

SHAMANIC CONTENT IN THE ART OF CLAYOQUOT ARTIST

Joe David

"Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth"

(Supernatural White Wolf Transforming into Whale)

by

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Maîtrise, Université de Paris VIII, 1973

Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies,

Université de Paris VIII, 1980

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

The University of British Columbia

October 1983

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ABSTRACT

Images seem to speak to the eye, but they are really addressed to the mind. They are ways of thinking, in the guise of ways of seeing. The eye can sometimes be satisfied with form alone, but the mind can only be satisfied with meaning, which can be contemplated, more consciously or less, after the eye is closed.

(Duff 1975:12)

The question of the influence of shamanism on Northwest Coast art is not new. It has received increasing attention in the past few years, though in ways that are not altogether convincing. This dissertation presents an aspect which has been relatively ignored until now, namely the point of view of the artist himself. It focusses on one contemporary Northwest Coast Indian artist, Joe David, and uses both his works and his comments as the basis for the study of his use of shamanic themes. At the beginning of the thesis, shamanism is defined in terms of its main characteristics and cosmological themes, using the work of Mircea Eliade as a primary reference. This is followed by an examination of Northwest Coast shamanism, and the pervasiveness of shamanic ideology in Northwest Coast Indian cultures and art. The works of art by Joe David are discussed, and through his comments

the meaning of the work is revealed, as he talks about the circumstances behind the creation of the pieces and the private meaning hidden in them. Finally the importance of the artist's comments is confirmed in a summary of Joe David's views concerning art and his private cosmology which synthesizes West Coast traditions and personal experience. Both his works and his cosmology contain most of the shamanic themes identified in the first part of the study.

For Joe David, this relationship with shamanism has become explicit as he compares his work to shaman's activities. But little of that personal cosmology would be evident in Joe David's works to an observer who was not a participant in Joe David's world. This leads to the conclusion that any study of Northwest Coast art based solely on images, without considering the world view of the artist, reveals only a fraction of the possible influence of shamanic themes in Northwest Coast Indian art.

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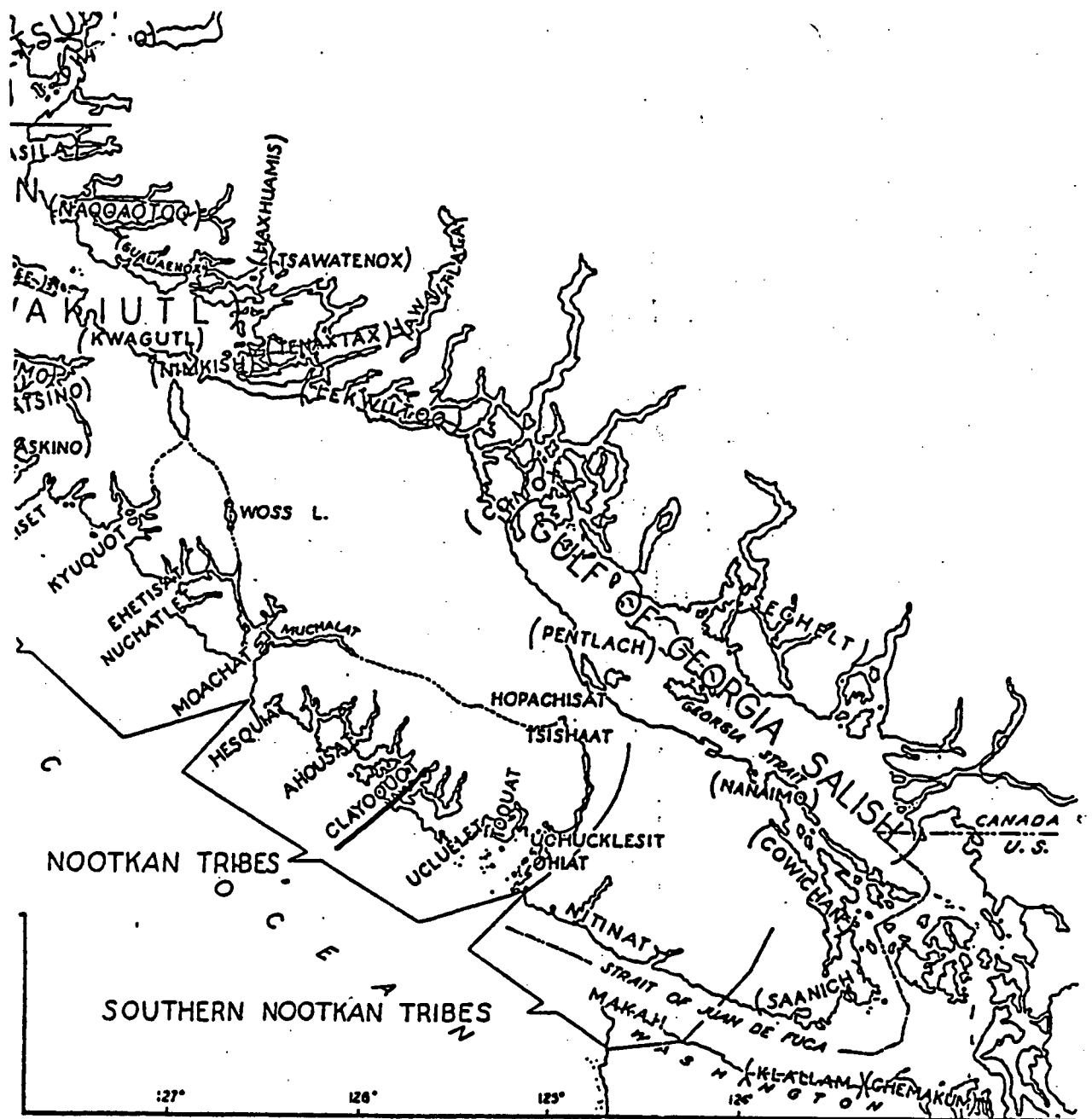
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MAP 1: THE NOOTKAN TRIBES AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS



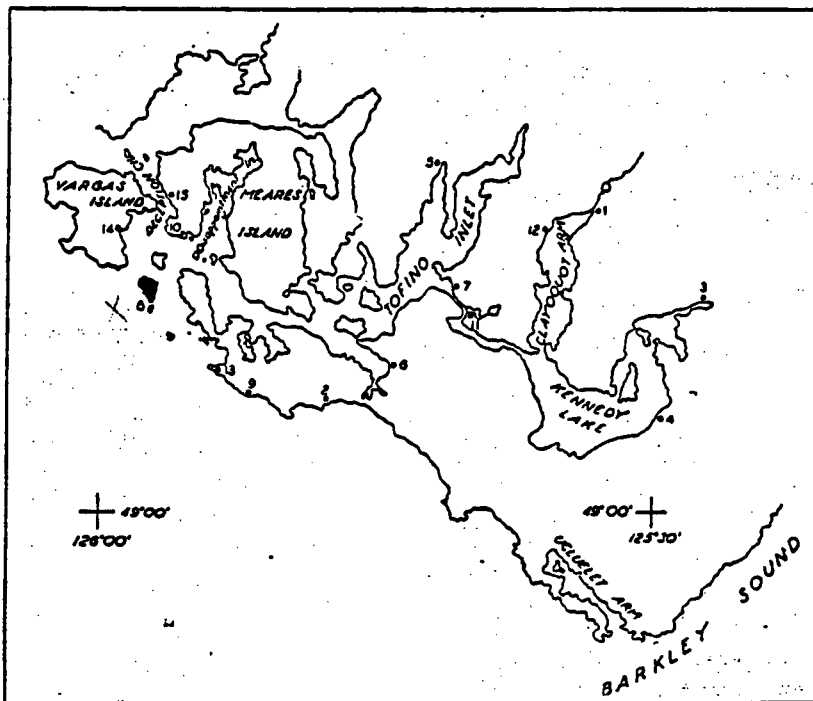
MAP 1.—The Nootkan tribes and their neighbors.

(from Drucker 1951:1)

MAP 2: CLAYOQUOT SITES

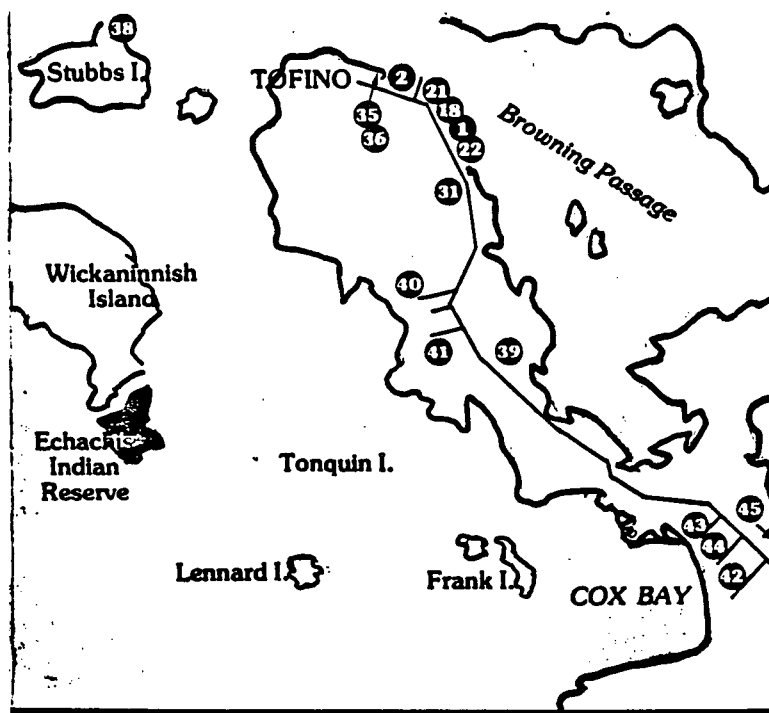
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MAP 3: VARIOUS ISLANDS AND LOCATION OF ICHA-CHIS



(from Vancouver Island Tourism Office, The Tofino Chamber of Commerce, 1979).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In producing this dissertation I have incurred many debts. I owe thanks first and foremost to my main informant, Joe David, for his trust and friendship. I am deeply grateful to him for sharing his ideas with me and I trust that he will find them faithfully represented and respected here.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the supportive guidance and unfailing encouragement of my advisor, Dr. Marie-Françoise Guédon. The valuable suggestions of Dr. Margaret Stott and Dr. Robin Riddington are also gratefully acknowledged.

Two other distinguished scholars have contributed in meaningful ways: a special 'thank you' to Dr. George MacDonald, Director of the National Museum of Man in Ottawa, for his astute critique and advice, and to Professor David F. Aberle for his generous encouragement in difficult times.

Many friends assisted me in various and precious ways; Joanalld Dumont, Dr. Bill Reid, Dr. Martine Reid, Mike Poole, Robert Lang, Duane Pasco, Paula Swan, Audrey Shane, Madline Rowan, Dr. Olga Kempo, Christiane Dubuc, Josette Faure, Iona Brown and many others.

I also want to say a special thanks to my anglophone copy-editor, Bill Schermbrucker, without whom I would never have finished the project.

"Now, think of hands and eyes:
Ceremonial masks
Spider Web charms
The four directions
Winter count figures
Eagle feathers
Circles of the sun and heart
Bear claws
Hand prints on stones
Pictomyths of feelings
Eyes of woodland dolls
Wind in the trees
Rhythm..."

(Vizenor 1972:15).

Shamanic Content in the Art of Clayoquot Artist

Joe David

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(Supernatural White Wolf Transforming into Whale)



J. V. Katz-Lahaigue
October 1983

INTRODUCTION

The influence of shamanism on Northwest Coast art is so attractive an idea as to have already generated a long history of studies and debates. Meanwhile the art itself is being studied more seriously. In a recently published article on Northwest Coast art, Aldona Jonaitis remarks that, "In less than a generation, the definition of Northwest Coast pieces has changed from 'ethnographic specimen' to 'fine art' (Jonaitis 1981:3). Among other causes, Jonaitis attributes this evolution in American Indian studies to: a general change in attitude towards the Indians; the influence of European Surrealists (1981) in which connection she mentions Claude Levi-Strauss and Wolfgang Pallen; a growing interest in primitive art for "its timelessness, primaeval mythic roots and psychological complexity;" and of course the "discovery" of native American art as a sacred art (Jonaitis 1981: 15-18). As far as Northwest Coast art is concerned a number of authors have shaped the changing attitudes. Some were ethnographers interested in shamanism in general. But others were specifically interested in the influence of shamanism on the art:

For some scholars, shamanism is the originator of art forms and iconographic motifs. For example, Deborah Waite (1966) proposes that

the Kwakiutl transformational mask -- which snaps open and shut to reveal different mythic beings -- is an artistic elaboration of the shamanic experience of transformation. Joan Vastokas (1973) suggests that the totem pole, an object used to exhibit social rank, is descended from the shamanic tree of life. And Peter Furst (1973) believes that images of skeletons, horns, and animal/human transformation were originally visual manifestations of shamanic power. Although these motifs do appear on Northwest Coast shamanic art, they also appear on secular art, like house posts, crest hats, and feast spoons. Both Furst and Vastokas propose that the origin of much Northwest Coast art -- even that art used in secular contexts and illustrating beings that do not relate at all to shamanism -- is founded in the shamanic experience (Jonaitis 1981:24).

Jonaitis sees the increased interest in shamanism as part of a larger condition in North America at this time: the tremendous receptivity to studies of the irrational, the other worldly, and the occult in the scholarly field, "as well as among the general public."

As several authors including Jonaitis and Guédon have pointed out, the term "shamanism" is often used by art historians in so uncritical and broad a fashion as to throw serious doubts on the position of the "shamanists". Guédon writes:

Ce nouvel intérêt pour le chamanisme amérindien s'étend d'ailleurs à bien d'autres domaines que l'art. Il facilite les contacts entre chercheurs, mais pose de sérieux problèmes à l'ethnologue qui a besoin de données précises. Il est consolant de noter que les définitions offertes par les informateurs indiens sont beaucoup plus riches que les définitions très générales qu'utilisent

la plupart des auteurs pour qui tout ce qui touche de près ou de loin au sacré devient 'chamanique' (Guédon 1982: 131). (Translation¹).

Such "définitions très générales" are obviously useless for an understanding of the subject.

My first purpose in this study is to explore rather precisely the role of shamanism in Northwest Coast art, both traditional art and modern art as represented by a contemporary artist. I hope to show that there is more of shamanism in Northwest Coast art than a mere allusion to spirits, or a simple correlation between certain artifacts and certain sacred or shamanic concepts. I will try to present shamanism as a useful field of reference for the study of Northwest Coast art, through a study of shamanic cosmology among the hunting and gathering societies, and by a survey of shamanic concepts on the Northwest Coast. My main reference sources are Mircea Eliade's extensive studies of shamanism around the world and especially in Siberia. Eliade has been followed by broad-range scholars like Hulkrantz, Reichel-Dolmatoff, Joan Halifax and Michael Harner. Others, including Irving Goldman, George MacDonald, Joan Vastokas and Marie-Françoise Guédon have dealt with shamanism specifically among Indians of the Northwest Coast.

I will focus on certain shamanic themes: Reference to the Non-Human World; Mystical Ecstasy; Initiation;

Initiation or Contact with Death; Journeys to Other Cosmic Worlds; Transformation; Spirit Combat; Shamanic Power.

I will follow these themes through Northwest Coast art to show how the influence of shamanic cosmology extended far beyond the activities of the shaman-healers into such areas as the secret societies' ceremonies, the chieftain rituals, and even the crest system ritual and other privileged activities of kin groups.

Throughout this first part of the study, I will stress the importance of the general spiritual complex (shaman-- secret societies -- chieftain) which permeates the traditional daily life of the Northwest Coast Indian tribes.

In the second part I want to show how these shamanic themes are reflected in contemporary art, and specifically in the work of one artist, Joe David. I met many native artists, among them Bill Reid, Francis Williams, Bob Davidson, Norman Tait, Roy Vickers and Joe David. I listened to their interpretations of the art, at lectures in the U.B.C. Museum of Anthropology and in personal interviews. These artists are from various tribes (Haida, Nishga, Tsimshian, Clayoquot) and all have their own interpretations reflecting their individual backgrounds and personalities. Though many steps removed from the original traditions, the shamanic themes are still present today, some more obviously than others; some are implied

in the images themselves, and some in the meanings behind the designs and/or in the circumstances of the source of inspiration. In time, I recognized Joe David as one of the rare artists who can genuinely relate to the ancient traditions while at the same time living and expressing himself in the modern world. Moreover, he was willing to talk with me about the topics that I was interested in. I therefore decided to ask for his collaboration and he graciously consented. I wanted to study his carvings and silkscreens, and obtain the comments of the artist. But I found that in Joe David's case the artist had become not just an interpreter but a philosopher as well. This is why, in my opinion, his works and words are so valuable.

Research Methods

I searched through public documents and official biographies to construct Joe David's public identity, and collaborated with the artist on a list of all his works. With his help, I also assembled a collection of photographs of all his works.

Though Joe David and I met casually several times, Chapters IV and V are based mostly on the contents of interviews on five occasions: the first one was conducted in Icha-Chis in July 1979. On that occasion I spent a week at Icha-Chis, participating in the daily life of Joe

and a friend with whom he was living. His nephew Frank Charlie -- also a West Coast carver -- came regularly to pay visits. I conducted three other interviews in August 1979, March 1981 and November 1981, at my home in Vancouver.

I slowly learned that an interview with prepared questions based on my own hypotheses was not the best working method. Joe would simply elude the questions by answering: "I am not into making generalizations like that", or, "words are not my medium." The artist preferred to be the initiator of the interview, to talk freely and not to be constrained by a rigid frame of pre-conceived questions. The best method to structure the interview, I found, was to present him with photographs of his works. Questions had to be few and flexible, formulated during the work sessions, based on what Joe felt like talking about on the spur of the moment. Despite this rather unstructured approach, I found that in the course of our various talks I was able to cover quite comprehensively all the relevant topics I had intended to explore. I was satisfied that this working method had produced rich and valid material.

The fifth interview used for my study was conducted by Mike Poole, a C.B.C. producer, who made a film on the art of the Northwest Coast in 1980. Hearing of my work, Mike Poole offered me the transcriptions of his talks with

Joe David. These transcriptions did not include the questions asked of the artist, but only the answers.

I have also used the text of three lectures Joe David gave in the Museum of Anthropology at U.B.C.: one in February 1977 (51 pages), and two in March 1978 (30 and 40 pages).

Joe David himself has reviewed a draft of my discussion of his works and has agreed to the publication of his comments within it.

By comparing Joe David's artistic achievement and ideas to the traditional shamanic images revealed in Northwest Coast Indian art I hope to show a continuity of content between the traditional art and modern art.

Introduction - Footnotes

¹This new interest in Amerindian shamanism extends into many other fields besides art. It facilitates contact between researchers, but creates serious problems for the ethnologist, who needs accurate facts. It is comforting to note that the definitions given by Indian informants are far richer than the very general definitions used by the majority of authors, for whom everything which even remotely touches upon the sacred realm becomes "shamanic."

CHAPTER I - SHAMANIC COSMOLOGY

Following the lead provided by Mircea Eliade (1974) in his monumental study of shamanism, Joan Halifax recently offered the following definition of shamanism:

Shamanism is an ecstatic religious complex of particular and fixed elements with a specific ideology that has persisted through millennia and is found in many different cultural settings. The term shaman, derived from the Vedic sram, meaning "to heal oneself or practice austerities", indicates influences by Paleo-Oriental civilizations. But the complex of shamanism is more archaic, being part of the prehistoric cultures of Siberian hunters and occurring among protohistorical peoples in other areas of the world. Although shamans are mainly associated with the geographies of northern and central Asia, they can be found in Africa, Oceania, Australia, the Americas, and northern and eastern Europe, wherever hunting-gathering peoples still exist and wherever this ancient sacred tradition has maintained its shape in spite of the shifting of cultural ground (Halifax 1979:3). (Emphasis added).

What does Halifax mean by the "particular and fixed elements" which make up the complex of shamanism?

According to Mircea Eliade, who studies shamanism world wide, analyzing its ideology and discussing its techniques, symbolism and mythologies (Eliade 1974:XIX), the essence of shamanism is mastery of the technique of ecstasy.

According to him "the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld" (Eliade 1974:5).

The separation of the soul from the body during ecstasy is perceived as an experience similar to death. The shaman is thus the only one who can die and then return to life many times taking on the qualities of a spirit:

He can fly through the air, he is invisible, he can perceive things far away in the past or in the future, he can visit the various mythical or animal worlds. Ecstasy is the access to the different realities in which the shaman is supposed to operate, and especially to the perception of these realities. So shamanic ecstasy is both leaving one's body and seeing more than the body can perceive (Eliade 1958:95).

The shaman uses these abilities to become a healer. He is also a specialist in the human soul (Eliade 1974:25) and a psychopomp (or guide of the soul through the underworld) (Eliade 1974:21). He is believed to be able to transform himself into an animal, to communicate with the dead, with spirits and mythical ancestors.

Although shamanism functions in much the same way wherever it is encountered, there are variations in the techniques used to achieve trance states. In Siberia, Asia and South America, records show that these states are often attained with the help of hallucinogenic mushrooms; other narcotics or alcohol are also used to trigger the ecstatic state. Mircea Eliade (1974:315) believes that the use of narcotics is a recent phenomenon which, in a way, underlines the decadence of shamanic technique -- the shaman "imitating" through the narcotic dizziness the

spiritual state that he can no longer achieve by other means. However, Furst (1974:10) points out that linguistic, archeological, historical and ethnographic evidence suggest that the widespread contemporary use by shamans of botanical hallucinogens in the New World could have remote origins in Old World Paleolithic and Mesolithic shamanism. Furst argues that the ritual use of the *Amanita Muscaria* mushroom dates back at least 7,000 years and has spread from Siberia to India:

The evidence comes from rock shelter sites in Texas and Northern Mexico that were occupied by early peoples until about a thousand years ago. Here, amid cultural debris that has been radio-carbon dated at between 10,000 and 11,000 years ago quantities of the potent hallucinogenic red "mescal bean" (*Sophora secundiflora*) have been found in association with the remains of extinct bison and the tools and weapons of Folsom Man" (Furst 1973-1974:52).

La Barre (1974:249-266) is convinced that the New World hallucinogenic complex has its roots in the ecstatic shamanism of Siberia and that the use of hallucinogenic plants by prehistoric Indians appears to date from the late Pleistocene, before the extinction of the mammoth. However, at present the antiquity of hallucinogenic use is undetermined, due to a lack of archeological evidence (Pokotylo: personal communication). In Middle America there is archeological evidence (Furst 1974:11) that various mushrooms have been used for at least 3,000 years;

ancient stone effigies representing mushrooms have been found in Mexico and Guatemala (Wasson 1974:186-187).

In spite of the widespread use of hallucinogenics, narcotics and alcohol, most shamans do not use anything stronger than tobacco or the beat of rattles or drums to attain ecstatic states. In fact shamanic techniques vary culturally, individually and according to the occasion. Guédon, in her study of Tsimshian shamanism, remarks:

Looking at the methods used by shamans in different cultures or regions, one cannot fail to notice that there is no such thing as a "shamanic trance state." The state of "vision" used by shamans does not only vary from culture to culture but also from individual to individual and indeed from occasion to occasion for the same practitioner. The wide range of induction found in shamanic practices is a first clear indication of the non-specificity of these states. The Koriak shaman in Eastern Siberia could switch from *Amanita Muscaria* to vodka to induce his vision because what was done with the state was more important than the state itself. The same bewildering variety of methods is found on the Northwest Coast. The shamans therefore are only looking for some technique -- of any nature -- which will help them to reach a dissociation state -- of any kind, provided -- and we touch here some essential characteristics of the shamanic craft, that this state be controllable, hence the preference of light trances rather than the deep unconscious trance state found, for instance, in rituals of possession (Guédon 1981: 108-109).

If shamanism cannot be defined in terms of specific psychological states, the role of the shaman as well as the

cosmological themes supporting his practices and belief system are much more useful. Hultkrantz' summary of shamanic activities and responsibilities defining the phenomena in North American Indian communities could be applied to most cultures where shamans are found:

The influence medicine men exert in tribal Indian societies can hardly be overemphasized. The medicine man cures the sick, he reveals things hidden in time and space, leads ceremonies and rites, and is in many places the foremost authority on the traditions of the tribe. His supernatural equipment enables him to secure the success of the economy of the group through magic and other ritual activity. In many places he is a rainmaker and a frequent supervisor of New Year, hunting, and harvest ceremonies. The medicine man also makes war medicine. Besides, the medicine man may be employed in various tasks where there is need for his supernatural capacity. We hear of medicine men with the power to control the course and strength of the winds or to expose evil-minded magicians or to help make women fertile. The medicine man is often the preferred bearer of traditions, whether the tradition be exoteric, as in the case when the medicine men are not established as a separate guild, or esoteric, which can easily be the case with secret shamanic societies (Hultkrantz 1967:101-102). ✓

This set of functions provides a background for understanding the shamanic cosmology and it underlines the general world-wide consistency of what Michael Harner calls "basic shamanic knowledge" (Harner 1980:41). This "basic shamanic knowledge" is articulated on a particular relationship between the shaman and non-human beings. Indeed the function of the shaman can be summarized as that of an intermediary between the human world and the

non-human world. This communication takes place in a context defined by specific beliefs including the idea that animals and even plants, natural phenomena and objects are real persons -- though non-human ones -- with a soul, an individuality and an existence of their own. This personification of non-human beings is associated with a belief in the independent existence of the soul; the soul may separate from the body and maintain its own awareness. It is at this level of souls that communication is possible between different beings, and most shamanic activities take place.

The contact with and control of the non-human world is achieved in a meeting of equals where the human actor is not a supplicant addressing superior beings but rather one power among others. This may be because most of these contacts are with or through the animal world. Whether in hunting or in dreams, the meeting with the animal is a face-to-face encounter between inhabitants of what is ultimately the same universe. The land of the dead with which shamans have numerous contacts is conceived of as close to the animal world. But if the same universe is shared by human and non-human beings, the perception each being has of it differs according to its species. And the shaman is an exceptional human being who is able to perceive the world from a point of view different from

other humans.

Anisimov (1963) gives linguistic evidence to demonstrate the connection between shamanism and the subsistence pattern of hunters, pointing out the roots of shamanic terms in various Siberian languages. In the Evenk language seve Kechen means "Siberian stag", and seven means "shaman's spirit helper," which leads to sevenche-mi "to shamanize." Anisimov believes also that the "magic conjuring rite performed to attract or head back the game" within range of the hunter would be the most ancient element of shamanism, and that "magical pantomimes" performed for this purpose would be even more ancient than shamanism. He uses shamanic terminology to illustrate his point: samal-mi-Khamal-mi means "to jump" (pantomime dance); khamati-mi means "to overtake" (special dance to attract the game), which leads to the construction of the word sama-khaman meaning "shaman". He suggests that in order to lure the game, the shaman had to simulate the animal's appearance by wearing robes of hides and caps adorned with antlers. Rituals or "magic curing" and the paraphernalia connected with them came a little later and derived from the same concept (Anisimov 1963:109).

Cults and rituals dealing with the hunt and the killing of various animals are found in North America and Eurasia. They differ in details but have the same basic elements

of respect and propitiation. Among the animals, the bear is so predominantly involved in elaborate ceremonials over such a wide area that its presence in shamanic rituals is no surprise. The link between shamanism and the subsistence pattern of hunters is evident not only in the similarities between shamanic themes and hunting rituals, as demonstrated for instance by Lot-Falk (1936) but also in the identification of the shaman with animal helpers. Mircea Eliade summarizes a number of ethnographical reports by noting "that the majority of these familiar and helping spirits have animal forms" (Eliade 1974:88-89). The spirit-helper is sometimes a very demanding master using the person of the shaman to express itself, sometimes a servant or an assistant to the shaman, but the relationship is always very intimate.

This particular human world points toward an essential difference between shamanic and non-shamanic perceptions. The connection is achieved during an initiation process which sets the shaman apart from other human beings. As Eliade writes: "The initiate becomes another man, because he has had a crucial revelation of the world and life" (Eliade 1958:1). Two other general categories of initiation, unlike the solitary shamanic experience are defined by Eliade: tribal initiations or puberty rites (or sometimes initiation into an age group), usually compulsory for all

members of a particular society, and secret society initiations restricted to members of particular groups. In contrast to tribal, puberty and secret society initiations, shamanic initiations occurs in connection with a mystical vocation and is an individual experience. This initiation is usually described as compulsory in that the future shaman is supposed to be "called" by the supernatural beings, a call which he cannot refuse on pain of death.

Despite their differences, puberty rituals, secret society and shamanic initiations have much in common: prohibition of sleep (to remain awake signifying the attempt to become conscious of the world); dietary prohibitions (including the injunction not to touch food with fingers); prohibition against speech (in certain tribes novices are only permitted to use sounds imitating the cries of birds and animals); prohibition against normal sight (as darkness is a symbol of the other world, whether of the world of death or of the fetal state) (Eliade 1957:16). All these prohibitions serve to cut the novice from the profane world and to lead him to concentrate and meditate. During the ordeals instruction through myths, dances and songs opens the candidate to spiritual life, and entices him to penetrate the mysteries of his culture. In many tribes the novice has to be presented to the sky beings by symbolically ascending a tree or

a pole which symbolizes the axis of the Cosmos, the World Tree. The symbolism of death is stressed -- initiatory death, which means death to the profane condition or to childhood. At the same time this initiatory death is an opportunity for festivals and a regeneration of collective religious life:

Collective initiation ceremonies reactualize the mythical times in which these Divine Beings were creating or organizing the earth (Eliade 1957:19).

In the case of the shaman, however, the initiation is individualized; this individual nature of shamanic experience is best exemplified by the methods used to secure the shamanic "gifts". Dreams, visions (in sleep or in trance states), hallucinatory experiences such as meetings with strange beings or events in the solitude of the wilderness are all means by which the most important elements of a shaman's knowledge are supposed to be acquired. Formal training is present but not emphasized. Eliade underlines this importance of the dream for the shaman in the following description:

As we have already seen more than once, the shaman's instruction often takes place in dreams. It is in dreams that the pure sacred life is entered and direct relations with the gods, spirits, and ancestral souls are re-established. It is always in dreams that historical time is abolished and the mythical time regained -- which allow the future shaman to witness the beginnings of the world and hence to become contemporary not only with the cosmogony but also with the primordial mythical revelations (Eliade 1972:103).

The culmination of the shaman's initiation, his death and rebirth, takes place in the inner reality of a vision or dream often signalled by a psycho-physical illness which strikes the novice and announces the coming of the powers. It does not take place in a symbolic ceremony and this may be because of the intimate and personal nature of the experience. The violent death through which the shaman appears to go is a ritual of profound disintegration at the individual physiological and psychological level.

The main themes of the initiatory visions are similar from Siberia to South America. One can trace many similar patterns of shamanic initiatory death around the world where the initiate is swallowed by a mythical beast or digested by a giantess. In Lapland, for example, the shamans are supposed to enter the intestine of a big fish or a whale. In Russian myths, heroes enter the bodies of giants to be vomited out later on, and in one Eskimo initiation, a white bear is supposed to devour the novice shaman. Slight differences occur according to the various natural and cultural contexts: animals such as deer, stag and bear haunt the Siberian shaman's visions; bear, otter, and killer whale appear in visions of the American Pacific Coast shaman; while jaguar and snake are part of visions of the South American shaman. All these animals, whether

deer, bear, jaguar or snake do at some time bite or devour the novice. Shamans share a similar fate:

. . . to die and to be reborn in a state of wisdom so as to be endowed with supernatural power and become the link between the human world and the other world (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1972:102).

