Supreme Being, the true ruler of the cosmos, the sun being but its visible manifestation. (p. 72-73) This Supreme Being was looked upon as the "ultimate source of all the power or force in the universe, power that was single and yet divisible" [like the rays of the sun], power that actually was divided among all the objects of nature, including man himself. (p. 73) These awesome forces, as I noted above, inspired reverence and since these forces could be either friendly or hostile, to avoid arousing their hostility, each tribe evolved a number of regulations and taboos and sacrificial rites. Prayer, reinforced by fasting, was the key to the supernatural
world. An Indian child at adolescence, for example, would fast and pray in solitude in the hope of a visitation from the supernatural world. A vision would convince the person that he had acquired a supernatural guardian, and having thus inherited the doctrine of his spiritual kinship with nature, he would seek to enlist its forces for his own protection and welfare. (p. 74-75) A mystic link was thus forged between himself and the natural world and the supernatural powers that undergird it. So holy was this link that he rarely dared to reveal the vision that created it. (p. 75)

Canadian Indian mythology was a blending of quasi-historical traditions and common folk-tales, "a direct outcome...of that spiritual interpretation of nature on which the religion rested." (p. 77) Some myths refer to a heroic age in which man could freely communicate with animals and birds; others purport to explain the origin of certain lakes and rivers, of caribou and of man himself. But, interestingly, the notion of a first cause for everything, of a Great Spirit that created ex nihilo is lacking in these mythologies. Jenness suggests that this is so because the Indians

premised, perhaps unconsciously, that nature's greatest phenomena had always co-existed with the Great Spirit, and that to both alike there was neither beginning nor end. (p. 78) 7

As a summary Jenness writes:

In the character of the Canadian Indian realism and mysticism blended strangely. Beneath the semblances of external things he pictured beings animated with thoughts and emotions similar to his own, beings that struggled as he did to maintain their places in the arena of life. ...he extended to all things a certain measure of reverence, as
befitted one who himself played a role in the same amphitheatre. ...whether he prayed to the spirit world around him, or turned his eyes upward to the sky god above, he asked for earth blessings only.... (p. 78)

What I would suggest as a conclusion to be drawn from this account of native Indian spirituality and the reverence for nature and the land is that native people have learned how to respond wisely to a sense of the numinous in life. They have been responsive to life's mysterious forces inherent in nature and have conceptualized a Supreme Being as the ultimate source of these forces in the universe. The fact that they see some of these forces as hostile, however, does not mean that the Creator is himself hostile. This rather is a recognition that the ultimate source of the universe has a nature incommensurable with our own, a nature which can appear hostile and evokes a sense of dread. Native people have been filled with a sense of reverence for life which extends itself to the most insignificant of creatures and rather than seek to dominate and destroy those aspects of the natural world that loom over against man, the native people have sought to live in harmony with the natural environment as a creative response to a world which they as well as other life-forms share.

(11) First Explorers, Early Settlement, French Canada

What I have tried to point out in the first section of this chapter is that Canada's indigenous people had evolved a distinct culture and authentic spirituality rooted in a symbiotic relationship with nature by the time the first contact with Europeans occurred. The early explorers, however, came to North America
with a radically different understanding of the relationship between man and nature than that of the native people of this continent. Their attitude could be described as apobiotic which emphasizes man's apartness, his separation, his lack of oneness with the natural order. Being detached from the natural order, man is then free from it and impelled to oversee, manipulate and exploit the natural process for his own ends. By becoming master of nature, man sees himself as sharing in the transcendent power of God. In the process of his apobiotic efforts, however, man is often caught up in the order and beauty he is seeking to understand and then control. It is at this point that man's one-sided emphasis on technological achievement and mastery of nature can be checked by a view of nature that emphasizes the accommodation of man to the natural process in a relationship of harmony, unity and organic wholeness. But more often than not the first explorers, in their eagerness to conquer the inexorable land [and its inhabitants], were not moved by the beauty of what they saw to seek to accommodate themselves to it. They were often awed by nature's spectacles but just as often were unimpressed by what must have seemed mere obstacles to routes of discovery. Consider these varied impressions, beginning with those of Samuel de Champlain on the famous Lachine Rapids:

I assure you I never saw any torrent of water pour over with such force as this does...it boils up extraordinarily...and it is so dangerous that it is beyond the power of any man to pass with any boat however small it may be.... 9

Of the awesome chasm of the Saguenay River, however, he says only that it is "a most unpleasant country; very deserts, unfit
for animals or birds." (p. 41)

Father Louis Hennepin, who travelled with LaSalle and is allegedly the first white man to see Niagara Falls, wrote this description:

Betwixt the Lake Ontario and Erie, there is a vast and prodigious Cadence of Water which falls down after a surprizing and astonishing manner, inso much that the Universe does not afford its Parallel... [a]horrible Precipice... The waters which fall down from this vast height, do foam and boil after the most hideous manner imaginable, making an outrageous Noise, more terrible than that of thunder; for when the Wind blows from the South, their dismal roaring may be heard above fifteen leagues off...

The explorers who subsequently were to push through to the west coast reacted to the country in the following ways: Captain George Vancouver said of the British Columbia coast that its shores put on a very dreary aspect, chiefly composed, as they were, of rugged rocks - "as gloomy and dismal an aspect as nature could well be supposed to exhibit." Simon Fraser describes the river that his come to bear his name and its surroundings as "dreary" and "dangerous": "Mountains upon mountains, whose summits are covered with eternal snows, close the glooming scene." David Thompson said of the Columbia River system on the west slope of the Rockies:

The scene of desolation before us was dreadful, and I knew it. A heavy gale of wind, much more a mountain storm, would have buried us.... We are pyrmies among the giant pines and cedars of this country....

Descriptions such as these, I suggest, are the 'stuff' of which Canadian poetry is made and the Canadian imagination nourished. There is in them a sense of awe and dread and desolation - "a tone of deep terror in regard to nature" - as Northrop Frye
expresses it:

It is not a terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest. The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even its sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values. 14 (my emphasis)

We shall have occasion to see how this tone of deep terror is established in the Canadian poetic tradition later on in this chapter. Let me simply say here that what I think produces this "terror of the soul" is man's initial response to the formidable environment in which he finds himself in first coming to this country. It is born of the feeling of 'creature-consciousness' as Otto has called it, "the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness"; it is Margaret Atwood's meaning when she says we are all "immigrants to this place... [as] "we move in fear, exiles and invaders... in the parts unknown to us"; it is David Thompson's sense of being "pygmies among the giant pines and cedars of this country"; it is man's perception of his own insignificance and vulnerability in the face of nature which initially overwhelms him. Unlike indigenous people who have learned to live in harmony with the environment and thus assuage many of its more ominous aspects, the Euro-Canadians tend to see nature as an enemy, an obstacle to be overcome. Only as this sense of awe and dread and desolation is attenuated by an utmost fascination for the wilderness can the non-native person expect to see the truly numinous character of the natural world of which man is himself a part.
Rupert Brooke articulates the appeal of the wilderness in this description of northern Manitoba:

It is the feeling of fresh loneliness that impresses itself before any detail of the wild. The soul - or the personality - seems to have indefinite room to expand. There is no one else within reach, there never has been anyone; no one else is THINKING of the lakes and hills you see before you. They have no tradition, no names even... In such country as this there is rarefied clean sweetness. The air is unbreathed, and the earth untrodden... There are only the wrinkled, grey-blue lake...and the grey rocks, and the cliffs and hills, covered with birch trees, and the fresh wind among the birches, and quiet, and that unseizable virginity... Dawn...and sunset...follow one another with an infinite loneliness... 18

J. M. Bliss, editor of Canadian History in Documents, 1763-1966, who cites this description by Brooke, notes that the "northern wilderness was the essence of prewar Canada, just as it has always been the essence of Canada." In this description one detects the beginnings of a movement in the direction of fascination as well as dread before the land. It is the combined sense of awe, dread and fascination that leads one to an attitude of reverence for the land and respect for the Creator who is present in creation in all its idyllic and ominous forms.

The first Canadian settlers were French and both in terms of their history and literature the influence of the environment upon them is strong. Jean-Charles Falardeau, for instance, contrasts the Canadian seignorial system which developed in French Canada with the French feudal system of which Louis XIV intended the colony to be a replica: "It was a purely economic system... a method of distributing land and exploiting it, not a political institution as was its counterpart in France." The seignories
fronted on the St. Lawrence River and other rivers. The farms were narrow and deep and houses were built on the extreme end of each farm facing the water. This string of houses, known as 'la côte', was easily accessible from the rivers, the only 'roadways' in the colony for some time. When all the land along the rivers was occupied, another row or 'rang' of houses was built a mile further back and so on. This arrangement of houses built in a long row made clustered community such as existed in France impossible. And despite Louis XIV's orders to administrators in the colony to prevent the 'habitants' from building their houses on their land, but to oblige them to group themselves in villages [as was the custom in France], the Canadian 'habitants' kept on building their houses on isolated 'rangs', "the influence of the environment being stronger than the intentions and edicts of His Majesty." (p. 103) The 'habitant' was attached to his land which he cultivated with the help of his family. With his neighbours being engaged in the same enterprise, having the same interests, and having their homes along the same road, the result, notes Falardeau, was a tradition of mutual aid unlike that in France. (p. 103) This 'côte' or 'rang' became the elementary unit of social cohesion; it was the first spontaneous pattern of rural organization, born out of the need to survive. (p. 110) It marked a radical departure from the village community model of old France.

What I would draw attention to in Falardeau's analysis is the way French settlers, like the French and English explorers before and after them, respond initially to the land: they seek
to manage it, exploit it. They do so out of a basic need to survive in a country where they are strangers, where they are overwhelmed by formidable forests and a numbing climate. And yet, as Palardeau points out, the 'habitants' are attached to their land. They do not transform the Canadian environment into a replica of their homeland. While seeking to manage land in order to survive, the French-Canadian settler is also being shaped by the Canadian environment in an unique way.

Archibald MacMechan, in his important pioneering work of literary criticism, says of both French and English literature that "they are both affected by the genius of the land they live in... and move in the same directions and under the same conditions." He marks the decade between 1860 and 1870 in Quebec as the "true cradle" of French literature in Canada. (p. 56) Of poet Octave Crémazie, he writes:

What distinguishes [him] from the Mermets and Bibauds is his enthusiastic love of the Canadian scene. Here is the new note sounded, and herein is the typical Canadian poet. (p. 65)

The 'new note' sounded in Crémazie, like the note sounded in Brooke's description of northern Manitoba, is one of affection for the land. One of Crémazie's finest poems is about the Thousand Islands. In it, he theorizes, that when the angels carried the Garden of Eden away from earth, a trail of Eden flowers marked their flight. "These fell upon the bosom of the giant river, and brought forth 'les Mille Isles, le paradis du Saint Laurent.'" (p. 65) No place on earth can speak to his heart like the Thousand Islands, "for this is his native land and this soil is hallowed by the graves of his ancestors." (p. 66) In an-
other poem, Crémazie says of Canada that it is a name both
sonorous and salutary ["sonore et bienfaisant"], a country
whose noble nature is the source of all things good [...ta
grande nature, pour nous la source de tout bien..."]. Here
the good feeling of being Canadian is evoked by

La grande voix de nos montagnes
Qui vibre au milieu des sapins,
Et que l'echo de nos compagnes
Répète aux rivages lointains...

Nature is not something to be exploited, but rather is some-
ting to be delighted in. The good feeling of being Canadian
results from man being in tune with nature's voice, albeit for
Crémazie that voice is an idyllic one.

Louis Frechette captures more of the sense of awe that is
associated with the numinous in his reflection on the country:

C'était le Canada mystérieux et sombre
Sol plein d'horreur tragique et de secrets
sans nombre,
Avec ses bois épais et ses rochers géants
Emergents tout à coup du lit des océans.
Quels êtres inconnus, quels terribles fantômes
De ces forêts dans fin hautent les vastes dômes,
Et peuplent de ces monts les repaires ombreux...

This land, 'mysterious and dark', with its 'thick woods', 'giant rocks',
'unknown creatures', 'dreadful spirits', 'endless forests' and 'vast
skies', full of 'tragic horror' evokes that same deep terror of
which Northrop Frye speaks. But one is not repelled by the ter-
rrible beauty of the land described here. It is not dreary and
wearisome as some of the early explorers experience it. There is
rather something compelling and alive about this place as Frech-
ette depicts it, a fascination for this foreboding land.

Looming in the background of the 'côtes' or 'rang' and over-
shadowing the Thousand Islands is the indomitable wilderness which evokes both a sense of mystery and awe and intimates the holy. In new France one has established the basic rhythm of Canadian life, the cultivation of society and culture in the habitable regions of a country dominated by an impenetrable landscape.

(iii) The Conquest and Beyond - English Canadian Attitudes Towards the Land until the time of Confederation

English settlement in Canada predates the conquest by a number of years but for the purposes of this part of the paper, it is the attitudes of English writers in Canada after 1759, and particularly those in Upper Canada, that I will be examining to determine the impact of the land on their consciousness. I will be referring to writers who may be considered representative of this period by their inclusion in such books as Klinck and Watters' edited *Canadian Anthology* and Carl Hallstadt's recently edited anthology entitled *The Search for English-Canadian Literature*. I have already made reference to a couple of French writers of this period in the preceding section of this chapter whose attitudes towards the land correspond with those of English Canadian writers, but since I am much more familiar with the English-Canadian tradition in literature I shall concentrate on it.

Frances Brooke, the first English novelist to live and write in Canada, accompanied her husband to the British garrison at Quebec in 1763 where she spent the better part of the next five years. Her *History of Emily Montague*, published in 1769, gives a vivid description of life in Quebec and the effect of the en-
environment:

The cold is so amazingly intense as almost totally to stop respiration...the rigor of the climate suspends the very powers of the understanding; what then must become of those of the imagination...27

Yet, despite the cold, as Brooke, through one of her characters, Arabella Fermor, writes elsewhere: the Canadian winter is not a joyless season; nor is it one that numbs the creative spirit. She gives this description of a journey from Quebec to the Island of Orleans by way of the falls of Montmorenci, a journey she describes as "one of the most agreeable jaunts imagination can paint":

...the serene blue sky above, the dazzling brightness of the sun, and the colours from the refraction of its rays on the transparent part of these ridges of ice, the winding course these obliges you to make, the sudden disappearing of a train of fifteen or twenty carriages, as these ridges intervene, which again discover themselves on your rising to the top of the frozen mount, the tremendous appearance both of the ascent and descent, which however are not attended with the least danger; all together give a grandeur and variety to the scene, which almost rise to enchantment.

Your the English dull foggy climate affords nothing that can give you the least idea of our frost pieces in Canada. (p. 6)

Mrs. Brooke has captured the essence of the land and the climate in these two passages. In the first, the cold’s stupification, the numbing of the imagination; in the second, the enchantment of a winter scene when experienced as a totality. It is this pattern of first being overwhelmed by the land and then being fascinated by it once one is acclimatized that stands out in the Canadian response to the environment. Similarly, it is the pattern of first being overwhelmed by the idea of the holy and then being drawn into a posture of worship and praise that
is characteristic of religious experience.

The awesome aspects of the Canadian wilderness which evoke both a sense of dread and a feeling of wonder are depicted in several narrative and longer poems that recount the early days of settlement in English Canada. Adam Burwell in his poem, *Talbot Road*, extols the lavishness of nature in this "blissful land":

...how rich these vallies lie,
How soft the purling streams meander by!
How lofty, towering, these deep forests rise,
These pines, majestic, intercept the skies! 28

Oliver Goldsmith in *The Rising Village* describes the wilderness in more daunting and fearful terms:

How great the pain, the danger, and the toil,
Which mark the first rude culture of the soil.
When looking round, the lonely settler sees
His home amid a wilderness of trees:
How sinks his heart in those deep solitudes,
Where not a voice upon his ear intrudes;
Where solemn silence all the waste pervades,
Heightening the horror of its gloomy shades; 29

Joseph Howe's *Acadia* depicts the Maritimes as a "wide expanse" comprised of "blushing flowers," "groves of stately pine," glassy lakes," "swelling seas," and "hills that soar heavenward." The woods have a"deep tone." Each of these writers hears the voice of nature.

However, each also gives enthusiastic approval to the destruction of these noble forests as settlers move into the area. Burwell describes the destruction of trees as a "heap of chaos.../

A scene of terror to the astonished eye." (p. 16, 11. 6, 12)

But there is no lament as in Chief Dan George's soliloquy. On the contrary, Burwell writes:
...Liberty must call this favourite soil
Her own, and o'er the whole benignly smile;
How fitter to fair freedom's chosen race!
How might the goddess here her sons embrace?
Then why should it neglected, waste remain? (p. 15, 11. 29-32)

Goldsmith sees the forest's terror overcome by the woodman's axe "that strew[s] the fallen forest on the ground." (p. 25, 1. 20) And Howe, having described a massacre by Micmac Indians who he characterizes as "shrieking fiends" and of "demonic strain" (p. 56, 11. 38, 65) even though their land is being taken from them, praises the "venturous wanderers from their Fatherland" (p. 57, 1. 26) who braved the danger and death to "win a peaceful dwelling or a grave..." (p. 55, 1. 68)

As we have seen previously, the tension between viewing nature in its virgin state, symbolized by the deep forests, as an awesome spectacle evoking a sense of the numinous, and seeing nature as man's enemy is again found here. The 'vast unconsciousness' of nature arouses both a 'terror of the soul' that leads man to want to destroy the forests and a sense of fascination that causes him to stand in awe of the majestic land that looms over against him. The ambivalence of man's attitude toward nature as something to be manipulated and controlled on the one hand, and something to be accepted and lived with on its own terms on the other is a prevailing Canadian motif.

Northrop Frye has identified the indifference of nature to human values as the central Canadian tragic theme. He points to a poem by Charles Heavyssege entitled "Jephthah's Daughter" as the place where this theme emerges in the Canadian literary tradition. The poem is a Biblical dramatic work based upon the Book
of Judges, XI: 30-40, the story of Jephthah the Gileadite who had promised the Lord that, if he were granted victory over the Ammonites, he would offer up as a sacrifice "whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return...and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him...his only child."

In Heavysege's poem, Jephthah, in response to this cruel twist of fate, addresses his adversary:

Oh, Fate supreme, Fate, tell me whence thou art?
Speak, phantom; wert thou from the deep of time Evoked? Or hast thou stood...
Over Eternity's dread, bankless sea?
And have all things known thine encompassment?
And shall the future be the slave of thee,
Thou Gorgon-visaged, dire necessity?
Who and what art thou, that thou shouldst me bind,
And seem the secret master of my mind?
I hate thee, Fate, and would 'gainst thee rebel,
As 'gainst the Omnipotent once the king of hell!
Yet, if thou be'est the name of God's high will,
I do submit thy purpose to fulfil. 32

Jephthah lashes out against sinister Fate that mindlessly seems to hold him captive on the one hand, and yet proposes to submit to its will should it turn out that Fate is but another name for God on the other.