One aspect of the shamanic initiatory death not found in other kinds of initiation is the frequent and explicit mention of the bones or skeleton of the shaman. In Siberia for instance, (Eliade 1957:9) the shaman often lies inanimate for several days and nights in a solitary place; during this "cosmic death" he is visited by demons and ancestral spirits who dismember his body, clean his bones of any flesh, throw away the fluids and take his eyes out of their sockets. The parts are then re-assembled, new flesh and new blood are provided, and the shaman is reborn as a new man. According to Eliade the bones have special symbolic value:

Bone symbolizes the final root of animal life, the mold from which the flesh continually arises. It is from the bone that men and animals are reborn; for a time, they maintain themselves in an existence of the flesh; then they die, and their "life" is reduced to the essence concentrated in the skeleton, from which they will be born again. Reduced to skeletons, the future shamans undergo the mystical death that enables them to return to the inexhaustible fount of cosmic life (Eliade 1958:92).

Anisimov (1963:97 and 109) referring to the Evenks mentions that the "calling" of the shaman to his position

is thought of as the annihilation of the old anthropomorphic substance and its replacement with a new zoomorphic one; these remarks apply to shamans everywhere.

Once initiated the shaman, who is by definition more than human or at least other than human, becomes part of a world which is always changing, moving, metamorphosing. In the shamanic world the power of transforming oneself into an animal or a supernatural being is a gift shared by all powerful beings whether they are human or not human. The shaman learns to control this power. This is one of the purposes of the shaman's costume. The shaman dresses in animal skin, the robe being ornamented with animal bones and completed by a headdress of antlers, or bear claws, or animal head, thus helping the shaman to "become" the animal; he might also wear a dress on which are sewn representations of bird bones, in effect transforming the shaman into a bird and allowing him to fly.²

Dancing is also a means to control shamanic transformation. As mentioned above, the Russian ethnologist Anisimov (1963:109) derives the etymology of the word "shaman" in the Evenk language from the dancing motions of the shaman. The same importance is placed on the gait of tutelary animals in order to transform the dancer. This shamanic transformation gives the shaman the ability

to use the specific animal's or being's knowledge and strength (Eliade 1974:460).

Because the shaman has access to non-human powers and can perceive their influence, his status within the human community is affected: his power sets him apart from other human beings, and at the same time it gives him a special role within the human community. Shamanic power is never defined as "normal", "civilized" or "human". It can be detected primarily by what is "unwonted", "extraordinary" or "unnatural". A very special skill of a hunter or fisherman, a birth defect or very abnormal behaviour are often taken to reveal the presence of power. Guédon, in her description of Tsimshian Indian cosmology analyzes the Tsimshian concept of naxnoq which she translates as "power". She makes the following observation:

The term naxnoq applies to any being, event or ability which appears to exhibit or express some form of "power", anything connected with the abnormal or the extraordinary...It applies to ghosts, spirits gifts, and to any abnormal degree of strength as well as any manifestation of the non-human world. When I am talking about powers, it may mean "spirits", or supernatural beings; it may also mean the special gifts a shaman has obtained from or through his helpers, whether it is to predict the future or to cure a certain type of sickness (Guédon, Forthcoming).

The special calling of the shaman places him, then, in an elite category. In many cultures, he is no longer considered merely human; he has become a power himself.

The shaman uses his power for his own sake as well as for the sake of the human community, which brings us back to the role of the shaman as an intermediary between the human and the non-human, the normal and the abnormal, the living and the dead. The social role of a shaman is marked by his special abilities which single him out and place him in a position of high social standing. In Hultkrantz's words the consequences of a shamans's power

...are not limited to himself and his family, as is the case with other acquired supernatural powers. It is his calling to sustain the community in its entirety and on this sustenance his social prestige and his political power are established (Hultkrantz 1967:85).

Our definition of shamanism would not be complete if we did not call attention to the interconnectedness of all the themes on which it is built from ecstasy and cosmic journeys to the animal world, from initiation and death to the power of transforming into non-human beings. For example, Eliade points out that:

The presence of a helping spirit in animal form, dialogue with it in a secret language, or incarnation of such an animal spirit by the shaman (masks, actions, dances etc...) is another way of showing that the shaman can forsake his human condition, is able in a word, to "die" (Eliade 1972:93-94).

Similarly, travels to other worlds, the perception of other realities, familiarity with death, are only particular cases of the more general and pervasive themes

of shamanic transformation and power. Not only are all these themes linked to form a structured constellation of traits; they ultimately are part of a cosmic model which is the basis for a whole network of cultural exchange, which may account for the expansion of shamanic ideas.

According to George MacDonald, the work of Eliade (1972), Furst (1972), Reichel-Dolmatoff (1971, 1975) and many others

...indicates a conceptual framework, linking cultures across a wide area, that has been scarcely studied in the past, but which provides the basis for cultures to influence each other in covert, often secret, exchanges between ritual specialists....(MacDonald 1981:226).

In the next chapter we will see that the cultural exchange promoted by shamans influenced more than the shamans themselves and that shamanic ideas may pervade whole cultures.

Chapter I - Footnotes

¹In Siberia, as in North America, this theme of dismemberment is often found in hunting rituals. Among the Evenks whenever a bear was killed his bones were not allowed to be cut or broken but the whole carcass had to be carefully dismembered at the joints. When the meat had been eaten the bones were collected and laid on willow branches where they were reassembled in the same order in which they had been when the bear was alive. Special care was also given to the cooking and the serving of the parts of the bear. All this careful preparation had to do with the future resurrection of the bear which would be endangered if the rules about dismemberment and gathering of the bones had not been respected (Potapov 1964:649).

²It is clear that, through all these ornaments, the shamanic costume tends to give the shaman a new, magical body in animal form. The three chief types are that of the bird, the reindeer (stag), and the bear -- but especially the bird. We will return to the meaning of the bodies in the form of the reindeer and the bear. For the moment we will consider the ornithomorphic costume. Features are mentioned more or less everywhere in the descriptions of shamanic costumes. More significantly, the very structure of the costumes seeks to imitate as faithfully as possible the shape of a bird.

A Tungus shaman's boot imitates the foot of a bird. The most complicated form of the ornithomorphic costume is found among the Yakut shamans. Their costume displays a complete bird skeleton of iron. Indeed, according to Shirokogoroff, the center of dissemination for the bird-form costume appears to be the region today occupied by the Yakut (Eliade 1974:156).

CHAPTER II

SHAMANIC IDEAS IN NORTHWEST COAST INDIAN CULTURES

Shamanism among Northwest Coast Indians is very similar from one culture to another, from the Tlingit to the Salish. We can therefore speak broadly of such shamanism without differentiating between its local forms. In considering Northwest Coast shamanism, I am focussing on shamanic ideas in general rather than on shamanism as a healing technique or as a cosmology specific to a category of ritual specialists.

In Northwest Indian cultures, shamanic ideology, techniques and symbols extended outside the realm of the healer. According to M.F. Guédon:

Au développement des groupes de parenté et de la hiérarchie de titres et blasons, correspond une mainmise des chefs et personnes de haut rang sur les ressources du surnaturel. . . . Il s'est donc greffé autour ou à côté des chamanes une série d'institutions qui ont repris entre autre soit au compte des lignages et des familles nobles soit au compte des sociétés secrètes les rituels de quête d'une vision ou d'un esprit gardien (dont l'identité est maintenant souvent dictée au départ par le groupe de parenté ou même par le titre qu'on peut espérer hériter à l'intérieur de ce groupe), les rites de passage et les grandes cérémonies d'initiation autour desquelles étaient centrées les festivals ou Danses d'hiver. . . . Un chef n'est pas un chamane, mais lorsqu'il officie en qualité d'intermédiaire entre les humains et le non-humain, on l'appelle par un titre spécial qui comporte souvent le même terme que celui qui désigne les guérisseurs (Guédon 1982:132). (Translation¹)

A number of shamanic concepts, images, even rituals have therefore been sustained by kinds of ritualists who are not shamans in the narrow sense of the term but who have contributed to the development of shamanic cosmology and shamanic art in Northwest Coast cultures.

As for the Northwest Coast shaman himself, his main role is to cure sick people. Healing is done through an encounter with the cause of the disease, itself a power, or by a direct meeting with the soul of the patient during which the disease is removed. The corresponding physical action often involves the use of the mouth (Guédon personal communication) either sucking or blowing. Among the Kwakiutl, sucking is most common. According to the Koskimo (Boas 1930:20) the sickness is like a human being. It has to be taken out and swallowed by the shaman; then it dies. Among the Tsimshian, where blowing is more important, a person who possesses a power is called halait which translates as "shaman", but the actual shaman is called halait swensk, that is "blowing halait".

Another way of dealing with disease arises from the belief that the sickness is caused by the theft or loss of the patient's soul. It is the task of the shaman to bring it back and thus enable the patient to recover. The action of sucking/blowing symbolizes "breath", a synonym for "energy" and consequently for "life". The soul is

re-captured, strengthened by the breath of the shaman and blown back into the patient: "Breath was considered the primary life requisite" (Swanton 1970:446).

The shaman can also predict catastrophies, see secret intentions, perceive what is happening in hidden places, and, because he can communicate with animals or their mythical counterpart, predict or even influence the hunt. He may also influence the weather; he is believed to be able to travel to remote places, even to the land of the dead to bring back the soul of the person he is attempting to cure. In his visions, he may fly or dive down to the bottom of lakes, rivers or oceans.

Power has to be handled cautiously and can be dangerous for any layman coming into contact with it without the proper preparation. Thus a person who has just had a supernatural experience stays away from contact with other people for a while to avoid the risk of their contamination. Similarly, at a shaman's death his whole paraphernalia is buried or hidden away in remote caves to avoid any danger.

The contents of shamanic performances may differ according to circumstances, from simple events where the shaman performs alone, without much paraphernalia or audience, to more complex cases requiring special songs and dances and the presence of the whole community including other shamans. The main shaman has to enter into a trance during

which he asks the help of his non-human helpers in order to perform with success. Performances vary also according to the personality of the shaman, but a vision or dream is an essential part of the ritual. It is during the vision or dream that he receives his songs and the details of his paraphernalia, communicates with his helpers and often finds the solution to the problem he is trying to solve.

The methods used during the performance vary but always require the intervention of the "shaman's spirit" or "guardian spirit", whose power is often transmitted through power objects or "charms". These charms are frequently of animal origin -- a moose hoof, a bear's tooth, a bird's skull -- but can also be a carved object or a simple stone. During curing performances, the shaman uses certain rituals and gestures: massaging, touching, sucking, blowing, directed to or from the patient. Rattles and drums are employed to accompany the songs.

Shaman-healers usually act individually; but they can sometimes join other shamans for common performances. They may also join fellowships of initiates who -- though they are not healers -- are considered to belong in a similar category.

The Northwest Coast Indian people themselves use similar terms to designate the shaman healers and the initiate dancers. The most prestigious members of the

Kwakiutl societies as well as the societies themselves are called Tsitsiqa, that is "shamans" by the Kwakiutl (Drucker 1940:202).

This commonality of term is found among the Bella Bella, Xaisla and Xaihas (Tsitsaiqa), the Koskimo and Fort Rupert and Wikenno Indians, as well as among the Tsimshian (Halait) and the Haida (Sxaga). Even a cursory examination of the rituals defining the Northwest Coast secret societies shows that the initiation of their member gives a very important place to individual experience, including dreams and visions (Jilek 1974). In this respect, secret societies novices are very close to the traditional healers.

This common background is also noted by Hultkrantz:

Secret societies seem largely to be collective transformations of the institution of the medicine man, with an accompanying weakening of the visionary and a strengthening of the dramatic elements.

Against such a background the development of secret societies in North America becomes fully intelligible. In its most pronounced form the secret society is an assembly of ritually initiated medicine men who proceed with the celebration of the annual rites in an exclusive and esoteric setting. In its secondary, derived form the secret society is an association of individuals who obtain certain distinct privileges in this life or the next through the initiation rites and who are entrusted with medical or cultic functions. In both cases the medicine men have directed the development, and their ideas and objectives are basic to the aspirations of the societies. This becomes obvious when we take a closer

look at the ritual of the secret societies on the Northwest Coast and among the central Algonkin on the Great Lakes (Hultkrantz 1967: 119-121).

Shamanic rituals and secret societies performances are two of the means by which laymen have access to shamanic powers; but there are other means to do so, means usually controlled by the chiefs. Though the chiefs are not shamans the mythical history of the noble families, lineages, or clans, reveals a contact between the human and the non-human realm, which is often handled in a typically shamanic fashion. The names or titles derived from the legendary meetings which form the core of clan or lineage myth of origin and histories are all evocative in their simplest forms of power quests and animal powers. These connections give the chiefs and people of high rank access to ritual positions and responsibilities; they are thus assuming duties which in other cultures are considered shamanic. For instance the Nootka chiefs act as intermediaries between the hunters and the whale (Drucker 1951:177, Curtis 1916:20), the Tsimshian chiefs initiate the children to their first meeting with the spirit world and assist them in their spirit quest (Garfield 1939:169). I would go further and venture to say that in most, if not all Northwest Coast cultures, the chiefs have the privilege to cross the boundaries of the human world and

to enter a privileged liminal state. Their function is one of balance between the everyday human world and the non human world of myth. Because of their familiarity with the liminal state chiefs are sometimes explicitly defined as shamans when they officiate in that quasi-religious capacity: for instance, among the Tsimshian, a chief is called wi-halait (great dancer or great shaman) when he is acting as initiator (Halpin 1973:74-77).

According to Garfield (1939:192): "as a 'wi-halait' a chief acted in the capacity of a very powerful shaman performing for the benefit of his people". Among the Tsimshian, there is a direct association of chieftainship with the right to transform into the crest animal; only the high chiefs have the right to wear the animal's head and skin, a right which every shaman already has. The equation linking the positions of chief and shaman can be read here.

Irving Goldman reaches a similar conclusion for the Kwakiutl as he brings together the Kwakiutl secret societies initiates, the shamans and the chiefs:

Among Kwakiutl the chiefs, or the so-called "nobility," are equated with shamans, and a curing shaman need not be chief. In their major ritual roles, however, the chiefs are addressed as paxala (shaman) and behave as shamans. The supernatural powers of chiefs are akin to those of curing shamans, the "medicine men" (Goldman 1975:4).

This equation between the shaman, the initiate and

the chief is, in my opinion a key to understanding the pervasiveness of shamanistic themes in the crests and title systems among Northwest Coast societies. Concluding his comparative study of these ceremonials Philip Drucker explicitly recognizes the ties between shamans and initiates of the secret societies:

Warfare, as Boas has pointed out, has lent many symbols and motifs to the rites. I should like to point to another institution that has contributed most generously to the secret society complex. I refer to shamanism. Not only do the rituals, as Boas long since recognized, dramatically portray a supernatural experience of the same sort as that by which shamans obtained their power, but the basic idea of possession, the dance to display the novice's power including the sleight-of-hand tricks, invariable accompaniments of shamanistic performances in this region), the concept of "throwing" supernatural power (often in the form of quartz crystals), the curing techniques used to "heal" the novice and the many references to "healing" in rites, and the designation of one of the articles as that of the Shamans, all stem from the shamanistic complex of the area. Even red cedar bark used as society insignia is partially part of a shaman's regalia. Plainly, shamanism has contributed more heavily to the form of the rites than has any other aspect of native culture (Drucker 1940:229/230). (Emphasis added)

Initiates and laymen seeking power have a number of ritual elements in common with healers. Of these, the most important in my opinion are:

- 1) General use of a vision quest, with superhuman power granted the successful seeker.

- 2) Helpers or spirits, most often animals from the

Lower World or the Higher World or "heavens," and with means of exit (or re-entry) through the holes, which form the old symbols of the cosmic tree, the polar star, or the whirlpool in the middle of the ocean.

3) Initiation ritual with death as the main focus of the experiences; rebirth or return to "cultured humanity" follows. Reliance on dance, drumming, songs and theatrical performances, with masks and costuming used to change the identity of the dancer, rather than hallucinogenics.

Each of these ritual elements has been developed by Northwest Coast traditions in a specific fashion we will now look at briefly.

1 - The Vision Quest -

According to Viola Garfield (1939:222) shaman-healers, shaman-initiates and chiefs-as-religious leaders all gained their powers through the ritual vision quest. The Northwest Coast vision, as Garfield describes it and as other authors confirm, is based on the inheritance and rank system which gives each individual his own status and identity, according to family, lineage or clan traditions, and dictates the kind of spirit and the kind of power one may seek; nevertheless the vision quest is a ritual experience shared by all individuals whether shamans, chiefs or commoners, and gives everyone a taste of the supernatural powers.

The nature of the powers is difficult to define apart from the quest which leads to them. M.F. Guédon notes that an examination of the quest itself and of the spirits or powers acquired by the seekers illustrates the common background of the shaman-healers and shaman-initiates (personal communication).

Among the Indians of the Northwest Coast there seem to be some central religious powers such as the "power of the Shining Heaven" (Haida) or the "Chief of Heaven" (Tsimshian). But the most important supernatural beings are the individual guardian spirits. Anybody can try to obtain a guardian spirit. Laymen do not have to go on a quest as severe as the shaman's or initiate's; theirs last only a few days. Sometimes they even obtain their guardian spirit in the simplest manner: it just appears to them and bestows a dance and a song. Some individuals start the training for the quest at a very young age, as early as seven or eight (Jenness 1955:66; Spradley 1963:12). Some have to wait for adulthood to obtain a spirit; others admit to never receiving anything. Even if a young boy does encounter a supernatural being in visions, he will keep it secret and continue training in order to obtain more powers (Duff 1952:99). Women as well as men can attempt a spirit quest. However, because young girls are not supposed to be alone and have to be accompanied by

an old woman, even at a distance, the quest is not easy for them to accomplish (Spradley 1963:12). Older women have more freedom. Female shamans do exist and some are very famous.

2 - Spirit Helpers -

The subjective experience of a vision varies from informant to informant but does correspond to examples in legends and stories. The spirit sometimes appears in human guise, sometimes in animal guise. He gives special instructions to the seeker regarding his new song and dance, and sometimes directives about his masks and costumes, and the new power granted. Then he departs. The spirit can also appear in the form of a bizarre object "such as a hand protruding from the ground," or as a quartz crystal (Spradley 1963:16).

By contrast with other North American Indian cultures, the Northwest Coast shaman understandably places a certain emphasis on themes neglected by other tribes such as the ocean landscape and inhabitants. Whales are predominant; shellfish, fish such as blackfish, bullhead and salmon are often mentioned; the Northwest Coast shaman seems to dive down into the ocean or the river as often as the Siberian or Eskimo shaman flies up, and sea mammals and amphibious animals are then taken as guides.

Some shamans get power after having been kidnapped by animals, wolves or bears specially, or after having been hurt by them (Duff 1952:10), or by contrast after having helped a sick or hurt animal; later on this animal shows its gratitude by giving the hunter supernatural power (Boas 1966:41-44). A human being can also gain power from an encounter with supernatural creatures. These creatures will take human form and talk to the would-be shaman; then they resume their original state and disappear after having given power (Duff 1952:99).

All guardian spirits belong to the animate realm, or to what the Indians considered as animate: e.g. including such forces of nature as the winds and the thunder "which had been human in the dawn of time" (Jenness 1955:47). These guardian spirits possess the vitality of the individual animal (or being) of origin, and this vitality is transmitted to the individual as "power." Some Coast Salish informants declared to Jenness (1955:47 note) that the vitality or soul of the animal lodges in the dancer's chest. An old native of Sardis even added that "the reason why a medicine-man possesses much greater power than a dancer is that his guardian-spirit dwells in his chest at all times, but a dancer's only while he is dancing."

In Northwest Coast culture animal spirits are monsters from the sea inlets, or forests and are considered more important than remote gods. Power, from the human point of view, is therefore nearby and accessible. The spirits and mythical beings -- even though they live in the non-human realm -- reveal themselves tangibly to human beings, through visions or through supernatural encounters.

Spirits and mythical beings appear to individuals under a multitude of shapes but have traditional characteristics which are transmitted from generation to generation.

Power varies in intensity and kind according to the receiver and according to the donor:

The available supernatural powers are both specific and general. Animals, for example, give a power which is inherent in their own nature: beavers give their industriousness, grizzly bears their fierceness. Animals offer themselves as a comprehensive gift; they give their flesh, their form, their specific nature. Spirit beings cannot give their flesh but they can give their specific nature (Goldman 1975:198). (Emphasis added)

While humans have to strive to obtain power it seems from myths that the animals are also involved in power quests. Goldman comments:

The relations between men and animals may be visualized as two strands, coiled helix-wise around each other, touching at some points, separated at others, but always symmetrically positioned. When they touch they exchange powers; when they are separated they reflect

each other -- humans appear as animals and animals as humans. Myth portrays the animals in their houses, holding Winter Dances or seeking Supernatural powers by diving into deep waters in the guise of humans. Humans are portrayed in ritual in the guise of animals as they seek and portray powers. In Kwakiutl thought humans are the principal receivers of powers (nawalak) and animals and their spirit counterparts are the principal donors (Goldman 1975:185-6).

3 - Initiation -

In the content of their vision, as well as in the nature and identity of their spirit helpers or even their paraphernalia, the healers are independent, and are not governed by the limits of their clan, lineage or family. (Such is not the case for the other practitioners of the arts of power.)

Among the Nootkan or West Coast people there are two main ways of acquiring healing powers. First it can be inherited (Curtis 1916:45) from father by son, or daughter. In this case, the child is sent at an early age into the woods to accomplish purification rites. He is then advised by his father of the steps to take in order to recognize the visit of the spirits. Secondly, power can be obtained from an encounter with a supernatural being. This encounter may be accidental or achieved through a quest. It is not unusual for an old shaman to teach a child who has already shown a disposition for shamanic talent. The preparatory

cleansing of the body is assured by bathing in sacred waters and rubbing with special herbs during the waning of the moon; the rituals are accompanied with songs and prayers.

Among the Tlingit (de Laguna 1972:678) after some time spent in the woods, the novice has to find and cut off the tongues of certain animals. He is lucky if "he gets a land-otter in whose tongue is contained the whole secret of shamanism" (Krause 1956 quoted in de Laguna 1972:677). He may cut off the tongues of other animals too: brown bear, wolf, eagle, raven, owl etc... but the land otter seems to be the one which will give him the strongest power. The future shaman does not kill these animals. He encounters them in the forest, simply looks at them and they drop dead. When the tongue is cut he makes a wish to become a healer. The tongue's skin is then pulled off, placed preciously between two pieces of wood and wrapped in cedar into a bundle. It is then hidden away in a dry place. The future shaman will pay visits to the tongue each year. If the precious amulet gets lost, he will run the risk of becoming insane. The soul -- or qwani -- of the animal whose tongue has been cut becomes the yek (helping supernatural being) of the shaman. A shaman usually cuts eight tongues; the more tongues he cuts the stronger power he will get.

In secret societies, the individual quest is supplanted

by a collective initiation. The novice does not leave deliberately on a quest but is believed to be abducted by the spirits and taken into their house where he stays in isolation for a few weeks or even a few months (for the Cannibal Society). In reality he is abducted by old experienced dancers, from whom he receives instructions in the art of dreaming and acquiring power, as well as in dealing with and presenting his supernatural abilities. In due course the "return" of the novice is planned and staged. All the members of the society gather in the Dance House and their singing and dancing is supposed to attract the attention of the spirit and to entice the novice to reappear. His frenzied behaviour and his re-enactment of his supernatural encounter through dances and dramatizations validate his initiation (Spradley 1963:31). The state of possession he is in is considered a form of "holy" madness. It is the task of the shamans to restore the dancer to his normal human state or, in Kwakiutl terms, to "tame" him by means of songs and purificatory devices. This "taming" process can last several days as the novice continues to escape back to the woods to be re-captured each time by his attendants.

The initiation is sometimes planned by the elders without the knowledge of the individual. The novice is grabbed violently, by surprise, blindfolded and stripped

to the waist. A lot of noise, drumming, rattling, hollering and screaming accompany the grabbing and contribute to the state of shock endured by the individual. The old dancers slap the novice in the stomach, bite him and blow on him to instill power. This ordeal may last for as long as three or four days in the most difficult cases, until the song which is the sign of the spirit power comes out of the novice. These rites involving many members of the group illustrate the collective return of the secret society rituals.

Despite the individual independence of the shaman and as opposed to the more social aspect of secret society initiations, there is an inherent similarity in all these experiences. The main scenario remains a spirit quest during which consciousness is altered.

W.G. Jilek, a psychiatrist and anthropologist who made a detailed study of the Salish Spirit dances from 1966 to 1972 in the Coast Salish area, draws parallels between the individual Spirit Quest and the Winter Ceremonial initiation. Jilek (1974:14-15) analyses the symptoms of "altered state of consciousness" as described by his informants, and lists the effects or visions recorded by the initiates which appear to them to be of supernatural origin. These effects are:

- 1) Alterations in thinking, including predominance

of an archaic mode of thought.

- 2) Disturbed time sense.
- 3) Loss of conscious control and inhibition.
- 4) Change in emotional expression toward affective extreme ranging from ecstasy to profound fear.
- 5) Body - image changes and feeling of depersonalization.
- 6) Perceptual distortion: hallucinations, illusions, visual imagery, hyper-acuteness of perceptions, synaesthetic experiences (e.g. sensation of colours when music is heard).
- 7) Change in meaning: revelations of "truth".
- 8) Sense of the ineffable: the essence of the personal experience is felt to be not directly communicable.
- 9) Feeling of rejuvenation, of renewed hope or of rebirth.
- 10) Hypersuggestibility: propensity to accept uncritically statements of an authority figure.
(Emphasis added) (Paraphrase of Jilek).

The initiation lasts as long as necessary for the novice to obtain the required visions and until he can sing the song handed to him by the spirit. According to Jilek (1974:28-31) in preparation for his spirit quest and initiation, a novice has to live under conditions which are bound to induce the trances and visions. These conditions are as follows:

1) Social isolation, associated with prolonged nocturnal vigilance: in different tribes, the novice is sent away into the forest in order to meet the spirit, sometimes for several weeks.

2) Motor hyperactivity and mental excitation, associated with prolonged fear and emotional stress, followed by exhaustion and fatigue. Records of initiations (Jilek 1974:71-72-73) depict the hardships the novice has to endure in an atmosphere of fear and violence.

3) Somatopsychological factors. The novice is maintained for several days, or even several weeks, in a state of wakefulness. He has to undergo a long period of fasting and restricted drinking. Forced vomiting, purgation, intense sweating in the sweatlodges provoke dehydration. Prolonged divings in very cold waters sometimes into whirlpools, provoke suffocation. At last, his susceptibility to rhythmic stimulation of the drums is increased by his exertion and fatigue. (Paraphrase of Jilek).

On the Northwest Coast, no evidence has ever been found of the use of artificial hallucinogens. The trance of the shaman/healer or initiate, is achieved by other means: by fever or delirium caused by a very serious illness (even coma); by extreme fatigue of the body caused by fasting, lack of sleep, and long hours of dances; or by the use of monotonous rhythms beaten on wooden drums,

rattles, clappers and even whistles.

When acting in their religious capacity chiefs, shamans, and initiates all depend on similar methods, and especially on dramatization which pervade all ceremonials:

On the Northwest Coast dramatization itself is developed as a technique to invoke powers. The dramatization of a myth, a legend, or even an event is sufficient to recreate the event, to bring the powers taking part in it "back to life," or at least back into action. To impersonate ancestors or their supernatural allies, is to make their power once more effective (Guédon 1981:20).

This emphasis on drama may be one of the reasons why visual arts have reached such a peak in this region, and why the artists have become so important as to form a special category of people.

4 - Shamanism and Art -

The depth and extent of the contact between shamans (whether initiate or healers) and artists cannot be over-emphasized. It is a relation of mutual dependency. Artists are directly, and sometimes explicitly, linked to shamanic ideology through their work for healers, secret societies and chiefs. And everyone is influenced by shamanic images. This is confirmed by the similarity of the images appearing on shaman paraphernalia, secret societies props and costumes and chief crest items and regalia. Because of this constant exposure of the artist to shamanic images, we have to

examine the full range of artistic production to determine the extent of shamanic imagery in Northwest Coast art.

Harry Hawthorn maintains that "in spite of his continual engagement in portraying supernatural beings" the Northwest Coast Indian artist has "no extra orientation to the supernatural" (Hawthorn 1961:62), but a rapid examination of the role and status of the artist shown otherwise.

Everywhere on the Coast, a distinction is made between the craftsman who is able to carve his fishhooks, hunting weapons and other tools, and the artist who is socially and publicly recognized as a man of special talent, whose task is to enhance the definition and status of the nobility, or to depict the meeting between the human and the non human world.

One of the main tasks of the professional artist is to keep alive the legendary history of lineages and spirit encounters of ancestors. The artist's role is not the only channel for recording such events but it is his task to make tangible and visible the characters of this invisible world so that people can relate more easily to them (Garfield 1966:59). Even the crests carved on the poles, and the many objects owned and displayed by chiefs, are originally won from an encounter with the supernatural. Northwest Coast potlatches are occasions for lavish

theatrical performances. It is the role of the artist to create the required gear: masks, puppets, mechanical devices. But his role goes beyond prop making. Many rituals are set up for demonstration of "power" (by chiefs and shamans) and require the talent of carvers skilfull enough to produce special effects. Artists also carve objects used during the Winter Ceremonials or secret societies dances (especially among the Kwakiutl) and for the Nootka (during the Klukwalle or Wolf Ritual). All the beings incarnated during these ceremonials are of supernatural origin, whether spirits, ancestors or animals.

It is generally agreed that carvers are generally of higher status than other men in Northwest Coast Indian society. Many scholars also underline the close association of the artist with the supernatural through various channels. This is especially true for the carvers who work with secret societies or shamans. Among the Tsimshian, totem poles and secular objects are carved and painted by the ukgilyae while masks and hala'it paraphernalia are taken care of, in great secret, by the Gitsonk whose status among the tribe is considerably higher (Halpin 1973:76). The powers, skills and training of the Gitsonk are inherited or are the prerogative of high families. These privileges are regulated and controlled by secret societies with which they are associated. The status of the Gitsonk goes

beyond that of excellent craftsmen. They are supposed to give secret advice to the chiefs, they belong to the inner councils and they are believed to have received supernatural power:

This professional group of artists...were all men who had received supernatural powers... the ability to carve, plan and operate novel mechanical masks or other objects, or compose songs which was considered a manifestation of the powers which the individual had received (Garfield 1939:304).

Among other tribes, especially in the South, no distinction is drawn, and all artists hold a highly respected position. Among the Kwakiutl there is only one official mask carver for each village group (Holm 1974:64). It is considered a prestigious position and the artist is always a nobleman, a nakhsola. In their adolescent years, artists usually perform their apprenticeship to a Master carver or to their own fathers. The carver is commissioned either by a patron, or by a shaman, who give him the theme to follow in the carving. He may also receive the necessary instructions from his spirits through visions or dreams.

The West Coast artist is similarly well defined by his community. For instance Drucker mentions one of the members of a chief's household in the following terms:

qwawin was considered an a'Lic man, but sometimes visited in this house, spending a winter there. He was a noted carver, among other things, and was, therefore, popular with all the chiefs. He had inherited various

rights, mostly in the a'Lic house, and was regarded as a chief of the middle class (Drucker 1951:286).

The artists of this area are busy carving masks which are used in different ceremonials, especially during the Wolf Ritual, for the imitative dances and the portrayal of the wolf captors. Dance screens are also required for this ritual as well as for potlatches and puberty rites ceremonies. Joe David mentions (Poole III) that a chief can be a sculptor as well, and that the privilege of being a carver can be inherited from a relative. It is not rare to see rich chiefs adopting an artist as a "protégé":

In a region given over to brilliant spectacle the appearance of a notable sculptor associated with his family greatly enhanced the family's prestige, through the luster of ritual objects owned and displayed on ceremonial occasions (Ernst 1952:102).

The shaman also assumes the role of artist -- he is the only one allowed to carve his own masks.

Most carvers, because of their association with the ceremonial aspects of life are also singers, dancers, composers and story tellers. These arts are never separate.

Chapter II - Footnotes

¹A monopoly control of supernatural resources by the chiefs and other high-ranked persons corresponds to the development of lineage groups and to the hierarchy of titles and crests. . . . A set of institutions has therefore grown up around the shamans, which employ again, among other things, the rituals of the vision quest or rituals of the guardian-spirit whose identity is now often dictated by the lineage or even by the title one may hope to inherit within the lineal group, rites of passage and the big initiation ceremonies. . . . A chief is not a shaman, but when he acts as an intermediary between humans and non-humans he is addressed by a special title which often involves the same term as that which designates healers.

Chapter III

SHAMANIC THEMES IN NORTHWEST COAST ART

Goldman, citing Eliade as his source, gives the following summary of the "central ideas of shamanism" among the Kwakiutl:

The central ideas of shamanism have been identified by Eliade (ibid). They include mystical ecstasy, the approach to death, journeys into other cosmic realms, spirit combats (antagonism), transformations and the designation of the shamans as a chosen elite. Shamanism is characteristically involved in the animal world, especially among North American Indians. The animal is the source of connection with other worlds, a necessary intermediary in the language of Levi-Straussian structuralism, between men and their sources (Goldman 1975:206).

These "central ideas" show the wide range of shamanic ideology, and in my opinion they form a useful basis for categorizing the presence of shamanic themes in the works of Northwest Coast Indian artists. From them, I have derived and listed below the major themes and sub-themes which are discussed in this chapter, as we look at the main ways in which elements of the shamanic cosmology appear in Northwest Coast art:

1- Reference to the Non-Human World:

Bear, Thunderbird, Sisiutl,
Wolf, Whale, Land Otter etc...

2- Mystical Ecstasy:

Light, Sight, Blindness, Eyes.

3- Initiation or Contact with Death:

Corpses, Skulls, Bones (X-Ray images), Death.

4- Journeys to Other Cosmic Worlds:

Flight (Bird), Diving (Whale, whirlpool), Spirit Canoe, Pole.

5- Transformation:

Animal/Human, Human/Animal, Devouring, Vomiting.

6- Spirit-Combat:

Defense against Witches, War.

7- Shamanic Power:

Contact with and control of spirits, healing
Cursing, Predicting, etc...

We will examine each of these themes in some detail, both in their cultural context and as they appear in the art images.

1 - Reference to the Non-human World

Northwest Coast art is based extensively on animal figures; some images appear more frequently in certain types of art than in others. The animals which appear most repeatedly are the bear, the thunderbird, the snake, the wolf, the whale and the land otter (or sea otter).

The Bear

Of all the animals represented in Northwest Coast art, the most imposing is the bear, which is found on monumental totem poles as well as on miniature pieces like spoons, or even gambling sticks. The appearance of the bear does not vary much from region to region except for slight differences due to tribal styles. Great attention is given to the facial features. He is often seen wearing a ceremonial hat with several rings. He is also occasionally portrayed in the act of swallowing a human or an animal, or holding a tiny man between his paws. When the face of the bear is represented on the front wall of a house, on a canoe, on a box or on a dish, the whole object is sometimes treated as the body of the animal (Boas 1897:392) (Duff 1956:106).¹ Like all other animals, bears are treated essentially as human figures with certain exaggerated animal features, to identify them (Duff 1956:105). Duff suggests that this method of depicting animals is usually associated with the belief that in the past animals had human identities. We could also assume that the shamanic idea of a recurrent possibility of transformation from one realm to another might be part of the context behind this way of depicting the animals.

The shaman proper favours the bear. His costume is often composed of a bear skin. His coronet, typical apparel

of the shaman, is made of upwardly projecting bear claws. The Tlingit shaman sometimes wears the "bear ears" headdress for very special tasks requiring a lot of power, in war especially. On rattles, the shaman who is sucking the poison contained in the brain of the frog, which will become supernatural power, strongly resembles a bear: his half crouched posture is more that of an animal than of a human and his face shows the facial traits of the beast. Is the shaman wearing a bear mask or is he undergoing a transformation? Both might be the answer, as the shaman is seen in the process of a shamanic action.

Bear masks are numerous and varied. Some are carved on plain wood; others use real fur or even the real head of the animal. Among the secret societies, masks and costumes made in effigy of the bear are worn during the Winter Ceremonials. Among the Kwakiutl these ceremonials belong especially to the "BaxbakuAlAnuxsi'waE Grizzly Bear" (Higher rank) and the "Ordinary Grizzly Bear." Their members are the only ones not taken away by the spirit at the time of initiation but are simply hidden in the house. They are the most dreaded helpers of the Hamatsa, as their role is to punish for any mistake committed during these rituals or during the Winter Ceremonial in general. The penalty is generally death. They always wear bear's claws on the hands and sometimes a whole bearskin costume (Boas 1897:467).

Their face paintings depict the huge mouth of the bear. During the Winter Ceremonial they usually perform dances around the fire imitating the actions and growling of an angry bear. Here again, as among the Kev tribe (Siberia) mentioned earlier, the bear appears as a bringer of justice to the human world from the Supernatural Beings.

The Thunderbird

The thunderbird is one of the most common figures in American Indian Art. On the Northwest Coast, its representations can be found from prehistoric times up to pre-and post-contact art. It is usually represented as a bird-like being. Hawthorn describes it as follows:

The marks distinguishing Thunderbird from other sky beings are the supernatural horns that adorn his head and the curved, humped and massive upper beak over a curved lower one. Talons and legs emphasized wings usually shown outthrust, extended straight out from his side (A. Hawthorn 1967:26).

Among the Kwakiutl, the thunderbird and his brother Qolos, are the rulers of the "birds of the sky" -- that is the supernatural birds -- and they hunt the double-headed serpent (Goldman 1975:77). The thunderbird is called "Head Winter Dancer" (Tsaqame) and is supposed to be a great shaman whose powers are equal to those of the greatest mythical spirit beings (Goldman 1975:107).

The Sisiutl

The sisiutl is the Kwakiutl version of a mythical, double-headed, snake-like being with horn and protruding tongue which conveys both good and bad luck. Such a character appears among various tribes under different names and with slight differences in appearance, on soul-catchers, screens, totem poles and house beams.

Among the Kwakiutl (Boas 1895:371-372) the sisiutl appears as a double-headed snake with a human face in the middle of its body, and two horns sticking out. It is said to have the power to assume the shape of a fish, to increase its size at will and to be able to swallow canoes with all aboard (Barbeau 1953:241). To those who already possess supernatural power, it will bring help. Its skin worn as a belt will enable the owner to perform wonderful exploits. It may also be used as a magic canoe, its fins becoming paddles. Its eyes can be used as sling stones which can even kill whales. But the sisiutl can be very dangerous to the layman who attempts to eat it, touch it or even see it. All the joints of the victim become dislocated and his head turns backward; if the sisiutl's blood touches his skin, it will become hard as stone, which means death. Among the Nootka the serpent-like creature is called Heitlik. It is described by the Clayoquot as a thread-like creature with a huge mouth, a long darting

tongue and teeth like a serpent. The thunderbird is supposed to hurl it when he wants to kill a whale: the Heitlik spears the body of the whale like a harpoon. This animal is said to be very rare but fishermen are very eager to catch it and put it in their boat; it is supposed to ensure good luck in their whale hunting. Even a piece of the magical animal can insure success on all occasions (Newcombe 1907:28). This Heitlik has been recognized on very early petroglyphs, winding round totem poles, painted on the chief's hat and etched on whale harpoons. Among the Tlingit, Kwakiutl and Nootka the double-headed snake, usually coupled with the thunderbird is a common emblem (Barbeau 1953:239). Among the Tsimshian it is a major shamanic emblem which is carved on soul-catchers, the hollow bones worn on a necklace by healers.

The Wolf

From Alaska to southern British Columbia the wolf was a most formidable figure, both as an animal belonging to the real world and as a mythic figure (Goldman 1975:76). He was chosen by Indian people as a tutelary animal for his qualities of endurance, bravery, wisdom and fierceness (Ernst 1952:45-87-91-105-106). He is called sometimes the "invincible gray warrior", the silent guardian", or "the silent warrior" -- the bravest and fiercest of them all".

According to a Nootka informant:

The wolf is the bravest of any animal in the woods. They are the killers. They don't fear anything. They are so brave that they can run the country undisturbed. That is why the wolf is chosen (in Ernst 1952:48 note 10).

The figure of the wolf appears on many varied artifacts.

On petroglyphs, four-footed animals may have been meant to portray wolves (Vastokas 1973:112). It is seen on heraldic items, on slate carvings, on tattoos among the Haida, and facial paintings among the Salish (Jilek 1974), on the bows of canoes (Boas 1955:207 Fig. 197), in the shape of a dish, and of course on masks. Among the Nootka, the wolf appears frequently on screens, lodged either in the belly of the whale or on its side, in the company of the thunderbird and lightning-snake. But the wolf figure reaches its peak in the masks created for the Klukwale, ceremony of the Nootka also known as Wolf Dance. Ernst evokes the importance of the role of the wolf in this ritual:

The land-bound wolf, lingering far North as the mysterious agency back of the complete dance ritual of the Coast, gradually retreats into his forests. Even far up in Kwakiutl territory he remains the final link between the everyday world and that mystic realm entered during the sacred winter dances, as the chosen supernatural creature who initiates novices into the secret dancing fraternities of the tribe (Ernst 1952:105). (Emphasis added)

The Klukwale masks assume various shapes, sometimes very realistic, sometimes almost abstract and box-like, according

to the dance for which they are made (See S. Moogk thesis, 1980). The dance dramatizes the myth of the capture of a number of novices -- usually children -- by wolves, that is the teachers members of the Klukwale secret society who instruct the novices and give powers to them. The initiates are then rescued and exorcised (Ernst 1952:2).

Among the Nootka people many accounts have been made of wolves giving "curing power" to someone who has helped them out of some difficulties, such as removing a fish bone stuck in the throat (Drucker 1951:186). This characteristic of the wolf is found among other tribes as well including the Northern Athapaskan Indians. In contrast to the encounter with other supernatural spirits which always contains an element of domination bringing the human to symbolically kill or overcome the spirit at the end of the encounter before using the power, the encounter between a wolf and men is always amicable.

Among the Kwakiutl, according to Boas (1930:41) wolves "are makers of shamans; they are the donors of supernatural powers and of the 'nontlem' ceremony". The wolf is also a conqueror of the thunderbird, a restorer of life and a major tutelary spirit of shamans as well as one of the founders of the Winter Ceremonial (Goldman 1975:76, Boas 1930:62). The wolf is therefore an important shamanic figure and it is not surprising to find wolves "described

in myth as the first great shamans" and as the first initiates (Goldman 1975:111).

The wolf is also a transformer. It is believed that wolf and killerwhale are two aspects of the same being and that the killerwhale may step ashore and turn into a wolf (Duff 1965:7). In a tale recounted by one of Curtis' informants, the wolf explicitly announces: "I am the Wolf who has one heart with the Whale" (Curtis 1916:20). On the other hand, according to Roberts and Swadesh: "When a wolf transforms into a killerwhale the wolf's tail becomes the killerwhale's dorsal fin" (Roberts and Swadesh 1955:31). This is a very ancient idea. The Sea Wolf, sometimes known as Wasgo or Was-Q is a mythological being dating back to prehistory (Ravenhill 1944:25), which is found all along the Northwest Coast.

The Whale

Representations of the whale are found on the whole Northwest Coast; they correspond to a number of crests in the North and ritual images everywhere, from monumental sculptures to smaller pieces such as dishes or even charms. They are represented also in facial paintings, body tattooing and (especially in the south) on screens in the company of the thunderbird, the lightning-snake and the wolf, and a number of masks and headdresses.

The whale is an important character in all Northwest Coast mythologies as well as a precious game eagerly sought by Indian people, though hunted only among Alaskan and Southern tribes. Whales have multiple identities: they are like people in their own kingdom, they are animals on which humans feed, but they are also supernatural beings in the sense that they can give supernatural gifts to humans as well as songs, dances and powers to call on them. In Alaskan and Nootkan tribes (Lantis 1938, Drucker 1951) elaborate ceremonies and rituals are associated with whale hunting. In order to overcome the vagaries of animal behavior and to increase the efficiency of material implements --hooks, harpoons and arrows -- the whole crew has to submit to ritual observances which are even stricter for the chief who is also the harpooner.³ Because of these lengthy preparations which involve many people of the tribes, the whaling has a lot of repercussions on daily tribal life. Furthermore, because the characters all belong either to the supernatural world or exist liminally to the supernatural world, the hunt can almost be considered as a metaphoric fight with the supernatural, which implies that people have to be very close to the elements and to the whale to be able to win this battle.

The Northwest Coast Indians suppose that the spirit or power of the whale is contained in his dorsal fin. A

special song is used by whalers to drive this power out of the dorsal fin of a whale which has drifted ashore (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:229).

Among the Kwakiutl, the whale supercedes the bear as the main helper of shamans. It is viewed also "as a clan ancestor associated with sea beings particularly Komowkwa, sculpins and loons. It is also associated with coppers, property disposition and wealth" (A. Hawthorn 1967:190). This shamanic aspect of the whale is found among other tribes as well. The whale usually transmits supernatural powers by means of songs and dreams, though myths often mention direct meetings between human seekers and sea beings or "ocean people" (Swanton 1905:17). Like all important shamanic figures whales are gifted with transformational ability. Not only can a killerwhale turn into a land animal when he goes ashore but a whale may also transform into a supernatural canoe: "I had a vision of several men in a canoe. I closed my eyes, looked again...it had turned back into a whale" (Sapir & Swadesh 1947:194).

Among the Haida, Swanton recorded that in some places:

The Ocean People are said to be creatures like human beings, but covered with a killer-whale skin. In either case we seem to have a double incarnation - the supernatural being in the killer-whale, and both the supernatural being and the killer-whale in the natural features. Some of them, even some of their chiefs, were once men (Swanton 1905:17).

The Land-Otter

The land-otter is one of the favorite helpers of the shaman. It can swim and even dive under water, and it can run on land faster than a man (Johnson 1973:9). It looks somewhat like a small human being. It therefore possesses qualities which are usually associated with liminal status and supernatural power. Land-otters are feared by laymen and are defined as malevolent towards human beings. Among the Tlingit of Alaska, de Laguna points out the land-otter's close association with death and ghosts:

In the last analysis, it would seem that the transformed Land Otter man (ducda-qa), the "ghost or revenant of the drowned person (yuk^w gahe yaqu), the soul of the land otter (kucda-qwani), and the shaman's land-otter spirit (kucda yek or kucda-qu yek), were all actually or potentially one and the same entity, that which one ordinarily encounters in its animal form or fleshy "clothing" as a land-otter (kucda) (de Laguna 1972:756).

This connection of otter with death and drowning is, together with madness, also predominant among the Haida:

If a person were given a name that the Land-Otters liked, they would try to steal him. They would sometimes deprive a person partially or entirely of his reason. When one of them came to anybody, it would assume the shape of whomever that person was in love with, to make him speak to her. If he did speak, he soon began to act strangely, faint etc. and soon after died. When taking on human shape, they could not get rid of the hair between their fingers (Swanton 1905:26).

Land-otters are supposed to attract sailors in difficulty by means of bright fires lit on the beach. Among the Haida these sailors will eventually lose their reason and transform into ga-gixit:

These transformed men (ga'gixit) were veritable bugaboos to the Haida. They are described as creatures resembling human beings but with bony faces, full of

fish and sea-egg spines, wide nostrils turned so high up as to open almost straight forward, and an unclothed body covered with land-otter hair (Swanton 1905:26).

According to Swanton (1905:26) the ga'gixit wandered for a whole year in the Haida country before going to the Ga'gixit island in the Tlingit country. Five years later, they would start to walk on their elbows and behave like animals. Ultimately they transformed completely into land-otters and acquired all their qualities and characteristics. This close connection between insanity, transformation and land-otter is mentioned again by Halpin for the Tsimshian. She informs us that "the Tsimshian word nawatsxw, which literally means 'like land otter', is consistently translated as 'crazy'" (1981:281).

Among the Tlingit, one of the first steps taken by a novice shaman is catching a land-otter to obtain its tongue. The land-otter is both the key to the language of all other animals, and has special powers to cure breathing difficulties:

Breath was considered the primary life requisite (Swanton 1970:446 in Johnson 1973:9). Perhaps the long periods of time the land otter can remain under water gave it this association and its tongue, the chief organ of communication would be particularly useful in reaching other realms, for the secret of shamanism (Johnson 1973:9).

The land-otter is also metaphorically thought of as a means of conveyance for a shaman, "capable of transporting him to another world" (Barbeau 1958:44-45). It often appears in Tsimshian shamanic visions associated with a spirit canoe:

My canoe came to me in a dream, and there were many people sitting in it. The canoe itself was the Otter (watserh).

I also dreamed of charms: the Mink (nes'in), the otter (watserh) and Canoe ('mal) (Barbeau 1958: 44-45).

The land-otter is frequently represented on charms, rattles and masks. These masks often portray the transformation in process of man metamorphosing into land-otter; his face still shows human features but has already begun to be covered with land-otter hairs (de Laguna 1982 - Plate 191).

This small sample shows how strongly the shamanic theme runs through the presentation of animal characters. Beings such as the Eagle, the Raven, the Frog, and others have a similar connection with shamanic visions. The ways in which they are depicted show that they are defined as carriers of power and potential spirit helpers, as we shall see in Chapter III.

2. Mystical Ecstasy

Hultkrantz uses the concept of ecstasy to distinguish between two different types of healers, first perceiving an alien or evil object or being in the body of the patient (and attempting to remove it) and second following the departed soul of their patient to faraway lands as necessary:

The manner in which the power or the spirit approaches its client is reflected in his psychic structure of experience, so that we may distinguish, although quite schematically, two main types of medicine man: the visionary, whose trance is light and whose clairvoyance is distinctive, and the ecstatic, who may converse with the spirits or depart from his own body in deep trance (and then at times be possessed by his guardian spirits) (Hultkrantz 1967:87). (Emphasis added).

Both types of experience are found among the Northwest Coast shamans. The representations of journeys out of the body are explored later. For the moment, we should note that both types of experiences are subsumed by Northwest Coast traditions under the concept of vision. Ecstasy is presented very practically as a mode of perceiving reality (Guédon forthcoming).

This theme of ecstasy is developed in a complex series of symbols related to enlightenment: "seeing" and "blindness", eyes open or closed, light and darkness.

A statement by one of Jenness's informants --Old Pierre -- (1955:67) exemplifies this pair of opposites: "Four winters I endured this penance. Then, at last, my mind and body became really clean. My eyes were opened, and I beheld the whole universe." In this area some of the strongest artistic statements are offered by masks. Some masks, especially shamanic masks, sometimes show solid eyes. Others have articulated lids which can open or close, to represent vision or blindness. The Kwakiutl xwéxwé mask has protruberant eyes. The protruding eyes suggest special powers of vision. The costume of the swaihwé dancer also includes feathers from the eagle or the swan, birds often associated with shamans.

The salish swaihwé mask has attracted the attention of many scholars including Claude Levi-Strauss and Michael Kew.

Everything in the structure of this mask, in the costume of the dance and its myth of origin seems to be strongly tinged with shamanism. Levi-Strauss (1975:105) contrasts the protruberant eyes of the swaihé mask with the deep sunken eyes of Tsonokwa. In myths the eyes of the giant Tsonokwa are sometimes associated with deep holes: "A Kwakiutl hero saw a rock in a river which shows two deep holes: he saw that these holes were the eyes of Tsonokwa" (Levi-Strauss 1975 Vol I:108). Tsonokwa is supposed to be blind, or very poor-sighted and she always tries to blind the young children she steals, by sealing their lids with resin. According to Levi-Strauss, Tsonokwa and Swaihwé masks are opposite but complementary to each other, one being the obverse of the other. This observation leads us to the twin stone Tsimshian masks which also seem to be opposed and complementing each other. The "unsighted twin" and the "sighted twin" are, as Duff puts it "far more than just alike: they are the two halves of a single work of art, the two sides of a single profound equation ... One has eyes that never opened, the other has eyes that can never close. The one sees only inward and backward, the other sees only outward and forward" (Duff 1975:164). The documentation on these masks is poor but Wilson Duff believes that they were used by a single performer during the Winter Ceremonial and that "they were switched in the blink of an eye" (1975:164).

Halpin (1981:286) observes that the eyes of the well known Tsimshian twin stone masks may be illustrating the hypersightedness of the eyes:

If we look closely at the twin stone masks, we can see that their 'eyes' are not eyes at all. The outer mask has no eyelids to close; the inner mask does not have typical Northwest Coast eye forms, but rather two perfectly cylindrical openings, as if they had been 'bored'. And this is perhaps the very metaphor the artist was using when he made the 'eyes' that shape. The evidence is light, but convincing.

Halpin mentions that according to a statement made by a Christianized Tsimshian shaman, "my eyes have been bored" means "I have been enlightened." This evidence is supported by Swanton's statement (1909:464) that the favourite animal helper of the Tlingit shaman is the woodworm "because it can bore through wood and so typifies strong perception" (Halpin 1981:286). Duff expresses a similar feeling about the twin Tsimshian stone mask the eyes of which are hidden behind unopened lids: "Their kind of vision is of a purer kind, eternally open to the inner light" (Duff 1975:165).

Eyes are emphasized not only in masks. Their importance is marked everywhere in Northwest Coast art. Huge open eyes dominate two-dimensional designs: Chilkat blankets, wall screens, housefront designs. They are also a major feature of the large heads characterizing the three dimensional figures. Joints of the body, whether human limb, bird wing, animal legs or fins are depicted as an ovoid filled with an eye, or even a face. According to Emmons, "This is to convey the notion of vitality, movement, intelligence or skill,

associated with these parts" (Emmons 1972:761), which are considered sometimes as independent entities. If repeated on other parts of the body, the eyes may represent the actual face of a being, or they may signify "the indwelling anthropomorphic soul (qwani)" (de Laguna 1972:761).⁴ When the face-eye appears on the chest of the being it could also represent the vitality or the soul of the guardian spirit, as we know from Coast Salish informants that this soul resides in the dancer's chest (Jenness 1955:47).

In a recent lecture given at the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver (February 6, 1979) Bill Reid, in his comments on the ovoid shape which in his opinion forms the essential building block of the whole imagery of Northwest Coast designs, suggests that at the origin, "it was certainly used as 'eye forms', as the outline eyes of the creature being depicted, which perhaps accounts for the thicker line at the top tapering off to the bottom." He adds that "this may be the origin of all the forms which can be found in Northwest Coast art."

In a Tsimshian myth called "tx'a'msem imitates Chief Seal" (Boas 1916:91) we find another interpretation of the eye motif:

People say that in olden times all the joints of man's or woman's fingers had eyes and mouths until Tx'a'msen held up his hands when he invited Chief Seal into his house, and that man's fingers have had no eyes and no mouth since; when people ate food in those days, fingers also ate.

George MacDonald, discussing rock art from the region of

Kitselas Canyons of the Skeena River, mentions that "mythical chiefs who have their plank houses at the bottom of the ocean are described on the North Coast as having eyes on the end of very long stalks. These chiefs cannot support their eyes and they must have slaves holding their eyes" (Lecture U.B.C. March 5, 1981). Again according to MacDonald (in MacDonald, unpublished paper, "Concepts of Wealth in Northwest Coast Art": April 21, 1982) a visual representation of these "eyes hanging out of the socket" is found on rock carvings (Ringbolt Island for instance) as on crest art including a number of totem poles. This theme has been generally identified as "Weeping Woman" but may, in fact, represent a sea chief. This correction is confirmed by Newcombe (MacDonald 1981:5) who indicates that this Sea Chief lived off Bonilla Island and had all the marine creatures in his house under his command. Levi-Strauss (1975 Vol. II:40) mentions the existence of a Haida pole from Tanu (a copy of which stands in front of the Museum in Victoria) on which a "Sea Chief" is depicted. According to myth the eyes of this sea chief came out of their sockets every night; his friends replaced them inside the sockets for each meal, so he could see his food (Levi-Strauss 1975 Vol. II:40). For Levi-Strauss, these 'hanging eyes' are unusable and consequently close to temporary blindness. He contrasts them with those of the Swaihé mask.

All of these different interpretations are based on the perception of a similar preoccupation of the Northwest Coast

artist with vision, and point to a link between vision and power.

3. Initiation or Contact with Death.

The theme of initiations or contact with death is widespread in Northwest Coast art, though it is often found disguised in ambiguous but closely related images. We rarely see depictions of people dying; instead we find images of skeletons and skulls often presented as "ghosts" or corpses.

Skeletons and bones are especially found in secret societies props and shaman's paraphernalia. This may be because both of them deal explicitly with death and resurrection. They appear in the paraphernalia of the Ghost dancers, of the Hamatsa and his helpers. In the Northwest Coast as in Siberia (See Chapter I) the skeleton is not always a symbol of ordinary death, but can imply the duality of mystical death followed by resurrection. Skulls are used explicitly to depict ghosts, or the presence of the dead. In Kwakiutl mythology (Goldman 1975:108) ghosts have the power of bringing back to life a person who has been killed, and that is the theme of their performance during the Winter Ceremonial (A. Hawthorn 1967:47). Ghosts appear in several dances during the Ceremonial. They are associated with Winalagilis - the war spirit -

and with Bukwus the Wild Man of the Woods, or Cockle Hunter (A. Hawthorn 1967:218). Ghosts are also associated with wealth. For instance, the Chief of the Ghosts is called Wealth Coming (Boas 1935b:131). Wealth is also mentioned in this Ghost song:

Now Ghosts go all to that upper world,
For great is your wealth in the ground ghosts
For great is your fire and many your hot stoves,
ghosts (Boas 1897:409).

The ghost dancers either wear complete wooden masks in the shape of skulls, or miniature skull masks of wood are attached on their red cedar garments, signifying the themes of death and revival (A. Hawthorn 1967:29). The blanket of the Hamatsa worn as a ritual covering may also exhibit small wooden skulls attached. "They were indicative of the number of times he had danced as Hamatsa" (A. Hawthorn 1967:120). Similar small wooden skulls also appear on headdresses (Boas 1897:123, Fig. 204), on masks (Boas 1897:448, Fig. 77 and 483, Fig. 128), and on head rings. Other human-size wooden skulls (A. Hawthorn 1967:121, Fig. 200) were presumably carried on a board by the Kinkalatlala attendant in her dance to placate the Hamatsa (A. Hawthorn 1967:120). Hamatsa rattles are often carved in the shape of skulls.

The depiction of the skeleton is often reduced to a rib design; in that form, it is part of the artistic vocabulary of Northwest Coast art.

Ribs, or X-ray designs, can be traced back in petroglyphs (Meade 1971:18) and tattoos (Swan 1884). In traditional art they are found on many objects like shaman's dolls, charms and rattles, representations of shamans, dead people, coppers, even heraldic figures.⁵

A morbid motif frequently encountered in Northwest Coast art is a long tongue hanging from the mouth. It is mostly seen on bears, although it also appears in representations of human beings. For instance a long striated tongue is a feature of the Coast Salish Swaihwe' mask described previously. The protruding tongue has become a conventional attribute of the bear in art, either on totem poles or on small carvings. Sometimes it only sticks out, sometimes it is twisted in such a shape as to be mistaken for a labret; sometimes it hangs down to the knee and is being grasped by the animal. On some Kwakiutl poles a human figure is depicted squatting on a bear's head whose tongue sticks out.

This tongue motif seems to symbolize death by hanging or strangling and especially the death of bears. It also recalls the touching of tongues found on Raven rattles, which may connote a sharing of power when two live beings touch tongues, and the Tlingit tradition of the quest of other tongues by the shaman apprentice.

Death image

On the Tlingit poles of Chief Shaiks at Wrangell (Barbeau 1950 Vol. I.: 182-183) and of Chief Arnteeh at Kitwanga (1950:240) the bear sits on the top of the pole with tightly closed eyes and tongue sticking out. Since the bear is sometimes traditionally snared and strangled -- which recalls the Ainu way of putting the bear to death, this hanging tongue may well indicate the death of the bear. On a Tlingit pole, the hero Ductool is seen in the act of cutting a sea-lion in two. The sea-lion, head down, shows a hanging tongue which portrays its death (Barbeau 1950 Vol. I.:303). This motif also appears on slave-killers on which the handles are carved in the shape of a human head showing an enormous tongue coming out of the mouth, the "tongue" being the stone blade. The motif was recorded by Captain Cook who describes a tomahawk and its handle as "representing the head and neck of a human figure with the stone fixed in the mouth so as to represent an enormously large tongue" (Badner 1966:27). A Kwakiutl knife shows the same device: the tongue of one of the Sisiutl heads is represented by the metallic blade. Among the Tlingit some masks represent a warrior with closed eyes and hanging tongue. Swanton collected an explanation for these masks: because they are put on for battles "sometimes the spirit gets tired in war time"

(1908:467). Among the Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island, we find very realistic whole heads carved in wood. These heads were used during power demonstration ceremonials to deceive the spectators into believing that they were the heads of decapitated dancers who were supposed to be resurrected later on (Boas 1955:184-185).

The twin stylistic conventions of dismemberment and splitting, which are characteristics of two-dimensional Northwest Coast art, have also been linked by some scholars to the shamanic death theme. Holm (1971:89) believes that the principle of splitting and dismembering body parts is an artistic convention which allows the parts to be more easily arranged to adorn a given surface. Likewise, according to Boas, the split representation in art is merely a technical process which allows a three-dimensional object to be reproduced on a flat surface (Boas 1927: 223-224). On the other hand, George MacDonald sees a similarity in conception between the shamanistic dislocation of the body during the initiation and the dislocation of the figure in two dimensional designs:

A complementary belief in the initiation of a shaman is that he is completely dismembered and disemboweled to homologize his body structure with that of the universe, after which he is reassembled. A similar concept is seen in the design of Chilkat blanket in which atomized and reassembled creatures are intended as cosmic statements in terms of the relationship of the animal portrayed. The

universe is of course constructed of the body parts of the cosmic ancestors (MacDonald 1981:227-228).

F. de Laguna (1972:762) raises another interesting point when she mentions that the Tlingit language makes a distinction between body parts when they form a living body and when they are visualized separately. Moreover, the words for body parts are frequently the same as for body positions.

We should note that dismemberment as such is a concept known to Northwest Coast Indians and used during rituals. During the Kwakiutl Winter Ceremonial for instance, a woman dancer, following the Hamshamtses dancer, also mimes the dismemberment of her body:

A woman dancer, Wilenkagilis, dressed only in hemlock branches, and known as Great War Dancer, acts out the dismemberment of her own body. She urges a reluctant XaXosenasco to dismember her. Her body recaptures its head and limbs and she is whole again (Goldman 1975:92).

4. Journeys to Other Cosmic Worlds

Whether in the privacy of one's dream or in the public performance of a dancer reenacting a mythical account, cosmic journeys are a fundamental theme in Northwest Coast shamanic procedures. Indeed journeys to the other worlds are necessary for both the initiation of the novice and for the healing of the sick. In this latter case,

the journey is undertaken either to discover the cause of the sickness or to recover the soul of the patient which is assumed to have departed from the body.

Among the Nootka (Eliade 1974:248) the stealing of a person's soul could be attributed to the Dog Salmon spirits. They were especially dangerous when returning to their home beneath the sea at the end of the Dog Salmon run. According to Drucker:

The cure consisted in the most direct possible approach to the problem: The shaman went out and recovered the soul. This was no dramatization of a journey like that described for some Coast Salish. The Nootkan shaman, in the full strength of his supernatural power, 'actually went down under the sea', returning dripping wet and sometimes streaming blood at nose and temples, carrying the stolen soul in a little bunch of eagle down in his hands (Drucker 1951:210-1).