Frye, commenting on this poem, writes:

...it seems to me to reflect more directly the influence of his [Heavysege's] Canadian environment, for what Jephthah is really sacrificing his daughter to is nature, nature as a mystery of mindless power, with endless resources for killing man but with nothing to respond to his moral or intellectual feelings. 33

In another article, Frye comments further:

To Heavysege, a man who, like Jephthah, worships a God who demands fulfillment of a rash vow of sacrifice even if it involves his own daughter, is really a man in the state of nature; he has identified his God, if not with nature, at any rate with a mindless force of inscrutable mystery like nature, and all
Jephthah's questionings and searchings of spirit are the looks of intelligence directed at blankness, the attempts of a religious pioneer to find a spiritual portage through the heart of darkness...34

In this poem, Frye concludes, human and civilized values are contrasted with nature's disregard of them in a primitive country where the religious tendency is "for God to disappear behind the mask of nature..." (p. 526) Frye's observation illustrate one side of man's response to nature that surfaces in the Canadian tradition. The destructiveness of nature suggests a terrifying side of God; and man, in his attempts to dominate nature, is engaged in a struggle against a seemingly hostile Deity.

But there is another side to Heavysege as well. Defiant as he is towards that nameless, force or power that "[shakes] the shore of nature with his frame" [Sonnet 2], he also stands in awe of nature, "[the] solemn darkness; the sublime of shade" [Sonnet 17], and extols the majesty of creation.

Hushed in the calm beyond mine utterance,
See in the western sky the evening spread;
Suspended in its pale, serene expanse,
Like scattered flames, the glowing cloudlets red...
Nor motion, nor the faintest breath of sound,
Disturbs the steadfast beauty of the scene. [Sonnet 16]

What Heavysege does is hold in tension the two interlocking faces of the natural environment, one capable of destroying man, the other able to evoke the utmost fascination. The question arises in the poem whether or not man could ever totally dominate nature by the very fact that its origins are unknown and beyond man's understanding. It is precisely the inscrutability of the origin of creation that evokes in man the idea of the holy. Perhaps indeed it is because the land is so inexorable here in Canada, so
overwhelming, awesome and compellingly alive, that Canadian poets have been able to respond to it in such a way that it comes to symbolize the numinous, itself an ineffable idea.

A number of other poets and writers besides Heavysege writing in the early to middle nineteenth century associate nature and God in what I would call a "numinous" way. It is true that nature is looked upon favourably by these authors, as was the standard response during this period, but as Frye has pointed out there is an aspect of their writing about nature that expresses its vast unconscious and terrifying side as well.

Catharine Parr Traill, for example, describes the charms of a Canadian winter, "the air...exquisitely clear and free from vapor," the "saffron-tinted", evening sky, the "hoar-frost" sparkling on the trees. It is a country without historical associations and legendary tales of ghosts or spirits, a country, she notes, which we look upon as a geologist does, "with the curious eye of natural philosophy alone." (p. 163-164) But far from finding Canada an unpoetical land with no scope for the imagination, she finds that she can be very happy and contented here.

If its volume of history is yet a blank, that of Nature is open, and eloquently marked by the finger of God; and from its pages I can extract a thousand sources of amusement and interest whenever I take my walks in the forest or by the borders of the lakes. (p. 165)

Beside this idyllic picture of nature, however, she sets another, a hurricane "violent and destructive in its effect." (p. 207) She describes the way the sky suddenly darkens, "the rapid movements in the lurid, black, and copper-coloured clouds that were careering above the lake," trees falling, and the "scattered
remnants of the pines" in the air.

It was an awful sight to see the tall forest rocking and bowing before the fury of the storm, and with the great trunks falling one after the other, as if they had been a pack of cards thrown down by a breath. (p. 208)

In a numinous sense, nature is as eloquently marked by the finger of God in a whirlwind's fury as it is in peaceful tranquility. These two aspects of nature held together in the poet's imagination lead to associations with other kinds of visions. Anna Brownell Jameson, for example, on first hearing the deep roar of Niagara Falls, compares her vision of the cataract with the vision of Job, "so near - yet unseen - making itself thus heard and felt...consciously present, yet unrevealed and undiscovered." In a powerfully evocative way, Jameson associates the roaring of the falls, heard but not yet seen, with man's consciousness of God [as with Job] being present but ineffably so.

During a summer voyage on Lake Huron, she also wrote this:

I cannot, I dare not, attempt to describe to you the strange sensation one has, thus thrown for a time beyond the bounds of civilized humanity, or indeed any humanity; nor the wild yet solemn reveries which come over one in the midst of this wilderness of woods and waters. All was so solitary, so grand in its solitude, as if nature unviolated sufficed to herself... (p. 124-125)

This "strange sensation," these "wild yet solemn reveries" of which she speaks which come over her in the solitude of the wilderness are the expression of her own creature-consciousness as she comes face to face with nature and the mystery of its origin. She is both overwhelmed and pacified by the woods and water that are sufficient unto themselves.
Susanna Moodie, best known for her book *Roughing It In The Bush*, a vigorous and accurate account of frontier life in Upper Canada, echoes these feelings about nature.

...there are few countries in the world which possess so many natural advantages as Canada, and present more striking subjects to fire the genius of the poet, and guide the pencil of the painter. Beautiful - most beautiful in her rugged grandeur is this vast country. How awful is the sublime solitude of her pathless woods! what eloquent thoughts flow out of the deep silence that broods over them! We feel as if we stood alone in the presence of God, and nature lay at his feet in speechless adoration....

Being in the presence of God is associated with the "rugged grandeur" of this "vast country." The "sublime solitude" of the forest and the "deep silence" that "broods" over the woods evokes a sense of awe. But as Margaret Atwood points out in her collection of poems, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* [which I will be dealing with at some length in Chapter Four], Mrs. Moodie was "divided down the middle" in her opinion about Canada. Although she could write about being in the presence of God amidst the beauty of this vast country, she also found the backwoods of Canada terrifying and depressing. She recalls, for example, a hurricane in August as "the most awful storm I ever beheld, and a vivid recollection of its terrors was permanently fixed upon my memory."

'It was a strangely awful sight.... Panting with terror, I just reached the door of the house [a log hut in the heart of the great forest] as the hurricane swept up the hill, crushing and over-turning everything in its course. Spell-bound I stood at the door...unable to speak, rendered dumb and motionless by the terrible grandeur of the scene. (p. 440)

She is both rendered speechless by the "terrible grandeur of the scene" and filled with terror [Frye's terror of the soul] at the
onslaught of the storm. One detects in her description both the fascination and horror, awe and dread that nature evokes. A sense of the numinous is hinted at by Moodie's comment that what appears to cause the whirlwind is "some unseen yet powerful agent." (p. 440)

Canada's literary critics of the period all made note of the impact of the Canadian environment on the poetic imagination and pointed to the land as a valuable resource upon which to draw in the formation of a national literature. David Chisholme, the first editor of the *Canadian Review and Literary and Historical Journal*, writes that nothing is more acceptable to men than "compositions which arise from the contemplation of those scenes and the investigation of those circumstances in which they may be placed." Of Canada, he writes:

> Our climate, soil, productions, scenery and inhabitants are so different from those of old countries, that every work on those subjects the result of study and observation on the spot would necessarily bear the impression of its origin.... (p. 8)

The study and observation of nature in Canada and the aboriginal inhabitants' relationship to the land, as noted in this chapter, are two aspects of a distinctive national feeling for life which I have tried to indicate has numinous dimensions. W. P. C., a contributor to the *Literary Garland*, maintains that Canada is entitled to a voice in the literary world since its writers have come to realize "that nature has furnished ready to [their] hands, materials, with which, as skilful architects, [they] are able to rear the splendid fabric of an undying national literature."

Thomas D'Arcy McGee, a statesman and orator who ardently
fostered a Canadian national spirit, writes this about the land and its relationship to literature and nationhood:

There is a glorious field upon which to work for the formation of our National Literature. It must assume the gorgeous coloring and the gloomy grandeur of the forest. It must partake of the grave mysticism of the Red Man, and the wild vivacity of the hunter of western prairies. Its lyrics must possess the ringing cadence of the waterfall, and its epics be as solemn and beautiful as our great rivers. We have the materials—our position is favourable—northern latitudes like ours have been famed for the strength, variety and beauty of their literature....42

At the heart of the Canadian reality is a responsiveness to the beauty and the shadowiness of nature, the spirituality of the native people, the uncontrollable vigor of immigrants to the western prairies—the aspects of Canadian life that I have been exploring here with all their existing tensions.

As ardently, Edward Hartley Dewart, an ordained minister in the Methodist Church, in the introduction to the first published anthology of Canadian verse defends Canadian poetry against the charges that it is both "crude" and "imperfect" and therefore of little or no consequence. He acknowledges that it may be deficient in "high artistic excellence" but claims that this lack of polish is the result of Canadians' "low estimate of poetry as an art...." (p. 74) Poetry, he insists, is not fanciful, "a silly and trifling thing," but rather is the "offspring of the whole mind, in the full exercise of all its faculties, and in its highest moods of sympathy, with the truths of the worlds of mind and matter...[having] its foundations in the mental constitution which our Creator has given us...." (p. 74)

His introduction concludes with these poignant lines:
...we have the inspiring spectacle of a great country, in her youthful might, girding herself for a race for an honorable place among the nations of the world. In our grand and gloomy forests - in our brilliant skies and varied seasons - in our magnificent lakes and rivers - in our hoary mountains and fruitful valleys, external nature unveils her most majestic forms to exalt and inspire the truly poetic soul; while human nature - especially human nature in its relation to the spiritual and divine - still presents an exhaustless mine of richest ore worthy of the most exalted genius, and of the deepest human and spiritual knowledge. (p. 75)

Here Dewart emphasizes how external nature can arouse the poetic soul of man and how the human spirit in relation to the divine can fathom the deepest wisdom. What I have been suggesting in this chapter is that in Canadian consciousness these two emphases of Dewart are linked together - man's spiritual knowledge is rooted in his responsiveness to the land. The non-human world is not merely for man to manipulate and control. There is a sense in which the created order has a life of its own and stands legitimately over against man's desire to submit it to his purposes. In this way, the land makes man conscious of his finitude and evokes in him a sense of the numinous, of something ineffable before which he stands in fear and trembling. There is a force or power within nature and beyond the natural world that both overwhelms and fascinates.

In the next chapter I shall continue to trace this development of nature's impact on Canadian consciousness during the Confederation period marked as it is by a heightening of poetic sensibility, national pride and religious feeling focused in nature, the seeds of which have earlier been planted.
Chapter II: Footnotes

1 Chief Dan George, "Lament for Confederation" in Alan Dawe, Profile of a Nation, p. 252. Other quotations from this address are indicated by page numbers in the text.


5 Diamond Jenness, "Canadian Indian Religion" in Stewart Crys- dale & Les Wheatcroft, ed., Religion in Canadian Society (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, Maclean Hunter Press, 1976), pp. 71-78. Quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.

6 See, for example, Ella Elizabeth Clark, Indian Legends of Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960).

7 It is interesting to compare this suggestion of Jenness with the view of Old Testament scholar H. Henckens who notes that the verb phrase 'to create' (bara) does not necessarily imply creation out of nothing. Rather, God is depicted as "moving over the face of the waters," effecting with ease an ordered cosmos out of the already existing 'stuff' of the universe. H. Henckens, Israel's Concept of the Beginning (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), pp. 44-56.

8 Robert C. Monk et. al., ed., Exploring Religious Meaning (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1973), pp. 334-336)Apobiotic is a term coined by the editors of this book and is a composite of "apo-", the Greek preposition meaning "apart" and "bios", which in Greek signifies "life in all of its appearances and expressions."

9 Morris Bishop, Champlain: The Life of Fortitude, Carleton Library, Number 4 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), p. 43. Other quotations from this book are indicated by page numbers in the text. These descriptions are Champlain's first impressions of Canada on his arrival in 'New France' in 1603.

10 Louis Hennepin, A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America,


12 ibid.

13 ibid.


15 See above, p. 23.

16 See above, pp. 7-8.

17 See above, p. 45.


20 Jean-Charles Falgardeau, "The Seventeenth Century Parish in French Canada" in Crysdale & Wheatcroft, ed., Religion in Canadian Society, p. 102. Other quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.

21 Archibald MacMechan, Headwaters of Canadian Literature, New Canadian Library No. 107 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 53. Other quotations from this book are indicated by page numbers in the text.

22 Octave Crémazie, "Qu'il Fait Bon D'Être Canadien" in his collected works, Oeuvres I Poésies, ed. Odette Condemine, pp. 377-378.

23 ibid.; p. 377. The great voice from our mountains Which vibrates amidst the pines, And the echo from our countrysides Which repeats to distant shores.

24 Louis Frechette, [From a poem celebrating the sailing of Jacques Cartier from St. Malo], in MacMechan, Headwaters of Canadian Literature, pp. 77-78 A translation of the significant words and phrases follows in the body of the paper.

25 Carl F. Klinck and Reginald E. Watters, ed., Canadian Anthol-

27 Frances Brooke, *The History of Emily Montague in Klinck and Watters*, ed., *Canadian Anthology*, p. 4. Other quotations from this selection are indicated by page numbers in the text.

28 Adam Burwell, "Talbot Road" in Klinck and Watters, ed., *Canadian Anthology*, p. 15, ll. 23-26. Other quotations from this poem are indicated by page and line numbers in the text.

29 Oliver Goldsmith, "The Rising Village" in Klinck and Watters, ed., *Canadian Anthology*, p. 25, ll. 12-19. Other quotations from this poem in the anthology are indicated by page and line numbers in the text.

30 Joseph Howe, "Acadia" in Klinck and Watters, ed., *Canadian Anthology*, pp. 54-57. Quotations from this poem selection are indicated by page and line numbers in the text.


32 Charles Heavysege, "Jephthah's Daughter" in Douglas Lochhead and Raymond Scouster, ed., *100 Poems of Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), p. 6. Other quotations from the sonnet sequence which appears in this anthology are indicated by the sonnet number.


34 Frye, "The Narrative Tradition in English-Canadian Poetry" in Klinck and Watters, ed., *Canadian Anthology*, p. 526. Other quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.


36 Anna Brownell Jameson, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*, New Canadian Library N. 46 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), p. 20. Other quotations from this selection are indicated by page numbers in the text.


40 David Chisholme, "Essay on the Advantages That Might be Derived from the Establishment of a Literary Association in Montreal" in Carl Ballstadt, ed., *The Search for English-Canadian Literature*, p. 8. Other quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.


43 Edward Hartley Dewart, 'Introduction' to *Selections from Canadian Poets* (1864) in Klinck and Watters, ed., *Canadian Anthology*, pp. 73-75. Other quotations from this introduction are indicated by page numbers in the text.
Chapter 3

THE CONFEDERATION PERIOD

The Emergence of a new National Feeling and its Relationship to the Land with an Emphasis on Canada's Confederation Poets.

It was pointed out at the end of the last chapter how, combined with poetic and religious feeling, there was a strong note of nationalism being sounded in the work of a number of writers in the pre-Confederation period in Canada. Archibald MacMechan had noted that before 1867 Canada was only a "chaos of provinces out of which a country might be created," a loose entity marked by fierce political strife. On the other hand, he writes, "the new-built national fabric was made with the mountains, and as imperishable." (p. 98) When Canada does indeed emerge as a nation in the decade of the 1860s and subsequently expands to encompass the entire land mass north of the 49th parallel between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, this national feeling is greatly increased. The Confederation of 1867 brought together as a Dominion the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia; the Hudson Bay Territories of the north-west were purchased in 1869 [including the future provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan]; Manitoba joined Confederation in 1870, British Columbia in 1871, and Prince Edward Island in 1873. As Arthur Lower, one of Canada's distinguished historians, points out, however, the dynamic centre of this new nation was undoubtedly the "relatively prosperous and energetic community lying between Montreal and Lake Huron" which exerted its influence over the rest of the country and pressed to enlarge its dominion. Lower notes that "the Dominion of Canada was to reach the Pacific without the inner concept[of] Canada having been born." (p. 355,
his emphasis) Political strife which had marked pre-Confederation Canada did not cease with the birth of the new nation. Regional disparities between the metropolis of central Canada and the hinterland of the north, east, and west were evident. The kind of tension that Northrop Frye articulates between a regional sense of identity and a national sense of unity as I outlined in the introduction of this paper has been part of the Canadian experience from the beginning. The inner concept Canada, I suggest, is born of this tension and some feeling for the vastness of the land which, as Frye points out, is the primary geographical fact about Canada and has no real counterpoint elsewhere. MacMechan, I believe, was on the mark when he wrote that the nation was made with the mountains in the sense that people who come to make their homes here are confronted by an almost interminable wilderness that both overwhelms and overawes them. Learning to live with that environment and with others who share it is their common task.

In this chapter, I will examine the attitudes towards this new nation and the impact of the vastness of the land on some of the more important Confederation poets who are the voice of Canada during this formative period. One finds in their writing an enthusiasm for the country, a keen awareness of external nature, a sensitivity to the notion of a force or power both within nature and transcendent to it that can attract and terrify.

As in the last chapter, I will also examine the views of literary critics of the period and their assessment of the significance of the land in the Canadian poetic tradition. I will con-
clude the chapter with a comparison of the views of Canadian poets with respect to nature and the insights of Old Testament scholars who draw attention to the importance of the land in Hebrew thought and the implication of these insights for Christianity today.

(1) The Confederation Poets

Of the leading Confederation poets who I will be examining in this section, Archibald Lampman is, perhaps, the best. He was born in Morpeth, Ontario in 1861, the son of an Anglican clergyman. He was educated in the Classics at Trinity College, Toronto, and after a brief career as a teacher joined the civil service in Ottawa where he spent his sixteen years of life as a poet from 1883 until his untimely death in 1899 at age thirty-eight. The last quarter of the nineteenth century in Canada was a most fruitful era for poets in this country and none surpassed Lampman. His first collection of verse, Among the Millet (1888) was well received. American critic W. D. Howells found in these poems "intimate friendship with nature." He said that they were "descriptive in a new fashion, most delicately pictorial and subtly thoughtful, with a high courage for the unhackneyed features and aspects of the great life around us." Another of Lampman's contemporary critics says of him:

...he has made the country and life of the woods entirely his own. His work is distinctive in its marvellous grasp of facts, its sincerity, vigour, vivid realism, complete absence of artificiality, either of language or thought, and in its inspiring interpretations of the common sweet realities of everyday life...he has caught the spirit of the storm, the bleak desolation of the Canadian autumn
woods, and the sensuous langour of the long mid-
summer noontides. . . . 4

Of particular interest is what W. B. Harte says of Lampman's poetic creativity. He acknowledges his genius in being able to lift the veil "that obscured from most men the poetry inherent in the simplest and most monotonous landscape." (p. 202) He notes also that "underlying all his [Lampman's] work is that spirituality which pervades the lowliest of lives...that quality of sympathetic humanity that appeals to the divinity in every man." (p. 202) What is important to note here is the way Lampman's attentiveness to the detail of external nature leads him to have a sympathetic understanding of the non-human world and makes it possible for him to associate the created order with a transcendent yet immanent deity even in the bleak desolation of the forest or the fury of a summer storm.