Bancroft-Hunt adds that:

A line was attached around the shaman's waist so that he would be able to find his way back, and he was then believed to journey under the sea. . . . He followed the tracks left by the soul, while his attendants waited on the beach and tied on additional lengths of line as his journey took him further away (Bancroft-Hunt and Forman 1979:83).

Northwest Coast art emphasized through its visual images a picture of shamanic cosmic journeys which differs slightly from their Siberian counterparts. As elsewhere, trips to the other worlds are often suggested by the representation of birds such as eagle, raven thunderbird, swan or even a simple feather. But they are also symbolized

by whales and fish, especially the salmon when the shaman travels to the bottom of the sea. The descent to the Underworld is also often portrayed by animals which can dive or swim into rivers or lakes such as frog and land-otter.

As mentioned before, the theme of flight among Northwest Coast shamans is not as frequent as in other areas of the world; nevertheless medicine men did travel up to the sky to obtain supernatural help. Marius Barbeau mentions some of these trips in his account of Tsimshian shamanism:

Nooks came in and said 'I am in with all my helpers. They have helped me a little, but I must climb myself into the sky to find out what I can do'. So he went to a corner of the house and fell into a trance (Barbeau 1973:75).

Another shaman describes his vision flight following a robin (Barbeau 1973:50). A Kwakiutl shaman song also reveals the same theme: "I was taken away far inland to the edge of the world by the magical power of heaven" (Boas 1930:47).

The symbol of a canoe brings together both flying and diving. Haeberlin (1918:257) has given a detailed account of a Salish ceremony which includes an ecstatic journey to the Land of the Ghosts in an imaginary canoe. As Hultkrantz explains:

Among the Salish around Puget Sound the medicine men perform a dramatic-mimic rite to restore

a lost soul: equipped with symbolic canoes and paddles they vivaciously enact the voyage to the land of the dead, the battle with the dead, and the recapture and restoration of the abducted soul (Hultkrantz 1967:91).

The canoe is an important tool among the gear of the Northwest Coast shaman. As described by Isaac Tens, a Gitksan medicine-man, it appears often in visions: "I also dreamed of charms, the Mink (nes'in), the Otter (watserh), and Canoe ('mal)" (Barbeau 1973:44). This latter is not an ordinary canoe but a "magical vessel" (Vastokas 1973:129), a living being which can not only float on the ocean but can also penetrate the earth or fly across space. Barbeau tells how Isaac Tens notes that: "The canoe sometimes was floating on the water, sometimes on the clouds" (1973:44). Further in a song again Tens recalls:

A great noise was rising out of the canyon.
I fell into the water, but I landed in the
canoe that was there. I drifted in it further
then it rose me into the mountain (Barbeau
1973:53).

This canoe is mentioned from the Tlingit to the Coast Salish. It is sometimes a being very much like the Sisiutl; it may also be called a ghost canoe or a "Sickness Boat" containing malevolent spirits:

When I was taken into the skies, I beheld the
sickness canoe in which were several spirits,
each with a harpoon. As they saw a person
walking about, they threw their harpoon at the
victim, who at once became ill (Barbeau 1973:75).

These "magical canoes" are sometimes engraved stone mortars (Inverarity 1971:Fig. 55) or reproduced in miniature in argillite. Haida artists have excelled in the carving of these miniature dug-out canoes crowded not only with shamans but with their supernatural helpers (anthrope-and zoomorphic beings) (Barbeau 1973:Fig. 79 to Fig. 87).

The shaman is also able to travel by ascending vertically via birds or rainbow, or by following a stream up to its source. The means most often mentioned in ceremonial context is a pole linking the earth to the sky or to a hole in the sky. This hole is sometimes defined as the point on which the sky is rocking on its axis. The possible relationship between the shamanic pole and the heraldic masts of the Northwest Coast Indians is probably indirect but is worth studying as myths do contain references to this cosmic axis. For instance:

The Bella Coola. . . imagine on the western horizon a mighty pole, which supports the sky and prevents the sun from falling down on the earth. On top of this pole, which was erected by the highest god, is seated an eagle (Hultkrantz 1979:23-24).

We also find this idea of a long pole linking heaven and earth among the Haida:

Upon the breast of "Sacred-One-Standing-and-moving" rests the lower end of a pole or pillar extending to the sky; and when he is about to move (i.e. when an earthquake is to occur), a marten runs up to it, producing the thundering noise which precedes. . . . Down the same pole from heaven to earth runs a string called "string of the

shining heaven"; and when any one throws a stone at a buffle-head, the bird pulls this string, bringing down some of the mallard feathers which are on top of the pole. That is snow (Swanton 1905:12-13).

According to MacDonald (1981:229) a rope is now symbolically stretched from the frontal pole to the beach to represent the "Shining String of Heaven" and no one is allowed to cross over that rope. In Tlingit mythology the Milky Way was seen as a long pole, while Tsimshian myths depict their world as flat and circular and rotating on a pole (Boas 1895:278). But the pole which seems to have the most obvious relationship with the idea of cosmic tree/Axis Mundi is certainly the Cannibal Pole used among the Kwakiutl during the Hamatsa dance. The Kwakiutl universe is divided into three worlds: upper, middle and underworld. A copper pole representing the Axis Mundi symbolically crosses the three cosmic areas in the Ceremonial House at a central point which is supposed to be the Centre of the World. According to the myths, the shaman uses this pole to travel from one world to another. This pole is represented in the Ceremonial House by a cedar pole, about thirty feet high. The top, sometimes carved in the shape of a human head reaches out through the smoke hole that is "the door of the upperworld". In Hamatsa songs, the pole is called "Milky Way," (Boas 1987:459) Rainbow or even the Post of the World or Centre

of the World. When the Hamatsa comes back from his seclusion in the woods, he enters and exits from the ceremonial house by means of the pole, this simulating his climb in and out of the Upperworld.

Vastokas notes the explicit link between the Cannibal Pole and the shamanic rituals:

Like the Siberian shaman and the Mexican pole dancers, the Cannibal Dancer climbs the ceremonial post to the roof of the house in a symbolic dramatization of his initiatory and visionary journey to the sky. The Northwest Coast Cannibal Pole ceremony clearly parallels the shamanistic pole of Siberia and Mexico; there can be little doubt, therefore, that the Kwakiutl pole is essentially shamanistic in both function and meaning, serving as a transcendental pathway through three cosmic levels (Vastokas 1973:144).

5 - Shamanic Transformation

Shamanic transformation as understood by Northwest Coast Indians is not so much a process of change as a way of seeing. It may show in many different ways. The human/animal, animal/human transformation is one of the basic ones though objects may also be considered as animated and can transform into animals, or spirits into humans and back again.⁶ Transformation then is not so much a process as a quality (Guédon 1983 personal communication) corresponding to multiple identities or, as we will see later, to multiple point of view or realities which focus on one entity.

The shamanic transformation is part of the dialectic of life and death already explored. Transformation may take place in many ways. Shamanic initiation is often presented as the action of being devoured or swallowed by an animal. This Devouring/Swallowing/Vomiting theme is probably one of the most recurrent. Its images intermingle human and animal creatures and it seems to be one of the prototypes of the shamanic transformation. Shamanic rebirth, however, can be facilitated if the bones of the person are left intact. Durand (1969:245 in Reid 1981:104) points out that in myths relating stories about the engulfing of humans by mythical beings (like Gargantua or Jonas' whale for instance) the word "avalage" (swallowing) is always preferred to the word "croquage" (munching) because the action of swallowing has the property of keeping "l'avale" (the swallowed one) "indefiniment" et miraculeusement intact".

Martine Reid goes a step further saying that:

Alors que la manducation est négation agressive de l'aliment, le geste alimentaire (ou le mythe de la communion alimentaire) concrétisé par l'avalage s'opère en vue non d'une destruction, mais d'une transformation⁷ (Reid 1983:104) Translation⁷

This is why the twin concepts of devouring-vomiting are often associated with toothless beings such as the cannibal birds of the Hamatsa society as Martine Reid points out in her doctoral dissertation:

Alors que le monde animal réel entourant les Kwagul est un monde rempli d'animaux féroces tels les loups, les ours bruns et grizzli, les épaulards, pourquoi avoir choisi l'Oiseau (en l'occurrence le Corbeau) comme prototype des représentations symboliques du cannibalisme. Nous pouvons avancer dès à présent que c'est parce que, en plus d'être carnassier, l'oiseau régurgite sa nourriture pour nourrir ses petits et n'a pas de dents. En effet, il nous semble important de souligner que l'avalage tel qu'il se manifeste dans les mythes ou les héros sont anthropophages, n'est possible que parce que les monstres cannibales sont édentés. . .⁸ (Reid 1981:104). Translation

On many Haida, Tsimshian and Kwakiutl poles, huge mythical beings like the bear or the whale are depicted in the process of swallowing or vomiting a human being or an animal. These images correspond to the various myths of the swallowing of the hero by a monster. Entering the mouth of the beast, and later being ingested corresponds to the initiatic death which leads to rebirth. It is interesting to note that even if the jaws of the Supernatural Being holding the victim seem very threatening (sharp teeth) the character who is partly engulfed never seems to suffer or be frightened.

On totem poles, on the front walls of houses, and on screens especially, the iconography frequently shows huge supernatural beings half swallowing humans or animals. Marjorie Halpin comments on the use of such images among the Tsimshian:

Ceremonial "mouth" entrances of course, did not subject Tsimshian guests to overt ridicule, but the metaphorical implications must surely have

been there. The noticeable emphasis on mouths, or beaks (or stomachs) in both ceremonial entrances, and house entrance poles, again suggests a Cannibal theme (1973:186).

This theme of Devouring/Swallowing/Vomiting is also found on many other artifacts: masks, charms, combs, carved boxes and others. Visually it is sometimes hard to say whether the creature is being devoured or being vomited.⁹

Often the fronts of houses were decorated with the painting of a huge face, in such a way that the mouth of the creature formed the door of the house. The whole house appears as the huge body of a sacred animal. This idea is corroborated by George MacDonald:

During ritual performances, the house becomes the body of the ancestor. The houseposts are the limbs of the ancestor, the ridgepole is the backbone and the rafters are its ribs. The gable painting depicts the face of the ancestor, either in human or in animal form, with the door as its mouth (MacDonald 1981:228).

This theme is explicitly part of the Kwakiutl Cannibal Ceremonial: the members of the society erected a screen (or ma'wil) across the rear end of the house. The screen or front wall of the bedroom was painted with the face of the Cannibal Spirit or that of his servant, the raven. When the novice reappeared he came out of the mouth of the painting. The danger of entering for any but the worthy initiates, was indicated by the Devouring Mouth through which the novice passed. The Cannibal Society,

the highest ranked society among the Kwakiutl secret societies, derives its origin from a cannibal being BaxbakuAlAnuXsi'waE, a famous bird with an immensely long beak which he uses to break the skull of his victims in order to eat the brains. Any individual meeting BaxbasuAlAnuXsi'waE or one of his suitors might become a Cannibal himself. In the course of the initiation the dancers -- the Hamatsas -- eat fresh killed slave and corpses (Boas 1897:441). When a Hamatsa returns from the wood after being initiated, he brings a corpse which is eaten after his dance. Eliade (1958:71) assumes that for the Hamatsa the fact of eating human flesh is "the evidence that he has identified himself with the God". Like his madness, "his cannibalism is proof of his divinization", or we could say: proof of his transformation for a while into the spirit who possesses him.¹⁰

Ultimately, however, as in all shamanic transformation, the initiate does come back, bringing with him the power he was given by the Supernatural World. The Hamatsa dancer reveals it in his songs:

BaxbakuAlAnuXsi'waE made me a winter dancer
 BaxbakuAlAnuXsi'waE made me pure
 I do not destroy life, I am the life maker
 (Boas 1897:508).

6 - Spirit Combat

From the Tlingit to the Nootka, shamans are said to be threatened by other shamans and antagonistic powers. Myths relate how shamans have to fight each other and each other's spirits. This experience with fighting is further increased by the frequent participation of shamans in war, especially in the ritual preparations preceding the departure of war expeditions. In a lecture George MacDonald mentions:

A shaman, though it is a shamanic doll, is also the representation of a warrior as he is wearing a vizor, a mask and a war shirt. The shaman often wore wooden weapons, which may have seemed non functional but were really aimed at frightening spirits (Lecture UBC, 1981).

Combat between spirits or between shamans can sometimes be found illustrated on Haida argillite panels and, as George MacDonald describes in a slide presentation on shaman's gear, occasionally on shamans' capes.¹¹

7 - Shamanic Power

Shamanic power, an intangible entity, is usually represented visually in traditional art by metaphoric events, such as encounters between human/animal/supernatural beings, transformation into animals or non-human beings, and contacts such as tongue touching, which encompasses the acquisition or exchange of supernatural gifts.

The motif of tongue-touching appears on a number of objects, but especially on rattles and totem poles. The rattles using this motif are the well known Raven or Chief rattles; the exchange takes place usually between a shaman, often with a bear-like face, and a frog, or a land-otter or a kingfisher. As mentioned before these rattles were the property of shamans among the Tlingit, but were owned also by chiefs in other tribes. Ridgeway (1906:145-148 quoted in Badner 1966:19) suggests that this exchange of tongues represents the sexual union between mortal ancestors and supernatural animals, in which power is transferred. Badner (1966:19) reports that the motif represents a shaman absorbing either poison or the power of producing evil against other people; this opinion seems popular among scholars, and has received a lot of support. However, Drucker (1955:103) suggests that it might be meant to represent a spirit extracting disease from a sick person. All these opinions converge around the same idea that the

touching of tongues symbolizes the transmission of supernatural power. It is interesting to recall the Tlingit shamans' custom of collecting tongues, especially otters'.

In brief, from its recurrent presence in both mythology and art, we can see that the tongue plays an important role which remains somewhat mysterious to us, but is definitely associated with shamanic activities.

Power can also be seen in the depiction of creatures of liminal worlds like the Wildmen, the Fool Dancer, or Tsonoqua, all beings who are always both human and non-human;¹² or it may be seen in the depiction of animals such as land otter, octopus, frog, bear, wolf. (These characters who are believed to have the ability to transform into human beings, and the metaphoric events, appear on poles, house fronts, rattles, masks, argillite art and on many other objects). More rarely, as for instance among the Kwakiutl (A. Hawthorn 1967:19) and the Salish (Wingert 1949) power is also explicitly symbolized by the presence of "duntsik" -- or power boards -- on which the Sisiutl appears in cutaway (A. Hawthorn 1967:Fig. 219-230). Some material objects are the repository of supernatural power and may evoke its presence: eagle down and feathers, bear teeth, bear fur, red cedar, red ocher, copper and crystal quartz. They are found abundantly both in the shaman's and the

chief's paraphernalia.

Another way of representing power is described graphically by George MacDonald:

Supernatural beings with special powers most frequently had exaggerated sense organs that were frightening to behold. Some had eyes like sea anemones (Swan, 1889) that pulsed on the ends of long stalks, some had long protruding tongues or exaggerated ears. Both horns and exaggerated ears have been associated with shamanism since paleolithic times. Animal ears were much more sensitive than were man's, allowing them to understand the speech of man and other animals. Their special tongues allowed them to speak to each other. Among the Tlingit and the Haida there are many references to bears' ears and tongues as a prerogative of high-ranking chiefs. In the ancient rock art of the coast (MacDonald, 1977: pl. 27) shamans are depicted with the extended tongues, curling ears, and staring eyes that characterize the masters of wealth (1981:231).

Sometimes the Haida and the Tsimshian shamans used "soul-catchers" to recapture the lost soul of a patient.

When the soul was caught the shaman plugged the ends of the soul-catcher with cedar bark until the soul could be returned to the body of the sick man (Musée de l'Homme, Paris 1969/70:Fig.117-118). This operation had to be very prompt, because unless the soul was quickly recovered the patient would die.

The soul-catchers, made from the long bones of animals (usually the femur of a bear) may represent the Sisiutl or one of its equivalents which are recurrent themes in Northwest Coast mythology. The finest soul-catchers are

inlaid with abalone, and red and black incisions emphasize the formlines. The soul-catchers were also used for sucking and blowing on the patient where he felt pain. In the myth the double-headed snake which forms the soul-catcher is often represented as a canoe-like creature and hence is an appropriate mythical animal to hold and transport souls. "Soul-catchers are metaphorically canoes" (Boas 1939:147 quoted in Johnson 1973:11). This interpretation is reinforced by the development of the shamanic soul-retrieval performances among the Coast Salish (SBeTDA'Q) in the course of which shamans are supposed to travel about in a canoe (Haeberlin 1918:249-257). The canoe is represented by rows of carved and painted planks, and the dramatization of the search for the lost soul aboard "the canoe" can last several nights.¹²

M.F. Guédon, in a detailed study of the soul-catcher concludes as follows:

I do not know yet if the soul catchers are to catch souls -- certainly, they intervene in the ritual -- but when and how is still to be investigated. I think it is clear the soul-catcher is more than a "soul-trap" (Guédon, 1978).

Soul catchers are extremely rich from a symbolic point of view - and allow all kinds of mental transformations:

-as a tube -to suck, to blow, to contain (including in this respect soul-catching.)

- representation of the shaman or shamanic body:
it's intestine, throat as well as anus.
- double headed tube means double mouth (but no tongue).
- as double headed, it is alive - it bears the signs of having turned into not only a living thing but a powerful one. It has a mouth to devour or swallow and eat, mouth to speak, eyes to see, it may "swallow" the spirit or catch it.
- as animated being, it is at once
 - creature of the marshes (in between sea, land and sky), otter-like, or seal-like,
 - or otter-canoe like, it carries you away and back,
 - akin to the whale, the snake will carry its master in the depth,
 - akin to the eagle, it will take the shaman up in the sky (Guédon 1978).

We therefore find in the soul-catcher a condensation of the shamanic ideology from the shaman's point of view. But such compact evocations of power are not restricted to shamans: one of the most prestigious objects owned and worn by the chief, the Raven rattle (referred to as Chief's rattle or Welcome Rattle) is usually identified with the "Throwing Dance" prerogative of Chiefs. It is found from the Tlingit to the Kwakiutl and is an epitome of shamanic characters and themes.

The history of the Raven rattle is complex. The Raven rattle is used mostly by chiefs (except among the Tlingit) which led Swanton (1908:464 in Gould 1973:42) to suppose that they were originally part of the shaman's paraphernalia. Shamans use round rattles and oyster-catcher rattles (Krause 1970: 196).

M. F. Guédon, following Marius Barbeau's information notes that the origin of items of the Tsimshian semhalait or throwing "dance" (which is an initiation ceremony) clearly links them to the vision quest complex. The raven rattle was invented as a result of the vision of a monster rising from a lake (Guédon 1981:79-80).

But the complexity of the history of this rattle is matched by the sophistication of its design, and the intricacy with which all the visual elements are combined. Here follows a description of the Raven Rattle:

The main body of the rattle is usually a raven with outstretched beak and diminutive, swept back wings. A man, sometimes referred to as a shaman, reclines on the bird's back with his legs pulled close to his chest and his hands clasping his knees. His head rests on the nape of the raven's neck while a kingfisher holds the man's tongue in his bill. A variation in some rattles shows the head of a kingfisher, a hawk, or another little raven, facing away from the man. When this composition is used, typically a frog is sitting in the man's lap, the two creatures bound together by their interlocking tongues. The underbody of the rattle, or the breast of the raven, is developed into a secondary bird face, commonly a hawk (E.L. Wade and L.L. Wade 1976:32).

Wilson Duff considered the raven rattle as one of the keys to Northwest Coast Indian thought (personal communication M.F. Guédon) and a visual synthesis (the late Wilson Duff might have said "a giant pun") of all its main themes. Most of these themes can be linked to shamanism. The following chart summarizes these themes.

The fact that this rattle is not (except among the Tlingit), part of the shamanic costume, but instead an item of the chief's regalia, clearly demonstrates the strength

of Northwest Coast shamanic elements in the chief's ceremonial role. It also shows the deep involvement of the artist with shamanic themes.

Although we are dealing with a system which is constantly evolving, and especially so with the secret societies which achieved their fullest expansion only at the time of contact with whites, the components of that system have been in place for a very long time and pervade all Northwest Coast Indian cultures. This integration of shamanic themes was achieved partly through the art. Northwest Coast ceremonial art indeed both reflects the involvement of the shamanic ideology in Northwest Coast Ceremonial life and promotes that ideology through visual representations. These representations are still carved, drawn and painted today, as we will see in the next chapter.

Table No. 1

Raven Rattle - Summary of Shamanic Themes

Characters Occurring on Raven Rattles	Characteristics	Action
Raven	Bird Crosses boundaries	Brings light to humans (Sun - supernatural)
Hagwelorn	Sea monster Source of luck and wealth Dangerous (Gould 1973:34)	Can swallow canoe
Saso	Spirit of the sea	Can transform
Shaman	Cures, transforms, crosses boundaries	Pulls hair of witch Sucks power (touching tongue)
Witch	Kills	Sucks power (touching tongue)
Demon	Kills	Sucks power (touching tongue)
Land Otter	Crosses boundaries Favorite shaman's helper (tongue) Transforms	Transmits power (touching tongue)
Frog	Crosses boundaries Associated in getting wealth Shaman's helper (North)	Transmits power (touching tongue)
Kingfisher	Crosses boundaries Fishing ability Associated with getting wealth	Transmits power (touching tongue)

Table No. 1, Continued

Raven Rattle - Summary of Shamanic Themes

Characters Occurring on Raven Rattle	Characteristics	Action
Octopus	Crosses boundaries Favourite shaman's helper (North)	Helps
Mountain Goat	Favored by shaman (hooves, horns, wool)	Helps
Dog/Wolf	Secret societies (initiation)	Teaches

Chapter III - Footnotes

- 1 Although Boas and Duff focus on Northern tribes, Drucker gives evidence of the bear's importance among the Nootka of the South:

"In addition to Wolves, a number of chiefs among the Northern Nootkans 'owned' Grizzly Bears, who appeared with the Wolves and might be used to kidnap the chief's heir. All these Grizzly Bears were known to have been obtained in marriage from Southern Kwakiutl neighbors. They wore costumes of bearskin with snarling masks" (Drucker 1951:394).

- 2 "The wolf mask is generally placed on the top of the head, as a headdress, and is tied up with a jugular under the chin. Some of these masks have a whirling contrivance for scattering eagle down into the air. Cedar bark and eagle feathers usually accompany the wearing of the mask. The face of the dancer is usually blackened with soot (Ernst 1952:27), or he wears black facial paintings. All along the Coast a tiny whistle 'to imitate the voices of the spirits present in the ceremony' (Ernst 1952:87 note 19) is held in the dancer's mouth" (Moogk 1980).

- 3 The chief has to bathe nightly during the waxing of eight moons (November to April). He goes through a dramatization of the whale's behaviour: swimming at slow pace, submerging and coming up making a noise like a whale 'blowing' four times, then swimming a circular course, in the ritual counter clockwise direction. During the entire period he has also to observe a strict continence. His wife has an important ritual part to play once the actual hunt has begun: she is a metaphor of the whale for the time being and has to lie quietly on her bed covered with new mats. If she moves about the whale is supposed to become restless and difficult to approach. The whale is ritually addressed by the title: "Chief's wife" or "Queen" (Drucker 1951:177).

4 Holm (1971:91) seems reticent to accept the interpretation of de Laguna and Emmons, and prefers to see these eyes/faces as "space fillers." He thinks that they are there purely for decorative purposes and that they give multiple visual transformations for the artist to play with: fins, ears, or feet becoming at the same time bird's beak or head of another animal according to the imagination or the whim of the artist.

5 Some examples of the use of the rib-motif are:
 -shaman's statuettes (Barbeau 1975:fig 66-67-13-70 Lommel 1967:21 Pl.5)
 -salmon rattle (Tlingit) on which the ribs are cut away to allow an effigy figure of a shaman to see through (Bancroft 1979:72)
 -amulette in argillite, showing an anthropomorphic figure with apparent ribs, petroglyph-like (Hill 1974: 104, 181).
 -charms (Jonaitis 1978:65)
 various beings, zoomorphic like, show ribs and vertebral column
 -copper
 -soul-catcher (Kwakiutl) (Inverarity 1971 Pl.163)
 -box drum (Tlingit) (Gunther: 1966: 238. Fig. 267).
 The killerwhale painted on the drum shows apparent ribs
 -commemorative statuette (Tlingit)
 representing a man killed by the falling of a tree
 -screen (Tlingit) (Laguna 1972:fig 91)
 thunderbird and two human like creatures.

6 "The old man said, 'they are going to become something else now. Wait until they do so, and you will 'get' whatever it is'. They paddled through the school of Killerwhales and beached the canoe. The Killerwhales howl four times like wolves, and a white Killerwhale in the midst of the school rose upright in the water to sing a spirit song. Then the Killerwhales turned into Wolves and emerged from the water. Saiyatcapis gave a ritual cry. They did not disappear but simply ran off into the woods." (Drucker 1951:158)

From Tales of Supernatural Experiences (tales of encounters with supernatural beings). "Saiyatcapis" was a noble ancestor of the wahinuxtakamlath lineage of the Ehetisat. When he was a young man he had a

series of encounters in which he was given privileges for ritual displays, and others from which he derived good luck and wealth power (Drucker 1951:157).

- 7 "While mastication is an aggressive negation of food, the alimentation gesture (or the myth of alimentary communion) given into concrete form by the act of swallowing, implies not destruction but transformation" (Reid 1981:104).
- 8 "While the real animal world surrounding the Kwagiulth is a world filled with ferocious animals such as wolves, brown bears, grizzlies and killerwhales, why did they choose a bird (in this case the raven) as a prototype of symbolic representations of cannibalism? We can now posit that it is because of the fact that in addition to being carnivorous, the bird regurgitates its food in order to feed its chicks, and has no teeth. Indeed, it seems important to emphasize that swallowing, such as it appears in the myths where the heroes are man-eaters, is only possible because the cannibal monsters are toothless" (Reid, 1981: 104-105).
- 9 For example, I note the two following poles:
 - a) Gaping Mouth.
A huge character is carved at the bottom of the entrance pole. The Bella Coola totem pole gives us a very good visual example (Barbeau 1950 Vol. II: 645) the monster carved at the bottom of the pole seems ready to engulf any person passing through his wide-opened mouth. Barbeau (1950 Vol. II:871) suggests that the house sitting behind the pole could represent the Giant Cannibal. Anyone entering the house through the mouth of the monster would in a way be devoured just as the novice is devoured when he enters the room of the Cannibal.
 - b) Snapping Beak.
The bottom of the pole called "The Thunderbird of Wawkyas" (Kwakiutl) (Barbeau 1950 Vol. II:674) is carved in the shape of an enormous beak which represents the entrance to the house. It could open and close rapidly to admit guests on ceremonial occasions. The snapping beak/door did not accept strangers and only worthy people could attempt to pass the door without being hurt (Boas 1895:360). We find mention of this dangerous threshold in Kwakiutl mythology -- the father-in-law says to his future son-in-law:

"Take care brother, when we enter my house. When we enter my house follow close on my heels....He told his brother the door of his house was dangerous. They walked up to the door together. The door has the shape of a raven. It opened and they jumped in and the Raven snapped at him" (Boas, 1897:383)

- 10 "This pattern of Devouring/Vomiting can be traced in the metaphoric vocabulary used by the Kwakiutl in their songs or in their mythology. The expression 'mouth of a river' has a dual metaphoric meaning of a spirit who swallows men, and of the mouth of a river which swallows salmon (Goldman 1975:10). The sky appears as the Great Mouth of Heaven which takes the sun and swallows it. When the eclipse happens, the sky is asked to disgorge its mouthful with cries of 'Vomit ! Vomit !' (Goldman 1975:201). Property which is given is called 'vomited out' and property received is supposed to be 'swallowed' (Goldman 1975:15).
- 11 "Here is another shaman's cape. They also wear the poncho type but they also wear one just around the shoulders and tie it on. This is one of these. It's interesting to see these rather gruesome figures. This all-devouring creature in the center who is chewing up people. It has teeth of its own but it's obviously consuming people and here is the shaman flying. There is another shaman on the right side who has his neck slit and blood is pouring out of the figure. So perhaps one is benevolent and the other one is malevolent on the other side. On the right side there is another scalloped edge, and it in fact represents huge teeth. So the whole thing represents a big mouth which is devouring the shaman himself" (MacDonald, Lecture U.B.C., 1981).
- 12 "Masks are indeed simulated faces of wood or, exceptionally, of stone or copper, but they are also the faces of power" (Halpin 1981:284).
- 13 "This ceremony usually took place at night in mid-winter, the only season when the trail to the ghost-land was passable. The Indians believed that the seasons, and also the time of the day in the Land of the Dead were exactly opposite to what they were in this world" (Haeberlin 1918:252).

CHAPTER IV -- NORTHWEST COAST SHAMANIC THEMES IN JOE DAVID'S ART

Modern Northwest Coast Indian artists do not have the privilege of direct contact with the rich culture which fed the traditional art in the past, or even with its master artists. Even though Chiletas or Edenshaw for instance are a link between the past and the present, they have never directly taught contemporary painters or carvers. It is up to the artists to go to museums, to dig out old works, to re-learn the various Northwest Coast styles through imitating and experimenting (Ron Hamilton in Blackman 1981:59, Tim Paul in Nu-tka 1978:53) or to participate in or sometimes re-create the ceremonial life of their native community.

Many contemporary Northwest Coast artists¹ say they have returned to the art because of the attraction of its forms. But they also confess that because of the rupture with traditional life, they cannot thoroughly interpret the symbolism of the old works. Yet, some artists² talk about their art as linked to the traditional rituals of their culture and for many, the context in which the art is presented to the audience is an important approach to understanding the art itself. And as the live ceremonials are revived, the artists find both a new

market for their works and a new source of inspiration. This may lead them back to the whole cultural context behind the ceremonials (and thus behind the art). As Bob Dempsey (Tlingit) expresses it so aptly:

To really understand the art, you have to understand the culture, and the history, and you have to understand the people. . . . to really understand the people, you have to understand the stories. . . . you can't separate the art from the people (Dempsey - 1979 Graphic Collection).

Joe David already has in mind the dance he is going to perform when he begins to carve the mask which goes with it. Talking about his Welcome Mask he says:

The masks, the Welcome masks I call them, because they are my family's name for them and each time I carved them I meant for that purpose to fit my face and to go with the dance I would be able to use. In carving masks, all along, I have always tried to see them in the light of the fire, not just look at them from head on and tried to fashion, trying to keep the eyes symmetrical and the lips straight, but I keep turning them even upside down, putting them in the dark areas trying to see a dimmer life in them, trying to see shape rather than three dimensions, rather than the way I was learning through books and slides (David, Lecture U.B.C. II:28) (Emphasis added.)

He comments on a wolf mask that he likes particularly and that he uses in his personal dance:

The idea to carve this mask comes from the Wolf Dance. So when carving it I had in mind what movements I wanted to make and I emphasized the angles...taking the body of the wolf, its life, and turning it into a dance (David, Personal Communication 1982).

Modern Northwest Coast art is therefore not only a product of culture, it is also one of the forces of its continuity and renewal. This connection between the Indian artist and the traditional culture may take many forms. It is my hypothesis that modern Northwest Coast Indian art is so pervaded by the same shamanic themes which define traditional art that the work of a number of artists has been influenced and shaped by these themes. One of these artists is Joe David for whom shamanism has become an explicit source of images. As we will see, recognition of this brought him not only to a different vision of his art, but eventually to a new definition of his life.