Lampman's theme, MacMechan writes, is "the march of seasons." In the poem "Heat" are expressed the impressions one has of a typical Canadian summer. The "cool gloom" of a bridge over a brook is contrasted with the stifling heat of mid-day. [stanza 3] The woods "far off" and "blue with haze" are set over against the "burning sky-line" which blinds one's sight. [stan-
za 5] Malcolm Ross has pointed out that all Lampman's poems are "tense with the shadows of opposite values" as depicted here.

He writes of Lampman:

Even landscape is made into a symbol of the deep, interior processes of the self in motion, or is used...to induce a settling of the troubled sur-
faces of the mind and a miraculous transparency which opens into the depths.
One gleans some appreciation of what Ross is alluding to and of Lampman's underlying spirituality in the concluding verse of "Heat":

And yet to me not this or that
Is always sharp or always sweet;
In the sloped shadow of my hat
I lean at rest, and drain the heat;
Nay more, I think, some blessed power
Hath brought me wandering idly here;
In the full furnace of this hour
My thoughts grow keen and clear. [stanza 6]

External nature is the catalyst for deep reflection and the occasion for Lampman to contemplate some "blessed power". This "blessed power", I suggest, is Lampman's apprehension of the numinous, something 'felt', which illumines his mind and sharpens his awareness. In another poem, "Winter-Solitude", in which Lampman contrasts an autumn and a winter scene, he concludes with these lines:

And a strange peace gathered about my soul and shone,
As I sat reflecting there,
In a world so mystically fair,
So deathly silent - I so utterly alone. 8

Again nature evokes feelings of peace and a sense of mystery, but also makes Lampman aware of his aloneness in the "deathly" silence of the scene. This aloneness, I believe, is an authentic aspect of the creature-consciousness: man is so overwhelmed by the 'wholly other' that it seems he is the only one upon the earth. As Northrop Frye notes, one can detect in Lampman

...a spiritual loneliness, a repugnance to organized social life...a quality linking him to the great Canadian explorers, the solitary adventurers among solitudes, and to the explorer-painters like Thomson and Emily Carr who followed them, with their eyes continually straining into the depths of nature. 9 (my emphasis)
What the depths of nature reveal to Lampman are the "murmurs and glimpses of eternity."

Lampman urges us to be "much with Nature.../Discerning in each natural fruit of earth/Kinship and bond with this di-viner clay." He writes of the voices of earth - the fall of streams, the cry of winds, the roaring of the sea's surge, the might of thunder - "uttering the mystery from which she [the earth's secret soul] came." Of his poem "The Frogs", MacMechan writes:

He recognizes the quaintness, the melody and the eerie suggestion of the mysterious chorus, where the ordinary person is only conscious of ludicrous incongruity.

The frogs, with their voices "high and strange", are the "flut-tists" of the land, the "soul" of the earth, our mother, revealing to men the truth of nature, "her spirit's inmost dream."

This truth of nature, I propose, is the revelation, to those who have the eyes to see, that in the mysteries of the world man directly confronts the mystery of the numinous, the holiness of God. For Lampman the Godhead is present in nature in a way it is not present in the church. Reflection upon nature brings both a sense of freedom and salvation. There is celebration of life in the open in much of his work.

One can detect in the above allusions to nature the influence of Wordsworth who, as Frye again points out, "saw nature as exquisitely fitted to the human mind," a consoler and comforter. But the Canadian landscape is not that of the English lake district. It is, as Frye notes, raw and angular where na-
ture and the human mind violently collide, where loneliness and terror emerge as tragic themes. (p. 516) Lampman captures the essence of nature's fury in his poem "Storm":

O Wind, wild-voiced brother....
... I heard you beat and rave,
Grinding your chains with furious howl and fret,
Knowing full well that all earth's moving things inherit
The same chained might and madness of the spirit,
That none may quite forget. [stanza 7]

He depicts the wind as having those "Mad moods that come and go in some mysterious way./That flash and fall, none knowest how or why..../The stormy joy, the sweeping majesty. [stanza 9]
The storm is fierce and demonic; yet Lampman loves it. He desires to break his fetters and flee, to be free as the wind although "the day be blind and fierce, the night/Be dense and wild." [stanza 11] Lampman experiences the terror of nature but is not repelled by it. He allows his own spirit to resonate with nature's fury and is perceptive enough to recognize that in man there are those same "mad moods" that drive the storm which set man strangely free from his prison of pride and his compulsive need for security from anything that threatens him. I have noted comparably, in the concept of the numinous, how man is not so much attracted to that which is consoling in the divine spirit as he is fascinated by a force or power which manifests itself in feelings of terror and dread.

Lampman wishes to be in harmony with nature, even its harshest elements, and considers the dangers of the natural world insignificant when compared with the dangers imminent in man's absorption in technology. His poem "The City of the End of
Things" warns of the dangers "of washing our own brains"; it is a sinister vision of the negative aspects of industrial expansion. In the imagery of the Book of Revelation, he describes one of the idols of the city:

And at the city gate a fourth
Gigantic and with dreadful eyes,
Sits looking toward the lightless north.
Beyond the reach of memories;
Fast rooted to the lurid floor,
A bulk that never moves a jot,
In his pale body dwells no more,
Or mind or soul - an idiot!..." 19.

He imagines an end-time when no living things shall ever grow again and all that shall remain is this "grim idiot at the gate...deathless and eternal...." (p. 77, ll. 4-5)

The tension between life in harmony with nature and life in the industrialized city which Lampman explores emerges in other Confederation poets and literary giants such as Frederick Philip Grove and E. J. Pratt in the twentieth century. It is a tension not easily resolved. The issue is much more complex than simply choosing one or the other alternative. Scientific achievement per se is not incompatible with the preservation of the natural order. Even Lampman, while exhorting man to be "much with nature", says of his own time in history, in which he notes "the beginning and spreading of a new conception of the higher life...the dawning of a new hope," that

This conception is the child of science, reinforced by the poetry that is inherent in the facts of the universe and all existence. Thus reinforced, the conception is a religious one...independent of the ancient creeds...different from the old stoic virtues of the philosophers.... 20

This conception, both poetic and intrinsically religious, comes
to those "acquainted with the vast facts and secrets of life" and armed with a "breadth and majesty of vision which withers away from the soul the greeds and lusts and meannesses of the old, narrow and ignorant humanity." (p. 204) He refers to this conception as a "new spiritual force" and says of those who enter into it that they are living in the "very presence of eternity." (p. 204) The suggestion that Lampman makes here and in his poetry seems to be that as man truly learns the secrets of the universe through the application of scientific method, he will not greedily seek to exploit this knowledge for his own material comfort, but will be motivated by a higher vision to find his place again within a whole, "the transcendent whole of sky, the immanent whole of vegetation and death and rebirth.

It is Lampman's "subtle interpretation of the land" derived from his intimacy with it that, MacMechan says, makes Lampman essentially a Canadian poet, his verse being "deeply imbued with the very spirit of Canada." Munro Beattie says much the same in his assessment of Lampman:

...his best poems came out of an experience which is characteristic of Canadian life, and commoner than we admit. Lampman's relationship to nature is our relationship... 23

This relationship is one that, Beattie says, we are unaccustomed to discussing openly, concealing it behind a number of week-end and holiday activities in the country from which we fully expect to return with new spirit and new perspectives as we resume our duties and responsibilities. "In short," he concludes, "nature provides the true Canadian catharsis." (p. 88) Not only is
this intimacy with the land the very spirit of Canada, but also, I would add, through it is evoked a feeling of intimacy with the 'wholly other' who, like nature itself, elicits in us both fascination and dread.

Much of Charles G. D. Roberts' poetry is also marked by an attentiveness to nature's detail and the theme of man's kinship with the earth. Roberts was born in Fredericton, New Brunswick, and like Lampman was also the son of an Anglican clergyman. There are a number of religious images and associations in his writings that evoke a sense of wonder and mystery. The march of the seasons, for example, is described in terms of a church recessional:

Now along the solemn heights
Fade the Autumn's alter-lights;
Down the great earth's glimmering chancel
Glide the days and nights. 24

The sights and sounds of nature he calls "Earth's Complines" - "the spent blooms sighing,/The expectant buds replying.../The spirits of earth.../Thronging the shadowed air,/Serving among 25
the lilies,/In an ecstasy of prayer." The poem concludes:

And a spell came out of space
From the light of its starry place,
And I saw in the deep of my heart
The image of God's face. [stanza 8]

In "Kinship", he asks to be taken back to the "bewildering vision/
And the borderland of birth;/Back into the looming wonder;/The companionship of earth.../Back into the ancient stillness.../Back into the grave beginnings/Where all wonder-tales are true.../Back to knowledge and renewal." He seeks wisdom from the earth:

Tell me how some sightless impulse,
Working out a hidden plan,
God for kin and clay for fellow,
Wakes to find itself a man. [stanza 9]

In one other lyric poem he writes of coming before God face to face "in the wide awe and wisdom of the night." In these selected passages one sees how Roberts expresses both a sense of awe and wonder and exuberance for nature; one detects a depth of insight and a zestfulness which identifies him with his contemporaries who establish an intimate relationship with the land in their writing.

But as well as a sense of exuberance and wonder, Roberts also expresses a sense of dread in writing about nature. In "The Winter Fields", he contrasts the ecstasy of summer with the death of winter:

Set in the lonely ridges, wrenched with pain,
Harsh solitary hillocks, bound and dumb,
Brave glebes close-lipped beneath the scourge and, chain,
Lurks hid the germ of ecstasy - the sum
Of life that waits on summer....

Nature does not merely bring delight to man. It suffers and brings suffering to the human spirit. It is not at man's disposal but rather is shrouded in mystery that both attracts and confounds the one who seeks to understand her. In "Origins", for example, Roberts traces the life of man from its emergence "Out of the dark sublime, / From the averted Face" to its return again to the beginning "past the bournes of space / To the unaverted Face."

Out of the pregnant stir
Where death and life confer--
The dark and mystic heat
Where soul and matter meet--
The enigmatic Will--
We start, and then are still.
For Roberts as for Heavysege and Lampman, the mystery of creation evokes thoughts and feelings about the "enigmatic Will" of the author of life, the Creator, the numinous who through his creation arouses both a sense of fascination and an overwhelming sense of dread.

Bliss Carman is another of the prominent Confederation poets who elaborates the kinship with nature theme in his poetry and essays. He discovers God in nature and appears much more so than either Lampman or Roberts to actually identify the two. However, even in his most pantheistic poems, there is still a distinction made between nature and the God of nature. For example, his poem "Vestigia" begins with the lines: "I took a day to search for God, \( \text{And found Him not...} \)" (my emphasis) But as he walks through the woods, he sees "His [God's] footprint in the sod" [stanza 1], hears "His voice upon the air" in the song of a hermit thrush [stanza 2], feels His hand "light upon [the] brow" in a stir of wind [stanza 3], catches "the glory of His robe" in the sunset [stanza 4], and knows God dwells within his heart as he experiences the "kindling ecstasy" evoked by nature's beauty [stanza 5]. God, Himself, remains elusive but His 'presence' in nature is everywhere. In an essay, "Subconscious Art", Carman discusses the "power" of the subconscious which expresses itself in painting, music and poetry. He says of the force present in these arts that it is "a something... which we do not readily define" (p. 117) - 'a something' akin to the ineffable in Otto's idea of the holy. Carman writes:
We say perhaps that the picture has soul; it sways us, we know not why; it allures us, we cannot tell how. [It] appeals to our irrational instinctive self. [In it] there are certain qualities which pass the threshold of the outer mind and pass in to sway the mysterious subconscious person who inhabits us. (pp. 117, 118)

As I have tried to demonstrate throughout this paper, the Canadian environment in the vastness of the land, the march of seasons, and the extremes in climate is, as it were, a picture which evokes within us a sense of the numinous, a desire to penetrate the mystery of life, a mystery that we find alluring and appealing yet beyond our understanding.

Carman, like Roberts and Lampman, is enthralled by nature's beauty but his poetry is also full of "lonely cadences [which] will continue to haunt the Canadian imagination." A number of his poems are, as Malcolm Ross said of Lampman's, "tense with the shadows of opposite values." In "The Eavesdropper", an eerie figure looms out of the twilight at the close of a resplendent day:

Another Shadow stood without
And gloomed the dancing of the leaves.

[And] hurrying to the open door,
Against the verge of western sky
"I saw retreating on the hills,
Looming and sinister and black,
The stealthy figure swift and huge
Of One who strode and looked not back.

The vastness of the western sky, the distant hills, and the shadow of approaching night are contrasted with the intimacy of an autumn afternoon. An ominous figure looms out of the twilight, chilling the human spirit that just hours before has delighted
in watching "the great deliberate sun/Walk through the crimson
hazy world,/Counting his hilltops one by one." [stanza 5] In
"Low Tide on Grand Pré", the same scene which once evoked a
feeling of "keen delight", at nightfall in a time past youth, a-
roused only a vexation of spirit:

The night has fallen, and the tide....
Now and again comes drifting home,
Across these aching barrens wide,
A sigh like driven wind or foam;
In grief the flood is bursting home. stanza 10

Again it is the vastness of the land, the wide barrens, associa-
ed as they are with feelings of oppression and grief that is con-
trasted with the more intimate "waving meadow lands." [stanza 4]
In "A Northern Vigil", Carman's more exuberant descriptions of
the land give way to more foreboding ones:

...the night is cold,
The ghostly moonlight fills
Hollow and rift and fold
Of the eerie Ardise hills! 76

As I have pointed out throughout this paper, it is the juxtapo-
sition of fascination and fear, delight and dread, expressed by
Canada's poets in response to the land and nature generally that
evokes a sense of the numinous. These feelings towards nature
are consistently associated with the mysterious presence of a
force or power that transcends the created order and yet is man-
ifested in it.

In the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott the foreboding as-
psects of nature, evoking as they do a sense of the numinous, are
most pronounced. E. K. Brown writes of Scott: "It is to him we
must go for the most suggestive evocations of the terror and
strangeness of the Canadian north and northwest." Malcolm Ross points out that Scott "uses his landscape as a tragic stage for the dark human figures who seem to rise out of it." Dark and sombre notes are sounded in such descriptive lyrics as Scott's "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon":

Here in the midnight, where the dark mainland and island
Shadows mingle in shadow deeper, profounder,
Sing we the hymns of the churches, while the dead
Whispers before us....
Tones that were fashioned when the faith brooded in darkness,
Joined with sonorous vowels in the noble Latin,
Now are married with the long-drawn Ojibwa,
Uncouth and mournful....

The silence and darkness evoke a feeling of religious awe. The earthly shadows suggest even deeper shadows of the numinous itself - a reality that the hymns of the churches and the hymns of the native people both seem to address. In another poem, "The Height of Land", Scott writes of Canada's near north, a land of mournful cadences:

...here is peace, and again
That Something comes by flashes
Deeper than peace - a spell
Golden and inappellable
That gives the inarticulate part
Of our strange being one moment of release
Than seems more native than the touch of time....
(p. 110, ll. 10-16)

These lines speak of a presence, mystical and elusive, yet felt and apprehended in the setting of the Canadian wilderness, a setting that inspires these closing lines:

And do I stand with heart entangled and burning
At the zenith of our wisdom when I feel
The long light flow, the long wind pause, the deep
Influx of spirit, of which no man may tell
The Secret, golden and inappellable (p. 112
11. 29-33)

"Here is the land of quintessential passion," Scott writes in
still another poem - a land that inspires a trust which "vaster
than the world or life or death...is based in the unseen and
towering far above." (p. 105, 11. 13-14) The poem concludes with
this fervent plea:

Hold me, O Law, that deeper lies than Justice,
Guide me, O Light, that stronger burns than Love.
(p. 105, 11. 15-16)

What is evoked by the land in Scott's poetic imagination is an
'unseen 'something' which although unnameable arouses profoundly
mystical feelings within us. This 'something' I call the numi-
uous. There is in Scott's poetry the acknowledgement of an in-
effable presence in the universe of which man is aware as part
of his responsiveness to nature.

(ii) Other Confederation Writers, Literary Critics and 'the Land'

To the poets Lampman, Carman, Roberts and Scott can be added
several other writers in the Confederation period who experience
the numinous in nature. Charles Mair, who lived most of his life
in the western provinces, was one of the founders of the Canada
First Movement. In an article in the Canadian Monthly he in-
structs Canadians "to cause to shine before men and before na-
tions...the concrete feeling and inspiration of the country."
He urges them to carry the Canadian heritage to Saskatchewan and
the Athabasca - a heritage shaped by "mighty rivers whose turbid
streams drain half a continent ... a boundless ocean of land,
diversified by rolling hills; by lakes and woods, or swelling
into illimitable plain." (p. 154) In a similar vein, R. G. Haliburton writes of Canada's Northern Culture:

The pine woods of the north are gloomy retreats and there are but few bright flowers to deck the sward beneath them, but the smell of the sombre green woods, and the breath of the cool wind that murmurs through their branches, bring health to the cheek and brightness to the eye. 43

The north, he adds, breathes forth both "a healthy vigour" and a "quenchless spirit of freedom." (p. 156) W. A. Fraser says of Canada's northwest that "there is local colour in abundance, and the colour of God, which is the beauty of the universe." He describes the valley of the Northern Saskatchewan River as the most beautiful spot on earth - "God's own garden stretching mile on mile." (p. 158) In that these writers find the country inspiring, the north woods salutary and associate its beauty with divinity, they are, I suggest, responding to a sense of the numinous in nature characteristic of other Canadian writers I have examined.