Joe David has become a prominent artist, both among his own community and among white collectors. His interests are widespread and he is openly fascinated by all tribal styles of the Northwest Coast, especially the West Coast where he was born, a Nootka. One trait characterizing his works is versatility of expression. His two-dimensional works range from watercolours, to banners, dance-screens, blankets and silkscreens. His three-dimensional art ranges from totem poles to headdresses, masks, frontlets, rattles and drums. He has not yet done much jewelry, except for a few items in copper, ivory and bone that he has made for close friends.

More and more he seems to have concentrated on objects which are used ceremonially rather than on objects of a solely esthetic nature.

Unlike some other artists of the Coast, Joe David has never suffered a complete rupture from his cultural roots. His childhood was spent in the village of Opitsaht, on Meares Island in Tofino Inlet. Traditional skills and knowledge were emphasized by his family, especially by his Nitinat father, the late Hyacinth David, who was an accomplished speaker, dancer and singer, and by his Clayoquot mother. Joe David took a real interest in the family traditions:

As a kid, going to potlatches and whatnot, I remember seeing old things that were used in dances and I kind of remember, as a kid it was real to me, it was not theatrics in any way. I'd go there, they'd dance and sing their songs, and I believed exactly what I'd seen, so I paid attention and it stuck with me. That way I learned something rather than just having been amused or entertained (David in Blackman 1978:12).

Early in his career Joe David concentrated on the technical aspect of his work, exploring many different styles. In 1971, he met Duane Pasco, a noted Seattle carver, and Bill Holm, a professor of Northwest Coast Indian art at the University of Washington. Both men helped him to become an artist and encouraged this technical experiments. This training strengthened Joe

David's determination to work within his own cultural tradition, and he eventually recognized the spiritual aspect of his art, as we can see from his introduction to the Graphic Collection Catalogue in 1978:

It is each artist's task to interpret these supernatural and natural laws, to train himself and strive for perfection in these interpretations. I for one recognize this fate. I respect this decision of high order. I strive for the perception of higher consciousness. I bathe in sacred waters, I sing sacred songs and I recite words. The answers and results are reflected in my paintings and carvings; my actions reflect my convictions (David, Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild, 1978).

By the time this catalogue appeared, Joe David had helped to create the Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild, and his contribution was both artistic and philosophical.

Throughout Joe David's work are many examples of iconographic motifs which seem obviously related to shamanic cosmology. For an outsider to perceive that connection does not, of course, prove that the motifs and the shamanic ideas are connected in the artist's mind. But from his own words we shall see that it is so. In the treatment which follows, emphasis has been placed not just on the images but also on the artist's statements, which are quoted extensively because we are dealing with a cultural context unfamiliar to most of us. Joe David's previously unpublished commentary makes that context more accessible.

1 - Reference to the Non-human World

In keeping with traditional Northwest Coast art, the non-human world is an ever-present theme in Joe David's art. His main characters are animals from real life, like the whale or the crow, and mythical beings like the thunderbird or the supernatural rat.

a) Animals.

Of the twenty two kinds of animals portrayed so far by the artist, the most frequent are the thunderbird (14 times), the whale (14 times), the wolf (10 times), the snake (8 times) and the raven (5 times) (all except the whale both in masks and prints).³ There is no bear in Joe David's work except for a cub that he carved on the Haida pole conceived by Bill Reid in Skidegate in 1976.⁴ We have mentioned previously that the bear is an animal found mostly in the Northern cultures. Its counterpart for the Southern area seems to be the wolf.

The four animals which Joe David favours all play a predominant role in Nootka mythology, as well as in the Northwest Coast shamanic realm in general. These are the wolf, the thunderbird, the lightning snake and the whale. They are often associated with each other, and form a sort of quadrilogy in Nootka cosmology as well as visual art. Indeed, all four animals are part of the same mythical cycle and ritual system.

These four animals appear either alone or in groups of two, three or four. In Joe David's two dimensional works they are generally paired as wolf/whale, thunderbird/whale, thunderbird/lightning snake. When the four of them appear together, as in the screen created for a Memorial Potlatch (1977), the thunderbird is flanked by his assistants the lightning snakes, and holds the whale in his talons, while the wolf appears in the whale's belly. In three-dimensional art, such as masks or poles, the animal is usually portrayed alone. Table 2 shows the frequency of usage of each animal of the Nootkan quadrilogy. Table 3 gives the list of animals.

According to Joe David, one of his favorite animals is the wolf which is particularly close to him. His Indian name "Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth" means "Supernatural White Wolf transforming into Killer-whale." His signature on certain prints and invitations is composed of a wolf's head whose tongue holds a star in its rolled tip (see reproduction page 137).

Table 2 - Frequency of Use of the Nootkan Quadrilogy

<u>Thunderbird</u>		<u>Lightning Snake</u>	
Alone	In group	Alone	in group
1973 mask	1971 silkscreen	1975 silkscreen	1971 water colour
1974 blanket	1971 water colour	1975 brush-holder	1974 blanket
1975 dancer	1977 dance screen	1979 silkscreen	1975 silkscreen
1977 headdress	1978 silkscreen	1980 mask	1977 dance screen
1977 rattle	1978 silkscreen		1980 mask
1977 frontlet			
1977 cape			
1978 banner			
1979 drum			
<u>Wolf</u>		<u>Whale (or Killer Whale)</u>	
Alone	In group	Alone	in group
1973 mask	1971 water colour	1977 cape	1971 silkscreen
1973 mask	1973 hat	1978 banner	1973 hat
1975 silkscreen	1977 pole	1979 initiation card	1975 silkscreen
1977 mask	1977 silkscreen		1977 dance screen
1979 mask	1977 dance screen		1977 silkscreen
1980 mask	1979 pendant		1978 silkscreen
1981 mask	1981 silkscreen		1978 silkscreen
			1979 pendant
			1980 drum
			1981 silkscreen

Table 3
List of Animals

Single Beings

1971	Halibut	Cedar Panel	Static
1972	Grouse	Rattle	Static
1972	Bird	Box	Static
1974	Kingfisher	Print	Animated: •Catching Fish
1975	Thunderbird Dancer	Print	Animated: •Transforming •Dancing
1975	Whale (Welcome Dance)	Print	Animated: •Transforming •Dancing
1975	Serpent (Dancer)	Print	Animated: •Transforming •Dancing
1975	Wolf (Dancer)	Print	Animated: •Transforming •Dancing
1977	Crow	Rattle	Animated: •Flying
1977	Loon	Rattle	Animated: •Flying
1977	Thunderbird	Rattle	Animated: •Flying
1977	Crow	Drum	Animated: •Singing
1977	Raven/Rainbow	Drum	Animated: •Flying
1977	Supernatural Rat	Print	Static
1977	Ling Cod	Print	Animated: •Transforming
1978	Otter	Banner	Animated: •Swimming
1978	Crow (ka-In)	Print	Animated: •Flying

1978	Crane	Postcard	Animated: •Flying
1979	Hawk	Print	Animated: •Transforming
1979	Thunderbird	Drum	Animated: •Shamanizing
1979	Thunderbird	Print	Animated: •Shamanizing
1979	Whale	Postcard	Animated: •Swimming (Cosmic Journey)
1980	Whale	Drum	Animated: •Spraying •Swimming
1980	Lightning Serpent	Mask	Animated: •Dancing

Groups

1971	Whale/Thunderbird	Print	Static
1971	Thunderbird/L.S./Wolf	Watercolour	Static
1973	Killerwhale/Wolf	Watercolour	Animated: •Transforming
1974	Sea Wolf/Hamatsa	Pole	Animated: •Transforming
1974	Sea Wolf/Hamatsa	Drum	Animated: •Transforming
1977	Thunderbird/Whale Lightning Serpent/ Wolf	Screen	Animated •Moving
1977	Killerwhale/Wolf (Ka-Ka-Winn-Chealth)	Print	Animated: •Transforming
1977	Killerwhale/Wolf	Print	Animated: •Transforming
1978	Thunderbird/Whale (Spindle Whirl)	Print	Animated: •Whirling
1978	Thunderbird/Whale	Print	Static
1980	Whale/Chief Harpooner	Print	Animated: •Hunting

111.

1980	Swan/Moon (Moon Dance)	Print	Animated: •Swimming
1981	Killerwhale/Wolf (Ka-Ka-Winn-Chealth II)	Print	Animated: •Transforming

The animals depicted by Joe David are not simple representations of animal species. For instance, the rat depicted in the silkscreen (Fig. 1) reproduced below, is not a common one but a supernatural rat gifted by definition with supernatural power.



Figure 1
Supernatural Rat "Eats Qwin" (Silkscreen, 1977)

Joe David describes Eats Qwin in the following terms:

This is a humanoid rat...supernatural rat. The black on the top represents the rat ear and here again with three dimensions, like the

heaven. The front one is smaller than the second one. Some dimensions there...no body, just arms, liquid ribbonlike arms, no tail. The black represents its home, whatever it may be...the earth, and it represents also its supernatural cape, its world, its home, its supernatural powers. That's what he has been gifted with. And above, it represents its supernatural songs and its lineage (David, U.B.C. Lecture I, 1977:26).

Let us note that the artist has also established a personal relationship with this character:

The mouse illustrated here in merman form has in each palm a grain of rice. Wrapped around him is his house. The earth, which he can transform into a ceremonial cape above his head, is the sky and universe. I bring to him rice and grain and fruits for which, in exchange, he allows me to roam the beaches and forests of his little island world (David, Northwest Coast Guild, 1977).

Similarly, the ling cod is a character which may first appear as a simple fish. But a careful examination of the pictorial treatment reveals more complexity. The ling cod has been illustrated three times: once in the Invitation card sent for Hyacinth David's Memorial Potlatch (Figure 2) (1977), once in a silkscreen (Figure 3) (1977) and once in a frontlet (Figure 4) (1976). In all cases the transformation theme is illustrated.



Figure 2
Ling Cod "Hanu Qwatchu" (Invitation Card, 1977)



Figure 3
Ling Cod "Hanu Qwatchu" (Silkscreen, 1977)

In the Invitation card (Figure 1) the ling cod shows a fish body but a human face. In the print (shown below as Figure 2) and according to his mythical origin, Hanu-Qwatchu is no longer completely human but has been caught in the process of transformation into a ling cod. His face still appears human: eyes, nose, lips, ears. The right hand is also human. But his left arm has already transformed into a fish fin, and his bow legs already look like the flukes of the ling cod's tail. A being with two round eyes and a large toothless mouth is nestled on the chest of the ling cod man. According to the artist it represents a black fish, and his long-fingered hand indicates that he is dancing (Joe David personal communication). In the frontlet (Figure 4), the face of the ling cod is not clearly defined; human features, eyes, nose, mouth, cheek bones just appear in the wood. But the carving is precise enough to let us guess that the being portrayed has been caught by the artist in the transformation process: the eyebrows and the eyes are still very human while the nose and the mouth have already acquired a fish-like quality. This is confirmed by the artist's following statement:

This was made in 1976 and given to Bill Holm in 1977, at the potlatch. It's Tsimshian. It represents the human face of the ling cod transformation. So his face is human and his body is ling cod (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:14).



Figure 4
Ling Cod "Hanu Qwatchu" (Frontlet, 1976)

Sometimes, the meaning of the work is highly personal as in the case of the drum labelled "Hawk" (Figure 5). From Joe David's comments, we glimpse the vision which gave birth to the image:



Figure 5
Hawk (Drum, 1979)

The first time I really came to terms with the word "Hawk" and wind and things, it was through black friends of mine, who were in the same programme as I in the commercial art training... people from Chicago. They call Chicago the city of "the Hawk and the Wind" and it was one of those influences with which I became interested in the Hawk...just to say it...the Hawk and the Wind...when I say the "Hawk"...I think of real piercing beak, when you say the "Hawk", you

can have some grandeur...but you can easily turn with that beak and it would slice you with its claws and...pointed beak, like a hawk...unpredictable. When I created this design, it was for a drum...it was in a period of my life when things were really calm and then started to change in my personal life. I am true to my creations and this hawk illustrates that. It's actually a portrait of X...It's a portrait of what the wind brought to me ... I was making a drum and was wondering what I was going to put on this drum and while I was doing this, all of a sudden, I hear this scream above me and I look up and it's actually the whole chart of black and white which is going to transform for me in front of my eyes. I look up again and it is against the real bright light and from the sound I think it's a hawk... I am finally ready to come to terms with that drum and my life and this spirit, and I felt so great. And I am painting down there, and all of a sudden, here comes that same scream. I am on the beach, it came over and I look up and it is not a hawk, it is an osprey. It has always been an osprey, This design is an osprey. It's a well known bird, very eagle-like. It's black and white. It's almost like an eagle but it's kind of mixed. It almost looks like it is transforming because of the mixture of black and white. The osprey looks like X..., uptilt (David, Interview Katz III 1982:33-36).

All these beings are creatures the artist has personally met, in visions or in "real" life. They are associated in one way or another with his ceremonial or private life. They are rarely fully animal but usually partly human. Joe David considers them as teachers or transformers and always gifted with supernatural power as indicated by the very mention of a dual nature participating of both the human and the animal.

b) Mythical characters -

The Wild Men, a favourite subject of Joe David, represent creatures living in a liminal area, either at the edge of the forest or close to the ocean. They are said to be gifted with supernatural power which they transfer to the humans who are strong enough to meet them. The Wild Man is more than a mythical being for Joe David who speaks of him in the following terms:

I have always somehow identified with him in the sense that he was supposed to live in the woods and that he was very shy. Where I come from, he had no spoken language and there was no song for him; and all my childhood I very seldom spoke. . . . Even people who know me sometimes, all of a sudden they have been able to cut away all my education and see me as a Wild Man when I am coming out of the forest to the beach. I really closely identify with him, much more than with anything else; that's why I do a lot of them (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:5).

For this personal reason Joe David does not carve masks of the Wild Men or the Fool Dancer for art exhibits, but primarily for use in ceremonials or potlatches. Joe David favours especially the Fool Dancer's mask that he often wears at artistic festivities. The Wild Men's masks (together with his Wolf masks) were worn at the Klukwalle (Wolf Initiation Ritual) set up by Art Thompson in Neah Bay where his children and Ron Hamilton were initiated. Joe David differentiates between Bukwus whom he identifies as the Kwakiutl Wild

Man, and Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha (or Almeqo), the West Coast Wild Man. Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha is often identifiable by his tubular mouth which recalls that of Tsonoqua -- with whom he is often associated. Joe David has also illustrated another Wild Man (Puqmis) who is more associated with the Ocean and the Forest; another creature, close to the Wild Men, is Nulmal, or the Fool Dancer. We shall study these four characters as depicted by the artist in the following pages.

i. Bukwus -

Bukwus is a forest spirit. He appears in the Klukwalle masquerade, but only as a minor character. Traditionally, he appears in the Kwakiutl dlu^whulaxa and other minor ceremonials.

He is a very shy being, without significant powers, who is believed to belong to a non-human race rather than being a transformed man (Penney 1981:102). Bukwus is often named the "cockle hunter" because he is fond of digging for sea shells on the beach. When a dancer imitates Bukwus he illustrates this characteristic by digging in the dance floor with large wooden claws (Olson 1954:248 in Penney 1981:102).

Joe David has carved six Bukwus masks, each strikingly different. Joe remarks that "Bukwus might have different

faces. He can have different colours. He'll go from real wild to real pleasant thing. He transforms" (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:5). This first mask, for instance, bears a peaceful or neutral expression (see Figure 6, below):

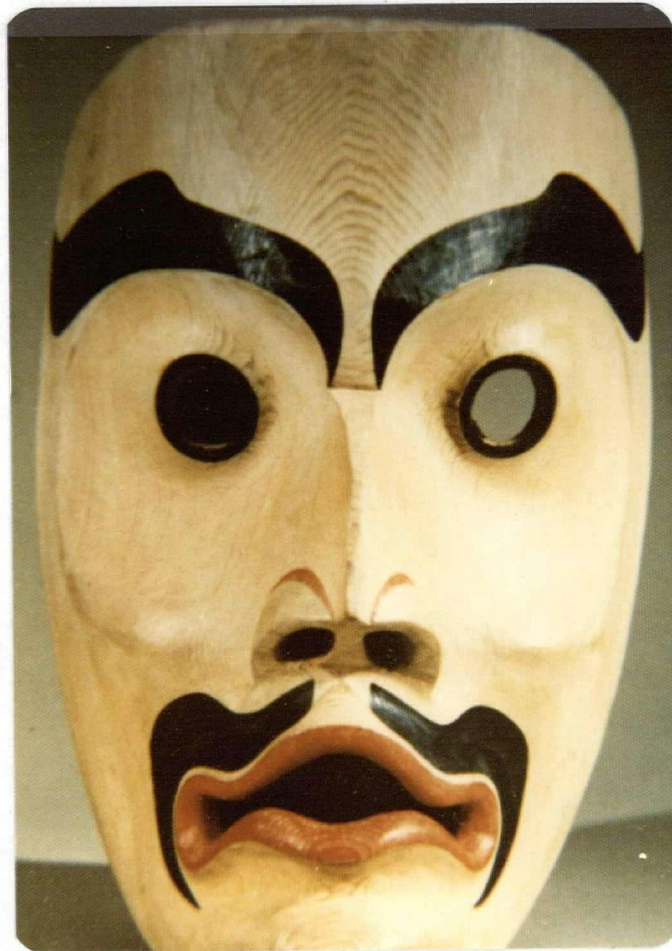


Figure 6
"Bukwus" (Mask, 1975)

The next mask (1975) (see Figure 7, following), is, on the contrary, rather fierce. Again Joe David mentions a personal relationship, this time between the character

represented and the owner of the piece:

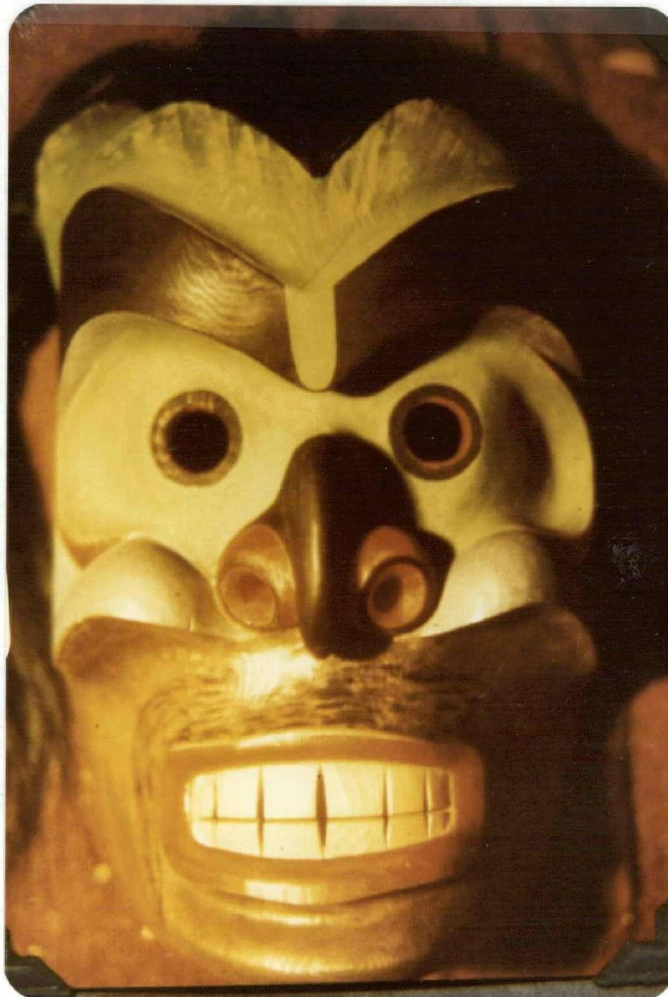


Figure 7

"Bukwus" (Mask, 1975)

Real skeletal...I made it especially for a person who ordered it. He was so identified with this creature that on a camping trip, somewhere on the Coast, in the woods things were moving around; he just thought he was approached by this thing because he so believed in him, felt him...and he wanted me to make a Bukwus for him; so I made this one and he of course accepted it and identified with it (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:8-9).

This mask (Figure 8) is a play on Makah (Ozette) and Kwakiutl styles and traditions:

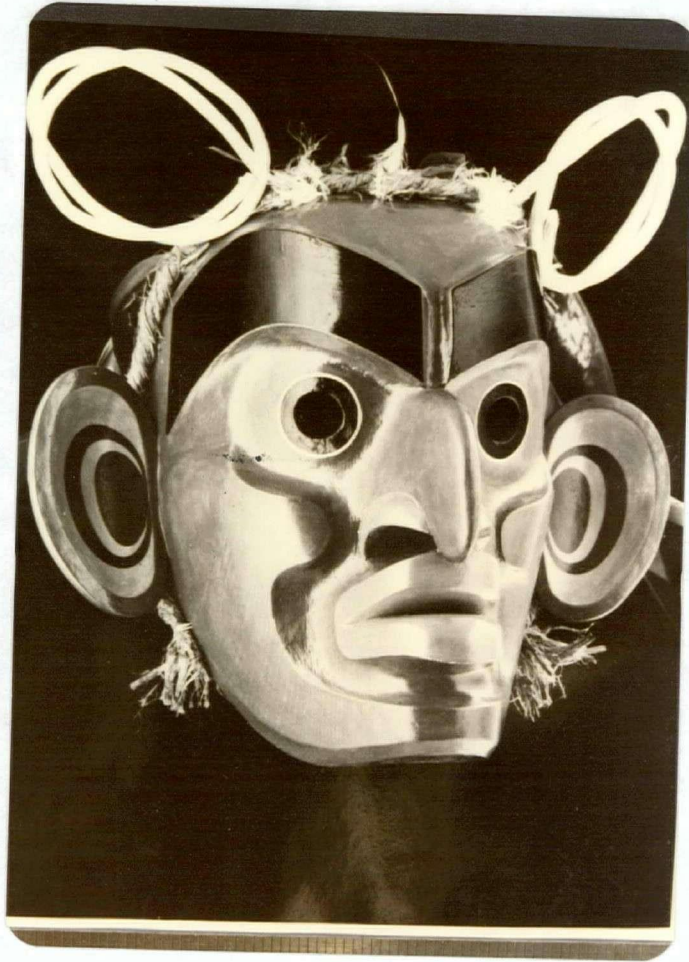


Figure 8
"Bukwus" (Mask, 1975)

The things above his head are his radars, his sensors...to find his food. When he is looking for cockles on the beach he runs his hand over the surface to feel if it's o.k..."not so much is it there?" because he can tell by the hole or by other thing if it is there...and he is really shy. He will never come around when people can see him...so he is very careful to feel out if things are o.k. for him to come. It's to demonstrate its sensitivity...because he is real shy and sensitive person. He is Kwakiutl (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:3,4).

I carved this...shaped it out in Neah Bay after seeing an "owl" club that came out from Ozette, hundred and hundred years old. The massive brows really impressed me and I incorporated it into The Wild Man of the Woods. The nose is to me structured in a very Seaweed style, the mouth also (David, Lecture II, 1978:29).

ii. Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha (or Almequo) (The West Coast Wild Man of the Woods).

Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha (or Almequo) is called also the Cedar Bark Ogre or the White Forest Spirit -- haiyahlin (white is always used in his facial paintings) (Penney 1981:97).

He is thought to be Tsonoqua's husband (Ernst 1952:74). Although he is not permitted inside the dance house he is a very important character in the Klukwalle ceremonial and can be seen dancing frantically during the several days of the Klukwalle, destroying property (Penney 1981:98, Ernst 1952:16 Sapir & Swadesh 1955:103). Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha is loaded with power. His encounters with men are dreaded, although these experiences result in a transfer of spirit power (Penney 1981:97):

To look at Almeqho (Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha) square in the face meant death: the masks reflect the need to look at him from the side. The frontal view is dangerous because powerful medicine runs from either side of the nose (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:103). The cheek crescents running from the nose might very well represent this medicine (Penney 1981:98).

Joe David illustrates the power of Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha in a number of ways. Some of these masks show crescents on the side of the cheeks -- as mentioned by Penney (see Figure 9, 1974 - mask) -- others show deep furrows running along the jaw and into the cheek (1972, Figure 10). The profile is always very accentuated with large nostrils, hooked nose and a protruding cylindrical mouth (Figure 11, 1973). This mouth symbolizes Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha's characteristic two-tone cry (Ernst 1952:17).

Eight of these masks have been carved by the artist.



Figure 9
"Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha" (Mask, 1974)



Figure 10
"Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha" (Mask, 1972)



Figure 11
"Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha" (Mask 1973)

iii - Pukmis -

Puqmis, called by Ernst "The Ghostly Other Wild Man" (1952:21) appears frequently with Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha during the Klukwalle performances. According to Penney (1981:97) Puqmis has no spirit power and is "less supernatural being and more ghost." He is a human being who can partially enter the supernatural world by way of the forest. Like Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha, Pukmis also lives in the forest but is seen more along the shore because of his association with the ocean (Ernst 1952:70).

Puqmis is not always represented by a face mask (Ernst 1952:78, Sapir & Swadesh 1955:252); the dancer may instead rub his body and face with flour and wear long icicle-like finger nails. According to Joe David the Wild Man of the Sea combines the idea of death with the idea of the ocean (personal communication). The artist carved only one mask of this kind, which he traded for a Tsimshian mask with Duane Pasco. The artist mentions: "It's one of the strongest masks I ever made, it comes from another dimension" (David, Interview Katz III, March 1981:15). (See Figure 12, following).



Figure 12
"Pukmis" (Mask, 1971)

This mask reminds the artist of one of his father's stories which he tells as follows:

There is the Wild Man of the Sea. He is all white and he represents the spirits of people drown or lost at sea. Pukmis, they call him. My father, as a child remembered these creatures, the real ones...they were two brothers who were up fishing in a canoe, who because of a storm fell from the canoe and got lost. And everybody thought the canoe had been crushed and that the brothers had drown at sea. But ultimately they made their way to the sea shore and wound

up behind the village. At night they were coming around the houses looking for food. One night one of the brothers was caught, ceremonially tamed and brought back into the society. The other one, I don't know what happened (David, Lecture I, 1977:8).

iv - The Fool Dancer -

Nuhlmal, or Fool Dancers, are forest-spirits -- like Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha and Bukwus. According to Boas (1897:468 in Penney 1981:98) they are said to dwell on an island floating in a lake far in the interior.

Deep, incised cheek markings running from each side of a big nose are characteristic of the Nuhlmal mask. As in the case of Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha, Penney assumes that "these represent the mucus that runs habitually from the Nuhlmal's nose. Mucus is the substance of the Nuhlmal's power; he throws it at those he wishes to inspire" (Boas 1966:183 in Penney 1981:99).

The Nuhlmal -- Kwakiutl character, -- appear in the dances of the Hamatsa society together with the bird-monsters. They are considered as messengers for the Hamatsa but also as buffoons and controllers of the audience, making sure that everybody is behaving properly. They are notorious for their boisterous manners and repulsive appearance (A. Hawthorn 1967:116). Like Ulth-Ma-Choo-Wha Nulmahl shows an aggressive and violent temper. Any mention of his nose, mucus or smell may trigger a destructive outrage.

In Joe David's Nuhlmal (Figure 13, mask) the nose practically become a muzzle giving the creature a kind of feline appearance.



Figure 13
"Nuhlmal" (Mask, 1973)

This is the Fool Dancer, the person they call it Nuhlmal and I carved this mask to use at a performance Bill Holm was giving in Seattle, at a Haida workshop that he has built at his home and although it's a Kwakiutl character there are some very West Coast feelings about

this particular mask. I used rubber cement to represent the mucus which is what you see on the nose area, and I also, in the performance fashioned a hook from wire and I had a fresh oyster hanging from one of the nostrils..and at the end of the performance I rushed to Steve Brown and threw it down his throat...a lot of people were amazed...It gave this man all the more life. I portray him as a kind of dirty old man. I don't know what that says about me but...I used this mask at Bill Holm's as a comic relief after the Hamatsa ritual had been performed, and a few of the Supernatural transforming beings had come through the big house...and suddenly in walks this little, sloppy, crazy guy! and people kind of laugh and relax and kind of saw all that for the performing arts as it was rather than expecting to think at all the things as a really happening potlatch (David, Lecture II, 1978: 30-32).

c - Celestial Bodies -

For Joe David the sun and the moon are personalized, as they are in West Coast mythology. The sun is illustrated four times (frontlet, mask, rattle, print); the moon five times (frontlet, mask, print). The two following pieces are frontlets (Figures 14 & 15). They are good examples of the artist's treatment of the theme, but do not allow us to reach the personal meaning which may be hidden in them.



Figure 14
Sun (Frontlet, 1975)

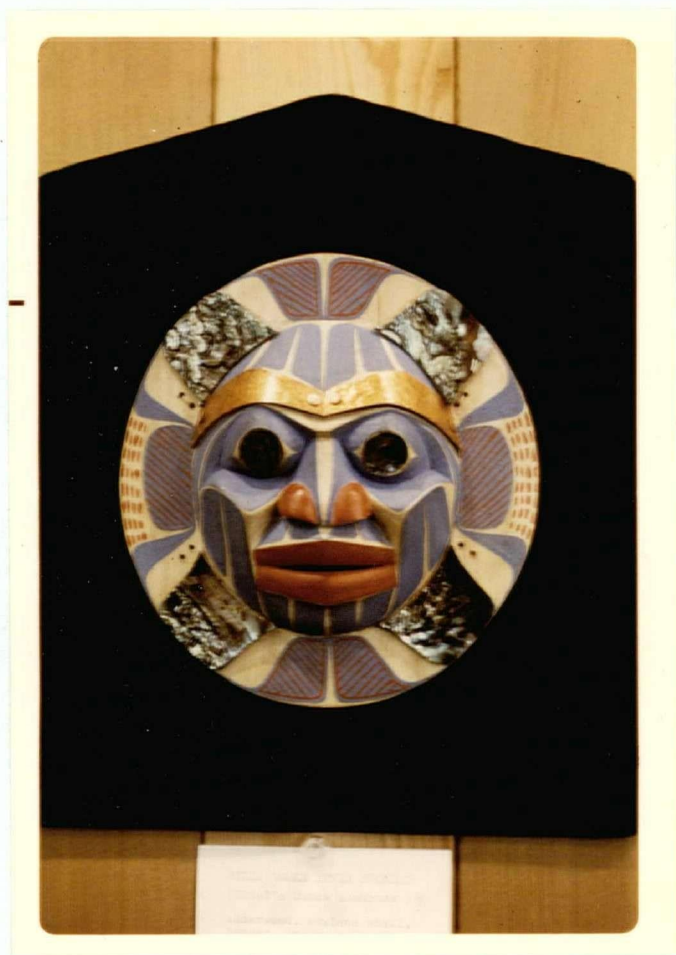


Figure 15
Moon (Frontlet, 1973)

Discussing this third celestial piece -- a mask --

(Fig. 16) Joe David revealed part of his personal symbology:



Figure 16
Moon (Mask, 1979)

To me, the moon is femininity and guidance. I owe a lot to the moon. I am a male, and I identify closely with the sun. That's what happens in many cultures: the man is the sun and the mother is the moon. So this mask represents my feeling towards women. My feeling towards women who loved me and women that gave birth, not just inspiration to me but gave birth to children, to the new me. The moon has taught me incredible things. The Moon mask, it's also in commemoration to my village: Opitsah...my father told me the name means: "where the moon is rising" (David, Interview IV, Katz 1981:30).

The star is used by many Nootka artists and is part of the West Coast artistic vocabulary. Joe David employs it in two dimensional works. The star is part of his family crests. He draws or paints it either in a very realistic or an abstract way but does not personalize it. It appears in the signature when he signs his pieces with a wolf's head: a star is nestled in the rolled tip of the tongue; another one is lodged in a curl of the hairs flowing back from the wolf's head (see below).

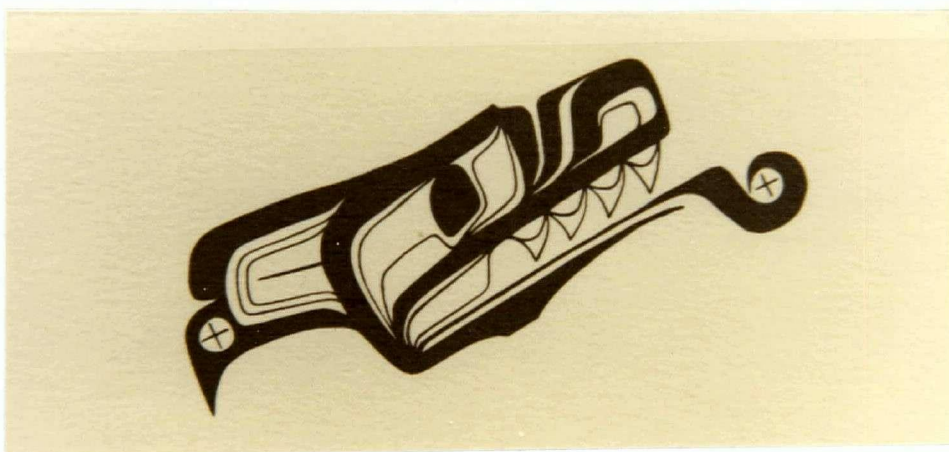


Figure 17
Wolf (Joe David's Signature, 1975)

Joe David also favours the rainbow motif and gives it a very positive meaning. For him, it signifies light, and we will see it in a number of prints which we will discuss in connection with the theme of ecstasy. He began using it in 1977, on one of his favourite prints,

"Rainbow Raven" which was made for a Memorial Potlatch. The same design is found on a drum. Recently, Joe David has used the rainbow again in a print called "Medicine Drum." In this print the whole spectrum of colours has been reduced to just two: green and blue. This motif is also present in three dimensional form on the headdress of a Secret Society's mask presented in the recent Chicago exhibition (April 1982) (See Figure 32, page 156).

d - Human Beings -

The representation of human beings is rare in Joe David's works and they are always involved in some animal transformation process. The only fully human being represented in two dimensional designs is the Hamatsa initiate on the Initiation drum. The other representations, which may at first glance look like human beings, are identified by Joe David as representation of an animal as a person (Ling Cod), or as a Supernatural Being (Rat), or as fillers (Kingfisher, Whale's tail).

Human representation appears more frequently in the three dimensional works, in pieces portraying either human beings involved in ritual activities, sometimes explicitly shamanic, such as the mask of the Young Boy (See Figure 18) in the process of being initiated and of his father (See Figure 19), or the human side

of supernatural or mythical beings (Raven Spirit Bringing Light to the Hamatsa, and Pukmis).



Figure 18
Young Boy Initiate (Mask, 1979)



Figure 19
Father (Mask, 1979)

The Welcome masks form a distinct category of human representation often identified by Joe David as the representation of ancestors. Finally a series of masks, mostly carved in Tsimshian style, are labelled "portrait masks". But these "portraits" do not depict actual

beings. "Portrait mask" is a term originally coined by whites to label series of Tsimshian masks which represent naxnok that is supernatural beings or powers, rather than human individuals (Halpin 1974). The following portrait mask, for instance, represents the Flying Frog Crest, shown below in Figure 20.



Figure 20
Flying Frog Crest (Mask, 1979)

I would like to stress again that all the characters
(animal, mythical beings, human beings and celestial bodies)

depicted by Joe David belong to the traditional Northwest Coast Indian ritual world.

2 - Mystical ecstasy

Aided by the artist's comments, we can detect the ecstasy theme in several of his works. Such images as the rainbow, and light in general, as well as the figure of the raven are directly connected with actual experiences of an ecstatic nature which gave the artist his inspiration for the designs. Such connection is not obvious for the viewer who does not have access to the artist's private world, but appears consistently in a number of designs.

The series of rainbow designs spring from a vision which brings together the ideas of light, flight and journey to the sky. The rainbow is therefore a summary of many shamanic themes but for Joe David, it is first of all an important personal symbol which is also one of the crests of his family.⁷

In Skidegate I heard my father had passed away.
I went off the woods to sing and pay tribute.
I left to attend to the funeral. On my way I
saw two rainbows on Sprout Lake and a raven
flying from nowhere...solitary action...power...
I made a drum out of that vision (David, personal
communication, August 1979).

The rainbow is related to the sky and other celestial bodies, and the mythical figure of Raven is often associated by the artist with the rainbow, but is there

reinterpreted in a personal fashion. Instead of being emphasized as the demiurge or the clumsy re-arranger of the world, Raven is presented by Joe David in his traditionally important but often forgotten role of original shaman. For Joe David, Raven is the bringer of light. The artist has used the rainbow and the raven motif several times. The three following pieces directly illustrate Joe David's vision and the progression of his interpretation.

The first piece is a drum (Figure 21) made for a Memorial Potlatch. Here a raven is depicted in the process of flying, stretching his wings and displaying all his feathers. The sky above him is completely invaded by the double rainbow with its vivid colours.⁶

The second piece is a silkscreen (Figure 22). The design shows some variations from the drum, as here the raven has lost his human qualities. The feather motif encompasses the whole body. The character has transformed into his bird state.



Figure 21
Raven-Rainbow (Drum, 1971)



Figure 22
Raven-Rainbow (Silkscreen, 1977)

This rainbow was a real glorified mass, in the religious sense of awakening into another realm . . . like my father had passed away and he was never going to be there for me again physically. It's going to be through a big spiritual realm that I would communicate with him now (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:37).

The connection between rainbow and bird is also explicitly shown in the print reproduced below (Figure 23) labelled "Medicine Drum Design". The rainbow is thinner than in the previous works.



Figure 23
Medicine Drum Design (Silkscreen, 1979)

I am overwhelmed with that knowledge (inherited from his father) but now I am confident with it and I am anchoring my physical sense, my physical being and knowledge into the realm of plant medicines which is blue and green...I am confident with the knowledge but I am still praying though...still communicating with this other realm, the moon. In this print the main character is a bird and the only way it could relate to the moon and see anything in it would be

its own being. If a man were looking at the moon he would see a man. Around it's a rainbow, its blue and green--which is related to plant life. I did not want to illustrate it as strongly as in the Rainbow/Raven print which had five colours, but I wanted to illustrate it in the medical sense rather than just a visual emotional sense with all the colours of the spectrum. So, it's a much thinner...it's a much thinner... it's a much more confident rainbow than the other one (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:38). (Emphasis added).

Raven is also twice illustrated in pieces based on the theme of Raven Stealing Light.



Figure 24
"Raven Stealing Light" (Frontlet, 1976)

It was made in 1976, and was traded to Steve Brown for a silver bracelet. Tsimshian. This one is the human face of a Raven child. This is the Raven stealing the light. So it's the sun, moon and Raven at the same time (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:14).

The above round piece (Figure 24) is a frontlet representing Raven child stealing light to give to humans. In this illustration of the myth the artist has chosen to stress the heavenly body Sun/Moon rather than the hero of the action, Raven. This explains the full round face encompassing nearly the whole surface of the frontlet. Raven child is perched on the top of the Sun/Moon face which he is holding in his open wings.

The theme of Raven Stealing Light is illustrated a second time in one of Joe David's most striking masks, (Figure 25).

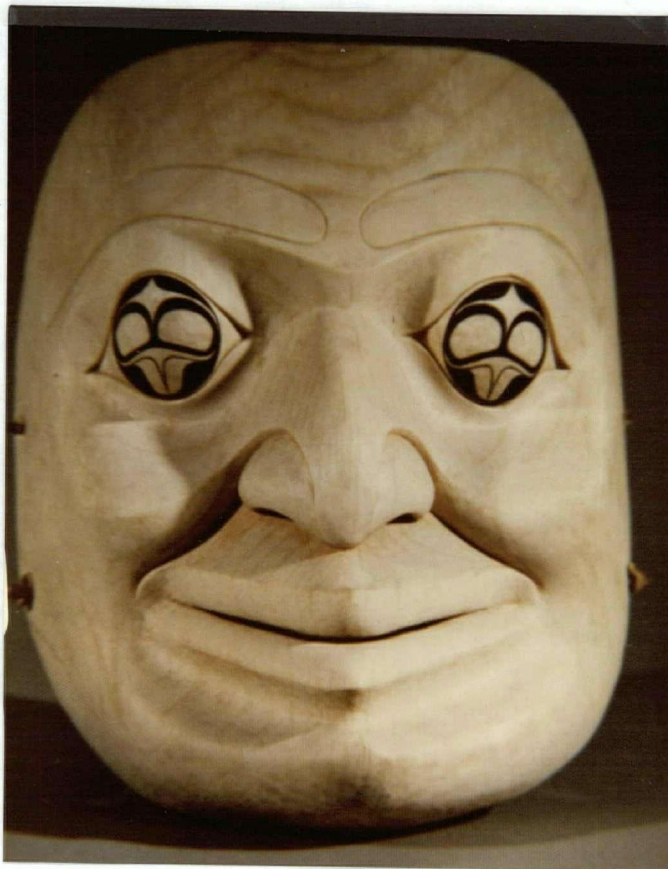


Figure 25
"Raven Stealing Light" (Mask, 1976)

The mask illustrates the moment raven gets the box, opens the lid and sees the light. He looks at it, it could be like eternity or a fraction of second. The black in the eyes represents the raven as a human child looking the first time into the box... and the smile is the feeling for the light he brings to the world... the Moon, the Sun... and then it's a reflection in his eyes of the supernatural light. One day I will carve the counterpart of this face... Raven with the mouth opened and a smiling moon in his eyes (David, Interview Katz, 1979:52).

This mask of the Hamatsa going through a trance (Figure 26) is Joe David's first representation of an initiate:

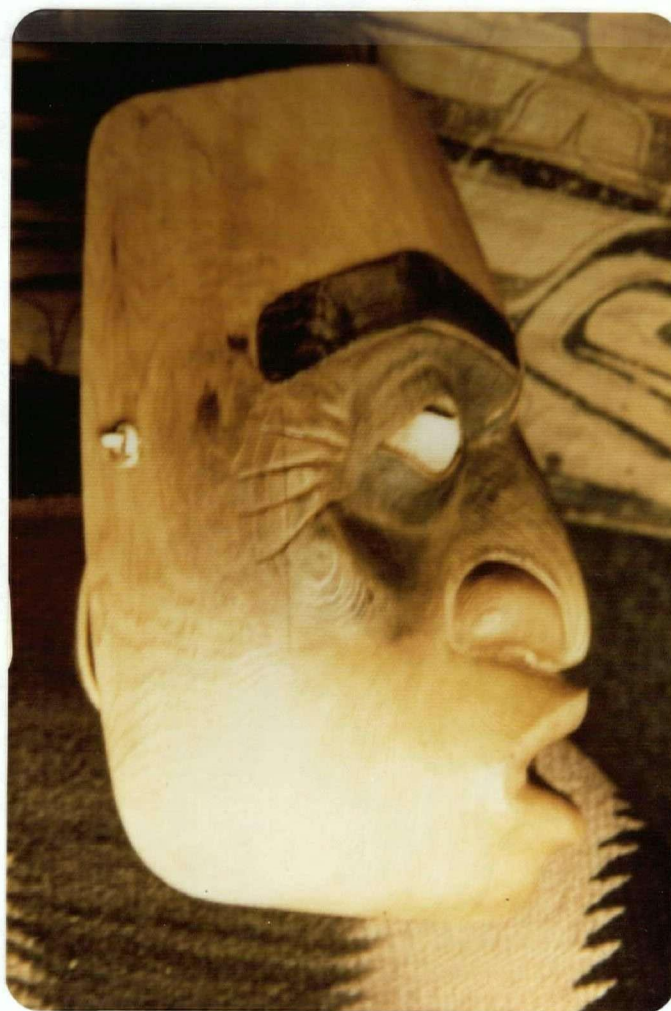


Figure 26.

Hamatsa (Mask, 1973)

The half-open mouth and the upturned eyes of the character indicate that the initiate is in a deep trance

state. The mask is stark, unpainted, with the exception of a large black band encompassing the eyesocket area and the upperpart of the nose. According to Ernst (1952:67-68) the initiates used to paint their faces black to signify they had received a supernatural gift. Black was also used by warriors before starting an attack: "They blackened their faces and put on their medicines for being unbeatable warriors" (Sapir & Swadesh 1939: 165 and 453).

3. Initiation

In Joe David's works, the theme of death does not appear very often; when it does, it is as an element of the closely related theme of initiation. Neither is the theme of initiation visually obvious; yet it is very much present as the title of a number of pieces or the explanation given by the artist.

In 1974, Joe David personally experienced the old initiation rituals through a series of dreams. This experience is directly represented on a pole, the "Spokane Pole" (Figure 27) which Joe David describes as follows:

It represents the Sea-Wolf surfacing, coming out of water and the Hamatsa dancer coming out of the mouth; the face in the bottom part is just a face representing the human part of the Sea-Wolf which is me. During summer 1974, I took Frank Charlie with me and it took us about five weeks to carve the pole. It represents a succession of dreams that I had this preceding winter. We carved this in July... In January I had a few dreams that I was being initiated in the Hamatsa Society and it took place out in the Sound. I was under water in Kealth Bay, and I could see this huge canoe above my head and I knew they were searching for me when I saw them getting near... I swooped off and come out of water. Coming out of water a seaweed was hanging...

and dancing on top of water and the Canoe People would come after me when I'll go down and this went on for who knows how long.... and there were a series of dreams where next time I jumped.... They had me inside the house and they were taming me. So this pole represents these dreams. My Indian name is Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth which means transformation of Supernatural White Wolf into Killerwhale and this pole was to represent the dream coming out of me transforming; so I designed the pole with a sea-wolf, creature surfacing from the water, plunging towards the sky... its mouth opening and this Hamatsa dancing out of its mouth" (David, Lecture II 1977:20 1979:15).



Figure 27
Initiation - Spokane (Pole, 1974)

This pole is carved in a very realistic manner. The Hamatsa initiate--who portrays Joe David--is life-size.

The same initiation is also expressed in a drum (Figure

28). On the face of the drum, a young man clad in the red band and red gown of the initiates comes out of the Sea-Wolf's jaws. The Sea-Wolf seems to be dancing. He is holding the man in his jaws and a fish in his fore-paw. We are reminded here of the connection between Wolf and Killerwhale, since a fin appears underneath the fore-paw and another one has replaced the hind-paw. The small human face appearing on the surface of the fin/tale is blowing a flame-like design. Commenting on this motif, the artist specified that the flame represents the song of the dancer.



Figure 28
Initiation (Drum, 1974)

The gathering of the wolf's tail, which is at the same time the dorsal fin of the whale, and the man's head (appearing

in the tail) suggests a heavy concentration of power.⁸

The drum (Figure 29) and especially its elaborately carved drumstick (see Figure 29 shown below) is also closely related to death and initiation ritual. The drumstick depicts "a cannibal bird holding a human skull with vertebrae in its beak" (MacNair 1980:171). A whale is shown on the drum itself.

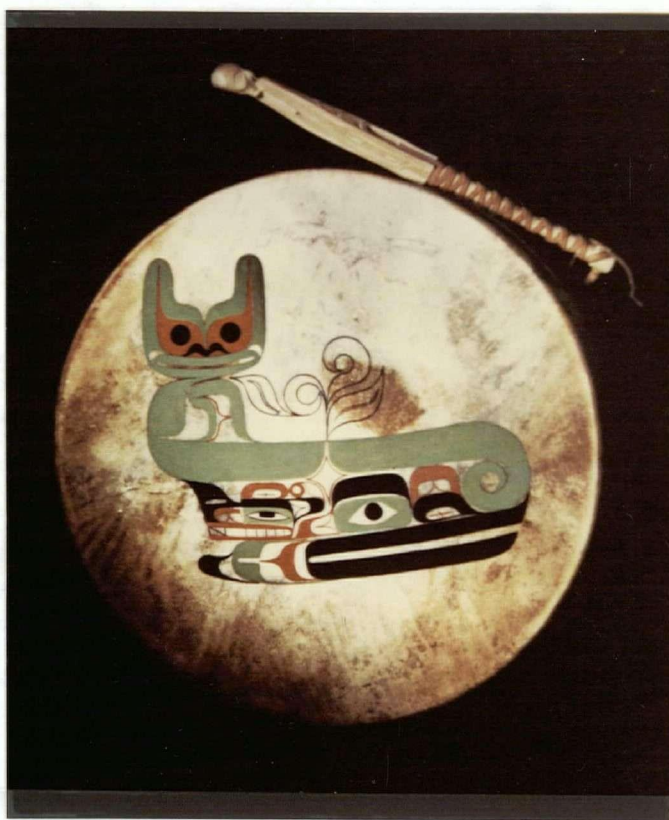


Figure 29
"Whale (Drum, Drumstick, 1979)

Another mask (Figure 30) named "Spirit of the Raven Awaking the Hamatsa in the Morning" brings the idea of

awakening to the picture:



Figure 30

"Spirit Awakening the Hāmatsa in the Morning" (Mask, 1975)

Awakening appears also in the mask following (Figure 31) where an obvious shamanic element is the hanging tongue, which means death. But if the closed eye and blueish colour of the right side of the face symbolize death, the wide open eye, the feather-like facial painting and light colour of the left side symbolize life. So this is not a simple warrior's death but a cosmic death and resurrection.

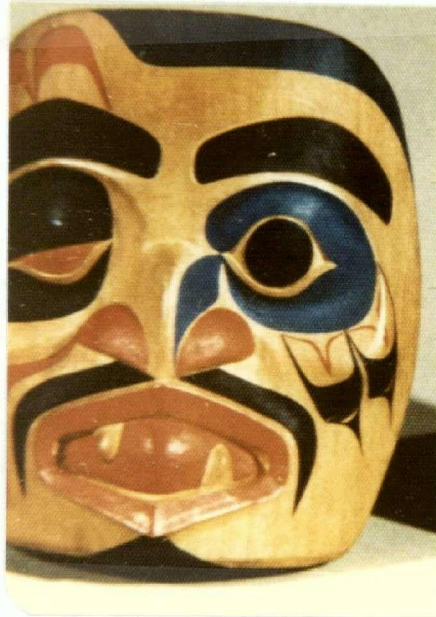


Figure 31
Dead Warrior (Mask, 1975)

Initiation is also associated with the image of the rainbow in the mask reproduced on the following page (Figure 32) of a secret society's initiate. Death is now completely absent from the picture.

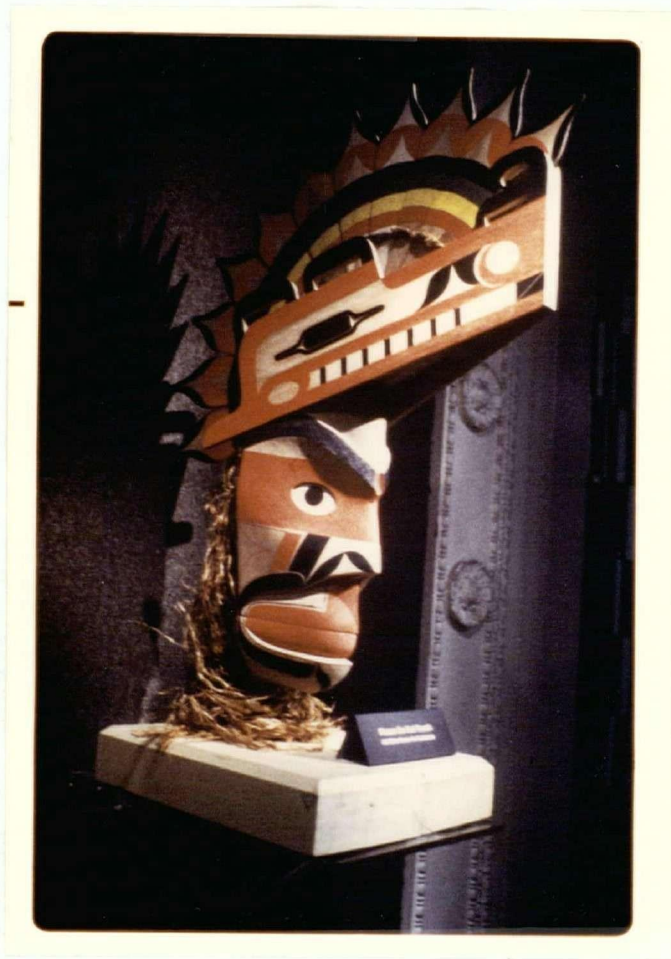


Figure 32
Secret Society Initiate (Mask, 1982)

4. Journeys in Cosmic Worlds

The theme of the cosmic journey is evoked only indirectly in the print named "Memorial Canoe" (Figure 33). Without the comments of the artist we might simply interpret this boat as the legendary "Soul Boat". Yet although this print was created to commemorate the death of Joe David's father, the boat stands, according to the artist, for his father because

he used to carve miniature canoes; and the departure of Hyacinth David's soul is symbolized by the detached stern paddle:

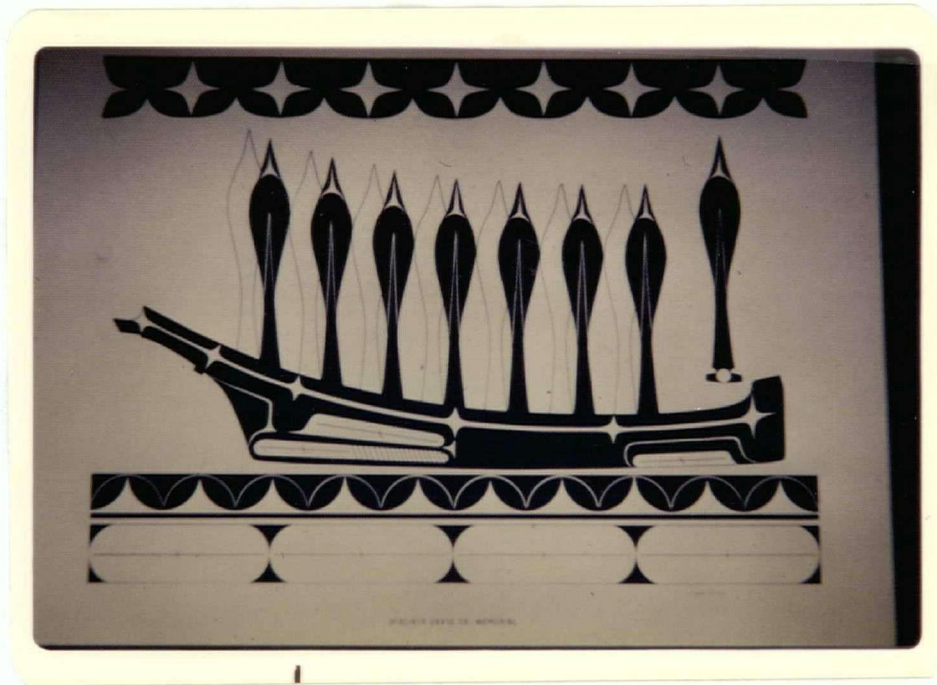


Figure 33
Memorial Canoe (Silkscreen, 1977)

This canoe stands for my father. He was carving miniature canoes. The paddles, those in shadow represent the spirit of the deceased children, seven... the paddles in solid color portray the children alive. The detached stern paddle represents the spirit of my father leaving for another realm. The stars appearing in the sky are my family crests (David, Personal Communication August 1979).

The theme of the cosmic journey is also there in the Invitation card drawn for the opening of the Wood, Metal and Paper exhibit held in Chicago in December 1979 (Figure 34). Here we can distinctly see a human face nestled in

the blowhole of the whale. Dr. George MacDonald assumes (Personal Communication October 1982) that such images clearly indicate the travelling of the shaman to the Underworld, the whale being a favourite spirit helper for the shaman and a guide to reach the hole located in the middle of the sea through which the shaman could depart from this world.



Figure 34
Whale (Invitation Card, Chicago Exhibition, 1977)

A similar journey is illustrated (Figure 35) on the Crow Rattle, depicting a small humanoid character perched on the wings of the Crow, which would indicate a cosmic journey in the Upperworld. Joe David's comments confirm this intuition:



Figure 35
Raven (Rattle, 1977)

This being on the top of the wings represents me... The crow is taking me and teaching me things and then taking me back and flying with me (David, Interview Katz IV 1981: 5).

5. Transformation

The theme of shamanic transformation is explicitly developed in a number of works. Indeed the concept of

transformation has been so elaborated by Joe David as to constitute a leitmotiv to which the artist comes back again and again, not only in his works but also in his comments.

One of his first prints to depict transformation is "Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth", (Figure 36), illustrating his first Indian name and designed in 1976. In 1981, he made another print titled "Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth II" (Figure 37).



Figure 36
"Ka-Ka-Win-chealth" (Silkscreen, 1977)



Figure 37
 "Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth II" (Silkscreen, 1981)

In the first print, the character is ambiguous, both wolf (through the sharp-pointed muzzle, the clawed fore-paw, the positive representation of the tail) and whale (through the blow hole, the dorsal flipper and the negative representation of the caudal fin). In the second

print, the two components of the name are illustrated in more realistic manner; the two characters have retained their identities, but are very animated and seem busy playing a game together. The body of the whale is nestled into the sway back of the wolf. The only detail betraying their common nature is the wolf's tail which is also the whale's springing from a blow hole in the shape of a blue star. Transformation is depicted in the two silkscreens and the difference between the two depictions represents a progression which was quite deliberate on Joe David's part:

There are two prints illustrating my name Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth: in the first one, that I made in 1977, I tried to illustrate Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth as real young, as a pup, the wolf looks like a pup...and at that point I began to realize that I was going to use the theme throughout my life for design and that I was going to have to go from real young to the appearance of old age; so Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth II is a little more older than that, he is not so new and bewildered than the first one, he has been in the world. The first print intentionally illustrates a pup, he is new in the world, it's his first experience of this world, so he is bewildered with his transformation... he is sharing two bodies. Suddenly the wolf is in the water, and he has to adapt, he has to learn to control his breathing, he has to learn to control transformation to be able at will to go from one to the other.

The second Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth has more control; He has learned to control transformation, he has learned to control his breathing, being into the ocean and on land... he is not so bewildered, he is now more playful... he is in a circle, a blue circle which ties actually the air, the world above water. Even if the whale is inside the water he has to come at the surface for air. The Killerwhale has patches of white and black, like a lot of fish which have a white belly and a black back. It's a disguise... I have no idea where I first heard about that... but I started thinking that Killerwhales and wolves, way back, chose the way they wanted to go... one decided to go on land and the other one decided to stay in the ocean. There is a lot of

close communication between the two that we still don't understand... like with other animals. Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth is in a circle, he is now in control, he feels at home in both worlds; that's what the circle means, the control of air.

I'll make a third, a fourth, a fifth one till I am a real old man, I can imagine... when I will be old and wise... but it will always be a white wolf (David, Interview Katz IV, 1981:4)(Emphasis added).

The idea of transformation is given expression by Joe David through other means as well. He has the traditional right to dance his name Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth and the transformation it implies. In this complex dance he wears a Whale ceremonial cape; by wearing it, he identifies with the creature and symbolically becomes a whale. He then dons the Wolf mask and by imitating the swift and twirling movements portraying the wolf's gait, he further "transforms" the whale into a wolf (see Figures 38 and 39 following).



Figure 38
Wolf (Mask, 1979)

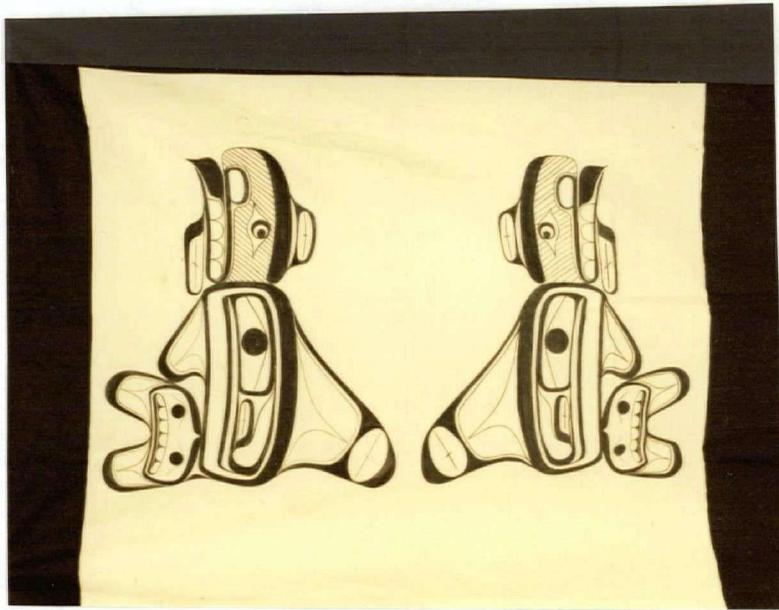


Figure 39
Whale (Ceremonial Cape, 1977)

Dances -- and especially masked dances -- are plays on transformation, and so are the representations of dancers. The Dancers prints illustrate this in a forceful manner. The set contains four prints entitled: "Welcome Dancer" (1) (Figure 40), "Serpent Dancer" (Figure 41), "Thunderbird Dancer" (3) (Figure 42) and "Crawling Wolf Dancer" (4) (Figure 43).

At first glance, it seems that Joe David wishes to present the characters of the Klukwalle (Nootkan Initiation Ritual), but the artist insists that these characters are the ones who would appear in a potlatch given by his family and that "they represent the movement of transformation of the dancer into the creature he is portraying" (David, Lecture UBC, I, 1977:20). We can already read a number of symbols by ourselves. In the Welcome Dancer print, the dancer is wearing a Welcome mask. Through his mask and his ceremonial cape, he transforms into an ancestor.

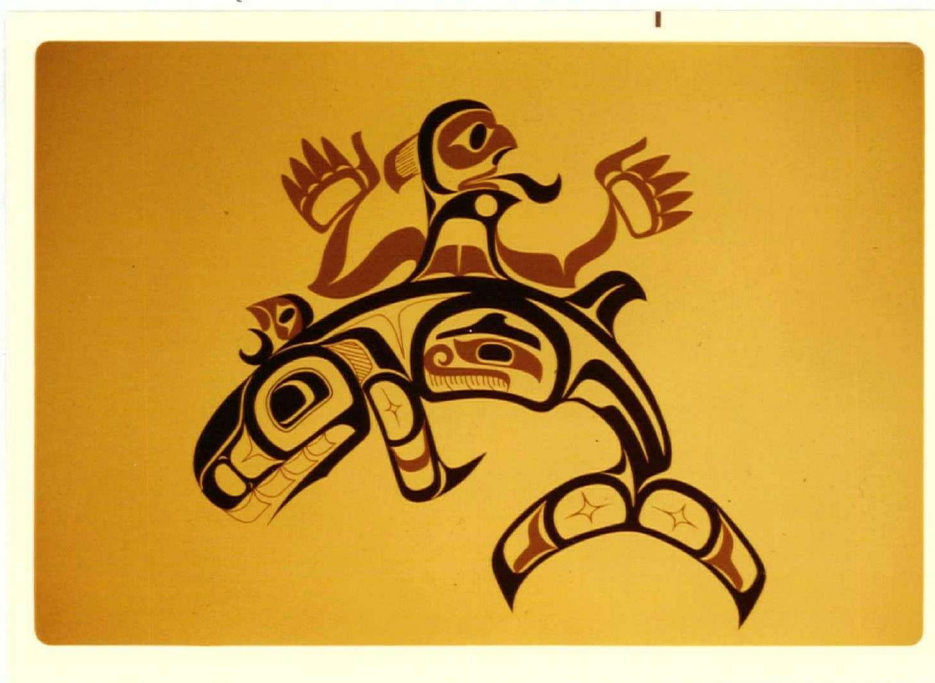


Figure 40
Welcome Dancer (Silkscreen, 1975)

The whale represents the painting on the back of his cape and the dancer is pretty slow from one side of the room to the other, back and forth, with the guy's

hands up; he has got a mask on that he pulls up through... he never looks at us straight (David, Lecture U.B.C. III 1978:34)

In the "Serpent Dancer" print, the dancer wears a lightning snake mask:



Figure 41
Serpent Dancer (Silkscreen, 1975)

The head represents a headdress, and the rest represents the movement of the cape (David, Lecture U.B.C. III 1978:36).

Here the dancer has been caught half-way in the process of transformation; the right arm still looks human, but the left one has already transformed into a serpent's claw. In the "Thunderbird" print the artist is still focussing on the

dance, but the dancer is caught further in the transformation process; only the two small hands emerging from under the wings are a reminder of his human-ness.

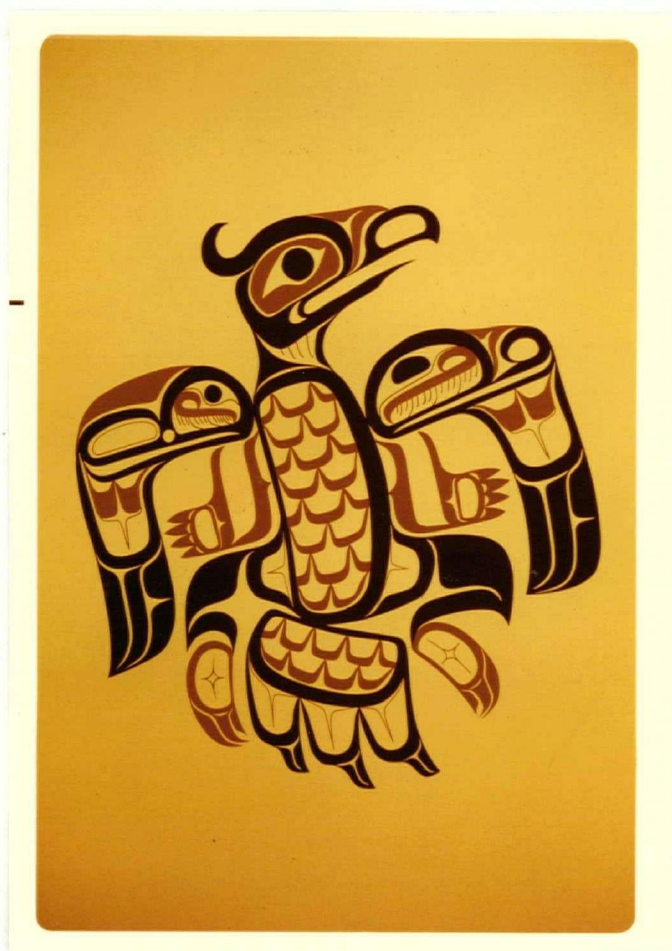


Figure 42
Thunderbird Dancer (Silkscreen, 1975)

I took the snake's body ... and I put human hands instead, human hands holding the cape. I started to play around making things look right. I feel fairly strong with these prints. The leg on the right there represents the other side. They look the same; they represent the side and the different proportions in the four legs and the thighs, it's what I tried to illustrate like... strong towards you (instead) of hanging from the side. Now people always ask me to dance the Thunderbird dance. My father taught me how to dance it. He was from a chief's family (David, Interview Katz II, 1979:12).

In the "Crawling Wolf Dancer" print below, the artist is using his experience as a dancer to compose the image.

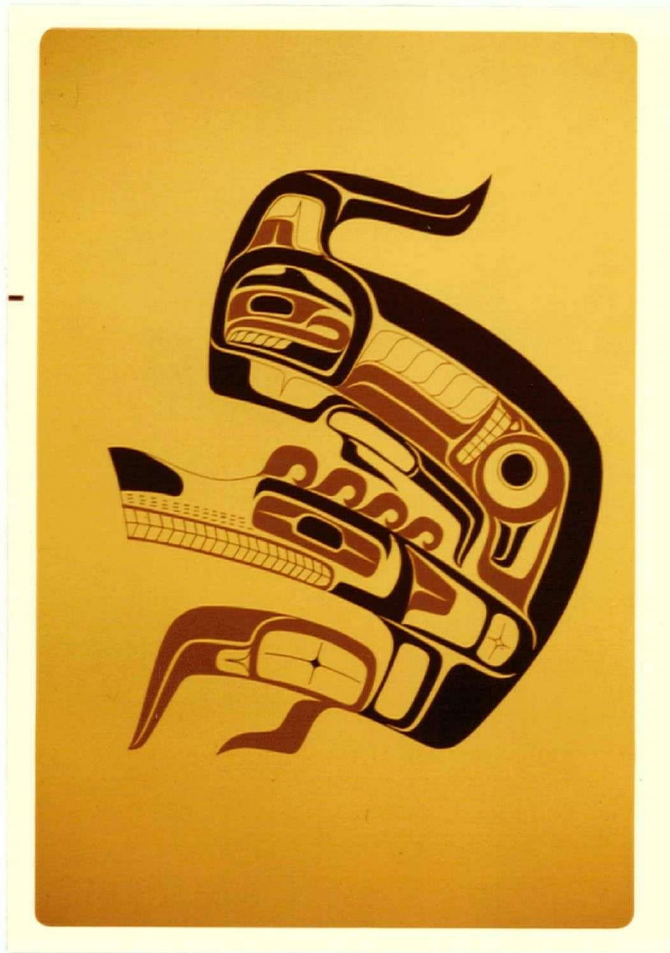


Figure 43
Crawling Wolf Dancer (Silkscreen, 1975)

It's just going in a circle, turning... its hind legs, his tail hanging from the top above the body, balancing... I got the idea from a slide a friend took from Frank Charlie... we did a ceremonial dance at Spokane when they raised the pole there. Somebody took a slide of Frank dancing the Wolf Dance. And his legs and everything were up in the air. "Push up, Push up!" he says to his fingers when he was just turning (David Interview Katz II, 1979:12).

The dancer performing the wolf dance has completely transformed into a wolf, except perhaps for his posture:

inverted -- upright position, fore paws on the ground and hind paws swaying in the air along with the tail.⁹

6. Spirit Combat

The theme of antagonism and spirit combat seems to be totally absent from Joe David's work. We should note here that the artist also avoids any depiction of violence. His wild men are wild but never aggressive. The designs showing two beings together are all interpreted by Joe David as either transformation or cooperation, never as fights. As mentioned earlier, even when Joe David illustrates the initiation process he does not emphasize the theme of death, but relies instead on the idea of dream, light and awaking. His concept of power is always geared toward harmony rather than destruction. The only glimpse of the association of the Hamatsa initiation with death is a drumstick representing a cannibal bird holding a human skull in its beak and accompanying a drum merely representing a whale.

7. Shamanic Power

The theme of power is present everywhere in Joe David's work: in the supernatural quality of all the characters, in their multiple identities, in the gifts brought by them.

Joe David's representation of the theme of shamanic power follows the tradition in that it is conveyed through the depiction of powerful beings; these beings are often engaged in some form of contact with the human world --

shamanic power is after all supernatural power controlled by humans. Some are transforming from human into animal or spirit, or an ambiguous combination of human and animal characteristics. Some are meeting with a human character, some of the images derive from a personal contact between the artist himself and a natural or supernatural world. These beings always have special strength because of their link to mythology. They belong clearly to the world of supernatural power. This is signified by the choice of characters, who are the main heroes of West Coast mythology. We have seen before that even if some animals are gifted with more power than others and become the helpers of the shaman more frequently than others, all of them possess power and might be the guise of a supernatural being; they are able to transform and are also generally the channel used by supernatural creatures to communicate with human beings.

The visual expression of power is also achieved by stylistic means, such as the use of certain colors with their traditional symbolic meaning,¹⁰ and the simplicity and strength of the design. But all these endeavours would have less impact without a strong reference to an underlying tradition. Power is felt in these images because of Joe David's faithfulness to the West Coast Indian stylistic traditions, and because of his constant striving to maintain contact with traditional ritual themes. This feeling is moreover reinforced by the pictorial context of the works. Because no expressions of time or space locate the

characters created by Joe David, even though they are more realistic than in the Northern tradition, they always retain their mythical quality. For instance, clouds or the horizon line which surround some of the prints (and which are a remnant of the big screens, according to Joe David) are depicted in a very abstract manner and do not lock the action in a special time or space. Joe David's characters have not "become illustrations",¹¹ they have not "become dependant upon a story for their meaning," they do not "require another episode before and after the particular moment in linear time before they are meaningful". On the contrary, even though, or maybe because their creation refers to very personal events and feelings, the meaning attributed to them is timeless.

The visual expression of power is not only a question of theme or symbolism, it also depends (according to Joe David) on the artist having mastered technique and material so as to achieve perfection. Craftmanship is power too: "There is more power in a perfect circle than in a wobbly one" (David, Poole Interview 1979:15).

Commenting on the first shaman's mask (Figure 44), Joe David draws our attention to the identity of the character:

This is me. This is when I usually see the power that the old shamans have going in different directions: healing, destructing, isolating. That's what it represents. Power can heal, power can kill. That's probably the ultimate of that period of me. And you know what is going on and that's a perfect description: it presents solitude and thought, a man who gazes into the sun, moon, stars and in the open fire at great length for his powers of medicine, medicine meaning power; not just power for its sake but for meaningful

and healing source... "harmony". Medicine is harmony. When medicine works, it's harmony (David, Interview Katz IV, 1981:5).

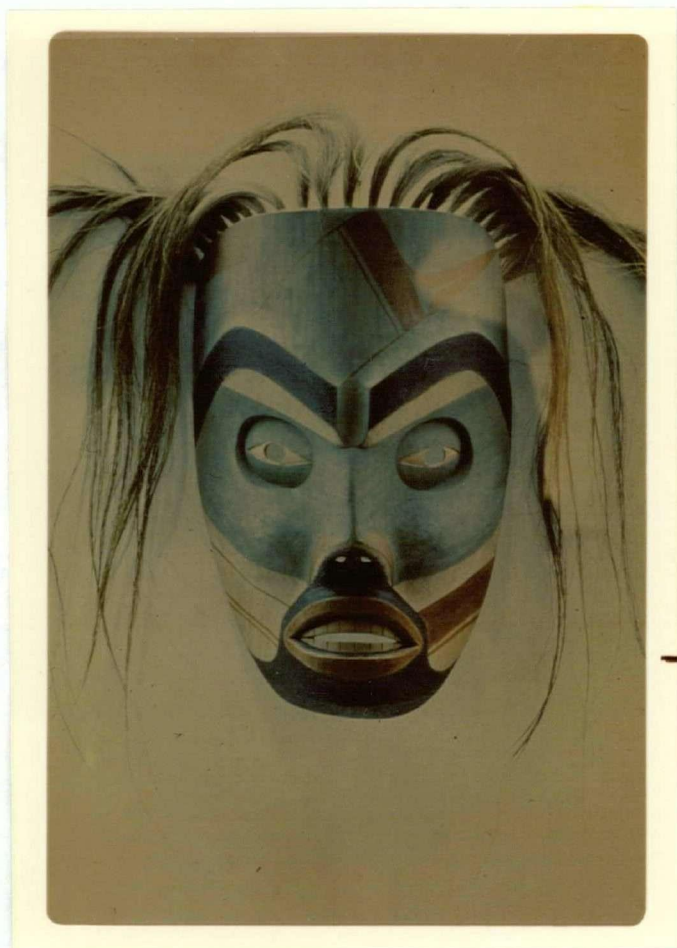


Figure 44
Shaman (Mask, 1979)

The two other shaman's masks were carved in 1982 .
(See Figure 45 and Figure 46). One is in Tsimshian style and has a very peaceful appearance. The other is in West Coast style and looks fierce, "angry" according to Joe David (personal communication). He wears a crown-like

headdress made of wooden feathers very similar to the top part of the Nootka wolf masks.



Figure 45
Shaman (Mask, 1982)

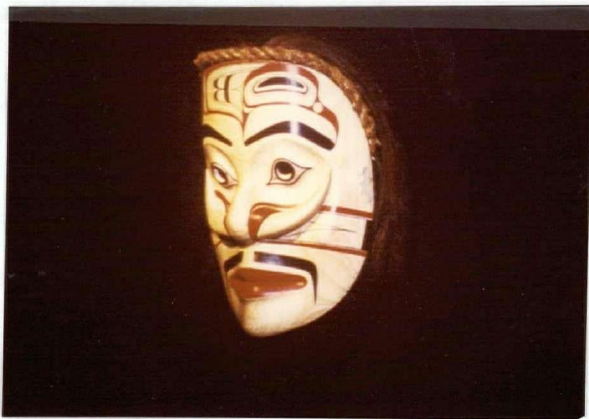


Figure 46
(Mask, 1982)

Representations of shaman's helper of "Medicine Spirit" occur in three masks (See Figures 47, 48, and 49).

Two were carved in 1980 (Tsimshian and Haida style), one in 1982 (Kwakiutl style). Commenting on the Tsimshian style Medicine Spirit (black face with a red eagle facial design), Joe David says: "I did not know its power until I was away from it" (David, Personal Communication May 1982). Another way of expressing power is to represent human beings being able to achieve it. We have mentioned a number of masks representing initiates for instance. But Joe David has not shied away from the shaman himself. There are in his works three portraits of shamans (Masks), three medicine spirits (masks) and last but not least the very tools of a shaman: a shaman's drum with a crow design, a drum with a whale design accompanied by a carved drumstick which depicts a cannibal bird consuming a human skeleton, a print labelled "Medicine Drum Design" with a thunderbird-Moon-Bird design and a brush-holder in the shape of a soul-catcher, this last combining significantly the shaman's tools with the tools of an artist.

The carving of shaman's masks came late in Joe David's development. It was not until 1979 that he carved the first one, followed by two others in 1982. Then he carved three shaman's helpers masks between 1980 and 1982:

Some years ago, in 1977, I knew I had to carve a whole series of them. Three and five are magical numbers for me, powerful numbers... and I am 35 now; so I decided to let it go (Personal Communication: May 1982).

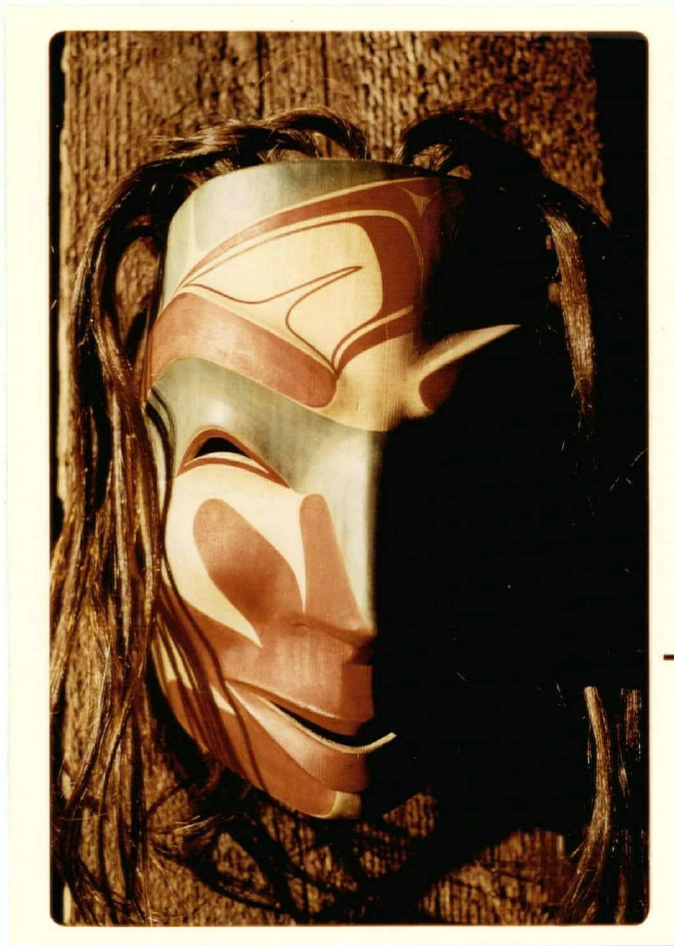


Figure 47
Shaman's Helper (Mask, 1980)

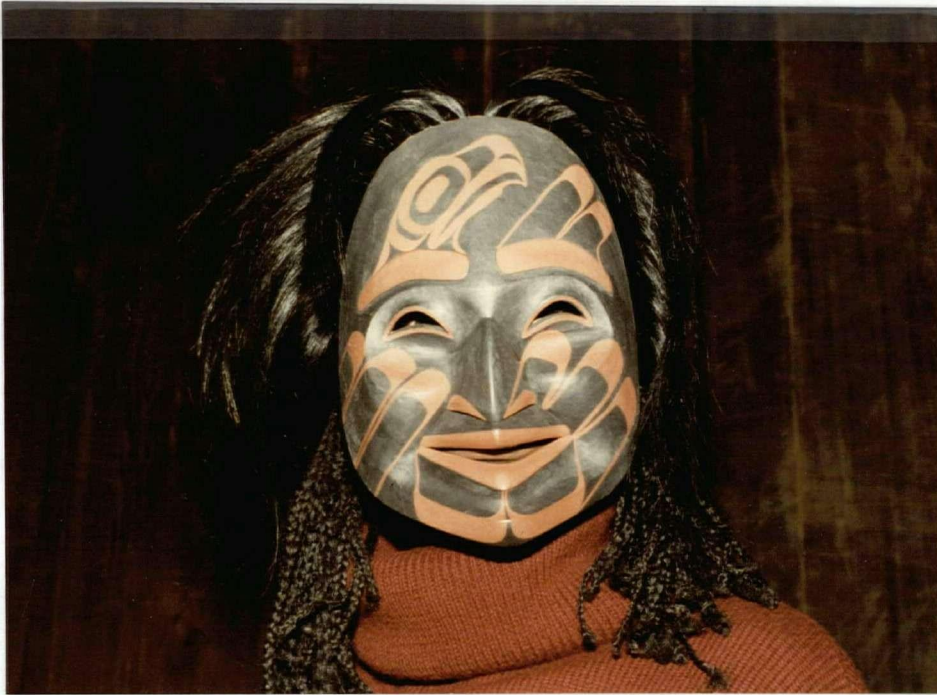


Figure 48
Shaman's Helper (Mask, 1980)



Figure 49
Shaman's Helper (Mask, 1982)

Traditionally, the soul-catcher was one of the most important elements in the shaman's gear. In the Figure below (No. 50), we can see a range of ceremonial objects made of wood: boat-shaped dishes, spoons, baton and a brushholder.



Figure 50
Various objects: Soul-catcher/Brushholder/Dishes/
Miniature Canoe/Baton - 1975

The most important of this group are the brushholder and the miniature canoe-dish. The brushholder borrows its shape from a soul-catcher. The lightning snake heads are painted at each extremity and the traditional face appears in the centre.



Figure 51
Soul-Catcher - Brushholder, 1975

This relatively small work becomes very important when Joe David indicates that he has not chosen the soul-catcher shape solely for esthetic but also for symbolic reasons. With this piece he is explicitly using shamanic metaphors and

incorporating them into his art. The brushholder is his medicine tool in that it doubles as an artist's rattle; in the same sense his paintings are his medicine -- they act as his songs, as his soul-catcher. Joe David comments on this brushholder/soul-catcher:

This is a brushholder in the form of a soul-catcher. It is hollow and inside carries the brushes. And it is also a rattle, but it's an artist rattle. It's an innovation in the sense that my paintings are my personal medicine. My paintings and things are visual medicine ... in other words what I have to say through my painted lines can be accepted by someone who is in the need in the form of medicine to acquaint him with the beauty of line, and the beauty of harmony. And also you can rattle it. I use it that way. When I sing a song proper I can shake it and the brushes in here make the rattle song. It belongs now to Duane Pasco. I have to make another one (David, Interview Katz III 1981:21).

This merging of shaman and artist is explicit both in the objects and in the comments. We need another level of study to further define the power of the painter and examine whether this is a metaphor or the expression of a real correspondence.

* * * * *

This short survey is sufficient, in my opinion, to demonstrate how extensively Joe David's work uses traditional Northwest Coast images and their underlying shamanic inspiration. Most of the themes we have examined to define Northwest Coast shamanic cosmology are present here and are emphasized explicitly by the artist himself. Yet some of the themes are obviously absent; there is no mention for instance of violence or death.

Most of the themes used by the artist are not immediately visible and we need the artist's explanation to grasp the full meaning of the image. This, I think, reflects the process of interiorisation and integration which took place in the artist's mind. We are no longer dealing with obedience to a rigid tradition, but rather with the creation of a personal world. This is expressed also by the personal contact the artist claims to have experienced with the characters he depicts. The paradox here is that traditional images are used both to present West Coast traditional Indian cosmology and the very individualized world view of the artist.

As we shall see, this paradox is part of Joe David's definition of Northwest Coast art in general, and of his own work in particular.

Chapter IV - Footnotes

- 1 •Norman Newton (1973:120-121) asks a question of Bob Davidson concerning the meaning of the art. Bob Davidson answers:

"I don't know about that All I know is how to do it I guess it's a feeling. Right now I know what to look for in things, I usually go to museums and look at what has been done, and try to get ideas from it. And I also find myself thinking in Northwest Coast art. Some people think in words. I can't think in words; I guess you might say I think in images -- Northwest Coast art images."

- Ron Hamilton interviewed by Margaret Blackman (1981: 59) about his rediscovery and understanding of Northwest Coast Indian styles answers:

"I tried to call up from my memory designs on old drums, headdresses and curtains in my home country, the west coast. When my memory failed, my imagination served me. When both failed, I turned to photographs and the few books available at the time. Whenever I found an old piece in the house of a friend or relative, I would make sketches while visiting, take photographs if possible, and spend time trying to see and understand some of what the oldtimers were doing (personal communication, 1979)."

- Tim Paul, interviewed about art by Bernice Touchie (Nu-tka: 47-48) says:

"I thought about art, and I wanted to do it. But I didn't really have any thoughts that I would be into designing of Northwest Coast art, Nootka art, or to be able to recognize the differences. . . . It really didn't mean anything to me, I didn't understand it, I didn't know what was going on in the forms and you know the elements that were there, the separate styles and so on. It just worked slowly, sort of picked at me and I finally got into it."

- 2 "The way the old timers used to do their designs is the reason that it looked so good. The only time they were able to see the masks was during the potlatch. There never was a mask exposed in front of anybody's eyes unless it was used and brought out from behind the curtain when the potlatch started. A chief who hired a carver would send the carver into the big houses where the potlatches were happening. The carver would observe the masks that

were used, and just by observing he would create in his mind what he wanted to do. His interpretation of what he saw would be very different. I guess that's why there are so many different varieties of masks. You see so many, yet none of them are the same"(Smith, 1979, Graphic Collection).

"There has been a lot of things written about our art. A lot of things are not true because it was always written from outside the culture and always from a Christian point of view, never from an Indian point of view, and they would always romanticize our people To really understand the art, you have to understand the culture, and the history, and you have to understand the people to really understand the people, you have to understand the stories Our people believed at one time that the animals were human, and when the light was brought to the world, the people that had the fur on turned into different animals that's why they represent Raven sometimes as human or part human when he's changing Raven was actually a teacher, and he helped our people. He taught the people the art. He taught them how to make canoes, how to make big houses, how to dry the fish You can't separate the art from the people"(Dempsey, 1979 Graphic Collection) (Emphasis Added).

3 The other animals portrayed are:

<u>Animal</u>	<u># of times portrayed</u>	<u>Art Object</u>
Land otter	2	Banner Rattle
Halibut	1	Rattle
Grouse	1	Rattle
Crow	3	Rattle Print
Loon	1	Rattle
Crane	1	Post Card
Hawk	1	Print
Kingfisher	1	Print
Sculpin	1	Print
Ling Cod	3	Print Post Card Frontlet

<u>Animal</u>	<u># of Times Portrayed</u>	<u>Art Object</u>
Unidentified Bird	1	Box
Red Snapper	1	Print
Sea Wolf	1	Pole
Supernatural Rat	1	Print
Beaver	1	Pole (Miniature)
Frog	1	Mask (top)

- 4 The absence of bears in Joe David's work should not be taken to signify that the animal is unimportant to him. Indeed it has a very important place in his thoughts, as the following quote shows:

"I am close to, I would say, Indianness. I would think that it meant that characteristics in the native person, the people of the West Coast, the Indianness of them is the human-bear-human reflection of the environment, of their society too, but mainly of their environment" (David, Personal Communication 1983) (Emphasis Added).

- 5 From 1971 to 1974 Joe David has mainly depicted animals in static position. In 1974, with the Kingfisher print, he begins introducing a different style, much more active. From there on, the animals he portrays are going to be involved either in the acts of daily life such as fishing, swimming, flying or of ritual life such as twirling, dancing or transforming into something else (See Table No. 2 labelled "List of animals").

- 6 Joe David is the first contemporary artist from the West Coast to use this theme. Others have followed, notably Lyle Wilson (Haida) with his print called Tradition, Time and Consequence (1981) where a shaman is depicted blowing a rainbow out of his mouth. The element appears also on a very old dance screen which was displayed at Joe David's Memorial Potlatch. There the rainbow is single but it takes the form of a whole circle surrounding the thunderbird, the main character of the screen.

- 7 Joe David had previously intended to use the theme of two cranes flying -- the crest of his father -- because he had seen two of these birds flying above the sea in Skidegate just before the announcement of his father's death, which he had interpreted as a bad omen. He changed his mind later on.
- 8 The wolf's tail contains the life principle of the wolf (Drucker 1951:127 and Sapir & Swadesh 1939:8); man's life principle is located at the crown of his head (Drucker 1951:341). The life principle of the whale is in the dorsal fin (Sapir 1919:352). The merging of wolf's tail, whale's dorsal fin and man's head is probably not fortuitous but arranged in the design to load it with the power circulating during the initiation ritual.
- 9 With the help of Joe David, Hilary Stewart (C.N.P. Notes 1975) has described the unfolding of these traditional dances and the meaning of the steps and movements.
- 10 (a) "Among Coast Salish red from ochre was the usual colour for face painting because it was "the friend" of all guardian spirits. Painted on the face by a priest, it helped a man's power, whatever his sickness. The spirits of the west, north-west and east winds, however, and also the thunder spirit, required black paint from charcoal because they rolled up black clouds ... So, too, did the warrior spirit sqa'la-an, which came from the same region, as did the northwest wind, though its song was different; the powerful fish spirit sk^{wani}lec, because it had black markings on its body; and the two-headed snake. When a man inspired by the thunder spirit performed his dance, black clouds gathered and the thunder rolled; if he wished hail to fall also, he daubed spots of red ochre over his black markings. One spirit, the real q^{wa}'x^wqs that was believed to dwell far out in the ocean, or else far off in the mountains, demanded from its dancers face-paintings in both black and red.
- For each spirit guardian a special dancing costume was worn, and special markings painted on the face in red or black, markings that often represented some part of the spirit (e.g. of a grizzly, the claws). It was from the costume and face painting as well as from the song that the audience recognized the spirit that presumably inspired the dancer" (Jenness 1955:41 note).

- (b) "The red cedar bark is fashioned into ropes that stand for wealth, and into neck rings that suggest to Kwakiutl celestial phenomena. The rings shrink and expand like the moon. Forms of life hang from them and cascade from them. They are the most potent carriers of "nawalak" (power). The red of the cedar is seen as blood, in the ultimate sense as human blood, but human blood rendered powerful by being in associative form, by being associated with the most human branch of a generalized human kind, and by its association with a ring, the celestial symbol" (Goldman 1975: 192-193).
- (c) "This Kapkinuyi is a shaman. He is black in this part of him. This one was the first (person) to be created ... she saw him there with his black marking here; with a tufted ornament on his head and with marking about his eyes" (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:165).
- (d) "We each had two knots of hair at both sides of the forehead and straight stripes painted on the face. We turned nuuthlim at the end of the song. The face of nuuthlim is masked with straight stripes" (Sapir & Swadesh 1978:126).
- (e) "He wears a headdress. It is a supernatural spearsman. He sees that he has charcoal stripes across the eyes. He follows the being. He gets shaman power from that" (Sapir & Swadesh 1978:55).

11 In the terms used by Marjorie Halpin (Vancouver Institute Lecture, March 17, 1979) to describe Northwest Coast traditional art versus Northwest Coast modern art, such as Ksan.

CHAPTER V - ART ACCORDING TO JOE DAVID

Joe David offers us a number of definitions of art. They all make use of concepts which are part of shamanic cosmology. Art is the acknowledgement, that is "the display of knowledge" which follows the contact with the Supernatural. Hence, the shamanic world of animals and power is predominant in Joe David's definition of art and of the traditional artist's relationship with his subjects. The concepts of transformation and power figure predominantly in Joe David's definition of art and lead him to compare the artist to the shaman. Let us note that Joe David does not place much emphasis on art as an ecstatic or initiatic process; neither is art itself presented as a contact with the supernatural world. The artist does not introduce the image he carves or paints as a means whereby he reaches other realities but rather as a result or an expression of the visionary experience.

For Joe David the traditional artistic process is not restricted to the production of images. It involves a preparatory link of the artist with the Supernatural world, an involvement with transformation which is for him a way to project himself into the non-human world he is depicting. Finally he possesses a willingness

to accept the consequences of his artistic act, that is the emergence of power.

a) The Supernatural World

The Supernatural world which has been Joe David's main source of art is endowed by him with definite qualities. Among West Coast people, more importance is traditionally granted to animal spirits and monsters populating the inlets and the forests than to remote gods; accordingly the Christian god is definitely not included in the cosmology of Joe David's art. On the other hand, natural and supernatural are traditionally part of the same continuum, rather than being opposed as they are in the Western world. This includes, as in the old shamanic tradition, a personalization of the animal. This personalization is carried over from the mythical to the natural. The real eagle seen on the beach is ultimately similar to the eagle in the myth. This implies respect for the animal as it is, and the possibility of communication (or at least perceiving the possibility of communication) with it. The traditional artist belongs, according to Joe David, to a universe where any contact with what we call nature may be the manifestation of these supernatural creatures "who carry and transmit power." The artist who wishes to retain the qualities

of the past is linked with the non-human world in several ways, but first of all through the channel of the myths and ceremonials where animals and other beings intervene as teachers and sources of knowledge. Any approach to the non-human world paradoxically depends upon participation in the human community, the rituals of which mediate this knowledge:

Art is really a display of not so much wealth that these Supernatural Creatures gave to our ancestors, but the display of knowledge that was shared with them through these Supernatural Creatures. They worked hard and proved themselves worthy to the point...They went to the mountains and rivers and fasted for days on end, and praying, praying. They were not asking for something to go back to and dazzle game with. They were praying for guidance, for guiding lessons. They were prayed for the right way to live the rest of their lives and believed that what they were asking was just, was the way it has to be and they stayed there until they were finally given this vision, until they had been finally contacted by these Supernatural Creatures and they were given these special privileges, they were given songs, they were taught dances to go with them; so that when these people went to potlatch, to teach the rest of the people, it would be more believable, the songs and the gear that the creatures had given them (David, Lecture U.B.C. I, 1977:17).

Without participation in the ancestral myth which shapes one's approach to the non-human world, the individual seeker would have no guidance in his quest and the artist would find no meaning in his works; he would be unable to connect the images he creates with more than the merely human level, and unable to understand what Joe David calls

"the wisdom and harmony of high order." The responsibility of the traditional artist is to build this understanding:

You need a balance and a communication and an understanding to get along. An understanding of the creation of the balance. We are balanced here with them, we are not of them, they are not of us. They are into their own as we are into our own, and they are free to create and do as they wish, as we are free to do and create and express for ourselves (David, Interview Poole 1979:10).

The association of natural and mythical is explicitly described by the artist in his presentation of the four animal characters which dominate his work: the thunderbird, lightning snake, wolf and whale. These four characters are brought together by Joe David to form a symbolic structure of which the attribution of these animals of a life and awareness of their own is an essential component. For instance, for Joe David "the thunderbird always illustrates and stands for supernatural things, supernatural lights, supernatural rainbows, supernatural knowledge. High knowledge is always represented by a thunderbird in my family" (David, Interview Poole 1979:11).

Moreover the thunderbird has a clear value as an indicator of social status. Joe David says:

The Thunderbird mainly belongs to the chiefs. Only the Chiefs possess the Thunderbird teachings and qualities. Thunderbird is symbolic of Prestige. There is a lot of people, like Commoners, who would go through the Wolf Ritual and that would not even touch anything which had anything to do with Thunderbird, because

they were not entitled to.¹ (David, Interview Katz II, Aug. 1979: 13-17)

This linking of knowledge and supernatural power with social rank and prestige is one of the traditional elements clearly retained by Joe David. It adds to art an element of nobility and therefore social responsibility. This is expressed also by the symbol of the snake. The snake is associated with whaling².

But in Joe David's family the snake, and what he calls the Serpent Dance, are symbols of records:

The Serpent Dance, in West Coast potlatching represented that it was a moment of record: you were going to demonstrate family names, or transfer names, and there were paid witnesses. And it was the first thing you do after the welcoming of the guests. You want to demonstrate, you want to express what is going to happen, and then once that was established, then you would demonstrate your loyalty, your complete knowledge, those family lineages, the power of family lineage, the power of high knowledge. So, that's why the Serpent Dance was one of the most used dances within the family because it was a validation of something, a record (David, Interview Katz II, Aug. 1979:9-12).

It is one of the social duties of the traditional artist to help maintain these records and re-validate the traditions. On the other hand the two characters of the animal quadrilogy which are more commonly met in the everyday world, the wolf and the whale, have become for Joe David a channel for the expression of nature and of the human connection with nature.

In this structured system the serpent is opposed to the wolf:

The wolf represents the knowledge, the acquisition of knowledge, the teaching of knowledge, and the serpent represents to me record. The serpent and the wolf are very different. The serpent is of supernatural origin, or mythical origin, whereas the wolf is natural, it is not mythical, it is a real thing (David, Interview Katz II, Aug. 1979:13).

The whale symbolizes the island where Joe David lives, the ocean, the wilderness, the elements, the power of knowledge:

The West Coast people were the only people on the Northwest Coast tribes that, like say whaled, went after the whale, prepared for it, ceremonially prepared to take the whale, to capture the whale, which meant killing it, to bring back to the people and for the consumption, they'd consume it, there was not a thing in that whale that would be wasted. They had complete use for it, most of it was food. You have an incredible spiritual communication of people in an incredibly spiritual communication with the elements, with the creature, massive creature, this massive open ocean. This massive sky, the massive depth of the ocean and the mass of the whale, the mass of the mountain and the land behind them. They were in whale...in spiritual communication with the elements, they demonstrated it. They built the most beautiful and the most sea-worthy going canoes in all the Northwest Coast and they hunted and captured the most biggest challenge (David, Interview Poole, 1979:22)

The wolf corresponds to the woods, to the supernatural power, to the spiritual world, but the wolf is first of all a mediator between the human world and the wilderness. As the main initiator of the West Coast people in the

myths as well as in the Wolf's Dance, the wolf stands for the social and human side of the natural powers:

It was mainly the teaching into the social system of the people of the West Coast. The wolf...it was geared completely towards the young, the kids. They would be kidnapped at a certain age therein the Wolf Ritual you know, the dancers, the songs, the costumes, they would be taken...it would be decided in each family which one would be kidnapped, which one would start to learn and they would be taken by these people in wolves costumes during a raid at the beginning of the Wolf ritual and the process of the village was to prepare for this big feast and prepare to lure the wolves and the children back and while the kids were gone, they were just taken off to separate houses and they would be cared for and taught all the while, they had been there probably with some relatives, aunts, and each kid would be... there was no thought of isolation of being kidnapped off by real wolves; it was all drama, so the drama was all understood that a lot of that teaching came from the wolves, and you know like say the songs, the myths, the dreams (David, Interview Katz II, 1979:26).

We have mentioned already that the wolf is one of Joe David's personal crests. It is not surprising then, that in describing the symbolic function of the wolf (i.e. as mediator between the human and the supernatural levels) he uses language which could easily be used to describe his own calling as an artist:

The wolves were important, but probably I like to say on a different level, even if they were physical just like the whales; the wolves connected them with their spiritual beliefs so it was a whole different importance; there was a whole different realm involved. There must be an incredible energy within the Wolves

social system that attracted my people...a social system to share together...and more than likely the wolf system still exists but now our people's social system is not as strong and as structured as in the old days although there is a lot of energy and knowledge...and it could be a guess that if a system of thoughts started to regenerate in this area of wolves that matches, like say...was the equivalent to the energy and knowledge of the wolf...the wolves could come back. It could start coming back, teachings, dreaming, singing and so forth,...but not too many people believe in wolf anymore...so they don't see them in their dream too often (David, Interview Katz I, 1979:45) (Emphasis added).

It is difficult to say what Joe David's personal reflection specifically adds to Nootka tradition, but I want to note that the symbolic aspect of the non-human world is for Joe David very personal as well as based on traditional teaching. The images he carves and paints obviously relate to his own experience of both nature and traditional teachings. This is especially so with the wolf:

Looking at the thing, the wolf that I finally carved, the power of it, the essence of it, is my interpretation of it, my personal creation of it, it is my love and respect and admiration and understanding and awareness of the beauty and concept of wolf. The knowledge of wolf, the powers of wolf, the balance of wolf, the colors of wolf, the textures and expressions of wolf. I have in me the feelings, this awareness. You can basically say I have the love, I love the wolf, I love my people, I love their art style, I love their tools and I love their colors and when I create, when I, Joe David, create a West Coast wolf, I am expressing this incredible love, this incredible power, this incredible awareness, this incredible communication

between these things, these beings, the wolf, me, the being of the wood, the being of our society, the being of my family, the being, the life, the spirit of the songs and the dance and that is the supernatural sense of all that. And we created them. We created the wolf, we created the songs and dances, we created the communication with them. We appreciate that they were there to teach us what they did in the sense of their beauty and the sense of their culture. The sense of their balance and their place in the environment, in the world as we know it, as we share it and as we live in it. There is a supernatural idea and force behind these expressions that we choose to say; that is of supernatural, it is a supernatural communication, it is a supernatural wolf, it is a supernatural mythical creature (David, Interview Poole 1979:23).

b) The Concept of Transformation

The ultimate consequence of any contact with the non-human world, be it through a direct meeting with it, or through working on images of it, is always a transformation or the participants. Joe David talks a lot about transformation. It is one of the main concepts he uses to define himself:

Transformation, I was born right in the middle of it. I was born, natural birth, in the village within a parental system that advocated the old ways. My parents advocated and practiced transformation; they practiced the union of supernatural and natural (David, Interview Katz II 1979:22).

He is therefore very careful about the full meaning of the term:

By "Transformation" I mean the union of natural and supernatural entities and powers and dreams. The valid life of expression being born from both natural and supernatural, from myth and teaching the high knowledge of the mythical creatures and the basic natural knowledge of human beings. Transformation means both of those things into life system of a family or of a human being. Transformation...you transform, I personally transform into mythical being or another natural being like say a crow, a bird, or a mammal, only at times of my certainty... I sense it is all one and the same, all creations stem from one basic creative energy (David, Interview Katz 1979:22-23).

His first Indian name, Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth, has to do with this union of the natural and the supernatural, a fact that he lovingly emphasizes:

My name and me, Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth, which means transformation of Supernatural White Wolf into Killerwhale is the coming together of separate... directly from...let say [on] one side of my family system there was a man that came from Friendly Cove, what they call Nootka area, which is the Yukyot - which is the name of the area. There was a man at the turn of the century, 1920.1930, who was a master carver there. There are a lot of house posts and poles from that area that exist and that are rotting away, the last ones carved there by this man Chiletas... Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth, that was a nick-name. He was married but they never had descendants and he knew my father and my father knew him. He knew my father's interest and feelings for carving. My father demonstrated carving from childhood although he never pursued or really developed it as an art form because he went into Boarding School, he went into fishing, and went into mainly speaking. He turned to be a Speaker for my people - I am now a combination of an illustrator as well as a speaker - but he turned to mainly speaking for my people and studied and advocated the history of the people. He became that. But this man knew my father when

he was young and realized that he was a competent carver and could develop. He told him that he could use this name, his name Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth. It would be within his right to use it for himself or to give it to one of his sons or someone within the family system. And my father gave that name to me when he realized that I was choosing to be a carver, [that] I was going to be an illustrator, I was going to be a sculptor... so he gave me the name this man had told him to use...and connected the name with our family history of wolves (David, Interview Katz I 1979:27).

Transformation may take place on many levels. For instance on November 6, 1981, Bob Davidson - a Raven - adopted Joe David into his tribe and through this adoption Joe David has become an Eagle in the Haida tribe. This honour was authenticated by the receipt of a new name:

Robert [Davidson] told me the other day that my name that he is going to give me in Haida - we never knew this - the name had to come through proper lineage on his part. Robert had to go and seek for the right directions to be proper, and he finally came back after the Masset thing when he decided he was going to do it...he came back to me and said I have got one for you now. He cannot pronounce it but he said the translation means "Supernatural Spirit Rising".³ That's the next step. To me...my main spirit has been Killerwhale and Wolf, down on the ground, and all of a sudden, I am given that new name, and they call it Spirit Rising, and another meaning for it, is Spirit Rising from the Ground, getting up, so it's almost like Transformation, to transform, to go from there...I have transcended the physical. I am now supernatural and I am going to grow. I am reborn and I am going to grow...it's the direction of my path (David Interview Katz III 1981:61).

Ultimately, Joe David defines even his own art in terms of transformation:

My personal approach towards, whatever I do, be it a painting or a sculpture, is from pure feeling; a feeling that starts deep within me and gets so strong it finally surfaces. I think when you are painting a dance screen, or carving a mask, you have to be totally aware of its lively capabilities in the flickering firelight of the big house. You must transform yourself into that creature -- they truly do have spirits and you must know how to allow the spirit to overtake your mind and body, let it guide your personal spirit (David, in Stewart, C.P.N. Notes 1975).

Transformation is not simply a change from one state into another, but a union of two states or two beings, a sharing. In this cosmology the seeker does not need to travel into other worlds, he already has access to these other worlds, simply by adopting the different points of view of the beings he meets. This interpretation of transformation as sharing is a theme Joe David repeatedly emphasizes. For example, commenting upon the thunderbird on one of his banners Joe David says:

It is a kind of human hand represented there, rather than a claw. Things like that represent to me the sharing, when I use them, just the sharing of energy of that spiritual idea like that, through a human physical existence. Through the sharing of those teachings, one becomes the other, the dancer and the thing he is portraying, little moments in time that emerge and are shared (David, Interview Katz II, 1979:54).

The concept of shared viewpoint also applies, for instance to the dancer, and therefore to the artist who creates the mask:

If the dancers wore a mask that portrayed a beaver or whether they wore a headdress that portrayed Wolf or Eagle, it was symbolic of having merged and having shared as one, like when you dance, it's a symbolic gesture in music and motion, and in two or three dimensional art it is symbolic of having shared the same space, the same point of view of that other creature. It means that your consciousness and its consciousness have shared the same space and have been compatible. You have created a being that was half yours and half its. You have been able to project your consciousness into this creature and find harmony and knowledge, and a creature that will share with you.

As long as the dancers have the mask on, it means that they are still in the animal realm. When they take off the mask they are in the human realm (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:11,14,17).

This depiction of "sharing of energies" and "sharing of identities" between the dancer and the animal he incarnates is the reason why each artist is called to perceive both the "natural" and the "supernatural" so as to translate and transmit the knowledge born from this synthesis. It is an individual task which is reminiscent of the solitary quest of the shaman attempting to give a human voice and purpose to the supernatural being he has met in the wilderness. Such a conception of transformation as sharing of identity may be somewhat removed from Eliade's presentation of transformation as metamorphosis, but it is also very close to what Marie-Françoise Guédon describes for the Tsimshian Indians for whom shamanic transformation is akin to a shift in the perception of reality (Guédon, personal communication).

c) The Concept of Power

The non-human world is for Joe David a source of power as it is for traditional shamans. The ways in which Joe David defines and describes power is however very personal and offers a good example of how he reflects upon traditional concepts and makes them his own.

For Joe David the concept of power is complex. Like transformation, it stems from two components: the supernatural (including its manifestation in nature) and the human. It both "exists" of itself, and expresses itself in the individual human being strong enough to withstand its presence:

Thousand years ago, the powers were already there. The powers that are at my little island now are a combination of the natural powers of that wind and ocean and land but the humans have picked up on it and they knew about it, they understood it and they used it within themselves and that compounded it. The power is indestructible. And the power...the power always has and always will be, I think. And the power propels into endless other dimensions other than the one we claim to witness and deal with on a physical plane (David, Interview Poole 1978:16-17).

While power may vary in intensity and kind according to the receiver and according to the donor, it seems from the context of myths that animals, indeed all nature and its components, are primary owners of powers. So are the supernatural beings whose form is neither human nor animals. Joe David recognizes that spirits are very important beings

able to bestow various powers on men, such as the art of curing, skill at whaling, wealth and ritual songs and dances. They can also be very dangerous if encountered in a state of ritual uncleanness.

But these spirits are also defined by Joe David as another manifestation of the human power generated by belief. Ultimately all power is mental and, when properly understood and used, spiritual:

I believe somehow, all what is happening is an energy form and it is our sense of reasoning built-in human sense of reasoning that transforms it into these events, transforms until you believe thinking it is a spirit when in fact it may be just an energy feeling, representing a set of knowledge that you are looking for. All you need to do is look and you will find it. It will come to you.

The power is the belief...the more you believe in it, the more it happens. The more you believe in anything, the more power you get. You just have to not believe in it, then you are completely outside of it, completely - like you would call - safe from it, it is just outside that circle (David, Interview Katz I 1971 5/7).

Ultimately there is power in everything:

I see, I see and feel powers, the powers, overall powers. Not just of the creating of the art, all the powers. The power of each personality, the power of each voice, the power of each laugh, the power of each scream and cry. The power of every plant. The power of every rock. The power of every tree and the power of every wolf and bug (David, Interview Poole 1979:22).

When people are aware of that power, they derive from it the incentive and strength to create the whole fabric

of their social, cultural and spiritual lives. Power must be controlled and channelled. One of these channels is art, that is traditional art:

And you take people in complete communication as the people were, and they have demonstrated, as their dances did with their environment, with the powers that be. Knowing they had control of it. They took these powers and did the obvious, that was the art, but they also took and learned from the power of those other life forces, to power their own life. There were doctors and there were sorcerers; and there were song makers and there were dreamers and there were, - I was going to say illusionists, magicians. The creators of powers, they had the ability to create visually and emotionally, the stimulants for themselves and for anyone else who wanted to concern with. It is their knowledge, it is their manipulation. It is of their discretion of their decision, who is concerned with that power. with that knowledge (David, Interview Poole 1979:22) (Emphasis added).

As we can see, the human component of power, or rather its translation, is equated here again with knowledge. Ceremonial gatherings are moments when this knowledge is displayed and manifests itself, especially through songs and dances:

Power was accumulated and shared, when people came to potlatch, to dance, to attend ceremonies to a village the villagers would take their canoes up and bring them to the top of the beach, sometimes right into the dance halls... and when the guests arrived they brought their canoes, and whenever they came and went there were always songs and speeches going on... there were hardly a moment without songs...but the power, you have to imagine the concentrated power here, the joy, and the strength of the people underneath...eagle down on everybody...

They were invited, they were welcome to this knowledge and to the beauty and balance and harmony of this family. They were there to witness it...and to know that property and payment, like you are talking about they call it payment now, the giving of goods. They gave an amazing amount of things away and it was just the power, the power that they have received in this knowledge...Power was accumulated and shared. Accumulated. The sharing, it shared with the people and the people shared with it (David, Interview Poole 1979:22).

The artist is one of those who can communicate this knowledge, and move between different kingdoms. This may be one of the reasons why Joe David is fond of linking together the vision of the island where he lives (a traditional Indian whaling village), the description of whaling ritual, and the definition of his art:

Plus, you are also on that little island concerned with all that is there. It's not there no more just because the houses aren't there and because you don't see the people on the beaches. It is there right now, it always has been and it is still moving. The powers that moved the whalers and the powers that the whalers developed and moved themselves, those are still there. And that's what you feel there. That's what you mean when you say "what's happening there? what is this thing?" I know it well only because I know that. Because I am open enough to know that's still there even though you can't see it.

I think just the amount of time that it's taken to build it, the intensity of it, it has to do with the intensity of it. If you were to take another little area where whalers or something had spent even may be one tenth of that time and that concentration and that energy in that spot, there would not be the same as like there. There are hundreds, probably hundreds of years gone into what you feel there on that little island.

The finest of all, West Coast art and West Coast songs and dances, I think were a direct

expression of the balance they had found, the balance they found between them and the whales and them and the ocean, them and the sea and them and the sky (David, Interview Poole 1979:2).

Again, art is here defined as a meditation, the expression of knowledge. As an artist, Joe David channels power; as he says "My whole work is power" (Personal Communication). Power can be conveyed immediately through perfection of technique or perfection of being; craftsmanship is "power". As we can see, power is also harmony. This is another strong theme in Joe David's definition of art. It is found everywhere, not only in the description of a carving but also in the perception of nature and indeed, in any thing or being which is fully itself. Harmony expresses itself in many ways:

The power of the island, is obviously a combination and as far as I am concerned and as far as it stimulates and as far as it teaches me, the power of it is of itself, of its location and of its shape. For instance, you can't think of the island and another geographical location aside from thinking in a more basic sense that there is more power in a perfect circle than there is in a wobbly one. Each thing in its place has different power. It has more power to us because we believe in that perfection. We're striving for it. Of course, the circle is going to be of more power to us. But suppose we weren't concerned ourselves with the perfection of a circle, the perfection of anything but just to feel loose or to feel maybe more direction of a squiggly one. You'd get more, you'd derive more power from it. There is an amazing amount of power on the island...because of that same very reason. Because of how it has been created and how it sits within its own environment. Just like the power of any man and how he has created himself and how he sits with any society (David, Interview Poole 1979:20).

Here again Joe David departs from what we know about the traditional concept of shamanic power and its connotation of possible conflict. For Joe David, power is participation rather than opposition, as transformation is sharing rather than dying. The artist, too, is a participant. Because he is of use to his people, he is powerful; and his power increases to the extent that he accepts his responsibility. The artist is not a commoner. He is not a chief, but like a chief he has access to the traditional lore. The artist is therefore in a position to re-interpret or re-invent his cultural context. In the contemporary world of broken customs and misplaced traditions, the Northwest Coast artist can revalidate the past and re-interpret it in terms acceptable to the modern market, as well as to the native populations involved in the production, appraisal and use of modern Indian art work. There is some difference between the chief and the artist and it gives the contemporary artist a new responsibility. The chief is the teacher of the people, the keeper of the tradition. The artist, on the contrary is a creator of culture; in this sense, he is also a teacher for his community:

All you have to do, I think, is a proper demonstration on your part to convince them that it is valid. I think it is important and it is one of the things that I think is slipping out now within the system of potlatching and accepting the

teaching...It has always been established that there was always new songs, there was always new myths, new interpretations. I personally believe that you have to keep inventing, you have to keep experiencing and I will do it properly. I have to completely convince the people of the worth of it; the power of my presentation is going to reflect the power of the presentation to me, but I plan to do that, I plan to relay that you have to continually invent, and I think also my purpose is convincing them of the validity of the modern present civilization the modern knowledge and technology. I have to somehow convince them that it is a real and probable avenue of expressing and building. I am completely fascinated with stories of the turn of the century of people using what you call advanced technical knowledge to illustrate old myths. There is a lot to say about that... I have to convince them that the power is still there, in modern time like in old time, that it is going on...Perhaps it is asleep and it will bloom again, when people will start to believe in it again...You and I participate in keeping it alive and one of these days, within 10 or 30 years, somebody will pick up the pieces and put them together and it will work again... My father was believing in the validity of modern times. He went to school and he liked it (David, Interview Katz II, 1979:42-43).

Power is the power to be, to create and ultimately to create oneself. The artist represents power more clearly than most other human beings, but this is a prerogative which belongs ultimately, according to Joe David, to everyone:

People knew that the fish did not go down there and turn to human bodies, but they knew the power of that capability, that probability. You can create it if you choose to think that way, then it's going to be that way. If you choose to transform, you could look and be as you very well pleased. You have the power. You have the power to create your own reality.

You have the power to see things the way you see fit. To live according to the way you see fit. And relate to the other natural beings, animals or tribes as you see fit. We're using the same force. We have the same energy...if you didn't have it, you wouldn't perceive it; I think you perceive the things you have energy for. The things that you have worked for, that you want to see, that you believe you want to see. It's just direction, it's just a direction of consciousness. You share that power...that power is there, that energy is there. I'm completely aware that I possess powers and I can manipulate them. I manipulate powers, by manipulate I mean you have an awareness of it, not that you control it and you direct it, although that's what you can do. You are aware of it. If you believe in it, you become aware of it, then you're within the circle and the intensity and the strength of my spirit is widening because I'm correctly and properly dealing with it. Even if you say it is never ending and you say it is never complete, it is always, in a state of becoming just as we are. We become of it and it becomes of us. We are not here for nothing. We're not here just because it's fun to carve, we're not here because it's fun to drive a Corvette or we're not here because it was fun to ride a pony on the plain or canoe on the coast. We are here to develop. We are here to create. We are here to create deeper and deeper insights at a higher level of consciousness on this plan (David, Interview Poole 1979:6-7).

d) The Artist and the Shaman

All true art is a link with and a channel to a higher realm which is at once nature as a whole and one's own self:

The most profound thing coming out of all those era, all those civilizations, is the art...The artwork to me, is the speaker of it. I think the art, my art, is my communication...I am a physical body within all these other cultural

things. I am communicating with my greater self. We are not just human beings, not everybody in the world...You are an incredible being, this is an incredible travel, this is an incredible journey. Something incredible brought you here and you should at all times, in all actuality, be in communication with this greater thing, this greater idea, this greater movement. And that's what art is: I am communicating with and aware of this greater being (David, Interview Poole, 1979:15).

The artist's responsibility in his community is more than a social or even ritual role; it is a spiritual one:

The whaler and hunter is who he is...to bring food to your physical being. The singer and the dancer is the one who nourishes your spiritual being. The main objective is to finally convey that every human endeavour is as equal to the next as anything...there is no superiority. One being is not superior to the other. For every artist, including myself, two dimensional or three dimensional art expresses the communication and that idea of the greater being, the overall encompassing idea of creating and aggression and peace, all of the shaman's works, all of the chief's works, all of the geniuses of the master art works were to illustrate that (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:68).

When I asked him whether he could see the connection between shamanism and art, Joe David responded by defining shamanism:

That's what Northwest Coast art is all about... that's what it demonstrates. That people are under the power of their own beliefs. You form yourself, your own beliefs, your life is not directed by others or any supernatural beings... you are responsible of your own beliefs. The shaman is there to put you back on the right path when you are away from it (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:16).

He then proposed to define the artist as a worker of power:

The shaman's job in the old days was to re-acquaint anybody who was tricked or under an outside influence..., the shaman was there to put you back on the right track when you were away from it. He was going to re-acquaint you with your own power and the proper belief that you could have the power to overcome illness. He will demonstrate through manipulation of nature: 'I can manipulate for you these objects, whether it is two dimensional or three dimensional art, song or dances. I can prove you that you have personally the power'. I have this power. I know the understanding of power as a shaman (David Interview Katz II, 1979:10).

Later on, he completed the equation by revealing his art as a healing process:

"I can heal them...I can heal the people but they have to believe...and I have already healed people in a sense of their beliefs and my culture, my songs...just like X, just like Y even, I have sung songs, shaken rattles. I have shown them that a person can have that command. 'You can do it!' that means I have healed him... They did not believe before...but I have cured them. I told them that it was possible... That is the curing; and I did it through my art. I did it through my rattle, through my songs...through the evolution of my designs Y...looks at my designs, he listens to me, and he watches me and that's part of the curing" (David, Interview Katz III, 1981:84).

Northwest Coast Indian art is very much alive, and we acknowledge the continuity of style and content which links it with the past. Shamanic themes have endured in Northwest Coast art and are still present today in a situation where shamanism is almost dead, and art is usually

divorced from ritual setting. It may very well be that the same themes have been used for a great length of time in contexts divorced from shamanism as such. It may be that when the image is powerful enough, it acts as a trigger for a search, bringing the seeker back to the very shamanic tradition that is hinted at by the art. For certain artists, contemporary Northwest Coast art is a door through which they renew their acquaintance with shamanic concepts, and sometimes techniques and values. Furthermore, Northwest Coast Indian art is especially compelling for the individual artist, in that its themes call to life mythological and cosmological motifs belonging to the old shamanic tradition. A Northwest Coast artist, even in modern days, may choose to follow the lead provided by those themes, and let himself be taught or transformed by the entities he is depicting.

The shamanic themes expressed by Northwest Coast artists in the past and which are still present today reflect deep concern for the human individual and society in general and Northwest Coast culture in particular. They define the human realm by juxtaposition with the non-human realm, coming to terms with transformation and the multiplicity of points of view which are part of life, as well as with the perception of power, including one's own power. Shamanic in origin -- and therefore powerful --

they form a set which defines the Northwest Coast hidden reality.

I have observed Joe David's evolution for several years (1976-1982) and I have noticed a shift in the focus of his production. Since 1980, the masks he has carved are more and more related to the supernatural realm. In 1980 he carved his first shaman's mask and a medicine spirit's mask, followed by three other shaman's masks in 1981 and 1982, and three other medicine spirit's masks. Moreover his production is now aimed mostly towards ceremonial uses. Whether this progression in his works is the direct expression of a general personal evolution or whether the traditional images which he is asked to produce are leading him to explore shamanic ideas, Joe David has reconstructed a shamanic system of his own in which his way of life is intertwined tightly with his artistic creation. It is impossible to separate the artist or the images themselves as factors in this evolution. Joe David was led to the perception of powers partly because of the demands of his art; he has become an artist because the power he feels has to be expressed. In the traditional world, such power would have been expressed in shaman or whaler's rituals. In this modern world, David meets the whale as a figure in his drawing, and he meets the shaman through the discipline of his

drawing style as well as the corresponding demands of his life style. This is how in the Twentieth Century, he succeeds in retaining his identity as a traditional West Coast artist. The cosmological synthesis he is constructing is his own. It brings together traditional lore and concepts and contemporary experiences, even tradition from other North American Indian cultures. This does not invalidate its shamanic qualities. George MacDonald has insisted on the part played by innovation in shamanic technique and performances (MacDonald 1981: 227), and M.F. Guédon has similarly stressed the reliance of the traditional shaman on his own personal experience and his independence vis à vis social rules and traditional world view (Guédon 1982:140). Following these two authors, we may find in the part played by his own experience in Joe David's cosmology a further link with shamanism.

Chapter V - Footnotes

- 1 It is interesting to compare this statement with the one given in the same year (1979) to Mike Poole:

"Only the chiefs possessed the Thunderbird dance, or if a commoner had a Thunderbird in their lineage it's because they were related somehow to a chief's family. But during the Wolf Ritual people like commoners would go through this ritual without even touching a feather of the Thunderbird or had anything to do with a Thunderbird because they were not entitled to" (David, Interview Poole 1979:11).

Such a comparison reveals the stability of Joe David's wording.

- 2 "In history it has been recorded in one of the version that on the West Coast man developed pretty much the same strength as the Martial Art of the Orient: the STRIKE, THE CONCENTRATED STRIKE, the whaler, the chief that threw the harpoon at the whale, just behind the pectoral fin, was throwing a chunk of yew of 18 to 20 feet long, 4 3/8" solid dried yew, which would be very heavy, the weight, if you can imagine that, the throwing into a whale...sure the people were built incredibly in the old days, but I think that this concentrated strike came from the same idea as the Lightning Snake...

I do not think that the Lightning Serpent symbolizes any live creature from the area. I think it symbolizes the Thrust of the harpoon shaft. On almost every barb, there was etched a lightning Snake design on a lot of harpoon shafts. Its carved representation in ivory was often inserted as a charm between the sharp mussel-shells which formed the points of the harpoon employed in order to increase the efficiency of the wealth" (David, Lecture UBC III:25-26). (Emphasis added).

- 3 According to Robert Davidson the Haida name for "Supernatural Spirit Rising" is "Sk-Il-K-aathl-uus " (Personal Communication Dec. 1983).

Conclusion

Joe David's art provides a vivid example of the continuity between traditional and modern Northwest Coast Indian artists. Part of this continuity resides in the social role of the contemporary Indian artist. It may be that the new social value given the contemporary Indian artists by their native communities brings them to accept their cultural responsibility as those who are in contact with traditions. The artist becomes an active participant -- even an essential one -- in the cultural revival process. Joe David addressed this idea explicitly in his lectures; it eventually leads to a re-definition of the artist as a worker of power, that is a ritualist sharing in the world of the chief, the initiate and even the shaman-healer.

In Joe David's case, the continuity with the past is also expressed in the themes he chooses to present in his works. The images produced by Joe David demonstrate that shamanic themes have indeed endured in Northwest Coast art.

But as stated earlier most of the artist's personal intent and meaning are not obvious in most of the images themselves. They do not appear unless one is guided by the artist's comments. This is especially true for the shamanic themes underlying most of Joe David's production.

Though one can recognize shamanic elements in many of his works, the full extent of the influence of shamanic ideas on his art and his life does not show until Joe David himself retraces the circumstances leading to the production of each piece. Ultimately his art is shamanic not only because of the images but still more because of the intent behind their production.

If Joe David is at all representative of Northwest Coast Indian artists, past or present, the analysis presented here adds significantly to any theory which sees a relationship between shamanism and art solely on the basis of an examination of images. The image itself may be less important than its context. Studies based on a collection of specific "shamanic" images such as spirals, trees, cannibal beings or canoes, probably miss the most important element of all, that is the creative vision of the artist. Whether this vision has to be born from personal experience or is dictated by tradition, ignoring it prevents the analyst from understanding the extent of the shamanic content of the images.

The shamanic elements in Northwest Coast Indian art cannot, in my opinion, be adequately understood without either a solid knowledge of the traditional Northwest Coast Indian cultures or the explanations given by the artist himself whenever possible. When Deborah Waite (1966)

and Joan Vastokas (1973) for example rely on the presence of visual themes to find shamanism in Northwest Coast art, they do not take either of these into account and their analyses remain incomplete. Such analyses are much more convincing when the position of the traditional as well as the modern Indian artists are examined: through his art the traditional artist was a full participant in the shamanic rituals of healers, chiefs and initiates; he had direct access to the shamanic cosmology. The modern artist, though separated by time and change from the shamanic traditions has, as Joe David has shown, the opportunity to touch them through his work, and to re-unite in a contemporary synthesis the old initiatic beliefs and the new personal experience. To appreciate the full content of a shamanic image, or to work on it, one may have to become a participant in the ritual. In Joe David's terms:

It is necessary to understand the spirituality of Indian culture, and its expression in art, to sense the integrity of these artists' works. Each artist's designs represent detailed accounts of personal communication with the wisdom and harmony of high order (David, 1978, Graphic Collection).

Joe David provides us with a contemporary window, through which we glance at the magical and complex process of artistic creation in a world explicitly centered in shamanic concepts. One of the conclusions one may reach from Joe David's interviews, as well as from his art works, is that

his images are not illustrations. To use Joe David's terms, they are a "display of knowledge."

We may notice the shamanic quality of the images used in traditional as well as modern Northwest Coast Indian art; but unless we too become participants, we can only glimpse at the "knowledge" they possibly display.

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