Some French poetry during this period is likewise marked by a reverence for nature as Archibald MacMechan notes. He likens Lozeau, for example, to Roberts and to Lampman in his singing of nature's praises. He follows the months throughout the year, revelling in their variety and beauty, attuned to both the sweet and mournful sounds. As to why our Canadian poets seem to turn instinctively to the external world as contrasted to poets of other nations, MacMechan offers this suggestion:

Perhaps it is because the Canadian climate, with its fierce extremes of heat and cold, forces them to fix their eyes upon the procession of the seasons or because in their
desire for beauty they find it first at their own door, not in the handiwork of man, but in the handiwork of God. 46

In having their eyes fixed upon the procession of the seasons, with their violent extremes, Canadian poets, perhaps, have had more opportunity than their counterparts elsewhere to have their imaginations shaped by the natural environment and to be open to the idea of the numinous which is evoked by the climate and vastness of this country.

The impact of the land on Canadian consciousness is noted by a number of other literary critics besides MacMechan during this period. Allen Jack, for example, in his scholarly essay "The Academy and the Grove in Canada", maintains that the picturesque features of the dominion, where "a short voyage in a canoe can carry you into the very depths of the primeval forest" (p. 126), have never received the attention which they deserve in so far as their influence upon the intellect of the Canadian people is concerned. He points out that "everything in visible nature is in a proper sense the emanation of the Deity" (p. 127), and that "the study and appreciation of the natural beauties of a country by its inhabitants do much to kindle and sustain their patriotism." (p. 126) He calls on Canadians to have faith in their own resources - in the beauty of the objects which surround them - so that a literature both excellent and essentially Canadian might be produced. (p. 135) Again, in an article on poetic art in Canada, Basil Tempest writes:

Nature is indeed a divine palimpsest re-written by the hand of man, underneath which scrawl a mystic writing may be traced by honest study. 48
Attentiveness to nature's detail reveals the hand of something 'wholly other' in the universe.

John Daniel Logan regards the Celtic genius of seeing "a natural, lively sense of divinity in the universe" as the distinctive element in Canadian poetry. The Gaelic person, he writes, "feels divinity - spiritual presences - all about him and always." (p. 192) The universe and nature is his church. Logan adds:

It is because nature is thus a living thing to him, as it were a person with whom he can commune, that nature is also enthrallingly beautiful to him. (p. 192)

In his assessment, the imaginative vision of the Celt would have left an even more significant imprint on Canadian consciousness if it had not been hindered by a "noxious and effete system of theological dogma." (p. 193) What Logan is referring to, I believe, is theology's tendency to undervalue the religious significance of the external world, its failure often to appreciate the way nature evokes a sense of the numinous.

Lionel Stevenson likens the effect of the Canadian environment, where "man's puny powers and achievements" are contrasted with "Nature's permanence and immensity," to the Old Testament environment of Judah with its barren hills and burning desert sands. In rigorous environments such as these, in close contact as men are with earth, have come the "great basic achievements of the human spirit" and "the loftiest conceptions of the supernatural." (p. 206) In Canada, he feels, there can be an emancipation of the mind from the strict doctrinal religion
with which Europe has become saturated over the centuries. Here, the "Hebraic antecedents of Christianity are seen in a new light, and Paganism is no longer a synonym for iniquity." (p. 207) Canadian writers have the benefit of a new sense of proportion; they can pick and choose from among the traditions of the past what is appropriate to a new country, and they have the advantage of being able to make their choices on the basis of standards "derived from an intimate knowledge of primitive nature." (p. 208) He elaborates:

From childhood surrounded by this vastness and potentiality of nature, the Canadian becomes aware of it [primitive nature] long before his education in the traditions of culture begins. Since his sympathy with nature is practically an inbred trait he instinctively responds to those features of religion, myth, or philosophy that retain some meaning as interpretations of Ancient Earth and man's relationship to her. (p. 208)

He aptly notes the terrifying impact of the inexorable land on Canadian consciousness, the sense of being overwhelmed by the awesome wilderness.

The inhabitants seem to be precariously perched on a monster not yet conscious of their presence, and if they were to relinquish the perpetual effort of maintaining a foothold their mushroom cities and sporadic cultivation would vanish more rapidly than they have appeared. (p. 208, my emphasis)

It is a "genuine communion with nature in her pristine power" that vitalizes and unifies the outlook of Canadian poets, he concludes. (p. 209)

I find this association of God and nature, this comparison of the Canadian environment with the Judean, and the insights of the Canadian literary tradition with those of the Old Testa-
ment indeed intriguing. In what sense, for example, are the "Hebraic antecedents of Christianity" seen in a new light in Canada? Perhaps the claim here is that something basic in the Old Testament tradition, which for a time has been lost, is being recovered in our Confederation period poetry. Perhaps that 'something' is the self-revelation of creation itself and its profound mystery - the land and the idea of the 'holy' which it evokes.

(iii) Some Theological Reflections on the Land as Holy

Rudolf Otto maintains that in the Old Testament the numinous is presented in its purest and most complete form in the thirty-eighth chapter of the Book of Job, a chapter in which "all the glorious examples from nature" speak very plainly of the "sheer absolute wondrousness that transcends thought," of the "mysterium, presented in its pure, non-rational form." Gerhard Von Rad, writing on the Book of Job, comments that here "God makes creation bear witness to himself." He adds this footnote which includes a reference from Karl Barth:

God allows creation, that is, someone other than himself, to speak for him. 'He lets these other things speak and causes them to speak... eloquently of themselves. He obviously counts upon it that they belong so totally to Him... that they are so subject to Him and at His disposal, that in speaking of themselves they will necessarily speak of Him.... He is so sure of them as His creatures...to be sure at once of the service which the creatures will quite simply render Him in His self-manifestation.' (Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV, 3, 1st half, English Translation, 1961, p. 430)...in Von Rad, (p. 225)

Job, in his suffering, has had a completely new experience of
God, "an experience of something incalculable and fearful" (p. 217), "the experience of the hiddenness of God which produces a completely new feeling of terror." (p. 222) The Divine speech [Job 38.1-39.30 and 40.6-41.26], which tells of the wonderful power of God in his creation in all its divergent aspects, " refers man back to the mystery of creation and of divine guidance." (p. 225) What Job discovers is that God is to be found in the whirlwind. He alone supports and sustains the world. Man is to hear God's voice in nature, even in those aspects that seem to overwhelm him, that evoke a sense of terror. In acknowledging the mystery of creation, one acknowledges the mystery of God and is reconciled to Him.

It was this conviction, that in the mysteries of the world man directly confronts the mystery of God, that characterized Israelite wisdom, grounded as it was in the 'fear of Yahweh'. (p. 109) The fascinating thing about the Hebrew investigation of life, Von Rad writes, is "the fact that men dared to address themselves to a world in which they had to reckon at every step with the possibility of encountering the totally incommensurable God." (p. 109) Of wisdom immanent in the world, Von Rad claims that it is at one and the same time both somewhere there, but incapable of being grasped, and something separate from the works of creation. It must, therefore, signify "something like the 'meaning' implanted by God in creation, the divine mystery of creation," he concludes. (p. 148) This mysterious order or world reason rules in nature (p. 159) and calls to men. (p. 158) It is not identical with the real works of creation [wind,
springs, sea, mountains] but through them truth is discharged. (p. 171, 165) What is expressed in the Psalms is not simply poetic exuberance. Von Rad notes, "but the idea of a real witness emanating from the world." (p. 162) He elaborates:

We encounter the idea that the world is not dumb, that it has a message, in the hymn. The world proclaims itself before God as a created thing: the heavens 'call', the firmament 'proclaims' (Ps. 19.2). 'All his works praise God' (Ps. 145.10). Within the context of the description of the theophany, it could be said, 'The heavens proclaim his righteousness' (Ps. 97.6). This speaking by part of creation appears here as an accompaniment to the divine self-revelation. (p. 162)

The Canadian poets and writers who I have alluded to throughout this paper do more than write exuberantly about the land. Like the Psalmist, they, too, detect an underlying truth about the Creator which is mysteriously discharged through the works of creation. They exult in the glory of nature but are also terrified by its fury. Both sides of the external world, however, are held together in tension as part of the authentic poetic vision of reality. Nature is neither idyllic nor hostile. It is mysterious, calling man to an understanding of himself and his Creator in a way that, as Otto expresses it, "is incommensurable with thoughts of rational human teleology and is not assimilated to them." The wise man is the one who listens to the voice of creation.

But as Von Rad also points out, the voice of primeval order can withdraw itself from a man who does not listen to it. The results of this are catastrophic. "Horror, terror, distress will come upon men. They will be thrown back upon themselves
and will have to live by their own initiative, that is, they will destroy themselves." (p. 161) One is reminded here of Lampman's "City of the End of Things", the destruction of man who turns away from nature. As noted already in this paper, the tension between life lived in harmony with nature and life in the industrialized city is not an easy one to reconcile. How one listens to the voice of primeval order while at the same time advancing in technological competence will be dealt with at some length in the next chapter.

Before proceeding, however, I should like to point out the continuity between the expression of the numinous in the Old and New Testaments and discuss briefly the way in which the land is a central theme in both Old and New Testament literature. Rudolf Otto cautions that it is a mistake to think that in the Gospel of Jesus the numinous is "excluded or superseded." The kingdom of which Jesus speaks, according to Otto, is "greatness and marvel absolute, the 'wholly other' 'heavenly' thing, set in contrast to the world of here and now, 'the mysterious' itself in its dual character as awe-compelling yet all-attracting, glimmering in an atmosphere of genuine 'religious awe'." (p. 82) And God, 'the Holy One of Israel', revealed by Jesus to be a 'heavenly Father', is not less, but far more 'holy', 'numinous', mysterious, than his kingdom.

He is all these in an absolute degree, and in this aspect of His nature He represents the sublimation and the consummation of all that the old covenant had grasped by way of 'creature-consciousness', 'holy awe', and the like. (p. 83)

We have noted above how that 'creature-consciousness' is aroused
by the works of creation through which the mystery of God is discharged.

Walter Brueggemann, in a seminal book entitled *The Land* which examines place as gift, promise and challenge in Biblical faith, suggests that land might be a way of organizing biblical theology. He organizes his study around three histories of the land: (a) the history of promise into the land, (b) the history of management of the land into exile, and (c) the new history of promise which begins in exile and culminates in kingdom. (p. xv) He notes that the land to Israel is a gift from Yahweh which binds Israel in new ways to the giver. (p. 47) It is covenanted place. (p. 52) But the gift of land also provides secured people with dangerous alternatives. They can either keep the gift as gift and maintain the dialectic with land and with Yahweh or they can enter life apart from covenant and "reduce covenant place with all its demands and possibilities to serene space apart from history, without contingency, without demand, without mystery." (p. 53, my emphasis) It is Israel's failure to maintain this dialectic with the land and with Yahweh which leads to exile, the loss of land. But as Brueggemann points out, exile becomes the way to new life in new land. (p. 122) This understanding of the movement of history from exile into the kingdom [new land] is first expressed by the major Old Testament prophets and culminates in the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament. In attempting to articulate a theology of land in a Christian context, Brueggemann argues forcefully that in the history of Christianity the land as a central theme has not.
been rejected or spiritualized as many maintain. Rather, he
argues, the centre of the New Testament proclamation is "the
announcement of a new age, a new kingdom, a new political-
historical arrangement." (p. 170) This kingdom includes the
idea of an historical, political and physical realm, that is, land. (p. 171) Jesus' own statements reject the world of
graping and affirm the world of gifts. (p. 172) It is like-
ly, Brueggemann adds, that Jesus' actions are to be understood
as "the return of the dispossessed to the land from which they
had been driven, that is, the rehabilitation of the rejected
ones as bearers of the promise." (p. 173) But this is not a
simple promise of land.

Rather the New Testament has discerned how prob-
lematic land is; when the people are landless,
the promise comes; but when the land is secured,
it seduces and the people are turned toward loss.
Thus the proclamation of Jesus is about grasping
losing and those open to gifts as receiving. (p. 175)

The Canadian response to the land as reflected in this pa-
per has been largely one of openness to the land as a source of
mystery and a gift. There has been a readiness to discern in
nature the handiwork of God. Our poets have assumed a posture
of creaturely dependence, religious awe, and fascination before
the numinous as it manifests itself in nature. There have also
been indications of the catastrophes that can befall man when
he seeks to manage the land and control nature without due re-
spect and reverence for the external world with which he ought
to be in harmony. This tension between accommodating oneself
to the land and exploiting it for one's own purposes character-
izes the Canadian poets' attitude to nature and technological
development in the twentieth century. It is as if we, like Is-
rael of old, are on the boundary. We possess the 'Promised Land'
but we could lose it. It depends on how well we respond to the
land as gift and mystery and reflect that in how we manage our
national life.
Chapter III - Footnotes

1 Archibald MacMechan, Headwaters of Canadian Literature, New Canadian Library No. 107, pp. 97-98.


4 W. B. Harte, "Some Canadian Writers of Today", New England Magazine III (September, 1890) in Ballstadt, ed., The Search for English-Canadian Literature, p. 201. Other quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.

5 MacMechan, Headwaters of Canadian Literature, p. 111.


7 Malcolm Ross, 'Introduction' to Poets of the Confederation, p. xiii.

8 Lampman, "Winter-Solitude" in Klinck and Watters, ed., Canadian Anthology, p. 134.


10 Lampman, "Outlook" in Klinck and Watters, ed., Canadian Anthology, p. 125


12 Lampman, "Voices of Earth" in Ross, ed., Poets of the Confederation, p. 78.

13 MacMechan, Headwaters of Canadian Literature, p. 11.


15 Although the son of an Anglican clergyman, Lampman was often less than enthusiastic in his views about the church. For example, he writes:
It always depresses me to go to church. In those prayers and terrible hymns of our service we are in the presence of all the suffering in the world since the beginning of time. We have entered the temple of sorrow and are prostrate at the feet of the very God of affliction. Sunday is a day that drives me almost to madness. The grim black and collars... the bells, the silence, the dreariness... all... gradually presses me down till by Sunday night I am in despair and would fain issue forth with pot and brush and colour the town crimson.


18 Frye, "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology" in Klinck and Watters, ed., Canadian Anthology, p. 518.

19 Lampman, "The City of the End of Things" in Ross, ed., Poets of the Confederation, pp. 75-77.

20 Lampman, "A New Conception" in the column 'At the Mermaid Inn', The Globe (8 April, 1893) in Ballstadt, ed., The Search for English-Canadian Literature, p. 204. Other quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.

21 See above, p. 31; f.n. 42 for Chapter 1, p. 33.

22 MacMechan, The Headwaters of Canadian Literature, pp. 116-117.


26 Roberts, "Kinship" in Klinck and Watters, ed., Canadian Anthology, p. 117.
27 Roberts, "In the Wide Awe and Wisdom of the Night" in Ross, ed., Poets of the Confederation, p. 9.


30 Bliss Carman, "Vestigia" in Klinck and Watters, ed., Canadian Anthology, p. 117.

31 Carman, "Subconscious Art", The Kinship of Nature (1903) in Klinck and Watters, ed., Canadian Anthology, pp. 117-119. Other quotations from this essay are indicated by page numbers in the text.

32 Ross, 'Introduction' to Poets of the Confederation, p. xiii.

33 See above, p. 70: f.n. 7 for Chapter 3, p. 95.

34 Carman, "The Eavesdropper" in Ross, ed., Poets of the Confederation, pp. 32-33.

35 Carman, "Low Tide on Grand Pré" in Ross, ed., Poets of the Confederation, p. 27.


38 Ross, 'Introduction' to Poets of the Confederation, p. xiii.

39 Duncan Campbell Scott; "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" in Klinck and Watters, ed., Canadian Anthology, pp. 155-156


42 Charles Mair, "The New Canada", Canadian Monthly VIII (August 1875) in Ballstadt, ed., The Search for English-Canadian Literature, p. 157. Other quotations from Mair's article are indicated by page numbers in the text.

43 R. G. Haliburton, "The Men of the North and Their Place in History" (1869) in Ballstadt, ed., The Search for Eng-
lish Canadian Literature, p. 155. Other quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.

44 W. A. Fraser, "Literature", Canadian Magazine XIII (May 1899) in Ballstadt, ed., The Search for English Canadian Literature, p. 157. Other quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.

45 MacMechan, The Headwaters of Canadian Literature, pp. 170-171. MacMechan quotes Lozeau's "La Chanson des Mois" as an illustration of his poetic thrust:

Alors que le dernier chant vibre
D'un accent saint et moins libre,
Aux jours des automnes râleurs,
Mon coeur entonne un chant aux fleurs.

Lorsque siffle et brûle la bise,
Qu'il fait triste comme en église,
Aux jours des hivers assombris,
Quand même, sentant qu'il se gr se
Mon coeur exulte, jusqu'aux cris!

46 MacMechan, The Headwaters of Canadian Literature, p. 171.

47 Allen Jack, "The Academy and the Grove in Canada", Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly (July-December 1855) in Ballstadt, ed., The Search for English-Canadian Literature, pp. 121-135. Other quotations from this essay are indicated by page numbers in the text.


49 John Daniel Logan, "The Genius and Distinction of Canadian Poetry", 'Introduction' to Songs of the Makers of Canada (1911) in Ballstadt, ed., The Search for English-Canadian Literature, 191. Other quotations from this selection are indicated by the page numbers on which they appear in Ballstadt.

50 Lionel Stevenson, Appraisals of Canadian Literature (1926) in Ballstadt, ed., The Search for English-Canadian Literature, pp. 205-209. Other quotations from this excerpt from Stevenson are indicated by the page numbers on which they appear in Ballstadt.


52 Gerhard Von Rad, Wisdom in Israel, trans. James D. Martin
(London: SCM Press Ltd., 1972), p. 225. Other quotations from Von Rad are indicated by the page numbers in the text.


54 See above, pp. 73-74.


Chapter 4

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In this chapter, I shall try to show how the land continues to serve as a significant Canadian symbol in the twentieth century even with the trend towards a highly industrialized society and how the characteristic Canadian attitude of reverence for the natural order protects against man's excessive tendency to exploit nature and manage the land for his own purposes often to the detriment of nature and himself. I shall first examine Western Canadian novelist Frederick Philip Grove (1871-1948) whose complexity and depth of thought, writes literary critic Ronald Sutherland, we are just beginning to appreciate. Sutherland points out that Grove feared and hated materialism but also that he came to recognize the benefits to mankind that arise from material progress.

His philosophy seems to lean toward the principle of material progress as a benefit for all mankind, so long as it is not an end in itself. 1 (my emphasis)

To guard against the excesses of materialism, Grove urges man to orient himself toward the land which he believes is a catalyst for spiritual development. In addition to Grove, I shall also focus attention on a number of other significant Canadian poets and other writers who deal with the theme of land and the tension between being responsive to nature on the one hand, and at home in twentieth century industrial society on the other. Those writers to whom I will be referring can conveniently be grouped under three headings: the ones who come to maturity, as Grove himself did, between the First and Second World Wars when modern Canadian poetry came into its own—such poets as E. J. Pratt,
A. J. M. Smith and F. R. Scott; secondly, those writers whose works started to appear during the years 1940-1960, the poets of mid-century such as James Reaney, who I discussed at length in the first chapter of this paper; Earle Birney and Douglas Le Pan; and thirdly, those whose works have first appeared since 1960 and who serve to establish the new boundaries of contemporary poetry, such people as Al Purdy, Milton Acorn, John Newlove and, most notably, Margaret Atwood. Eli Mandel points out that these contemporary Canadian poets, although being mobile and technologically sophisticated,

surprise us with a determined regionalism, another version of traditional Canadian concerns with the land, wilderness, the pervasive notion that an ill-defined terror of space defines the authentic Canadian sense of things. 2

In other words, modern poets are as responsive to the Canadian environment and as capable of being awed and terrified by the vast and inexorable land as were the poets of the nineteenth century. The land continues to evoke a sense of the numinous, the idea of the holy.

(1) Frederick Philip Grove and The Promised Land

What is central in the novels of Frederick Philip Grove is the myth of the Promised Land. Stanley E. McMullin, who examines Grove’s use of this myth in an article entitled ‘Grove and The Promised Land’, points out that the myth has always been relevant in North America where lower-class immigrants, for example, who, like the children of Israel lived under severe conditions in their native lands, came to find salvation. "It was the Pro-
mised Land of Moses reaffirmed in the New World." (p. 29) Mul-

Mullin notes that when Grove came to America in 1892

...the debate over the future of the Promised
Land was being conducted by those who favoured
agrarian life against those who felt that the
new covenant could best be achieved through
the advances of an industrial society. (p. 29)

He further notes how the land itself is central to the Promised
Land motif. He points out that Grove was

...strongly influenced by landscape which was
flat, unrelieved, uncomplicated and vaguely
menacing.... Such landscape helps to simplify
life, reducing it to fundamentals. In such
a setting it is easier to find the essentials
of life, to weed out the non-essentials. (p. 33)

The characters in Grove's novels are involved with the land as
well. They "require the solace" of the wilderness where they go
"to listen for truth" and where they become aware of the "value
of their own souls." (p. 33) It is important to note that the
land is not a "deterministic force" but rather "a catalyst, caus-
ing spiritual development without becoming actively involved in
the process." (p. 34; my emphasis) In other words, there is for
Grove an underlying truth about the universe that is best dis-
cerned by man in the solace of the wilderness. This underlying
truth, I suggest, is man's awareness of a cosmic order shrouded
in mystery which in turn points to a mysterious and ineffable
source of creation.

The industrial society, on the other hand, cannot foster
spiritual growth because, in Grove's words, it "denies the hu-
man soul the soil in which to grow according to laws of its
own...." The immigrant in an industrial society is reorientated
to "aims which exhaust themselves in sensual enjoyment and the so-called conquest of nature." (p. 30) What Grove is implying is that mechanical civilization with its mass-production and standardization threatens the artistic aspirations of the individual which he associates with things spiritual, and perhaps closes off from view the mystery of the created order in the process. In his capacity to manage the land, man loses a sense of reverence for it. But, as also pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, Grove was no romantic. McMullin points out that he was well aware that one could not escape from the influence of technology, and "in his novels his heroes face the problem of living a life based on essentials in an environment bombarded by non-essentials." (p. 31) Grove and his characters solved the problem, in part, by listening to the land and getting in touch with 'things cosmic'.

Grove's first book, Over Prairie Trails, acclaimed by E. K. Brown as the "most remarkable literary work to come out of the west," illustrates the impact of the land on Grove's consciousness and its capacity to evoke a sense of the ominous. This collection of essays records Grove's impressions of the Manitoba countryside, impressions that were gathered from his many weekend trips between Gladstone and Pilmouth, a distance of thirty-four miles, during the 1917-1918 school year. Malcolm Ross says of Grove that...

...he was a Canadian writer, wholly absorbed by the Canadian scene... [having an] almost incredible love for the harsh, punishing, desolate Manitoba land.... For Grove - in season and out - the prairie is wonderfully alive. Every twist
and scar of the land is known and wondered at and claimed. Every freak of fog and drift and frost is a mighty event, to be known as the scientist tries to know, but also to be felt, to be re-created and re-set in the "interior landscape" of the self. 7

What Grove, the artist, tries to do is make the reader a thing "in its true significance, in its relation to other things... as a part of that web of things and events which we call the totality of human life...". By responding to the land as something wonderfully alive, by regarding every natural event as a mighty event to be internalized, Grove is prevented from taking the created world for granted and losing the sense of mystery which it evokes. He is likewise deterred from taking humanity for granted and losing the sense of mystery which lies at the human core. And although Grove does not explicitly relate his feelings about the land to his views about divinity, it becomes apparent in his book that there is an implicit relationship between nature and the Ultimate One which is its source.

Grove describes the "backwoods bushland" about which he writes as "God's own earth and second only to Paradise..." 9 On his first drive we are acquainted with the trails, the wild life, the scattered houses of the settlers. We catch something of the land's magic and its dread. There are descriptions of the wilderness' beauty by day - "the silver grey, leathery foliage of the wolf-willow... so characteristic of our native woods (p. 5), "a fine bluff of stately poplars that stood like gold in the evening sun" (p. 6), and "strings" of goldfinch, "chasing each other in their wavy flight." (p. 6) There are also descriptions of its gloom by night - "strangely chilly" breezes and "oppress-
Something loomed up in front. Dark and sinister it looked... A large bluff of poplars rustled, the wind soughing through the stems with a wailing note... Then, unexpectedly, startlingly, a vista opened... there stood... a snow-white log house, uncannily white in the paling moonlight... its windows nailed shut with boards... And yet... through one un-closed window on the north side, light. Unreasonably, I shuddered. (p. 11)

What captivates Grove is both the beauty and the bleakness of the countryside. He associates God with both the light and shadows of the natural world. His shudder is, I suggest, a response to the numinous, that ineffable 'something' in the universe which prompts to a sense of terror and is evoked by this dark and sinister event.

His second drive was through a thick marsh-fog. He had experienced this type of weather before in other northern countries, and recalls that in Finland, for example, what had stood out most in his mind was the "weird and mocking laughter of magpies." (p. 33) He ponders how easily these shrouds of fog and eerie sounds could evoke the fear of ghosts and tales of elves and goblins in these countries, and he thinks for a moment in the stillness that, perhaps, something is missing on the prairies after all. But then, after some further reflection, he concludes that "this silence of the grave was still more perfect, still more uncanny and ghostly, because it left the imagination entirely free, without limiting it by even as much as a suggestion." (p. 33) The Canadian environment, it would seem, evokes the sense of awe and dread - the perfect feeling - in contrast to those environments
which conjure up ghostly tales. Of particular significance here is Grove's insight into the effect of the stillness of an eerie scene on man's consciousness. It leaves his imagination entirely free. This, I suggest, is similar to what Otto says is the effect of the 'wholly other' on man's consciousness in that it fills the mind with "blank wonder and astonishment."

Silence is again the theme of his third sketch. Of the hour before dawn, "the stillest hour of the night," Grove gives this description:

There is an expectancy in the air, a fatefulness - a loud word would be blasphemy that offends the ear and the feeling of decency. It is the hour of all still things, the silent things that pass like dreams through the night. You seem to stand hushed. Stark and bare, stripped of all accidentals, the universe swings on its way. (pp. 48-49)

In such an hour, he writes, "the very air seems...to have gone to sleep" under the morning mist.

And yet how portentous! The haze seems to brood. It seems somehow to suggest that there is all of life asleep on earth. You seem to feel rather than to hear the whole creation breathing in its sleep...presently to stretch, to awake. (p. 49)

Of dawn itself, Grove writes:

You could not define how it came. The whole world seemed to pale and to whiten, and that was all. There was no sunrise. It merely seemed as if all of Nature - very gradually - was soaking itself full of some light.... I could not cease to marvel at this light which seemed to be without a source - like the halo around the Saviour's face.... I found but one word to describe it: impalpable - and that is saying what it was not rather than what it was. As I said, there was no sunshine, but the light was there, omnipresent, diffused, coming mildly, softly, but from all sides, and out of all things as well as into them. (p. 49, my emphasis)

A number of things in Grove's description of dawn imply a sense
of the muminous. He regards this "hour of all still things" as sacred. To speak would be an indignity to God. All non-essential aspects of life are stripped away. Man is alone before the mystery of the universe. The silence and solemnity of the early morning cause him to reflect on the holiness of life. There is an unique attractiveness and expectancy about that hour. There is also a portentousness, a more ominous note hinting at a sense of dread which impresses itself upon the author. He is aware of his smallness before the overwhelming vastness of creation. When dawn finally comes, Grove marvels at the light which "seemed to be without a source." What I think he finds striking is that the light seems to come mysteriously from nowhere, as it were, rather than from the sudden bursting forth of the sun as one would expect. In other words, its source is from outside the natural order, transcendent to it, and not easily perceived, discerned or apprehended.

It is on this third drive at dawn that Grove also reflects on the deep spiritual significance that the Canadian environment has for him compared to the environment of southern countries through which he travelled as a youth. Then, he sought out the "orgies of colour and screams of sound." (p. 51) But as the years began to pile up, he writes:

I longed to stake off my horizons, to flatten out my views. I wanted the simpler, the more elemental things, things cosmic in their associations, nearer to the beginning or end of creation... things that are unobtrusive and differentiated by shadings only - grey in grey above all - like our northern woods, like our sparrows, our wolves.... So I came home to the north. (p. 51)
Even on days when he longs to see the things that appealed to him in his youth, he remarks:

I should like to see them from afar and dimly only, - as Moses saw the promised land. Or I should like to point them out to a younger soul and remark upon the futility and innate vanity of things. (p. 51)

What is striking and significant here is the way Grove associates the Manitoba land with the primal meaning of life, the essentials as opposed to the non-essentials, namely the capacity to reflect on the significance of one's place in the scheme of things and to be awed simply by the mystery of the created order in its starkest simplicity. Grove is making the point here that away from the bombardment of sensual sights and sounds, his imagination free from all suggestion, man is able to delve more profoundly into the 'why' of his existence. He has the opportunity to explore the nature of divinity, the order, unity and grandeur of the universe which so greatly fascinates him. In coming "home to the north," Grove feels he is like Moses in the wilderness - on the boundary of the Promised Land - and from that vantage point is able to distinguish between what is eternal and what is trifling. Materialism, as an end in itself, is a vain and futile pursuit. What Grove promotes is the search for an underlying and universal law or truth beneath the surface details of life. This alone can ultimately satisfy man's longings even if that truth is not always comforting.

As Grove was to experience in Manitoba winters, the truth about nature is often harsh. His fourth and fifth drives are "charged with storm, bitter cold, terror...[in a]"pre-Adamic
world of violence." He starts out on his journey in minus thirty-two degree weather in the aftermath of a blizzard and is almost overwhelmed.

I still remember with particular distinctness the slight dizziness that overcame me, the sinking feeling in my heart, the awe, and the foreboding that I had challenged a force in Nature which might defy all tireless effort and the most fearless heart. (p. 72)

It was a drive like this one, he admits, that later on shattered his nerve. (p. 65) Words fail him, he writes, in his descriptions of the wintry blasts and treacherous drifts of whirling snow. (p. 111) Grove exhibits here a respect for nature's fury. He suggests that a man is fool-hardy to challenge forces in nature too great for him. One is reminded of the voice in the whirlwind that silences Job. What Grove implies is that man must learn to accept his limitations and the fact that he is a contingent being, dependent on forces in nature and transcending nature which he cannot control. He must learn to live in harmony with his environment which is both congenial in some aspects and forbidding in others. And ultimately he must be responsive to a God who both comforts and terrifies. Grove understood the tragic tone and heroic struggle of life. In an essay on "The Happy Ending", he writes:

To have greatly tried and to have failed; to have greatly wished and to be denied; to have greatly longed for purity and to be sullied; to have greatly craved for life and to receive death: all that is the common lot of greatness upon earth.... In this acceptance or acquiescence lies true tragic greatness: it mirrors the indomitable spirit of mankind. 12

Grove's deep respect for the land, his spiritual insight and pro-
found grasp of what it means to be human make him an important writer for Canadians to come to know. He sees the land as a gift to be enjoyed and wondered at and as a symbol of the impalpable reality of God which, like the light at dawn, is "omnipresent, diffused, coming...out of all things as well as into them."

(11) Poets Between the Wars: The Ambiguous Land

Among the Canadian poets who were contemporaries of Grove, the most prominent is E. J. Pratt, a Newfoundlander, who emphasized in his poetry "the importance of struggle...for the maintenance of human domination over the destructive forces forever at war with him not only in nature but in himself." Pratt is not as distrustful as Grove is of the trend towards industrial expansion. He has recognized "the enormous difficulties and the central importance of communication and transport" in Canada, and the imagery of technology appears throughout his work. In many of his poems, Pratt appears to exalt man the achiever, especially in his assault upon nature which if often indifferent to human values. But nature, in the last analysis, is seen to triumph over man. Let us look more closely at Pratt and his ambiguous stance toward the land.

In Pratt's poem "The Truant", which Northrop Frye calls the greatest poem in Canadian literature

the representative of mankind confronts a "great Panjandrum", a demon of the mathematical order of nature of a type often confused with God. In the dialectic of their conflict it becomes clear that the great Panjandrum of nature is fundamentally death, and that the intelligence that fights him, comprehends him, harnesses him, and yet finally yields to his power is the ultimate princi-
ple of life, and capable...of the tragedy of enduring him. 16

This mechanical 'god' "Panjandrum" in other Pratt poems like "The Great Feud" and "Titanic" is seen to be the "unconscious cruelty of nature", and in others like "Brebeuf and His Brethren" is depicted as "the partly conscious cruelties of ignorant and frightened men [the Indians in the state of nature]." 17 In each of these poems it would appear that the hero is courageous man who continues to defy the indifference of nature and ultimately seeks to conquer it by manipulating and exploiting the natural process for his own ends, even though invariably it is indifferent nature which tragically conquers man.

Pratt's critics, on the one hand, seem to regard this defiant attitude of Pratt's heroes who suffer and die at the hands of these mechanistic powers in the universe as the essence of his poetic triumph. His symbols are said by Earle Birney to be "defiant endurance," "courageous loyalty of man to man at the risk of death," and "physical force used against the concept of force." 18 What Pratt is chanting to us, writes Birney, is that "we are men, uniquely non-animal, and capable of great devotion and splendour either in the preservation or in the destruction of ourselves as men." (p. 93) His hero, writes Northrop Frye, is 19 "the beleagured society" of an industrial democracy that must contend with an indifferent and hostile environment, apobiotic man seeking to master nature.

But Pratt also demonstrates how man is often overawed by the 'terrible grandeur' of nature that he is seeking to under-
stand and then control. Even in those poems where nature is portrayed as man's enemy, Pratt describes the land in a most majestic way. There is this description of the Rocky Mountains, for example:

The big one was the mountains - seas indeed! With crests whiter than foam; they poured like seas, Fluting the green banks of the pines and spruces. ... They carried space upon their ledges....

Terror and beauty like twin signal flags Flew on the peaks for men to keep their distance.... They needed miles to render up their beauty, As if the gods in high aesthetic moments, Resenting the profanity of touch, Chiselled this sculpture for the eye alone. 20

An important warning is sounded to man in his presumption upon nature. What Pratt depicts here is the sanctity of the mountains exemplified in both their beauty and terror. Man is to keep his hands off. The mountains proclaim the artistry of the gods and caution man against believing the world is only made for him to manipulate.

Earle Birney has noted that Pratt loved reversal themes, and in several of his poems it is nature that prevails against the men who "coax and tease and bully her." "Towards the Last Spike" concludes with these lines describing a reptilian personification of nature:

...To drown
The traffic chorus, she
must blend the sound of steam locomotives
With those inaugural, narcotic notes
Of storm and thunder which would send her back
Deeper than ever in Laurentian sleep. 23

Man has triumphed. The railway is complete. But the image of the country that prevails at the end of the poem is the haunting
one of promordial nature, having been momentarily aroused by the “traffic chorus” of man and his machines, swallowing up those sounds in “storm and thunder” and drifting back into profound sleep. What one is left with is not a scene of man triumphant over nature, but nature in its depth and vastness looming over man. He is reminded of his status as a creature, despite his human accomplishments, as he stands overwhelmed by the Laurentian shield. More ominously in Pratt’s poem “The Titanic”, nature again triumphs despite man’s overweening self-confidence that he can build an unsinkable ship. The poem ends with these lines:

And out there in the starlight, with no trace
Upon it of its deed but the last wave
From the Titanic fretting at its base,
Silent, composed, ringed by its icy broods,
The gray shape with the palaeolithic face
Was still the master of the longitudes. 24

The feeling one gets here is not so much that man has been tragically defeated by an indifferent and hostile environment, however, but that he has been foolishly bold in challenging forces in nature too great for him. The iceberg, with its “palaeolithic face”, like the mountains with their “twin signal flags... of terror and beauty” in “Towards the Last Spike”, warn men to keep their distance. It, too, is inviolable, something the gods have sculptured for the eye alone. Birney also points out that the Indians in “Brebeuf and His Brethren” are not only savage and cruel but also courageous and concludes:

Whether Pratt himself thought of his ferocious Iroquois as the mere villains of a Christian parable depends very much on whether the poem’s concuding emphasis on the fact that Catholic masses are now performed regularly in the homeland of the pagan Iroquois is to be enjoyed as
a happy ending or simply as a final irony of fate. 25

Just as the awesome land prevails over man at the end of Pratt's other poems as part of his reversal theme, so here it is suggested that the native Indians with their radically different point of view of man's relationship to nature, which Brebeuf himself does not understand, are also justified for their actions and vindicated. (p. 85) This reversal of theme is also apparent in "The Truant" which ends with this bold declaration against mechanistic nature:

We who have learned to clench
Our fists and raise our lightless sockets
To morning skies after the midnight raids,
Yet cocked our ears to bugles on the barricades,
And in cathedral rubble found a way to quench
A dying thirst within a Galilean valley -
No! by the Hood, we will not join your ballet. 26

Here man, the defiant Job, "taunts the Panjandrum with his lack of real intelligence," and vows not to succumb to the seeming indifference of nature to human values. Ironically, however, what man has succumbed to are the ravages of war which are far more devastating than nature ever can be. Perhaps the defiant 'truant' still has to learn, as Job did, that there are things beyond man's understanding, things too wonderful for him to know (Job 42.3), a wisdom in creation that speaks to him out of the whirlwind and reduces him to dust and ashes.

Pratt, like Grove, it seems to me, while endorsing man's quest for material advantage that can bring comfort and well-being, never approves of material progress as an end in itself. Nor does he advocate the ruthless exploitation of the earth for
man's material benefit. In one of his later poems, "The Good 28
Earth", Pratt portrays nature not as man's enemy to be overcome, but as a companion to be nurtured. He exhorts men to be "pa-
tient with the earth" and not to "cram her with seed beyond the wisdom of her soil." [stanzas 1 & 2] She is responsive to men's toil in field and garden, but "she is nervous at the calls of men in panic at a strike of ore." [stanzas 3 & 4] The poem ends with a warning:

...do not scratch past her agrarian mood
To cut the calcium in her bone and marrow. [stanza 5]

Hold that synthetic seed, for underneath
Deep down she'll answer to your horticulture
She has a way of germinating teeth
And yielding crops of carrion for the vulture. [stanza 6]

Pratt not only extols the awesomeness of the land and intimates how creation bears witness to God, the holy one, as noted above, but he also is mindful of the catastrophic results that can ensue when man does not listen to the voice of primeval order. Man is encouraged to be wise in his 'cultivation' of the earth. He is not discouraged from "scratching past her agrarian mood" but he is advised against doing so in such a way that will destroy the earth's fertility or its capacity to nurture the human spirit. Pratt presents us with a paradox: the mandate to subdue nature with its infinite resources for killing man, and nature's ultimate triumph if man in his attempts to suppress it does not re-

plenish the earth and acknowledge his own human limitations.

What man needs to be reminded of is that although his industrial activity is important, it is not his only activity. Man's capacity for making things to secure his comfort and well-being
is not an isolated element in his nature. As theologians, such as Paul Tillich, have reminded us, industrial man is also social man, theoretical man, moral man, and above all religious man in that "he is able to be aware of his finitude and of the infinite to which he belongs at the same time." When one of these functions of man is separated from the others and put in control of the whole, his personhood is threatened. Man becomes the function, the means to an end, "a tool for the production of tools." (p. 133) Tillich charges that western technical society has adjusted persons to its demands in production and consumption and has thereby depersonalized him by making "individual creativity superfluous." (p. 134) By making the charge that conformity leads to the disintegration of the spiritual centre of a person (p. 135), Tillich confirms Grove's suspicions about the two processes of mass-production and standardization doing away with artistic aspirations and individuality. Tillich also makes the point that man needs a place to withdraw to in order to launch his attack against technical society and its power of depersonalization. (p. 136) Jesus, it could be noted, withdrew to the wilderness, to the mountains, to a garden in Gethsamene to find his spiritual centre. In the Canadian tradition, as exemplified in both Grove and Pratt, one is directed to the land as well. I would suggest, as a place to renew one's spiritual energy so as to be able to launch one's own attack on those aspects of one's society that repudiate the idea of the holy.

The land in Canada to which one is directed for renewal, the land that evokes in one a sense of mystery and the numinous,
is captured by a number of Pratt's contemporaries; for example, A. J. M. Smith and F. R. Scott. Both Smith and Scott express in beautifully haunting ways the essence of Canada and its northern situation.

Smith's "The Lonely Land", in Frye's phrase, depicts Canada in "unhumanized isolation, in raw colours and angular rhythms." His diction is as angular as the landscape he describes; his cadences are as resonant. Of Canada's north with its "cedar and jagged fir", Smith writes:

>This is the beauty of strength broken by strength and still, strong. 32

There is an overwhelming sense of barrenness and bleakness, harshness and austerity in Smith's portrait; yet there is also something intensely enriching about this scene, a fascination for the way the discordant sounds of a wild duck calling to her mate mingle with the rhythmic rise and fall of water and swaying wind-swept pines. A sense of the numinous, I believe, is implicit in this "lonely land" as it evokes in one a feeling of solitariness as it impresses upon one a sense of awesome beauty before which one stands in silent reverence.

F. R. Scott even more hauntingly evokes feelings of mystery, fascination and dread in his poetry. In "Old Song", for example, he contrasts the music of the hillside with the "elemental song... in the deep Laurentian river... a quiet calling/of no mind/out of long aeons/when dust was blind/and ice hid sound/only a mov- ing/with no note/granite lips/a stone throat. 33 Looming over a-
gainst the habitable land is an impenetrable wilderness that
calls to mind the unfathomable mystery of the origin of earth.
There is something compelling about this land as Scott expresses
in "Laurentian Shield":

Hidden in wonder and snow, or sudden with summer,
This land stares at the sun in a huge silence
Endlessly repeating something we cannot hear.
Inarticulate, arctic,
Not written on by history, empty as paper,
It leans away from the world with songs in its lakes
Older than love, and lost in the miles. 34

Even though Scott anticipates the "full culture of occupation"
in the north "from millions whose hands can turn this rock into
children," what will continue to permeate the consciousness of
men who come here will be the inarticulate sense of wonder that
the vast, arctic land elicits. That "something we cannot hear"
which this land expresses is, I suggest, the ultimate mystery of
creation which defies our understanding and points beyond itself
to a creator who is even more ineffable. Again, I would propose,
a sense of the numinous is implicit in this description of the
land. The poet’s task, as A. M. Klein remarks, is "...to praise
the world..." and in praising it to rescue man from being but
"an anonymous taunt/of the Gallup poll, a dot in a government
table/a number, an x/a Mr. Smith in a hotel register,/in-
cognito, lost, lacunary." Understanding oneself in relation to
the land is man’s salvation from the anonymity of existence in
a depersonalized society devoid of a sense of mystery and wonder.

(iii) Poets of Mid-Century: The Land as Healer

Two poets, whose works begin to appear between 1940-1960,
who are sensitive and responsive to the impact of the land on
Canadian consciousness are Earle Birney and Douglas Le Pan. In this section I will discuss their response to the Canadian environment and conclude with some theological reflections by William C. James that pertain to their insights into the healing function of the wilderness even with all its risks and dangers.

I have already had occasion to mention Birney as a critic in connection with my treatment of E. J. Pratt. As a poet, Birney, like Pratt, is thoroughly modern. The imagery of technology appears throughout his work. But there is as well a deep appreciation of the way industrial man despairs the land which, although dangerous and terrifying in many of its aspects, is also a source of renewal and healing. In his poem "David", nature, as symbolized in a jagged mountain peak, is both menacing and unresponsive to man.

... The peak was upthrust
Like a fist in a frozen ocean of rock that swirled
Into valleys the moon could be rolled in. [Part I, stanza 2]

Indeed this "overhang Crooked like a talon... the Finger" was to take the life of one of the two young surveyors who ventured to climb the mountain one summer. The unmapped spire is sinister and foreboding; that death should come to David is foreshadowed throughout the poem. And yet one cannot help thinking that even if David could have sensed the imminent danger of the ascent of "the Finger" [and perhaps he did] that he still would have gone on with the climb. Despite its perils, mountaineering for David was the stuff of life. As Birney writes:

... mountains for David were made to see over,
Stairs from the valleys and steps to the sun's retreats.

[Part I, stanza 2]
Here was nature at its exhilarating and awesome best with "the
darkening firs/and the sudden whirring of water that knifed/down
a fern-hidden/cliff and splashed unseen/into mist in the sha-
dows" [Part II, stanza 5], and the skyline pulsing "with the
surging bloom/of incredible dawn in the Rockies." [Part VII, stan-
zas 2&3] Juxtaposed in a single poem are the mystery and splen-
dour, the terror and dread of creation. A sense of the numinous
is again implicit, intimated by the way the mountains for David
evoke a feeling of awe, are a source of joy, provide an escape
from the "ruck" and the "wrangling" of the surveyors camp and
instill a sense of dread. By climbing mountains, one gets be-
yond the sphere of the usual and the familiar and is apt to be
struck by the sense of something 'wholly other' that overpowers
man in its vastness and gives rise to a feeling of reverence and
humility. One must always test one's foothold in the presence
of this 'wholly other' or, like David, risk being plunged to
one's death.

In his poem "Transcontinental", Birney implores us to behold
the earth - "this great green girl grown sick with man sick with
the likes of us." We should note, he writes

...where maggoting miners
still bore her bones to feed our crawling host
and consider the scars across her breasts
the sum of tugs upon her lakeblue eyes
the clogging logs within her blood... (p. 27, ll. 10-14)

He urges man to save her. Birney's profound respect for the
earth, as expressed in this poem, coupled with the sense of awe
and reverence it evokes in "David" exemplifies the Canadian atti-
tude towards the land.
Douglas Le Pan also holds together in creative tension the foreboding and the healing aspects of the land that impress themselves on the Canadian consciousness. In "A Country Without a Mythology", he notes the lack of monuments and landmarks to guide the stranger "going among this savage people" [stanza 1]; he laments the fact that time means nothing here, that "months, years, are here unbroken virgin forests" [stanza 3]. The sun is "flagrant"; November skies "sting like icicles", the land is "open to all violent weathers" [stanza 4]. And the poem ends on this depressing note:

And now the channel opens. But nothing alters.
Mile after mile of tangled struggling roots,
Wild-rice, stumps, weeds, that clutch at the canoe,
Wild birds hysterical in tangled trees.

And not a sign, no emblem in the sky
Or boughs to friend him as he goes.... [stanzas 8&9]

The land is a perplexing one that often frustrates man in his attempts to come to know it on his own terms. In this respect, the land is like the numinous it signifies, having a nature incommensurable with our own and defying apprehension.

But when man tries to get to know the land on its own terms, he has a very different attitude towards it. In "Canoe-Trip", Le Pan inquires about this "fabulous country" and seeks a word to describe it now that much of it has been explored. That word is "good". He elaborates:

It is a good stock to own though it seldom pays dividends.
There are holes here and there for a gold-mine or a hydro-plant.
But the tartan of river and rock spreads undisturbed. The plaid of a land with little desire to buy or sell. The dawning light skirs out its independence;
At noon the brazen trumpets slash the air;  
Might falls, the gulls scream sharp defiance;  
Let whoever comes to tame this land, beware!

You have no hope to harness the energy here,  
It gallops along the wind away. (l. 19-24; 27-28)

The poem ends on a healing note.

But here are crooked nerves made straight,  
The fracture cured no doctor could correct.  
The hand and mind reknit, stand whole for work;

Content, we face again the complex task. (l. 29-31;  
and 39)

This time he marvels at what he has seen in nature - "the fawns  
at the river bend,/The storms, the sudden sun, the clouds sheered  
downwards." There is a healthy exhilaration about the land that  
prepares man for the task of living out his life in an enviroment  
that often frustrates his attempts to master it.

In his "Coureur de Bois", Le Pan describes the impact  
our climate has had on us by depicting the modern 'coureur de  
bois' as "Wild Hamlet with the features of Horatio." We are a  
combination of moody introspection and roaring extroversion who,  
even when the country has been charted, will travel "through the  
desperate wilderness behind [our] eyes,/So full of falls and  
glooms and desolations." In other words, even when man has fa-  
miliarized himself with as much of this vast country as he possi-  
bly can, it will continue to haunt his imagination, hover over  
him, and, as I have suggested throughout this paper, evoke in  
him a sense of the numinous as it instills within him a feeling  
of mystery and the impression of the 'wholly other' in its more  
dreadful yet fascinating features.

William C. James, in a recent article entitled "The Canoe
42

Trip as Religious Quest" in which he cites Le Fan, picks up on the theme of wilderness and puts it within a religious context. He reiterates what has been said throughout this paper about the central importance of the inexorable land in Canadian consciousness when he writes, for example, that

The primary fact of the Canadian experience is a geographical one, whose primary ingredient is the presence of the Canadian Shield, dominating our country as it does, comprising our "wilderness", and still accessible, as it has always been, chiefly by canoe. (p. 3)

James develops the idea of the canoe trip as religious quest by analysing its various ingredients and showing how it corresponds to the archetypal quest pattern found in literature. There is, for example, the "departure from the known, the voyage into the unknown, and the return to civilization; the obstacles of...brutal portages...the unexpected pleasures of new vistas...the sense of participation in a primitive reality, or the re-enactment of an archetypal event: the sloughing off of the inessential and the experience of renewal." (p. 2) The wilderness is both harsh and yet a source of revitalization in the way it is able to let man feel he is close to the source of all life, the mysterious beginning of creation. He is, in other words, aware of a presence and power that transcends him but which, at the same time, is deeply imbedded in the roots of his own pre-history. James further comments that

In enabling us to encounter our geographical uniqueness, in making possible a completion of that circuit of separation, initiation, and return, and bequeathed to us by those peoples who were here before we were [the Native Indians], the canoe may well be an effective vehicle, not
only for the exploration of the wilderness of the Shield, but also for exploring that inner frontier, and perhaps for effecting an appropriate transformation of attitudes through a kind of indigenization. (pp. 14-15).

What James concludes, quoting C. E. S. Franks, is that the modern-day canoeist in the midst of the wilderness is aware of converting the "savage" - "only now we know that the savage who needs converting is the man from civilization, including the canoeist himself." (p. 15) What the wilderness teaches the so-called civilized man is that to enjoy a sense of wholeness, he needs to be attuned to a world that stands over against him as a corrective to his attitude that the world only exists to provide resources for his superficial comfort and ease of living. Rather than turning his back on nature and seeking to exploit it only for material advantage, man is encouraged to become integrated with nature through adaptation to the wilderness environment and thereby inwardly renewed.

Quoting Canadian historian W. L. Morton, James notes how the pattern of penetrating the wilderness and returning to civilization is the "basic rhythm of Canadian life." (p. 5) It is a pattern much in evidence in such contemporary novels as Margaret Atwood's Surfacing and Marian Engel's Bear which, as James points out, "tell of the penetration of the wilderness by a female protagonist, who there becomes integrated with nature through adaptation rather than aggression before effecting the return to civilization." (p. 14) This he claims is very much in keeping with the recent stress on a new ethic of conservation: "an adaptation to, rather than hostility towards, nature." (p. 14)
He also notes that Northrop Frye has recently written of the phenomenon in Canadian poetry whereby

Indians come to symbolize a primitive mythological imagination which may be reborn in us, resulting in the 'immigrant mentality' a turning away from nature being replaced by an 'indigenous mentality'." (p. 14)

James makes the point here that "if we are to...make of this territory a home, there is the necessity to form attitudes appropriate to those who really do belong here, to descend into the self and be reborn." (p. 14) In Surfacing and Bear, he notes, "it is in large measure through the legacy and tutelage of native peoples [our "true ancestors"], and in the context of a setting in the wilderness, that the transformations of the female protagonists are brought about." (p. 14) These transformations are, for James, an aspect of religious quest, albeit "a more naturalistic religion, one of the Earth Mother or of animism." (p. 13)

What is important about James' article for purposes of my thesis is the way it points to the land, particularly the wilderness aspect, as a source of healing and associates that healing process with a new ethic of conservation that he rightly claims is being stressed in Canadian life and literature. What is also significant is the way his article does honour to the part native people play in that healing process. It is their religious sense of the sacredness of the land that opens our eyes to the mystery and wonder that emanates from the natural world around us. The complex task of living in a highly industrialized and technological society is made possible for Canadians by the proximity of
wilderness to most of the urban centres within the country. Here one can go to find peace, solitude, and a sense of oneness with the cosmic or archetypal pattern of life evoked by the primitive wilderness and return refreshed to civilization—not just physically and mentally refreshed, but spiritually renewed by the awareness that one is a religious being, a finite creature whose true 'ground of being' is the 'wholly other' whom one encounters in the mystery and majesty of a created order that overwhelms one in such a setting. The wilderness experience is part of a religious quest in the sense that it evokes in man's mind a sense of the numinous, however implicit, causes him to reflect deeply about the meaning and purpose of his life, and helps him reorientate himself to his complex environment with a new sense of direction and feeling of wholeness. In light of James insights about the wilderness, I should like to conclude this chapter by considering a number of contemporary Canadian poets who keep alive before us the significance of the land in the shaping of the Canadian imagination.

(iv) Poets of Contemporary Canada: Claiming the Land

The poets who I will be dealing with in this section include Al Purdy, Milton Acorn, John Newlove and Margaret Atwood. They all reveal to a marked degree the influence of the Canadian climate and landscape, local colour and history, and concern for aboriginal peoples on the Canadian consciousness. Each writes honestly about the land, its harshness and beauty, its ability to evoke both a feeling of terror and dread and a sense of fas-
cination. Each, I believe, also intimates a sense of the numi-
nous.

Al Purdy is one of Canada's most popular and respected
poets who is typical of those writers who, in Eli Mandel's phrase,
"surprise us with a determined regionalism." In other words,
even though Purdy is cosmopolitan in outlook, he "continues to
see his own land intensely." The more he wanders over the face
of the globe, the more he is drawn back to his place of origin,
his own 'local grain of sand'.

In "The Country North of Belleville", he writes of the "bush
land scrub land...the country of defeat/where Sisyphus rolls a
big stone/year after year up the ancient hills/picnicking gla-
ciers have left strewn with centuries rubble." This is a harsh
land but it is also a country of "quiescence and still distance"
where

...during the fall plowing a man
might stop and stand in a brown valley of the furrows
and shade his eyes to watch for the same
red patch mixed with gold
that appears on the same
spot in the hills
year after year
and grow old
plowing and plowing a ten acre field until
the convolutions run parallel with his own brain -
(p. 9, ll. 20-29)

There is something alluring about this scene which depicts a man
rhythmically preparing the ground year after year, stopping each
time to catch a glimpse of colour in the distant hills until he
and the earth are somehow one. One gets the impression that
this man, having adapted himself to the land and its rhythm, in
the simplicity of his life and the sense of wonder he experiences
in that "same red patch mixed with gold/that appears on the
same spot in the hills/year after year" has grasped the essen-
tials of life. He is in touch with himself, the earth and the
'wholly other' in these moments of stillness and solitude.
Someday, Purdy writes, he may go back to this "lakeland rock-
land and hill country/a little adjacent to where the world is/
a little north of where the cities are..." Perhaps he will go
back when, as Grove wrote, he wants "the simpler, the more ele-
mental things, things cosmic in their associations, nearer to
the beginning or end of creation..." This land, bordering the
cities, is where one finds completeness and one's place in the
cosmic order.

It is while he is away from Canada that Purdy appreciates
the distinctiveness of its seasons and the impact that they have
come to have upon him. In the poem "Canadian Spring", for exam-
ple, Purdy contemplates the coming of spring in this country
while away from it in Peru. He describes how spring explodes as

...rivers slash their wrists
a thousand rivers roar one instant only
sea-wide forests fill the near horizon
forests are banners sprawling green

- and it's summer. 47

The turbulence with which spring comes is awesome. It shatters
earth's winter prison and suddenly lounges into summer. It is
overwhelming in its bearing but in the way it quickly yields to
summer provides an opportunity for man to reflect upon its sav-
age beauty and the unfathomable mystery of creation which it has
the power to evoke.
In three poems about the native people of Canada, Purdy laments their brokenness and extinction as a nation. In "Lament for the Dorsets", he contrasts these Eskimo "giants" who became extinct in the fourteenth century A.D. with "twentieth century people/apartment dwellers/executives of neon death/warmakers with things that explode." He presents a picture of the "last Dorset" carving two-inch ivory swans - "taking them out of his mind/he places in his mind/where pictures are" - until, laying the last one aside in "beginning darkness/at the end of hunger", he dies. But after six hundred years, the poem concludes, "the ivory thought is still warm." What Purdy laments, it would appear, is the loss of creativity so poignantly epitomized in the "last Dorset's" ivory carving. Such individual inventiveness has no parallel for Purdy in twentieth century society with its emphasis on mass production, standardization and neon billboards. There is a deep relationship between the people and the land and the life it nourishes suggested here which Purdy would have modern man perhaps recover.

In another poem, "Beothuck Indian Skeleton in Glass Case", Purdy expresses amazement that it is the "gawking tourists" who have survived while the "man in the glass case...this last symbol of his extinct nation...didn't." And in yet another poem, "Remains of An Indian Village", Purdy creates an atmosphere of nostalgia as he depicts a village that has gone, where the "spirits of the dead are vanished,/and only great trees remain." But he can still "observe the children's shadows/running in this green light from/a distant star/into the near forest".
and he can still hear the "broken consonants...of hunters silent and women/bending over the dark fires." Something deep and mysterious resonates within the poem as Purdy enables us to stand with him on the site and fade from view, "the earth aware of [us] no longer." We are taken back in time to a people whose home was the forest and in going back, I suggest, we are reminded that such a people still exist in this country who could teach us how to become whole by being in touch with the wilderness and the cycle of life it represents.

Purdy also captures the essence of the Arctic and its numinous connotations in poems such as "Ten Thousand Pianos". He notes how the Arctic is mostly silent in summer. He listens in a canoe on Baffin Island to "meltwater dripping into the sea." Here you can "listen to your blood negotiate/interior roads in the brain's back country." He comes here

\[
\begin{align*}
to \text{ take piano lessons} \\
\text{realizing one should be born} \\
in \text{ silence like a prolonged waiting} \\
after the first death-cry \\
\text{knowing this music} \\
is what silence is for \ (l. 24-29) \\
\end{align*}
\]

Canoeing in the Arctic wilderness, like canoeing in the Laurentian Shield, not only acquaints one with the exterior landscape but, as James noted, helps one to explore the inner frontier. The music which Purdy hears in the Arctic stillness is the rhythm of his own soul in harmony with nature and things cosmic in their association which this land evokes.

Eli Mandel has said of Purdy that "his imagination moves uneasily amidst skeletons of learning, lore, and memory, seeking
always the eloquence of loss, ruin, and transience; the language of disappearing forms." But what the explicit language of loss and transience discloses, I submit, is an implicit awareness of a more permanent reality that survives the disappearance of particular things. It is as man is able to 'lose' himself in the vastness of this land and recognize his finite state that intimations of the numinous, the infinite, the 'wholly other' are able to penetrate his consciousness. In a country such as Canada there is ample room to 'lose' oneself and paradoxically 'find' oneself in the process.

Milton Acorn is another contemporary poet who, for all his "radical humanism" and "transcendence of regionalism and the myth of the land," does not "relinquish his hold on particularities." Two of his poems illustrate an attachment to the land and a sensitivity to the way the land evokes profound aesthetic feelings which have very definite numinous connotations. In "Poem for The Astronauts," Acorn acknowledges man's quest for "New stars. Figures in the heavens. Voices." He knows that "man's truest home is the wind" and that he "breathes deepest in mystery." That mystery, for Acorn, is exemplified in "the [Canadian] scent of pines." But he had to leave this land and return to know this and "become Canadian." Likewise, to be an earthman, he conjectures, one must leave earth and return in order to know what the earth is - "the whisper of grass/seeds turbulent/with fearful exultance/voyaging." Although man often seems intent on getting away from the land and its discomforts and seeks the mystery of life in other contexts, Acorn suggests
that he will breathe "deepest in mystery" when he discovers the
earth again and the "fearful exultance" of the seeds from which
all life comes. In the poem "Pastoral", Acorn writes of how his
"windy visions fluttered like snow-clouds buffeting the moon"
when he heard a thrush sing.

But that song, and the drop-notes
of a brook truckling thru log-breaks and cedars,
I came to on numb clumsy limbs,
to find outside the beauty inside me. 55

He comes to appreciate the inner beauty of himself as a human
being by responding to the "pulse of song in a thrush throat."
The land in its pastoral tranquility has evoked a feeling of
wholeness and dignity.

But nature is not always tranquil. In another poem, Acorn
tells how he has

...cursed death as the realest face of God
black finger swallowing the buttercup, shadow deeper
Than all the underness of waves; in the tap of that
finger

...vanishment. 56

Man is left to reconcile these two contradictory aspects of na-
ture which is only possible if, like Acorn himself, one acknow-
ledges the paradox that to know life is to know death and to know
death, life. This association of the earth and nature with a
sense of mystery, a feeling of inner beauty, the paradox of life
and death is what I believe to be the intimation of the holy.
Terror, wonderment, fascination and inscrutability are all marks
of the numinous. All are evoked by the land.

John Newlove expresses the profound way the land has in-
fluenced the Canadian imagination in two poems, "The Double-
Headed Snake" and "The Pride". In the first, he writes of what a difficult thing it is for Canadians to retain a feeling for the prairies without losing the feel of the mountains. Each in its own way is beautiful and terrifying and "makes the adrenalin run."

...Fear
in the mountains at night-time's
not tenuous....

[Fear is]...Fear at night
on the level plains, with no horizon
and the stars too bright, wind bitter
even in June, in winter
the snow harsh and blowing,
[which] is what makes me
shiver, not the cold air alone. 57

The fear that both the mountains and the prairies evoke is a thing of substance and yet something impalpable. Although it is easy for one's beauty to cancel the other out, Newlove remembers both plains and mountains, the places he "comes from...adhere[s] and live[s] in." It is important for Canadians to be aware of how the regions of this country fit together to form a whole as they do for Newlove. Each in its own way reflects the beauty and terror of nature while at the same time accommodating man within it. It is precisely the way the land looms over man in whatever region of the country he may happen to live that I have identified as significant in the way the land evokes a sense of the numinous. Being aware of the beauty and terror of the mountains and prairies and thereby being fully alive, as Newlove expresses it, is another way of saying that to be in touch with the wilderness is to enjoy a sense of wholeness.

In "The Pride" Newlove puts together in "endlessly evocative
lines story, verse, the land, and its people." What he extols is

...the grand poem
of our land, of the earth itself,
which will come, welcome, and
sought for, and found,
in a line of running verse,
sweating, our pride. [Part VI]

He sees a time, which is perhaps at hand, when Canadians will
"seize on" events of their past and be suddenly flooded with an
understanding of the whole. Then they will "stand alone", but
will no longer be lonely for they will have roots and

...the rooted words
will recur in the mind, mirror, so that
we dwell on nothing else, in nothing else,
touched, repeating them,
at home freely
at last, in amazement;

the knowledge of
our origins, and where
we are in truth,
whose land this is
and is to be. [Part VI]

The land which he celebrates is one that bears the image of deso-
lation - "unfound lakes, mirages, cold rocks, and lone men going
through it." It is a western country "crammed with the ghosts
of indians..." It is a land with orchards in the interior and
cattle and fences at the foothills of the mountain passes. The
poem begins with an image of the Pawnees in their "earth-lodge
villages" and comes full circle. When the moment is due, when
our vision is complete, we will become the Indians again in our
desires -

...desires,
mirages, mirrors, that are theirs, hard-
riding desires, and they
become our true forbears, moulded
by the same wind or rain,
and in this land we
are their people, come
back to life again. [Part VII]

In this extraordinary poem, Newlove presents a panorama of Canada from east to west throughout its history that reflects the many aspects of the landscape and the unique role of its indigenous people in shaping our attitudes towards the land. All of these themes are drawn together and proposed as the story that one day Canadians will proudly tell. The numinous overtones to be found in the poem are, I suggest, what is implied in Newlove's comments about Canadians being home at last and having the knowledge of their origins when they see their country as a whole. Their origins and "the truth of whose land this is" transcend the earth as surely as the native people have always insisted that the land is sacred and belongs to the creator. It is the awareness of his relationship to the land that is the real source of man's pride and his responsiveness to its awesomeness and mystery that evokes a sense of the numinous.

Throughout this paper I have made a number of references to Margaret Atwood bearing on the theme of land and its impact on Canadian consciousness. I have noted for example her observations that we are all immigrants in this place, the land being too vast for any of us to inhabit completely; the "almost intolerable anxiety" that this vastness generates; the significance of merely being able to survive in such a country; and finally the freedom to participate joyfully in one's own place which is the positive side of survival. In her book *Survival*, Atwood points out that
the attempt to dominate and order nature through the imposition of straight lines, walls and roads and fences upon the curvatures of nature results as often in defeat as in victory. In her novel *Surfacing*, however, as William C. James has noted, there is a shift in emphasis from an attitude of aggression towards nature to one of adaptation and integration which identifies Atwood with the recent trend towards an ethic of conservation. I should like to conclude my survey of contemporary Canadian poets and this chapter with still a closer look at Atwood who, it seems to me, embodies the distinctive Canadian attitude towards the land and the way that attitude includes within it intimations of the numinous. The work that I shall single out is her collection of poems entitled *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*.

In this collection, Atwood has imposed her own vision on incidents in the life of Mrs. Moodie as recorded in her well-known book *Roughing It in the Bush* and on the thoughts of Mrs. Moodie in her old age as she reflects on her life in this country. The first series of poems is based on Mrs. Moodie’s first journal covering the years 1832-1840. She disembarks at Quebec, becomes established in the wilderness, and finally departs from the bush. Of this period in Susanna’s life, Atwood writes:

> We left behind one by one
> the cities rotting with cholera,
> one by one our civilized distinctions
> and entered a large darkness

> It was our own
ignorance we entered
I have not come out yet. (Further Arrivals', p. 12)

The trappings of civilization disappear as she is swallowed by
the darkness of the forest. She is descending into the unknown
and being brought face to face with the unexplored ground of her
interior self. In these early years she is repelled by the wil-
derness and remarks on departing the bush the first time that
"there was something it almost taught me I came away not having
learned." ('Departure from the Bush', p. 27) There is something
to be gleaned from the wilderness that as yet she has not un-
derstood. This 'something' is perhaps the sense of participation
in a primitive reality, the awareness of which is a source of re-
vitalization and spiritual renewal. In the wilderness one is
brought face to face with a power and presence that transcends
one but which has the capacity to restore one to wholeness. How-
ever, in Susanna Moodie's case, this insight does not come easily.

In the second set of poems based on Journal II for the
years 1840-1871, one comes to see how poignantly the land speaks
with two voices, one menacing and deadly, the other composed and
uplifting. Mrs. Moodie discerns the "red leaves, the rituals of
seasons and rivers," but also is attuned to the other voice of
nature, the other knowledge

that men sweat
always and drink often,
that pigs are pigs
but must be eaten
anyway, that unborn babies
fester like wounds in the body,
that there is nothing to be done
about mosquitoes; ('The Double Voice', p. 42)

Nature and the land are not romanticized. One is both attracted
and repelled. If man is to make his home here he must accept
to make his home here he must accept
nature on its own terms and not expect it to oblige him every
comfort.

The last series of poems are based on Journal III which At-
wood fittingly dates from 1871 to 1969 when her own poems based
on the life of Susanna Moodie were themselves written. One sees
Mrs. Moodie first in old age, beaten by the wilderness, with
"vapid face/pitted and vast...being/eaten away by light." ('Da-
guerreotype Taken in Old Age', p. 48) As she sits in her parlour
deaf, her "puckered mind/scurrying in its old burrows," she con-
templates being "dipped in the earth" and thinks about what it
will be like to "prowl and slink/in crystal darkness/among the
stalactite roots, with new/forming plumage/uncorroded/gold and/
Fiery green, my fingers/curving and scaled, my/opal/no/eyes glow-
ing." ('Wish: Metamorphosis to Heraldic Emblem', p. 49) She re-
calls a visit to a lunatic asylum in Toronto. On the first floor
women are looking at her "sadly, gently", answering questions.
On the second floor, "women [are] crouching, thrashing, tearing
off their clothes, screaming." And on the third floor, she sees
a room which was "a hill, with boulders, trees, no houses" – the
bush which has been her life, her own asylum. "The landscape
was saying something/but I couldn't hear," she writes. Not at
first. But she refuses to leave and, observing again the land-
scape, writes:

... There were no clouds, the flowers
deep red and feathered, shot from among
the dry stones,
the air
was about to tell me
all kinds of answers. ('Visit to Toronto, With
Companions', pp. 50-51)

Although life in the wilderness appears to have left Mrs. Moodie
demented, disordered and deranged, she is still able at the end
of her life to perceive that the wilderness has something to
teach her despite the way it has oppressed her, that it has all
kinds of answers for her that are somehow to be found in the
deep red and feathered flowers that shoot from among the dry
stones.

These answers come in the final five reflections. In the
first, dying, Mrs. Moodie comes to a realization that the self
knows and can know nothing but its own modifications and states:
that the self is the only existent thing. ('Solipsism While Dying,
pp. 52-53) The final four poems are thoughts from underground.
She recalls first how much she hated this country when she ini-
tially arrived - "in summer the light a/violent blur, the heat/
thick as a swamp./the green things fiercely/shoving themselves
upwards, the/eyelids bitten by insects/In winter our teeth...
brittle/with cold." (' Thoughts from Underground', pp. 54-55)
And she continued hating this country, even as she sought to
praise it. However, as she begins to hear the twentieth century
"shri{of glass and steel/[above her]} invaders of those for
whom/shelter was wood,/fire was terror and sacred," she prays
to her "wooden fossil God [to]...topple this glass pride, fire-
less/riveted babylon." ('Alternate Thoughts from Underground',
p. 57) In the 'Resurrection', she has one last disturbing vi-
sion with earth a blizzard in her eyes that
god is not
the voice in the whirlwind
god is the whirlwind
at the last
judgement we will all be trees (p. 59)

Armed with these insights about the land and the pervasive way it influences one's understanding of life, Susanna Moodie makes her final appearance in the present, as an old woman on a Toronto bus. She reveals the city as an unexplored, threatening wilderness. Atwood comments in her 'Afterword' that "Susanna Moodie has finally turned herself inside out, and has become the spirit of the land she once hated." (p. 64) And Atwood adds that as Mrs. Moodie lived - "divided down the middle" in her opinion about Canada - is perhaps the way we still live.

This country is something that must be chosen - it is so easy to leave - and if we do choose it we are still choosing a violent duality. (p. 62)

This violent duality is the two voices of the wilderness, one terrifying and menacing, the other awesome and alluring, the two faces of nature that man must both claim if he wants to live here.

What Margaret Atwood has so penetratingly revealed in this collection of poems and her own interpretive comments is the way the wilderness of Canada effects those who have made their homes here. They may indeed start by hating it, but when they reflect on its terror and sacred beauty and compare what it has to teach with the lessons to be learned in today's industrial society, the profundity of the wilderness and what it evokes becomes apparent. It teaches man that there is indeed a ritual of seasons
of which he is himself a part. It teaches him to hear the voice of God in the whirlwind and the other mysteries of nature which both overwhelm him and attract and fascinate him. It instructs man that he is finite and susceptible to the same sentence that is passed on all other living things - death and decay. It is as man, in the vastness of the wilderness, descends into the self and is re-born with a sense of his organic unity with the earth that he comes to see how sacred the land is, how mysteriously it speaks for the totally incommensurable God who transcends creation but is also immanent. All other knowledge is somehow shallow and superficial by comparison.

What the poets I have dealt with in this chapter demonstrate is the profound way the land evokes feelings of terror and beauty, fascination and fear, a sense of wholeness and completeness that seems to be missing in much of contemporary urban life. Those attuned to the land are depicted as being more fully alive than those who are not. They are in possession of themselves in a way that those who have not had an encounter with the wilderness are not. They have an awareness of the sense of the holy that pervades life, however implicitly that is understood, that those unacquainted with the mysteries of the natural order do not appear as profoundly to have. In this way, the poets of this century echo the sentiments of those who have preceded them who have seen in the vastness of the land the overwhelming common denominator that unites all Canadians.
Chapter IV - Footnotes


4 There is some disagreement about the date that Grove came to America, whether it was 1892 or 1912. For a discussion of this matter, see Desmond Pacey, ed., *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. xii-xv.


8 Sutherland, *The New Hero*, p. 47.


10 See above, Chapter 1, p. 24.


13 See above, p. 105.

Verse, p. 90.


16 ibid., p. 520.


22 Pratt, "Towards the Last Spike" in Wilson, ed., Poets Between the Wars, p. 78.

23 ibid., p. 80, ll. 36-40.


28 Pratt, "The Good Earth" in Klinck and Watters, ed., Canadian Anthology, p. 256.


30 See above, p. 102.

A. J. M. Smith, "The Lonely Land" in Wilson, ed., Poets Between the Wars, p. 106, ll. 35-38. This poem in my estimation best exemplifies the Canadian landscape and the kind of mystery it evokes. I should like to quote it in its entirety.

Cedar and jagged fir
uplift sharp barbs
against the gray
and cloud-piled sky;
and in the bay
blown spume and windrift
and thin bitter spray
snap
at the whirling sky:
and the pine trees
lean one way.

A wild duck calls
to her mate
and the ragged
and passionate tones
stagger and fall,
and recover,
and stagger and fall,
on these stones —
are lost
in the lapping of water
on smooth, flat stones.

curled over a black pine
like a broken
and wind-battered branch
when the wind
bends the tops of the
pines
and curdles the sky
from the north.

This is the beauty
of strength
broken by strength
and still strong.

F. R. Scott, "Old Song" in Wilson, ed., Poets Between the Wars, pp. 84-85.


A. M. Klein, "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" in Wilson, ed., Poets Between the Wars, p. 194.

37 Birney, "Transcontinental" in The Poems of Earle Birney, p. 27.


39 Le Pan, "Canoe-Trip" in Klinck and Watters, ed., Canadian Anthology, pp. 402-403.


42 Ibid. The article is 17 pages in length and quotations from it are indicated by page numbers in the text.

43 See above, p. 100.

44 George Woodcock, a cover quotation in Al Purdy, Sundance at Dusk (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart; 1976).


46 See above, p. 106.

47 Purdy, "Canadian Spring" in Sundance at Dusk, p. 75.


51 Purdy, "Ten Thousand Pianos" in Sundance at Dusk, p. 96.

52 Mandel, 'Introduction' to Poets of Contemporary Canada, p. xiv.

53 Ibid., p. xiii.

55 Acorn, "Pastoral" in Mandel, ed., Poets of Contemporary Canada, p. 34.


59 Mandel, 'Introduction' to Poets of Contemporary Canada, p. xiv.

60 See above, Chapter 1, pp. 7-8.

61 Atwood, Survival, p. 124

62 See above, p. 123.

63 Atwood, The Journals of Susanna Moodie: Poems by Margaret Atwood. 64 pp. All the quotations from this book of poems are given in the body of the paper.
Chapter V

CONCLUSIONS

The main thrust of my thesis has been to establish how a feeling of awe and reverence and respect for the land is a salient feature of Canadian consciousness. I have tried to show how the Canadian environment evokes a feeling of mystery and implicitly a sense of the numinous. I have also argued at points throughout my paper that it is the capacity of the land to elicit the idea of the holy that offsets modern man's tendency to look on the world solely as something to be exploited for his own comfort and well-being. I have tried to be careful not to romanticize nature or portray technology as something diabolical in and of itself. However, by blending the insights of Canadian poets with the theological reflections of men like Otto, Von Rad, Brueggemann, Tillich and James, I have tried to emphasize that there is an important dialectic here between those who respond to nature with a sense of awe and reverence and caution men against standing over against nature, and those who seeing themselves detached from nature seek to oversee, manipulate and exploit the natural process for their own ends.

What I have suggested throughout my paper is that man's deepest needs are met when he can experience a sense of oneness with creation and the natural process of which he is a part. This does not preclude technological development but it does imply that technology ought to serve man whose spiritual needs transcend those that technology is able to provide for. The vast land that is Canada, which is so much a part of Canadian consciousness, provides an opportunity, either
through the direct experience of it or vicariously through literature, for one to have a sense of this oneness with the world - as James expressed it, "a sense of participation in a primitive reality...the sloughing off of the inessential and the experience of renewal." The experience of the land as something awesome and terrifying which discloses a sense of the numinous serves to remind man of his creature status and ought to lead him to respond to the land as something which is itself holy by virtue of its capability to bear witness to the Lord of creation, the 'wholly other'.

(1) Land as Sacred: Ethical Implications for Canadians in the 1980s

What I should like to do in this concluding chapter is draw attention to what I believe are some of the implications of the notion of the awesome mystery and sacredness of the land for Canadians today as they struggle with three interrelated national issues. The first is Constitutional reform; the second is native peoples and northern development; and the third is a growing ecological consciousness and the implications of this on the idea of an expanding economy. These are only three of many 'issues' which face Canadians and to treat them in depth would require a second volume. I simply propose them as examples of the kinds of issues that the sacredness of land perspective can illuminate.

As Canadians, for example, go about the task of Constitutional re-evaluation and possible reform, they need to see, as Ronald Sutherland of the Université de Sherbrooke has so
well expressed, that Canada is now "awake and poised to become a viable plural society, a society where distinct cultural groups co-exist and are held together by a loose, flexible union." Like Northrop Frye, Sutherland understands cultural 'nationalism' in terms of regional identity - the ethnic group's desire to survive, to preserve an identity, to maintain a set of values and attitudes which produce feelings of belonging, security and dignity. (p. 19)

He contrasts this with a political sense of unity which often seems to be rooted in the "desire to expand and to dominate" (p. 19), thereby threatening the very identity of those ethnic groups and distinct regions that comprise the nation.

What is taking place in Canada at the moment, he writes, are

...several explosions of cultural nationalism - in Quebec, in the Acadian Maritimes, in various parts of English Canada - [and] ...what is intriguing about it is that it no longer looks backward for justification and inspiration... reaching over the seas but it is a native product, springing from the actualities of contemporary Canada. (p. 21, my emphasis)

He notes that Canadians are being encouraged to pay a great deal more attention to Canada and the Canadian story than they have in the past. Canadians are coming to know the truth about themselves from within their own tradition. They are beginning to appreciate that the vast country of Canada is their country; that Canadian history is their history; that Canadian literature is their literature; that the Canadian reality has shaped their lives and that their lives have shaped it.

Knowing that truth also involves probing the "darker
aspects of the Canadian totality." (p. 83) In claiming the land as their own, Canadians will have to acknowledge their "ill-treatment of native peoples (including virtual annihilation of the Beothuks of Newfoundland), [and] prejudices against blacks, Orientals, East Europeans...." (p. 83) But in honestly accepting the truth about themselves, including these "darker aspects", Canadians will be led to health and wholesomeness. As Sutherland writes:

The stones are being turned over and the closets opened, and what comes to light is not always pleasant. But in the long run the effect will undoubtedly be..."salutary". (p. 83)

Sutherland claims finally "that when enough Canadians are satisfied that they know the truth about themselves, they will at last be ready for 'the poetic grace of myth'." (p. 83)

What he means, I suggest, is that when Canadians have claimed the environment, history and literature of Canada as their own, they will be ready to tell their story of life in this land in the language of poetry and myth which, by definition, offers veiled explanations of a truth that transcends the earthy and finite.

What I believe lies at the heart of the Canadian story, which must be told for that story to be complete, is the recurring theme that through the experience of the land as something awesome and mysterious, a sense of the numinous is disclosed that leads man to raise important questions about how he should manage his corporate life so that it ethically reflects the holiness he perceives his world to have. As the
land is holy, so also are the people who have accepted the
'violent duality' of life in Canada that the pervasive wil-
derness manifests and have made Canada their home. As we
have noted, it is not one people or one culture but a plural-
ity of cultures that comprise the country. Each has a dif-
ferent story to tell about its history and understanding of
itself. Each can also tell the story of this vast land and
the impact it has had on human consciousness from a particu-
lar regional point of view. The story can be told in French
or English, from a central or western or northern Canadian
perspective. The word of the land to Canadians varies as do
the regions within which they live. Each group interprets
themselves in relationship to the land in unique ways. But
the word of the land to all Canadians whatever region they
happen to inhabit, I suggest, is this: I am bigger than all
of you; I will still be here when you are gone; there is room
here for all of you; I can accommodate not one or two but se-
veral cultures. A plurality of 'nations' within a single
state is possible and no one culture or region need relin-
quish its identity.

S. M. Crean suggests that a dominant Canadian theme has
been "our struggle to bring together a people scattered over
a huge and difficult land." But there is no value in bring-
ing people together if the end result is the destruction of
all that makes them unique, a shattering of the mosaic and
the substitution of the melting pot. The experience of the
vastness of the land and its variety of geographical expres-
sion ought to help us respond to people nurtured in these very different environments and with their particular histories in unique ways. One shows a respect for people by acknowledging their differences and not demanding that cultural, social, political uniqueness be sacrificed for the expediency of a mass age and its trend towards a homogeneous society. Canadians have the opportunity to make an important contribution to the ideal of unity being sought throughout the world, a unity in diversity accommodating several distinct cultural groups within a loose political superstructure. By living in a country that is simply too big for anyone to inhabit completely, as Margaret Atwood reminds us, Canadians have had the double opportunity to experience the awesomeness of the land and the sense of the numinous it evokes and also to survive as distinct cultural and regional units within the larger whole. There is something rich in that kind of diversity which any reformulation of the Canadian Constitution needs to take into account.

Related to this question of Constitutional reform is the matter of northern development and particularly its effect on native people living within Canada. A number of times in this paper I have drawn attention to the Indian people of Canada, the understanding they have of their relationship to the land and the way in which they have become symbolic of a primitive mythological imagination which may be rekindled in us and save us from the alienation which seems to characterize so much of the modern industrial world. Teilhard de Chardin, in
the only sentence in all his books related to North America, is said to have written:

If the white man also stays in North America another 10,000 years, he too will become Indian. If you think I mean wearing buckskin and living in wigwams, you are mistaken. I mean in gaining a feeling for this land. It is your only survival. 5

George Manuel, who cites this quotation from Chardin, points out that we have nothing like the luxury of 10,000 years within which to recognize that the land is our survival. We must see it now. There are a number of Canadians who at the present time are echoing Manuel's sentiment and are supportive of native people in their demands for settlement of land claims in the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and the eastern Arctic before any substantial northern development proceeds that would irreparably alter their style of life. It is not a question of native people being anti-development, but it is a matter of seeing to it that a whole host of concerns are properly attended to before any development goes ahead. The key to understanding the issue of northern development and native people is the land. As Hugh and Karmel McCullum point out in their book *This Land Is Not For Sale*, what land means to Indians, Inuit and Metis is almost indefinable to the North American mind.

...land is for use; it is like a Mother. It is a breadbasket, protector, and friend. It is something you live with easily, you don't fight. It is something you cherish and return to when you are sick, frightened and lonely. It has always been there and it always will be there. And out of it comes your being, the reason for your existence.
the only power you have in a white man's world [of subdivisions, industrial complexes, parking lots and high-rises]. If you lose it or sell it or have it taken away from you, then you are dead, or at best, a second class white man. 8

What is important to notice is the way the land and a person's being are bound up together. The land is sacred and is viewed as a gift of the Creator and as having ample renewable resources to provide for man's needs. What native people fear is that the capability of the earth to sustain them might be jeopardized by a wide-scale exploitation of unrenewable resources.

Mr. Justice Thomas R. Berger, commissioner for the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, has understood the native point of view quite well. He points out that Euro-Canadian society has never taken native culture seriously, particularly their special relationship with the land. What native people in Canada's north are today seeking is a settlement that will "entrench their rights to the land and that will lay the foundations of native self-determination under the Constitution of Canada." Berger regards as being of fundamental importance to the future of Canada the manner in which we deal with native land claims before proceeding with the construction of a natural gas pipeline. He quotes Andre Siegfried who writes:

Many countries - and they are to be envied - possess in one direction or another a window which opens out on to the infinite - on to the potential future.... The North is always there like a presence, it is the background of the picture, without which Canada would
not be Canadian. 8

It may be that through this window, writes Berger, that "we shall discover something of the shape that our future relations with the native people of our country must assume." Berger's conclusion in the second volume of his report is that

The settlement of native claims offers an uniquely Canadian challenge, certainly the greatest challenge we face in the North. It is by this means alone that we can fairly pursue frontier goals in the northern homeland. 10

The North in Canada, I would suggest, opens out on to the infinite in the sense that here especially one comes face to face with the terrifying face of nature which as I have shown evokes a sense of the numinous. But what native people have been able to do over the course of centuries is come to accept the 'violent duality' of a land that has both the power to kill and also the resources to sustain life. They have learned that the land, despite the fear and dread it manifests, is something that can be trusted, that is a friend one can live with easily - once you have accepted it on its own terms.

Native people in the North seem to have arrived at a healthy compromise between seeing the land as something that evokes a sense of the holy or sacred in life and managing the land in such a way that the feeling of mystery and attachment to the land and the Creator is not lost. Perhaps the challenge of native people in the North to the rest of Canadians is for us to show them that they need not lose their cultural, political, social or spiritual identity if they open up their home-
land for the development of non-renewable resources. When one considers what has happened to the culture and pride of native people in southern Canada over the centuries one is not surprised at the northern natives reluctance to welcome us with open arms. Perhaps the challenge we face in the North is having to look inward at our own values and ascertain to what extent we are willing to forfeit the question of native justice for the expediency of a sure supply of heating oil.

Underlying both the issue of Constitutional reform and native people and northern development, however, is the more general matter of ecology and conservation. On a practical level, Canadians are becoming aware that the earth does not have unliited resources to fulfill the insatiable demands of an industrial, consumer society. Fossil fuels, for example, are becoming scarce and the alternative energy resource, nuclear power, is fraught with controversy. On the philosophic level, as George Grant has so well articulated, we, in the modern world, who have for so long assumed it is our right and duty to master nature are now in the position of asking

What doctrine of nature will be adequate to express that nature is a sphere for our timeless enjoyment and yet is also a sphere which we must organize, that it has meaning apart from our ends and yet is also a part of redemptive history [as something to be conquered by humans] 11

It is the same question that Brueggemann envisages Moses asking on the boundary of the Promised Land. It is a perennial question that is no easier to answer now than it was then.
We, like the Israelites, risk exile from the land if we attempt to manage it apart from covenant and fail to respond to the gift of land as a gift and maintain the dialectic with the land and with Yahweh. At the same time that the land evokes in us a sense of the numinous, it brings the realization that it is a finite, created thing of limited resources. We must reexamine our assumptions about unlimited economic growth and man's boundless capacity to improve on nature before the natural resources of the earth are so depleted or contaminated that the earth will not be able to support life.

The urgency in attending to these ecological concerns is being stressed by many people in a wide variety of disciplines. Graeme Beakhurst, a member of the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University, in an article entitled "Political Ecology" reminds us that land, as a metaphor for all of man's environment, is inseparable from those who people the social environment.

In the environmental debate, the idea and the movement of political ecology are founded upon the mutual dependence of these two spheres of existence [the human and the natural environment] and the need to explore their relationship as a key to understanding and, if still possible, reversing the directions in which a globalized political economy is leading us. 13

Political ecology argues for a conserving approach to the natural world, based not only on the desire to keep environmental damage to a minimum, but more profoundly on more advanced stages of ecological consciousness which include "the religious/esthetic experience of transcendence through myth and
ritual, and the immersed awareness of the metaphoric sensibility." In other words, man is encouraged to preserve his environment, to keep it in a sound state, so that he might be nurtured by it not only in material terms but also in spiritual terms. A sound environment in which man recognizes his mutual relationship with the earth gives rise to the higher sensibilities of being part of a cosmic order that both overwhelms him and yet assures him of a place within that order, a mysterious sense of belonging that overcomes the feeling of alienation that the myth of the mastery of nature seems to spawn. The land in Canadian consciousness, as a symbol of the holy, has been a source of revitalization and renewal and as such is worthy of the kind of protection that Beakhust recommends.

William Leiss, a professor of environmental studies and political science at York and author of *The Domination of Nature* and *The Limits to Satisfaction*, points out in an article entitled "Political Aspects of Environmental Issues" that the existing behavior pattern of society encourages us to regard the natural environment as solely a means for supplying our wants. But eventually, he writes, we may begin to question this pattern when we realize that increasing our industrial productivity does not assue the tensions that result from the "scramble for status, unfulfilled wants that always exceed incomes..." He notes how native people in this country drew sustenance from their natural surroundings but how the land for them also had meaning or symbolic significance
over and above its ability to supply their wants. He points out how it was "the land itself" that provided a basis of continuity for Indian culture and "the bonds of identification between man and his habitat that gave meaning to [his] existence." (p. 276) Leiss does not suggest that we can find in the lifestyle of native peoples an alternative model for ourselves. But he does encourage us to create one that is based upon our own cultural history. The land, he notes, can have a much greater non-economic significance for us than it presently has—and perhaps, he suggests:

Broadening and deepening that caring attitude [for people] to include the land and other natural entities, whereby they too would be regarded not only as mere means for the satisfaction of our needs but also as things intrinsically worthy of respect and care, might be one among several new ways we could find to enhance our well-being. (pp. 278-279)

I would contend that it is the capability of the land to evoke in us a sense of the numinous that prompts us to regard it as something holy and thereby worthy of respect and care. It symbolizes for those who have the eyes to see a reality that transcends it and yet is manifested through it, a mysterious reality that cannot be comprehended but whose truth is discharged in the work of creation. Man is a part of that creation and to the extent that his life and activity is in harmony with the natural world and he is responsive to the 'wholly other' he, too, will be a bearer of that truth.

Rev. Paul Gibson in his article "Towards a Canadian Theology", which I cited in the introduction of my thesis, main-
tains that the "challenge of the Church today is to provide
men with a theology of the Kingdom [of God] that corresponds
creatively and constructively to the core ideas of their cul-
ture." By relating the core symbol of the land in Canadian
consciousness to the idea of the holy I have attempted to rise
to that challenge.
Chapter V - Footnotes

1 See above, Chapter 4, p. 122.

2 Gregory Baum at a conference at the Vancouver School of Theology in March, 1979 on the theme 'Doing Theology in Canada' enumerated the following areas of injustice in Canadian society: colonialism and racism as it relates to Native Peoples; the inferiorization of the French in Canada; regional disparities within the country; the subjugation of women; the inequality of the Canadian mosaic as it pertains to ethnic groups; and our exploitative attitude towards the Third World countries.

3 Ronald Sutherland, The New Hero, pp. 29-30. Other quotations from Sutherland are indicated by page numbers in the text. Also see above, Chapter 4, p. 99, Sutherland's comments on F. P. Grove.


5 George Manuel and Michael Posluns, The Fourth World: An Indian Reality, p. 266.


8 Andre Siegfried, Canada, pp. 28-29 as quoted by Berger, ibid., p. 197.


12 See above, Chapter 3, pp. 91-92.


14 Rodman, 'Four Forms', in "Ecology and Revolution" Symposium,
Liberation, September, 1972, as cited by Beakhurst, ibid., p. 24.

15 William Leiss, "Political Aspects of Environmental Issues", in Leiss, ed., Ecology versus Politics in Canada, p. 277. Other quotations from this article are indicated by page numbers in the text.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Canadian Literature Cited


Ballstadt, Carl, ed. The Search for English-Canadian Literature: An Anthology of Critical Articles from the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1975.


Books on Religion and Theology Cited and Consulted


Articles on Religion and Theology Cited and Consulted


Baum, Gregory. An unpublished address given at a conference on 'Doing Theology in Canada' at the Vancouver School of Theology, March 1979.


VITA AUCTORIS

EDUCATION


1966 Graduated from Huron College, University of Western Ontario, Gen. B. A. (English).


1973 Graduated from Huron College, University of Western Ontario, Hon. M. Div. (thesis)

1974 Began part-time studies at the University of Windsor, M. A. Program in Religious Studies.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1966-1968 Taught English and History at Sarnia Northern Collegiate Institute, Vocational and Technical School, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada.


1969-1970 Assistant Head of the English Department, Central Huron District High School, Clinton, Ontario.

1972-1973 Teaching assistant at Huron College, Department of Religious Studies, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada.

1973 Ordered a Deacon in the Anglican Church of Canada, Diocese of Huron.


1974 Ordained a Priest in the Anglican Church of Canada.
Diocese of Huron.

1974-1975
Assistant Priest at the Anglican Church of the Ascension, Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

1974-1979
Anglican Chaplain at Canterbury College and the University of Windsor.

1977-1979
Part-time lecturer in Religious Studies at Huron College, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada.