

INITIATION AND QUEST IN SOME
EARLY CANADIAN JOURNALS

by

JOHN MAURICE DEVEREUX HODGSON
B.A.,B.A.(Ed.),Memorial University of Newfoundland,1963

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

in the department
of
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

APRIL,1966

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of ENGLISH

The University of British Columbia,
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date APRIL 28, 1966

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines a number of Canadian Captivity and Exploration journals dating from Radisson's account of his captivity in 1652 to the investigation of the West Coast by the naturalist David Douglas in 1826. The examination attempts to reveal these early journal writers not only as men undertaking a specific physical task, but as authors reflecting the spirit of their enterprise in their journals. The genre of the travel journal reflects the literary spirit of the age in which they were written; sometimes allied to it, and at times quite antithetical to it. Each journal exposes an individual, uniquely aware of his position in time and place, attempting to express a novel experience in terms familiar to himself and his readers. The result is not always satisfying from a literary point of view, but then the criteria^{on} of the thesis has not been stylistically based, but has been primarily interested in revealing the individual in his particular endeavour. The results are not consistent nor conclusive, but the examination of the journal, which is the lasting testimony of physical trial, uncovers a fresh literary genre which is usually investigated only by the historian or the geographer.

The thesis is divided into two primary sections: chapter two, which deals with the Captivity journals of John Tanner, Alexander Henry, John Jewitt and Pierre Radisson; and chapter three which investigates the Exploration journals of Radisson, Henry Kelsey, William Cormack, David Douglas, Alexander Mackenzie, David Thompson

and Samuel Hearne. The introductory chapter gives some background to the genre of the travel journal from the period of Richard Hakluyt to the esoteric world of Science Fiction. The nature of heroic endeavour and the position of the travel journal as source material for authors is also briefly discussed.

In handling a subject which refuses to be limited to any one discipline, nothing conclusive can be stated. However, it seems important to isolate the travel journal in its attempt to describe the human condition. The environment and terms are not usually associated with literature, and yet the genre manages, unexpectedly, to point up those universal themes so essential to all creative writing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. CAPTIVITY JOURNALS	20
1. John Tanner (20)	
2. Alexander Henry (29)	
3. John Jewitt (37)	
4. Pierre Espirit Radisson (48)	
III. EXPLORER'S JOURNALS	55
1. Pierre Espirit Radisson (55)	
2. Explorer as poet and scientist (62)	
3. Alexander Mackenzie (71)	
4. David Thompson (77)	
5. Samuel Hearne (83)	
IV. CONCLUSION	92

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Every age of man seeks heroes or the heroic. Usually they are not difficult to find: Homer drew upon a massive oral tradition of the battle of Troy, Virgil showed that the Greek heroes could be borrowed to shore up another culture, and this principle was copied by the Neo-Classical writers of the Eighteenth century. At times the hero might become less overt and more self-conscious as in the work of the Romantics; and today, except in time of great crisis, there appears little of traditional heroics in the modern anti-hero slanted creative artist. However, the spirit which sent Odysseus, and which consequently gave him his heroic status, was the same which drives every explorer, whether his quest takes him across the Aegean, the Arctic, or alone across the Atlantic in a tiny skiff. In the age of anti-heroes, no sophisticated reader seems ready to accept the overt histrionics of a Dumas or Walter Scott, and yet there is lurking in each reader an appreciation of individual endeavour. Almost unacknowledged by the academic world, the journals of scientists, biologists and astronauts are read and their feats viewed by the public, thus feeding a need for heroism which current literary trends do not satisfy.

While the Cousteaus, Fuchs and Glenns of the world make history and reap the rewards from published journals, films and television appearances, publishers continue quietly to provide the public with classic examples of the hero as explorer: the journals of Sir Richard Burton, Captain Cook, James Bruce, Charles Darwin and a host of others. Just as contemporary explorers' journals such as Cousteau's are studied by marine biologists

and Papuan journals are read by anthropologists, so Darwin's may be read as an integral part of the history of the Evolutionary theory or just as a fine example of journal writing. Individual endeavour continues to fascinate a large segment of educated society, not only by exciting wonderment, but by acknowledging the debt which science and humanity owe to these individuals. Canada may seem void of heroes of Homer's stature or even of the modern heroes of space exploration, but again publishers seem aware of this lacuna in popular taste and they continue to offer the public the journals of early Canadian explorers. These men, in their own feats, challenge any of the traditional heroes; for such is the nature of the individual pitted against an adversary that each encounter cannot be assessed by comparison with another; for though not one of Franklin's hundred men left a journal to describe his particular encounter with a hostile fate, individually each of their battles must have been as heroic as Odysseus' encounters in the Aegean.

Perhaps no other form of literature offers such variety to the reading public as these journals. J. B. Tyrrell, himself a journal writer, speaks of the explorations of David Thompson:

Thompson was not a spasmodic explorer; with him surveying was his chief pleasure and life's work... he was exploring, surveying and depicting by regular methods on the map, the features of the country in which he was living... The excellence and greatness of his work is accounted for by this systematic continuation of surveys, practically without a break, for twenty-three years.¹

A journal such as Thompson's simply recording this feat would warrant its

¹ David Thompson's Narrative (1784-1812), (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1916), p. IX

inclusion of any list of individual endeavour, but Thompson includes a faculty for description and awareness of purpose in a remarkably readable journal. Unfortunately, critics of history and literature are too often prone to ignore journal writers' ability for consistent creativity, just as scientists are liable to study Darwin solely for his contribution to science.

English travel journals received their first public recognition in 1589 with Richard Hakluyt's Principal Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation. The inclusion of such diverse journals as Willoughby's describing his search for a Northwest passage to China, Drake's circumnavigation and the tragic and touching account of Sir Humphery Gilbert's last voyage convinced the English of their destiny overseas. Hakluyt's was continued in Purchas' Hakluyt Posthumous which succeeded in underlining the Elizabethan expansion schemes and firmly impressed a new literary genre on a marvellously literate society. The new society of the seventeenth century adopted the Elizabethan expansiveness as a part of its own developing rationalist philosophy, and expressed its concept of a new physical world in its unique application of the Elizabethan poetic conceit and continuing attempts to enforce its civilization upon barbaric tribes. Journals of the Elizabethan period are superlative in that the explorers and colonizers were educated courtiers with some, like Walter Raleigh, acknowledged poets and literary figures. These journals, therefore, are in some instances the reflection of an artist upon a physical quest, or at least the educated and sophisticated man of leisure commenting upon the conquest of personal physical

and spiritual privitation for gain and glory. It was not until the nineteenth century, with the search expeditions for John Franklin, that this extensive combination of purpose and educated sophistication was repeated, at least in North American exploration writing, but by then England had long forgotten its initial thrust into the New World and though the purpose of the nineteenth century explorers was dramatic and moving, the national spirit and wonder was lacking. By Franklin's time Exploration journals were an accepted part of the English commercial publishing world, and occasionally an added impetus was given the genre by national concern such as the loss of the Erebus and Terror in 1845: or exceptional journals such as Richard Burton's; but the latter, and journals of that calibre enjoy a steady reputation and influence to the present time.

Travel journals, that is those which are not written solely to impress a reader with a certain esoteric area or anthropological curiosities, have a purpose in which the literary value can only be considered as secondary. Beyond the concept of the individual as hero, the run-of-the-mill journal writer whose scope is small in physical endeavour and literary ability, the accomplishment can really only be of interest to the scientist, socialist, or politician. Each can be judged by the standards of scientific or sociological writings, but little can be gained by literary criticism, and little can be gleaned by the uninitiated reader. Even these, though, can be judged as a quest, however small; each is a unique attempt to reach a goal and the written journal is a personal triumph no matter how small the public or how slight the endeavour. But upon these small triumphs rise spiralingly a greater and more universal literary achievement acknowledged and promoted

by a chauvinistic Hakluyt, and which will cease only when man loses his curiosity and his ability to express wonder.

Although these journals may be easily judged as expressions of personal endeavour, in whatever category, criticism becomes more tenuous when an attempt is made to judge them as literature. What makes John Smith's poignant account of his initiation so readable, a classic in its field? Why are Cook's journals, though primarily of interest to the cartographer or politician, still read and republished in inexpensive editions? There seems to be an intrinsic literary quality in some journals which finds response in the generation for which they were written but contain as well a universality of theme - adventure, quest, initiation, endeavour, privation - hence, their current popularity is easily accounted for. Others which have enjoyed a less consistent popularity have been immortalized by their influence on other authors. There seems to be little doubt for instance that Shakespeare read either Sir George Summers' or Sylvester Jourdain's account of the wreck of the Sea Adventure in 1610 and incorporated many of the details of the accounts for The Tempest which was presented in 1611. Indeed, like all educated and informed Elizabethans, Shakespeare was very aware of the new spirit of adventure which was in good part due to the new discoveries made abroad by English sailors and to Hakluyt and Purchas' compilations.

In the following century, some of the most famous metaphysical poems owe their success to capturing the new spirit of travel and expansion of man's physical realms, and the New World loses nothing when reflected in the ethereal concept of the metaphysical conceit. Donne's effective

and moving images of the expanding and contracting world and universe in "Sunne Rising", or the compass image in "Valediction: forbidding mourning", and again in perhaps the most clever and lasting images of love exaggeration in Marvell's "Coy Mistress" all aptly demonstrate the influence of travel journals on poetry. Although this influence waned in the eighteenth century, it flourished for the Romantics as it had for the Elizabethans. On the continent, Rousseau must have drawn from explorers' journals for his concept of the noble savage, and Chateaubriand, in his short sojourn in America, could not have conceived his romanticized savage Rene without recourse to French explorers' journals. Low⁵, in The Road to Xanadu, investigates this facet of the creative genius in Coleridge. He traces minutely the influences of travel journals upon the great Romantic poet, and though these are numerous and one admires Lowes for his sleuthing techniques, it is his generalizations on the nature of travel journals that are more interesting. He sees the Ancient Mariner as the product of the centrifugal force of the imagination: its ability, unlike the lesser power of Fancy, to reach out into new territories - the phantasmogoric world of the explorer - and draw from completely new experiences and new territories, ideas and adventures which are normally antithetic to the atmosphere of English literature. Coleridge's genius, Lowes says, was to make a fantasy world created from travel literature meaningful for the English reader, making it avid and still suited to the poetic doctrine of Lyrical Ballads.

At times, travel journals are not capable of supplying the need of authors for quest material. Such is the case with the growing field of

fiction literature which, initiated by Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, has burgeoned into a pot-pourri of exciting speculation and fanciful nonsense. The spirit of travel journals is there and the impetus, perhaps, of Hakluyt and Purchas has allowed Man's imagination to conceive very accurately the nature of space travel through historical knowledge of man pitted against the unknown; consequently, the accounts of today's space travellers do not surprise readers inured by nearly a century of imaginative speculation. The New World in the sixteenth century or the moon in the twentieth still demands the same qualities from the explorer and the records and literature which evolve from these expeditions may vary in locale and quality, but the quest and record are universal. It is a curiosity of man's power of imagination and expression that time is of no consequence: the journal may influence literature, or literature the travel journal.

Amongst the plethora of journals published in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from all parts of the expanding empires of the European powers, the North American exploration journals had an individual character and influence. The Romantics drew upon these journals almost exclusively for their interpretation of the romantic savage life, just as Shakespeare did two hundred years before when he peopled Prospero's island with 'those goodly creatures'. Doubtless the prime factor in the North American exploration journal and, of course, the Initiation journal was the Indian. For, essentially, the success of each venture depended upon the native North American who guided, or captured the journal writer and upon whom the European was dependent. Perhaps not only the mission was dependent upon the nomadic Indians who

knew the routes which interested the traveller, but the journal itself, which was usually only a by-product of the journey, often owed its drama and intrinsic unity to the degree that the explorer or initiate entered into the way of the Indian. Few Exploration journals exhibit an authentic sense of unity because the author was unable to integrate with the native population; and there seems little doubt that the success of a journal, artistically, is directly proportionate to the author's integration into that society. The former thesis that the explorer is dependent upon the native population was proved time and again by land explorers like Lewis and Clarke in the United States, or Samuel Hearne in northern Canada. Vilhjalmar Stefansson was the first to realize this premise in arctic exploration and his popular journal, The Friendly Arctic, is his attempt to prove the theory:

Sir John Ross, who, fortunately for the advancement of polar technique, was thrown in close association with the Eskimos, borrowed some Eskimo ideas but used them with the ineptitude of the novice. He employed sledges and made some use of dogs. It seems extraordinary that no explorer thought of going directly to the Eskimos and borrowing their system of life and travel in toto; that instead of learning native methods they found it necessary to discover for themselves the same principles of living and travelling which the Eskimos had discovered years before.²

This concept is not hard to believe and certainly Stefansson's five years in the Arctic living as an Eskimo and his consequent arctic discoveries proved a concept which is accepted today as common sense. Still, it was only after two abortive attempts to reach the Coppermine river that Samuel

² The Friendly Arctic, (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1944), p. 3

Hearne finally put himself in the hands of a Chipewyan Indian, Matonabee, and completed the most daring exploratory feat in America up to that time. The belief that this absorption into the native life also affects the value of the explorer's or captive's journal is hypothetical, but a theory which determines the success of a voyage must surely also affect the written journal.

Early Canadian journals fall into two categories: the journal of exploration and the Captivity or Initiation journal. The former is quite easily classified while the latter tends to overlap the exploration field as the Captivity journal writer may be crossing new territory and hence, if conscious observation of the new lands and the consequent description warrant it, the man may be considered an explorer. This is particularly true of Radisson who, in his early Captivity journal, obviously is describing new territory in the interior of eastern Canada, but the inability of modern geographers to accurately follow his course usually discounts this first voyage as one of exploration. In his next five voyages, he describes himself as an adventurer - fur trader, but for posterity he is one of Canada's earliest explorers. The Captivity journal is usually one of travel as the captive is forced to become a member of a nomadic people; if not nomadic by nature they are forced to become so in face of the white man's revenge. Although early captives such as Radisson could not hope for aid from the French population, since the French themselves held on only tenuously to their forts in the seventeenth century; later captives, such as John Tanner and Jewitt, forced the natives to adopt more protective methods - the former covering a large area with his

tribe while the latter, being captive of a sea coast tribe, was simply moved a few miles to the interior when danger from white population seemed imminent. Alexander Henry the elder, who willingly adopted the Indian way of life in order to escape death at the hands of a rival tribe, travelled extensively during his relatively short captivity period, but only within a confined area in the vicinity of Michilmackinac. Only Radisson amongst these few captives seemed really conscious of the possibility of quest, and only his journal despite its inaccuracies, approaches the nature of the Exploration journal, doubtless pointing to the direction that his later writing was to take.

The Captivity journal as a literary genre began with the account of John Smith, and in many ways his experiences form the basic pattern of the Initiation journal. The archetypal pattern, such as developed, starts usually with a battle in which the future captive manifests some trait which the savage admires, usually bravery, which results in the captive being singled out and preserved. On other occasions, the prospective captive exhibits some skill, as in the case of John Jewitt who was observed by the Indians of Nootka plying his trade as armourer on the ship for weeks before the massacre of the ship's crew. Though a battle is usually the genesis of the Initiation journal, at times it seems a white captive is taken as revenge for death of a youth in battle or to replace a chief's favourite son who has died. Only in the case of Alexander Henry does there seem to be no reason for preservation beyond some sympathetic communion between the victim and his future champion, as Henry himself says describ-

ing his experience during the massacre of Michilmackinac:

One of them named Wenniway, whom I had previously known, and who was upward of six feet in height, had his entire face and body covered with charcoal and grease, only that a white spot of two inches in diameter encircled either eye. This man, walking up to me, seized me with one hand by the collar of the coat, while in the other he held a large carving knife, as if to plunge it in my breast; his eyes, meanwhile were fixed steadfastly on mine. At length, after some seconds of the most anxious suspense, he dropped his arm saying, 'I won't kill you'.³

Usually, initial preservation depends upon youth, skill or possibly bravery, but ultimately the captive must have the fortune of being adopted by a powerful chief, whose strength within the tribe shields the captive from the jealousies of the other savages. The extent to which such protection could be relied upon is shown by Radisson who murdered three of his Iroquois captors in an abortive attempt to escape and yet was forgiven; and Jewitt who was threatened innumerable times by lesser chiefs who feared the white man's retribution if Jewitt were discovered as their captive. John Tanner's protector was a female chief, Net-no-kwa who, though very prone to drink, evoked in Tanner a warm sense of affection through a narrative usually void of any feeling. For it was necessary for the captive to enter into the life of the Indian and to do it willingly, just as it was necessary for the successful explorer to integrate, though necessarily more superficially, into the savage society.

The major part of the Captivity journal is concerned with the Indian way of life, and it is this aspect which must have particularly fascinated

³ Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories,
ed. James Bain (Toronto, George N. Morang, 1901), p. 86.

the European reader. Much of this life was nomadic, thus completely foreign to civilized nations; while the journals of Smith and Jewitt describe societies which doubtless impressed the Romantic conception of a rude, but sophisticated settled population. The Iroquois of Radisson's time were barbaric to the extreme and his journal reflects this barbarity to the detriment of the journal as a literary unity. The degree of success of the Captivity journal depended upon this ability to unify experience, but to the author's contemporaries it must also have depended upon the horrific descriptions, such as abound in Radisson's narrative and which doubtless appealed to his age; while a relatively mild and sophisticated society such as that at Nootka must have impressed the then romantically inclined nineteenth century reader. Unconcerned with the scientific aspect of their sojourn amongst the savages the captive, unlike the explorer, describes the Indian way of life without scientific detachment or organization, but primarily as an instrument to épater les bourgeois and to increase the sale of their journals.

Most of the Indian captives long for release despite their ability to form close attachments within the Indian society. Alexander Henry, although he was a captive for a very short period, found he enjoyed the Indian life and save for a 'lingering hope' that he might be released, he was content to remain with his captors. Henry, though, adapted himself; whereas Jewitt never seemed to be able to throw off civilization, refusing to wear Indian clothing even two years after his capture, and he spends much of his time bemoaning the squalor of Indian life and longing for a sight of white civilization. Tanner, whose thirty year period of captivity places him in

a unique category of Initiation journal writers, was captured as a young boy and seems to have lost all vestige of his natural background and alternately longed for and feared a release which, in fact, he could have effected almost any time after his capture. When release does come, for most it results in mixed feelings, that of leaving a primitive society which accepted and protected despite incredible differences, and returning to a white society which could never accept them without making them aware of their former way of life. Radisson, as a result, is unable in his later years to be content with white society, and fortunately for the history of Canadian expansion, is only happy when exploring new territory close to his old captors. Henry is accused by his countrymen of spinning tales, and Tanner is dubbed the 'Old Liar' and he reverts to the bush after several unhappy years trying to adapt to Sault St. Marie society. In each case, the more successful journal writer seems to be he who adapted into the Indian society, and yet the more integrated he became the less successful was his re-entry into civilization after release.

The actual writing of the Captivity journal creates several problems for the historian and the literary critic. Since each captive is alone in his adventures, save Jewitt who managed to save one other crew member by posing him as his father, the question of authenticity is inevitable. Then, apart from this basic historical problem, the critic of the journal will also want to know whether it was written to aggrandize the reputation of the journal writer or if it is an honest account of unusual happenings. Also, the journalistic ability of the writer influences the journal, as does the length of time that elapses from the time of release to the

actual writing of the journal. Finally, the essential difference between the Captivity journal and the Exploration journal is the former's attempt to popularize the adventures of an Indian captive which is closer to the genre of the novel, or specifically fictional travel literature such as Robinson Crusoe, while the Exploration journal has as its purpose the extension of known lands either for commercial or political exploitation. One would expect the Initiation journal to be more popular and lasting, but curiously this is seldom the case. This can be accounted for in part by the authors themselves and their educational backgrounds, their depth of association with the Indians, and the nature of the literate man who seeks heroic status but whose critical faculties demand dramatic unity over isolated adventures - a combination which is seldom found in Captivity journals because of the literary limitations of the authors.

Authenticity of the Initiation journal can only be judged individually; but in general there seems to be little gained by the author manufacturing his story, for he then places himself in a genre beyond his literary powers. One could not imagine, for instance, Radisson's narrative being compared to Defoe: the subtlety of fiction is beyond Radisson. However, a consideration of the journals as literature precludes the necessity of determining their authenticity. Of the four journals that are discussed below, Radisson is not writing in his native language; Tanner has little or no education, and though his narrative is written in the first person it was dictated to an amanuensis; Henry shows considerable powers of observation and emotional response to his situation while Jewitt obviously is educated, but is rather too aware of this and other aspects of his civilized background. As education, or

lack of it, influences the journals so also does time lapse. Radisson wrote the account of his captivity probably about 1668, approximately fifteen years after the event and after he had completed his later important explorations. In the interim, he had changed his national allegiance from France to England and had also learned to express himself, though haltingly, in the language of his new affiliation. How much this fifteen year lapse and the confusion, which must have resulted from covering some of the same territory, affected his version of the Captivity journal is impossible to judge. Like the question of authenticity, the effect of time lapse upon the finished journal must be considered by inspecting the individual journal.

Finally, Radisson may have had as his purpose in writing his journal an attempt to impress the English government, which he certainly succeeded in doing as his information precipitated the creation of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670; Alexander Henry wrote his journal after he had retired from the fur trade, doubtless after encouragement from those same New York burghers whom he was supposed to be hoodwinking; Tanner wrote, or dictated, in an attempt to establish himself in the place of his birth; and Jewitt because he was aware of the unique place such narratives enjoyed in the public esteem. Certainly, few of these journals could claim to have been written for altruistic purposes, nor for the scientific purpose of the exploration journalists; but then these men owe their fame not to purposeful scientific or commercial training but to fate, and the permanence of their journals is as uncertain as that initial thrust into the unknown.

The purpose of the explorer's journal is self-evident, or so it

appears until one realizes that though the outcome is the same for all - the discovery of new territory - the genesis of each may be quite different. Henry Kelsey covered some of the same territory as Radisson, but Kelsey ventured further west almost accidentally bumping into the prairies and sighting the Rockies after an effortless trip across the grasslands:

This plain offers nothing but Beast and grass
And over it in three days time we past ⁴

Kelsey, of course, was travelling as a fur trader and though he could not envision the future importance of the Prairies and the Beasts, that he so disparagingly mentions, to the fur trade, he is the first of the Hudson Bay pedlars to penetrate the country which in future years would prove so contentious. As the French moved into the country that Radisson opened up in his later voyages, the English were content to remain on the Bay trading with the few Indians who risked the long trip from the Northwest. It was not until the French were defeated in the Seven Years War that the English once again showed some interest in expanding, and this took the novel form of scientific and commercial speculation over copper ore brought to the Prince of Wales Fort by some Chipewyan Indians. After two abortive attempts, Samuel Hearne reached the mouth of the Coppermine river in 1771 with the aid of Matonabee, and Hearne's journals and maps proved him able not only to expand the trade, but also proved him competent as a surveyor, cartographer, anthropologist and an exceptionally fine journal writer. Alexander Mackenzie travelled first down his River of Disappointment in 1789 with no

⁴The Kelsey Papers, The Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, 1929.

purpose other than to expand the trade and to prove the theory of his mentor, Peter Pond, that there existed a western water route across the continent to the Pacific and the markets of China; but Mackenzie, like Pond, was no surveyor and their estimation of the width of the continent was ingenuously inaccurate as he discovered himself in his later voyage. Undeterred, Mackenzie returned to London to prepare himself scientifically for his voyage to the Pacific which he completed with amazing speed in 1792-3. Mackenzie's object was to expand the trade for his own company, in which he had a profitable partnership, and to find a practical western outlet for the furs. His journal is laconic as one might expect, though detailed in astronomic observation and charted distance; and since he was ashamed of his lack of creative expression, he had it edited and rewritten. For his achievements he received a knighthood and a fortune in the trade. The man who ten years later followed his trail moved painfully more slowly, and his journal reflects a moody temperament and indecision, but also powers of observation and creativity. David Thompson had no interest in the fur trade and was proud to announce to the Indians that he encountered that his object was not trade, but rather diplomacy and discovery. Consequently, when the North West Company insisted that he move swiftly down the Columbia to establish the company at the mouth of the river, he hesitated through imagined fear of the Piegan Indians and when he did arrive in 1811 Astor's men had preceded him by several months. Annoyed as the partners of the North West Company must have been, the map which Thompson presented to William McGillivray and the journal which he completed later absolved him and placed him as a journal writer equal to Hearne.

Charles Darwin, perhaps the greatest of naturalists, showed in his journal of the Beagle expedition that the naturalist's journal need not be unintelligible nor uninteresting to the unscientific reader. Following this dictum required a man as capable in his own field as was Darwin, and yet sufficiently aware of the extent of human endeavour to realize the potential in exploration. Cormack, in his trek across Newfoundland in 1822, seems only vaguely aware of the creative possibilities of his endeavour. His narrative, unlike Darwin's, seldom expresses wonder but remains primarily a description of flora and fauna of the island. There seems to be in his journal little sustained awareness of the quest until the closing passages, but by then civilization is close and the fear of being forced to remain in unknown aboriginal country, which might have saved the journal from its author, is relieved by the sight of the goal. David Douglas, in his perambulatory wanderings on the west coast of a few years later, has in many respects the fine subjectivity of observation and awareness of adventure that Darwin has. As Darwin placed himself for an indeterminate time on the Beagle, so Douglas allows himself to be dictated to by the land in which he travels, and as Darwin had time to absorb and theorize for five years so Douglas remained without the destructive sense of urgency. Just as the ultimate in explorer's journals seems to be those written by men who allow the land and its inhabitants to regulate their quest, so the best scientific journals are those which reflect an absorption of the country rather than the attempt to force one's individuality upon an unrelenting wilderness.

Heroism is a difficult quality to assess. Radisson apparently had

it in abundance, Cormack did not have the opportunity to test his courage, and Mackenzie probably never gave his state of mind sufficient consideration to determine attitudes. But each of these men ^{was} ~~were~~ faced with danger for different reasons. Each reacted in an individual way and each experience is recorded idiosyncratically. Therefore, in order to assess the worth of the experience to the individual, and consequently to the reader of its record, the explorer or captive must be judged as an individual in those surroundings, and the journal as an expression of the individual in the savage environment. An examination of Captivity or Exploration journals, then, becomes an investigation of the spirit of expression, rather than stylistic analysis in an isolated sense. When extracted, the act completed is not one of recognized heroic action, but rather conscious expression of a trail, a true awareness of singular time and place which may be expressed in a single moment of awareness, or awareness over an entire journal. The consideration of any journal of this nature must be with a view to determine its worth through the spirit expressed, and to this end the style of the journal plays a relatively small part.

This spirit, be it heroic or simply the record of one man's attempt to preserve his life, is common to all Captive and Exploration journals. The Canadian journals are not less interesting or immediate than those preserved by Hakluyt or Purchas for the basic spirit of individual endeavour is intrinsic to the genre. There is no need to apologize for illiteracy, ingenuousness, or even histrionics; it is necessary only to sympathize with the naive or deride the proud, in either case try to uncover the spirit of true man in a strange and wonderful adventure.

CHAPTER II

The Captivity Journal

1. John Tanner - The Complete Captive

Perhaps nowhere in early Canadian journals is there displayed such a drive for self-preservation as in John Tanner's narrative. Though each captive and explorer suffers physical privation, Tanner's narration of thirty years with the nomadic Ojibbeway tribe gives in a very real sense the transience of Indian existence. The battle for survival never eludes the reader, and the narrative carries him from insatiable gluttony to starvation, from delirious dreams induced by hunger to miraculous intervention, which preservation allows the cycle to be repeated. In Indian life, as recounted by Tanner, there is no sense of unity; it is just an endless, repetitive cycle without sense of accomplishment or completeness. According to the thesis that a successful narrative is dependent upon the author integrating into the Indian Society, Tanner's journal should be a superior one. However, Tanner's narrative suffers if anything, from too close an association with the natives, whatever natural unity the journal might have is destroyed by the characteristic disjointed Indian life which, though it amazes the reader, equally confuses him by the destruction of coherent time lapse and consistent action.

Tanner's long captivity and the consequent authentic information which his narrative contains is, perhaps, most useful to the anthropologist and social historian. The direction that Tanner's narrative took was determined firstly by the man who undertook the writing of Tanner's memoirs, Edwin James, a doctor in Sault St. Marie, who was aware of the importance

of Tanner's experience to posterity and specifically to the scientist and philologist. Not only does the original edition contain Tanner's narrative, but also a considerable section on the language and customs of the Indians with whom he lived. Considering James' scientific bias, it is not difficult to imagine that he influenced Tanner's narrative not only in the careful notation of Indian customs, but James' influence is also noticeable by his predilection in including only what he considered important. As a result, he, as the virtual author of the narrative, in spite of his declarations that Tanner's "whole story was given as it stands, without hints, suggestions, leading questions, or advice of any kind, other than to 'conceal nothing',"¹ is surely liable to criticism for what he consciously omits. Indeed, a good part of the lack of coherence in time and place may be due to James who admits further that he "retrenched or altogether omitted"² many accounts of hunting and travelling. Altogether, James' introductory essay reveals more of his own character and particular prejudices than of his relationship to the man upon whose shoulders he stands. After a brief and unconvincing panegyric to Tanner's adventure, which to James seems not to require the credulity of the reader but his sympathy and understanding for the 'barbarian', James then launches into his private philosophy of Indian affairs.

Apartheid is not the answer, but rather wholesale integration of the Indian society into the white. Otherwise, he says "as separate and

¹A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner, p. xix.
²loc. cit.

individual tribes... it is probable they cannot long continue in existence".³ The white society, he claims, must 'overcome the habitual indolence and contempt of labour ... and the introduction of the English Language should keep equal pace ... but at the same time lay aside and forget their own, and with it their entire system of traditional feelings and opinions on all subject'.⁴ It is unfortunate that a man of so obviously antithetical interests and beliefs to Tanner, who wished to maintain as much as possible his Indian training while living in the "Sault", should become the editor for a captive who could have given to posterity an unequalled account of Indian life. Paradoxically, James, the scientist, could not forbear to record the dying language of the Indian; longingly regarding the passing of a complete race much as the English in Newfoundland must have shaken their heads when the last of the aborigines died: James wishing to complete politically what the English accomplished with arms.

If James succeeded as a scientist but failed, in his bias, as an amanuensis, he could not altogether destroy the narrative. Tanner, obviously unruly and rebellious as a child, was captured by two Ojibbeway warriors in 1789 when he was just nine years of age. He spent the next thirty years in semi-captivity, gradually winning the confidence of the tribe and becoming an integral part of the savage life. His first two years are ones of unmitigated privation and horror. He was captured by Manito-o-geezik, a troublesome old man despised equally by Indian and whiteman, as a replace-

³ Tanner, p. xxxiv.

⁴ loc. cit.

ment for his son who had recently died. Although proud of his adept kidnapping of the boy, the old warrior seemed to regard Tanner's life as something created for his pleasure and the shame which Tanner underwent at his hands remained with him even until his release. Tanner's narrative success seems often due to his ability at understatement. An incident which occurred in his first year of captivity is characteristic of the narrative, but only Jewitt could equal him for economy of words; Radisson or Henry would have given this almost surrealistic experience much more prominence.

It now began to be warm weather, and it happened one day that having been left alone, as I was tired and thirsty, I fell asleep. I cannot tell how long I slept, but when I began to wake, I thought I heard someone crying a great way off. Then I tried to raise my head, but could not. Being now more awake, I saw my Indian mother and sister standing by me, and perceived that my face and head were wet. The old woman and her daughter were crying bitterly, but it was some time before I perceived that my head was badly cut and bruised. It appeared that after I had fallen asleep, Manito-o-geezik, passing that way, had perceived me, and tomahawked me, and thrown me in the bushes.⁵

It was not the last time that Tanner was near death either through the mischief of some Indian who disliked him or through exposure to uncompromising Nature; but the laconic description of his own blood on his face and the contrast between the helpless despair of the women and the equanimity of the husband aptly describes the helplessness of the boy, and incidentally the indomitable spirit which he had in order to survive in such a society.

But survive he did. After two years of this abominable treatment he was bought by another Indian; this time the remarkable Net-no-kwa, chieftess

⁵Tanner, p. 10

of the Ottawwaws, who had also lost a son. It was the very different treatment which Tanner received at the hands of Net-no-kwa which must have prevented him from returning to his white family, and it was with her that he acquired the great skill as a hunter and also the characteristic nomadic nature of the Indian. Tanner's relationship with Net-no-kwa is the only one which lifts the narrative above the selfish concern of the author into the plane of human intercourse. It is only with his foster mother that he achieves any degree of sympathy or rapport with another human, and it is the anecdotes of his life with her that supplies the most lasting impression in the narrative.

Net-no-kwa, perhaps because of her human sympathy, a trait seldom shown in Tanner's account of the uncivilized Indian, and her hereditary importance in the tribe, is distrusted by many Indians and ridiculed by not a few. When Tanner was still a boy and had just learnt to hunt at the insistence of Net-no-kwa, one of the many instances of near starvation occurred within their lodge which occasioned the woman to self-induce a dream that might find them game. Her dream, as related the following morning, gave clear but complicated directions where a hibernating bear might be found and thus easily killed. The other Indians being accustomed to her claim as a clairvoyant ridiculed her and refused to comply with her directions despite their starved condition. The boy hunter, in his confidence in her, set out alone and after following the directions of the old woman's dream discovered the bear's hideout, shot the animal, and returned secretively to confide to his Indian mother the truth of her dream. The whole incident has the aura of magic and credulity, but it is a

credulity which Tanner must have acquired from exposure to this one person whom he loved, the only person he openly declared any depth of love for and she, apparently, half witch. The atmosphere of mystery surrounding this relationship is even more marked in Tanner's recounting of one of the episodes when Net-no-kwa was in her habitual drunken stupor. Again, while still a child, Tanner placed his mother in their canoe and with the rest of the children set out to sail across Lake Winnipeg. As he had been warned might happen, a storm arose and the waves threatened to swamp the canoe. The crying of the children woke the mother who, realizing the desperate nature of their situation, prayed earnestly to the Great Spirit. Though the waters did not become calm, they managed to make the opposite shore in an area so rocky that the Indians normally avoided it even under ideal weather conditions. The anecdote, with its Christian undertone, and many others which Tanner recounts regarding this strange woman and her occult powers, demonstrates his love for her and also shows Tanner at his story-telling best.

Tanner's relationship with the two Indian women whom he took as wives, both of whom deserted him and left him to care for their children, sharply contrasts with the relationship with his mother. Toward his children, however, he shows the usual Indian forbearance, for throughout the winter after his first wife decamped he had to supply all the wants of his small family even to the preparation of their clothing, through a winter with its usual scarcity of game for the Indian. The code of the Indian, however, and the necessity of survival forced him to waive both affection and love of children when two children under his care

accidentally burned down his lodge in mid-winter. James, as editor and official apologist, tries to explain away Tanner's cruelty when he sent the girl responsible for this accident into the cold without her blanket. Tanner's behaviour, actually, is in keeping with his integration into the Indian mores, and his ambivalent attitude toward his young wards is characteristic of Indian behaviour and the gist of the whole narrative.

Although most of the narrative is taken up with the serious business of providing for his family or his jaunts into Sioux country on innumerable pointless and unrewarding war parties, the reader glimpses occasionally a bit of humour in a life and narrative painfully void of any amusement. The occasion of one wry comment was Lord Selkirk's peace-making attempts to insure the safety of his colony at Red River. In the usual pompous fashion of the whiteman in addressing the Indian, which must have particularly irked Tanner, Selkirk opened with the traditional 'My children' and proceeded in painfully metaphoric language to outline the reasons why the tribes must remain peaceful and not attack the white settlements.

The Indians answered with the usual promises and professions, and being about to leave the fort that evening, they stole every horse belonging to Lord Selkirk and his party.⁶

Thus it was that Selkirk learned that the Indians were not likely to take anymore kindly to settlers than would the North West Company, for both required the primeval land to pursue their livelihoods.

⁶Tanner, p. 221

Tanner's narrative has all the potential for either a scientific journal or a novel. In the former it fails, as like all non-scientific captives, Tanner is unable to be consistent in his observations. As a novel it might succeed as the narrative could be mostly imaginative, at least at times it gives the impression of fiction, but it lacks unity of purpose and action. Like much travel literature, Tanner's narrative is the statement of one person's wanderings; but the classical tales of wanderers had some goal to give their story a sense of completion, Tanner's hardly rises above the near futile purposes of self-preservation. There is certainly little sense of the heroic.

In Tanner's narrative there is involvement in the surroundings, a necessary departure from normal and happier associations, but no feeling of deliberate sin as with Cain or the Wandering Jew: there is in no way a consciousness by Tanner or the reader of expiation or forgiveness or ultimately, release. It is, perhaps, with a subconscious mark of Cain that Tanner returns to Sault St. Marie society and attempts to accept, and be accepted by, white society. The mark of the wanderer is on him, but he is apparently unaware of this. If he had been aware he would doubtless have had no less a tragic end, but consciousness of his fate would have given the narrative the impetus to raise it into the realm of tragedy. As it is, the narrative simply records the impossibility of Tanner finding a sense of permanence in white society. He tries, for he lives with his newly found relations in Kentucky and Missouri, but his deeply instilled nomadic nature prevents his settling permanently. He cannot abide living in houses so he wanders back to the more primitive

Sault St. Marie and marries a white woman. But, still not comprehending his social stigma or his fate, he soon after disappears into the bush and from the annals of recorded history.

2. Alexander Henry

Whereas John Tanner, by his adventures and his own admission, can be termed the 'compleat captive', Alexander Henry is really only a superficial captive, but an educated one and aware of the importance of his rare experience. Tanner is dependent upon his editor to express his story, but Henry is avidly literate and tells his story, with doubtless many embellishments, for all its worth. Both the purpose and the tone of his narrative are stated in his preface:

A premature attempt to share in the fur trade of Canada, directly on the conquest of the country, led the author of the following pages into situation of some danger and singularity.⁷

The opening adjective premature sets the atmosphere of adventure, but also could describe the stripling fur trader of twenty-one who set out in 1760 on the heels of the French capitulation to harvest the fur trade areas which had been ignored since the start of the war four years earlier. In the same preface, he dismisses his obligation to science and yet at the same time attempts a narrative to interest both the layman and the scientist by refusing to separate observation of Indian custom and language from the narrative of events.

The heads under which, for the most part, they will be found to range themselves, are three; first, the incidents or adventures in which the author was engaged; secondly, the observation, on the geography and natural history of the countries visited, which he was able to make, and to preserve; and thirdly, the

⁷ Alexander Henry, Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories, (Toronto, George N. Morang & Company Ltd., 1901) preface

views of society and manners among a part of the Indians of North America, which it has belonged to the course of his narrative to develop.⁸

The anthropologist reading this preface would doubtless think the narrative indeed a scientific find, but in fact he would discover that the final sentence more closely resembles the truth; for despite his apparent design to be methodical the narrative wins out and the observation of Indian life and customs are incorporated directly into the stream of the narrative.

Henry's captivity antedates that of Tanner by some thirty years, and though the former spent only one year with his Indian family, he covered much of the same area as Tanner though necessarily somewhat more confined. Henry is aware of the exploratory significance of his travels with the Indian Wawatam, but of course he has no way of plotting his course; thus, though he was the first English trader in the area, his journal cannot be considered an important document in English exploration. In fact, his journal was not published until 1807, and by that date all the territory that he covered then, and later in trading in more western areas, was more accurately traced and recorded by Alexander Mackenzie whose journal was published in 1801. Henry was captured at the time of the June, 1763 massacre at Fort Michilmackinac when the Indians were still sympathetic toward the French traders. The Indian Wawatam, who some time before the massacre had adopted Henry as a replacement for a

⁸loc. cit.

dead brother, was responsible for Henry's preservation when he was discovered by the marauding Indians. As in Tanner's case, Henry's benefactor was a chief, and a chief of sufficient power to assure the strong protection necessary. Henry's preservation, then, follows the archetypal pattern, and the year which he spent with the chief's family in the Michilmackinac area attests to Henry's ability to accept his position as captive by becoming as much as possible in that short period an active member of the hunting society.

Henry's journal, since it was written by the captive himself, reveals more of the man as captive and as journal writer than Tanner's could do. How much of the content of Henry's journal can be attributed to this fact, and how much is due simply to his short captivity and the consequent novelty of experience, is conjectural. Doubtless, Tanner omits many of the horrors of Indian practice because of his involvement with them (and perhaps because his editor chose to omit them); whereas Henry's journal glories in Gothic horror which must account for some of the incredulity which greeted its publication. Tanner, for instance, tends to depress the relation of incidents involving cannibalism, perhaps rightly accepting them as part of any savage society, particularly the eating of enemies slain in battle. Henry first comes into contact with this practice while being transported away from Michilmackinac. He is ridiculed and offered bread over which has been spread a layer of spittle and blood and told 'to eat the blood of your countrymen'. Later he sleeps in a cave of bones which he determines was the resting place of the Indian's enemies after their flesh had been eaten. This journalistic method to epater les

bourgeois succeeds most succinctly with the relation of an isolated incident, again described with characteristic verve and economy of expression:

In one instance, I saw one of them killed, by a man who charged him with having brought his brother to death by malefic arts. The accuser, in his rage, thrust his knife into the belly of the accused, and ripped it open. The latter caught his bowels in his arms, and thus walked toward his lodge, gathering them up from time to time, as they escaped his hold. His lodge was at no considerable distance, and he reached it alive, and died in it.⁹

The relation of such anecdotes seems to serve no purpose other than to please a jaded public or to shock it. Certainly, they created an attitude toward the Indian which pleased the then developing Romantic spirit, at least that fascination for Gothic horror; but also created an actively negative attitude toward the Indian which Tanner found only too prevalent in Sault Ste. Marie sixty years later. It is doubtful if Tanner could have realized who would read his narrative in 1830, nor could he envision the nature of the jaundiced urban intellect; but Henry knew it, and realized that the commercial success of his book was dependent greatly upon his ability to cater to it.

In the journal, Henry claims to have adopted the Indian way of life; first through necessity, but later quite willingly as a way of life that he could voluntarily adopt:

I enjoyed a personal freedom of which I had been long deprived, and became an expert in the Indian pursuits, as the Indians themselves.¹⁰

⁹Henry, p.120.
¹⁰Ibid, p.123.

This was a fond hope, actually, as shortly after he became lost for several days in mid-winter; had he really become an Indian he would not have demonstrated so obvious a civilized fault: to be so unobservant as to allow such a misadventure, and then not to be able to find his way back. However, apart from a confession of loneliness for civilization, he did seem to adapt well from the time of his enforced savage metamorphosis. The winter he spent with his Indian brother, he became a good provider and trapper, and he even returned in the spring to Michilmackinac, which was still in the hands of the French, to trade his furs. The paradox of the civilized Indian was one which must have given Henry some satisfaction, a subtlety which was beyond Tanner, and shows Henry nearer in spirit to the genre of the novel than the factual journal.

Indeed, the whole emphasis on horror shows that he has not really integrated with the tribe: that he could not accept this facet of the savage culture demonstrates his civilized sophistication as much as his ability to conceive and express paradox. Henry claimed to have a deep attachment to Wawatam and his family, but when Wawatam is invited to a victory feast in which five white prisoners were eaten Henry declines to partake and tries to hide his disgust when his Indian brother returns with a human hand in his bowl. Tanner is noncommittal on the subject of participation in such feasts, but they were part of the Indian celebration and Tanner rightfully accepted cannibalism as a fact only requiring passing mention. Henry, despite his desire to be, and declaration that he was, an integral part of the Indian life, was as much as a white man in the Lake Superior woods as he had been at Michilmackinac. Finally, the

parting between Henry and his adopted family the following spring is touchingly described by Henry, but the formal expression denies sincere emotion and manifests the attitude that the civilized eighteenth century reader would expect:

We now exchanged farewells, with an emotion entirely reciprocal. I did not quit the lodge without the most grateful sense of the many acts of goodness which I had experienced in it, nor without the sincerest respect for the virtues which I had witnessed among its members.¹¹

Undeniably the greatest difference between Tanner and Henry as captives does not lie in a controversy over the degree of integration of each into their respective tribes, but in the degree of literacy and sophistication of Alexander Henry. He, as the literate and educated captive, is aware of his position in history, and following the effective recounting of the Michilmackinac massacre, he spends a chapter detailing the events which led up to the rout, and particularly his part in it. Henry realized that there might be some suspicion that he was in league with the Indians since he was spared. In this section, he testifies that he did warn Major Etherington, the fort's commanding officer, when Wawatam intimated that the fort was in danger; that Etherington chose to ignore Henry's warning cleared Henry of any possible duplicity. That Tanner was not part of any action of historical importance is patently obvious by his journal but, like Radisson before him, he is even unaware of the significance of his adventure. Henry, however, plays always to the gallery. His anecdotes usually give the impression of often-told tales, as is demonstrated in his narrative of his being the pawn of two

warring tribes.

He and several other white prisoners were carried from Michilmackinac by the Chipeways who had implemented the massacre, but on the way their captors were surprised and overpowered by the Ottawas. Their new captors then told Henry that 'what they had done was for the purpose of saving their lives, the Chipeways having been carrying us to the Isles de Castor only to kill and devour us'.¹² Later, after a council, the prisoners are handed back to the Chipeways, knowing, as Henry relates, that the Ottawas 'designed no other than to kill us and make broth of us'.¹³ Henry's use of italics to emphasize their probable fate and the change from 'devour' to 'make broth of us' indicates a very conscious craftsman and a familiarity from telling the story many times and with many embellishments.

Henry himself unconsciously notes for the reader of the journals the difference between Tanner and himself. As Tanner was in every sense of the word an Indian and Henry at best a superficial one, and one anxious to regain his white status; it is natural that Tanner would manifest every characteristic of the Indian. Henry was depressed by his inability to communicate with the Indians, and he recounts how he would sit by the fire after the day's hunt smoking his pipe and listening while the Indians recounted their day's adventures over and over. He realized that the Indian had no concern but the immediate physical one, that they had no ability or desire to speculate in things beyond their immediate comprehension, and this was Tanner's world. Tanner was never able to analyse his

¹²Henry, p. 90.

¹³Ibid, p. 97.

situation, for he was unable to consider it from any point other than this immediate and physical one, and doubtless if Tanner had been captured as a younger child the Indian life may have erased completely the desire to return to white society. It is clear, though, that the prime difference between Tanner and Henry is the barrier of literacy and civilized speculation, and the expression which accompanies them, and this same difference is the one that delineates the two captives: the one a temporary captive with a less sincere and affected journal, and the other an Indian with a sincere story to tell requiring no exaggeration, but paradoxically lacking the ability to express it.

3. John Jewitt - The Nootka Captive

The coast Indians who in the summer of 1803 massacred the crew of the merchant ship Boston had little similarity in custom to those who sacked the interior fort at Michilmackinac forty years before. The Nootka Indians, unlike the nomadic tribes described in the journals of Tanner and Henry, were a settled population on the west coast of North America in a territory that had long had commerce with Spanish, English and American trading ships. The incident which precipitated the destruction of the Boston was an insult directed at a single chief, Maquina; for though the normally peaceful tribe would not wish to frighten away a trade which had been profitable to both sides for so long, Maquina was not a chief with only the nominal authority of the continental tribal chiefs. His authority was more that of John Smith's east coast captor, Powhatan, for Maquina's power extended over fifteen hundred subjects. Few tribes in North America's interior, except perhaps the Sioux on the plains, could muster such a population, and few leaders commanded such authority except under coalition. Jewitt's journal, then, provides a unique picture of a semi-civilized nation living in relative peace and certain security, and the journal itself is able to escape the destructive disunity of a journal such as Tanner's recording the day to day wanderings of a hunting tribe.

Only Hearne's account of his Indian mentor, Matonabee, surpasses the portrait which Jewitt creates of Maquina in his journal of three years captivity with the Nootka Indians; and, like Matonabee, Maquina shows monarchical foibles only too familiar to European journal writers.

Jewitt has little intercourse with the common Indians except unpleasant experiences of their teasing him for his menial position in the chief's household. But there is an interdependence between the young English blacksmith who produces for his captor superlative weapons beyond the capability of Indian craftsmen, and the chief who has constantly to safeguard his captive against the murderous jealousy of lesser chiefs. It was Jewitt's trade as armourer aboard the Boston which first caught Maquina's eye days before he initiated the massacre, and it was his skill as blacksmith ^hwith suggested to Maquina that Jewitt would be worth preserving. The extent of this dependence upon Jewitt is manifested a short time after the rout when Thompson, Jewitt's future fellow-captive, is discovered, and by professing that Thompson is his father, Jewitt manages to save the man's life. Again and again, Jewitt's power over Maquina is tested as Thompson refuses to bow to his captors and twice strikes Maquina's sons in rage, an offense normally punishable by death, and only Jewitt's intervention saves his stubborn pseudo-father. As Jewitt settles down to what appears to be a lifetime of captivity, his journal gradually effaces its author, but reveals the Indian chief almost as a tragic figure beset alternately by the desire to emulate and impress the European and the need to maintain an image of integrity and strength to his tribe.

Throughout his journal, Jewitt professes a distaste for the savage society and the need to preserve the vestige of Christianity amongst the heathen. His goal as captive, of course, is not to become like the savage for this negates the necessity of escape, which desire even

Tanner maintained for thirty years, but to win his freedom and return to a Christian land. This he declared over and over in his journal, though during his three years of captivity he achieves a fine degree of integration. For instance, the time that Thompson struck the prince, Jewitt had to ransom his own life to save his comrade. Stubborn Thompson simply doubles his efforts to remain aloof, preferring death to servility; while Jewitt takes his first step towards integration in deciding to 'adopt a conciliating conduct towards them... I sought to gain their goodwill by always endeavouring to assume a cheerful countenance... I resolved to learn their language'.¹⁴ From that point he vacillates: he is unable to prevent his own absorption into the tribe and the moves he does take to maintain his identity as a civilized individual are nominal and ineffectual. First, he and Thompson try to eat as they are accustomed, but they are often unable to procure anything but Indian food and when they try to cook with salt Maquina arbitrarily forbids it. As Steffanson was to discover a century later, the native food prepared by the Indians was more palatable than European, and in greater abundance. Secondly, they insisted on maintaining their European dress, this they did for the first part of their captivity, at least until Jewitt married and Maquina insisted that they adopt the native life completely. Perhaps the most lasting aspect of civilization they maintained was their religion, and Jewitt's description of their religious observances manifests their sincerity although the romanticized aura of their retreat emphasizes

¹⁴Narrative of the Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt,
(New York, 1815), p. xix.

the unreality of Christianity in the savage society:

Our principle consolation in this gloomy state, was to go on Sundays, whenever the weather would permit, to the borders of a fresh water pond, about a mile from the village, where after bathing, and putting on clean clothes, we would seat ourselves under the shade of a beautiful pine, while I read some chapters in the Bible, and the prayers appointed by our church for the day...¹⁵

Again, it was not until after Jewitt's marriage to an Indian princess of a neighbouring tribe, that he and Thompson are invited to a native religious celebration and Jewitt seems to accept without fear of jeopardizing his own religious principles. Doubtless by this point, as many sincere lay Christians have discovered, their religious observances had lost their poignancy without clerical sanction. The savage celebration offered both priest and communion. By the end of the second year, Jewitt at least identifies himself with the Indians, and though he recognizes their faults he is prepared to forgive them for the massacre of his shipmates:

For though they are a thievish race, yet I have no doubt that many of the melancholy disasters have principally arisen from the imprudent conduct of some of the captains and crews employed in this trade, in exasperating them by insulting, plundering, and even killing them on slight grounds.¹⁶

The importance of Jewitt's sympathy becomes very apparent in the closing pages of the journal when he pleads with the captain who rescues him to spare the natives' lives.

¹⁵Jewitt, p. 81-2.
¹⁶Ibid, p. 93.

Jewitt's integration depended upon his good relations with Maquina's family, and it was completed by recognizing in Maquina characteristics above those of the common savage and confusing these natural traits with European sophistication. This blatant piece of rationalization is apparent in his assessment of Maquina's favourable points:

He was much neater both in his person and eating than were the others, as was likewise the queen, owing no doubt to his intercourse with foreigners, which had given him ideas of cleanliness.¹⁷

Just as he is unable to judge Maquina by standards other than those of his own civilization, he cannot express his admiration for the man as a king, as a father, or simply as an individual. His fondness for Maquina and his family he shows particularly in his attention to the young prince, Sat-sat-sak-sis, whom he adopts into his household following his marriage:

I was also very careful to keep him free from vermin of every kind, washing him and combing his hair. These marks of attention were not only pleasing to the child... but was highly gratifying both to Maquina and his queen, who used to express much satisfaction at my care of him.¹⁸

Considering the almost sacred position of the royal family, it is not likely that Maquina would allow Jewitt to have complete control over the prince unless the king realized the extent of Jewitt's acceptance of their life and thus was not liable to corrupt the child. Jewitt's only apparent concern, again, is to mould according to his standards, when in fact he is being drawn into the native life to a greater degree than he is aware.

¹⁷Jewitt, p. 116.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 130.

Two years of captivity weaken Jewitt's resolve to keep aloof from the native life, and he acknowledged defeat by accepting Maquina's suggestion that he marry. This is not a sudden change in his attitude, but symbolically marks a turning point in his life as captive. The girl he chooses is a princess, by his admission very beautiful, and light in complexion. The latter quality must have been the deciding point as he had to justify his actions if ever he were to return to civilization. The marriage is as satisfactory as could be expected under the circumstances, and for his final winter in captivity he manages to achieve a degree of domesticity with his menage which could only be accomplished after the realization that by then he was essentially an Indian himself. However, a severe illness that spring gives him an excuse to send his wife back to her people, and in allowing this Maquina starts to lose his hold and Jewitt starts to release himself from the savage bonds as though his capitulation had only been a momentary weakness. His recollection of his parting with his wife, by the time he wrote his narrative, had become divorced from emotion and she had resumed the guise of a pathetic savage:

Though I rejoiced at her departure, I was greatly affected with the simple expressions of regard for me, and could not but feel strongly interested for this poor girl... After her departure, I requested Maquina, that as I had parted with my wife, he would permit me to resume my European dress.¹⁹

Maquina does, and it is from this point that he seems to give up hope of

¹⁹Jewitt, p. 137.

retaining Jewitt, and it is only a few months later that the brig Lydia appears and Jewitt is released.

As with Henry's journal, there is no attempt in this account to systematize any scientific or sociological observation. There is little in Jewitt's journal to interest even the anthropologist, but of the four Captivity journals, it is the one which has the greatest literary potential. Jewitt's narrative presents, to a large degree, a work of dramatic unity since he has ^{the} advantage of involvement in a settled society; for it is the episodic adventures which the other captives undergo while tied to a nomadic people which initially destroys any natural unity there might be in their journals. However, Jewitt himself seems aware of the necessity of direction, plot and suspense; and it is one of the few adventures which he recalls prior to his capture, the destruction of the sailor's archetypal symbol of luck, which points forbodingly to the future:

After passing the Cape when the sea had become calm saw great numbers of Albatrosses, a large brown and white bird of the goose kind, one of which Captain Salter shot, whose wings measured from their extremities fifteen feet.²⁰

And it is Captain Salter himself who is the direct cause of the massacre when he later insults Maquina at Nootka. Jewitt is a conscious and capable artist working with material which provides him with the necessary dramatic unity.

In spirit Jewitt is in touch with the prevailing Romantic movement, and his descriptions of the New World are not unlike those of Chateaubriand

²⁰Jewitt, p. 19.

who was writing at the same time. It is the early romanticism of Rousseau, Chateaubriand and Goldsmith: a charming eighteenth century Nature created by God for a simple, appreciative human race. There is nothing in the other captivity journals, except perhaps Henry's idyllic sojourn with Wawatam, to compare with Jewitt's description of his religious retreat by the inland pond, or the Indians' winter bivouac on the coast north of Nootka:

Tashees is pleasantly situated and in a most secure position from the winter storms; in a small vale or hollow on the south shore, at the foot of a mountain. The spot on which it stands is level, and the soil very fine, the country in its vicinity abounding with the most romantic views, charmingly diversified, and fine streams of water falling in beautiful cascades from the mountains.²¹

The concept of a provident and benevolent Nature, essential to the Romantic, was very much a part of Jewitt's literary philosophy no matter how embryonic that might be. His desire to epater les bourgeois obviously is not to do so through horrific description, but rather as Chateaubriand did with concepts novel to the reader, but pacific in nature. It is the tradition of Defoe as well, but to the English Romantic it was a refutation of eighteenth century rationalism and a renewal of mediaeval religiosity. Like Defoe, Jewitt likes to pose as the practical man, aware of providential Nature and the hand behind that Nature; but the Puritan Defoe speaks also for self-sufficiency, and as Crusoe survives through ingenuity so Jewitt emulates him. One of the first tasks that Crusoe sets himself is to strip the wrecked ship of all usable items,

²¹Ibid, p. 86.

and Jewitt follows suit. But, from the point that Crusoe's ship is finally destroyed by the sea he is left to survive by his practical sense; and after a native Nootkian inadvertantly burns the ship, Jewitt, too, is on his own. Thus, weeks after their capture, the illiterate Thompson insists that Jewitt keep a journal and that he, Thompson, would supply his blood for ink if necessary. Crusoe-like, Jewitt experiments and finds a solution while the Romantic records his success:

On the first of June I accordingly commenced a regular diary... and after making a number of trials I at length succeeded in obtaining a very tolerable ink by boiling the juice of the blackberry with a mixture of finely powdered charcoal... as for quills I found no difficulty in procuring them... while a large clam furnished me with an ink stand.²²

Each writer of a Captivity journal certainly has the material to create a work of some drama, though most of them have not the native ability to develop the material satisfyingly. Jewitt exhibits the most literary potential with his education and his apparent sympathy with the contemporary spirit. Dramatically, the capture and release of the captive would supply the most likely material: Tanner has not the ability for expression, Henry succeeds with a tolerable, if horrific description of his capture, but an insincere recounting of his release; while Jewitt creates a mediocre capture sequence, but concludes with a masterful description of his final deception of the natives. The deception involves Maquina, and through Jewitt's handling of the narrative to that point, Maquina has evolved as a sympathetic character. The deception, therefore, appears gross as

²²Jewitt, p. 104.

Maquina must forfeit his life in order to preserve Jewitt. The reaction of the tribe, despondent and powerless to aid its leader in the hands of the white men, is not unlike a Sophoclean chorus watching inert as the inevitable tragedy draws to a close. As Maquina is held on board the brig as a hostage, Jewitt returns to the shore to collect the Boston's gear, and though greeted by spears he is certain that with their chief in the captain's hands they will not harm him.

In his three years of captivity, he has become accustomed to the Indian custom and psyche, and fortunately for him, unlike captives with more volatile captors, he is not harmed. As he boards the canoe to return to the ship he is intercepted by the prince, and Jewitt records the expression of the child's divided loyalty:

As I was going into the canoe, little Sas-sas-sak-sis, who could not bear to part with me, asked me, with an affectionate simplicity, since I was going away to leave him, if the white men would not let his father come on shore, and not kill him. I told him not to be concerned, for that no one should injure his father...²³

The tragedy averted, Maquina greets Jewitt as he boards the ship. Then, after the chief is given presents by the captain and prepares to return to his people, he acknowledges Jewitt's deception, but also his own cunning when he declares

that he should never take a letter of recommendation from anyone, or even trust himself on board a vessel unless I (Jewitt) was there. Then grasping both my hands, with much emotion, while the tears trickled down his cheeks, he bade me farewell and stepped into the canoe, which immediately paddled him on shore.²⁴

²³Jewitt, p. 153.

²⁴Jewitt, p. 159.

To the last, Maquina acts in the style of the eighteenth century concept of the 'noble savage' and he remains to the end more European than Indian, just as the young prince is pictured with his archly civilized 'affectionate simplicity'. Doubtless the feeling that lingered with Jewitt as he sailed from Nootka was a touching parting with his foster family, but the integration did not pass beyond this admirable 'European' family to the natives in toto or to the savage way of life.

4. Pierre Espirit Radisson - The Apprenticed Explorer

It would be difficult to conceive a narrative more brutal and immediate than that of Radisson. Brutal not only because of the adventures it describes, but because Radisson's inability to express himself fluently in English allows no incidental commentary, but only the essential facts of his captivity. As a consequence, the Captivity journal, which comprises the first book of his voyage journals, commences with the discovery of his murdered hunting companions, and the horrific tone of the opening scene is hardly allowed to wane through the short narrative of his two-year captivity. The Iroquois were doubtless the most brutal of the Indian tribes encountered by settlers in Canada, and possibly no tribe in North America matched their malevolence. That Radisson's narrative largely consists of descriptions of the tortures of these Indians attests to their macabre ability, and since he was the object of much of this torture one expects, and finds, that the Captivity journal consists of little else. Reading the narrative demands a suspension of critical faculties, for unless read solely for interest in superlative methods in the degradation of human beings, Radisson's journal is a disappointment when compared to the other captives' journals.

It has been suggested that Radisson's journals were written to impress Charles II with the importance of the beaver trade in Canada, so that he might look with favour upon an application for a charter to trade out of Hudson Bay. This purpose was accomplished by Radisson's writings. Initially, the purpose of the Captivity journal was probably

written to satisfy an autobiographical whim, as he wintered on the shores of Hudson Bay in 1668, years after his last voyage of exploration. It has proven to be the most widely known of Captivity journals, probably for the same reason that Brébeuf is the best known of Catholic martyrs in Canada: both adventures satisfy the popular taste for carnage and confirm the popular notion of the early, uncivilized savage. Radisson's account appeals in its description and economy of expression, but unfortunately lacks coherence, unity, and possibly authenticity.

According to his narrative, Radisson was captured while hunting by Lake St. Peter, just a few miles from his home at Trois Rivières; and though his two friends were apparently murdered outright, he was preserved because of his ability to defend himself. This is typical of the captivity pattern, and though he wounds some Iroquois warriors, this was not held against him later:

In the same cabin that I was, there had been a wildman wounded with small shot. I thought I have seen him the day of my taking which made me fear lest I was the one that wounded him. He, knowing it to be so, had showed me much charity as a Christian might have given. Another of his fellows, (whom) I also wounded came to me at my first coming there, whom I thought to have come for revenge, contrariwise showed me cheerful countenance. He gave me a box full of red paintings, calling me his brother.²⁵

The transition to Indian life seems very easy for Radisson who, grateful for the preservation of his life, was anxious to please his captors. He is adopted into the family of the man who captured him, and they recognize

²⁵The Exploration of Pierre Esprit Radisson, ed. A.T. Adams, (Minneapolis, Minnesota, Ross & Haines, Inc., 1961), p. 9.

his potential as a hunter and fighter, and accept him as a suitable replacement for a son who had recently died. He quickly learns their language, and realizing the necessity of obtaining their confidence, he denounced his own birthright when asked by his foster mother if he is French: 'I answered no, saying I was Ganugaga, that is, of their nation, for which she was pleased'.²⁶ Then follows the ceremonial painting of his face and adoption of Indian dress, and soon after he is given the freedom to roam, hunt and fight for the tribe. The whole process, as recounted by Radisson, took less than six weeks which shows an incredible ability to forget, or at least subdue, his own chauvinistic tendencies.

Not long after his formal adoption into the tribe, he is enticed by an Algonquin warrior to murder three of his Iroquois hunting companions, and then escape back to Trois Rivières. He agrees, but soon after the traitorous act the Algonquin is killed and Radisson recaptured. This gives Radisson the opportunity to observe first-hand the savage tortures, and to eloquently describe the tortures meted out to his fellow prisoners captured en route to the Indian encampment. Once again he is preserved, this time not solely through his mysterious communion with the Indians, but through the petitions of his foster parents. When released, it requires a month for him to recover from the wounds received from the tortures, but he is soon free once again to hunt for his family. The nomadic nature of Indian life converged with an already adventurous spirit, which later produced the seventeenth century Canadian explorer without peer. He himself realized at this time how easily he assimilated to Indian life, and what it

²⁶Radisson, p. 11.

would mean to him later as an explorer:

and being that it was my destiny to discover many wild nations, I would not strive against destiny. I remitted myself to fortune and the adventure if time as a thing ordained by God for His greatest glory, as I hope it will prove.²⁷

The captivity journey was just a start. He knew that his sojourn with the Iroquois was just a prelude, a means to the end by which posterity would remember him; not to be remembered just as another captive writing a journal, but as an explorer with purpose and a writer of exploration narratives which could erase the lack of purpose and unity of his first journal.

There is little in Radisson's journal to arouse the enthusiasm of the scientist; and equally there is little to interest the literary critic. Radisson's hesitant command of English and his consequent inability to express himself, particularly on the level of personal involvement, precludes any artistic success for the narrative. There is little sense of unity or consistent action, the reader is carried from isolated incident to isolated incident seemingly without conscious purpose other than to shock the reader. There is no conscious sense of time lapse, which gives Jewitt's journal much of its unity, nor is there detailed observation of place which might save the narrative for the historian and show Radisson consciously moving toward his acclaimed destiny. But any real success in the narrative is achieved only incidentally to his purpose: he succeeds unconsciously now and then in manifesting the artistic merit of

²⁷Ibid., p. 38.

the later captives; but with his inability to express himself easily in English, he cannot be judged by the same standards that one might use for the later journal writers.

Like Jewitt, Radisson is able to appreciate individual worth in the savages, and like the later captive he describes his foster father in terms which he reserves for him only. His Iroquois father seems the epitome of the self-sacrificing commander who 'by his example shows to the young men that he has the power as much as the honor': the description is quite unlike the other journal writers for their interest is in the pacific aspect of the Indian life, not the warlike. Radisson, then, does show appreciation, but also the degree of integration when he can celebrate the warlike qualities of his Indian father.

Further, Henry displays contempt of Indian indelicacy when he is offered the blood of his countrymen to eat; while Radisson, though under more peaceful conditions, is amused by the quaint eating customs of the Indians:

A dozen more-or-less old women meets together alike, of whom the greatest part want teeth, and see-th not a jot, and their cheeks hangs down like an old hunting dog, their eyes full of water and bloodshot.. Each takes an ear of corn and puts it in their mouths, which is properly as milk, chaws it, and when their mouths are full spits it out in their hands, which possibly they have not washed once (in) one year. Their hands are white inside by reason of the grease that they put to their hair, and the rubbing of it with the inside of their hands, which keeps them pretty clean, but the outside in the rinkness of their wrinkled hands there is a quarter of an ounce of filth and stinking grease. So, their hands being full of that mince meat minced with their gums, (they) fill a dish. So, they chew chestnuts; then they mingle this with bear's grease or oil of flower.... 28

28 Radisson, p. 37.

This type of writing is designed to turn the strongest stomach, and it is the type of sensationalism which fortunately the other captives do not indulge in too often.

Finally, it must be noted that Radisson, in his integration with the tribe, is able to look back at his more painful experiences with a high degree of objectivity. Tanner often feels that all his association with the Indians was a personal affront, and, for instance, when his face is rubbed in excrement during his first year of captivity, the hurt remains for thirty years when at last he seeks redress for that shame. Radisson, however, with quiet humour looks back on one example of pitiful degradation, and in his narrative expresses his sympathy for savage ignorance. It is the type of understanding which came to Jewitt only in his final year of captivity:

They tied me to a post.... A woman came there with her boy, enticed him to cut off one of my fingers with a flint stone. The boy was not four years old. This child takes my finger and begins to work, but in vain because he had not the strength to break my fingers; so the poor finger escaped...²⁹

There is not Jewitt's early righteous indignation over the unChristian-like treatment here, but simply Radisson's realization of the impossibility to impart to these people even the most basic ^{of} civilized man's humanitarian concepts.

Radisson does not judge, he observes and describes; and as a consequence his narrative lacks purpose as it lacks unity, but occasionally one glimpses the strength of the future explorer. His inability to express

²⁹Radisson, p. 21.

himself in the language of his adopted country, however, must always prevent a true assessment of his ability as a journal writer, and consequently also as an explorer.

CHAPTER III

THE EXPLORER'S JOURNAL

1. Radisson as Explorer

Radisson's journals have survived in three sections: the short Captivity journal, the journals of the famous voyages to the western Indian country and, finally, the two journals which describe his enigmatic activities at Hudson Bay when he vacillated in his allegiance toward England and France. The first five voyages which comprise his significant explorations - including the Captivity journal - are written in his newly acquired English; whereas the two latter voyages are written by an amanuensis. The Captivity journal with its quaint and inaccurate recollections of youthful adventure gives away to the mature explorer, young in years but nurtured by rough experience with a hostile, though ingenuous, people. His voyage to the Onandaga, Mississippi and Superior areas were undertaken within six years, the final voyage completed when he was not yet thirty years of age. Despite his youth, his journals show a man quite antithetical to the boy who perambulated as a captive-warrior of the Iroquois a few years before. The young man Radisson had a completely developed economic sense for the fur trade and this, coupled with the early communication with the land and the people, produced a temperament without equal for exploration-an ideal combination of experience and purpose which was not paralleled by a Canadian explorer until Samuel Hearne, and probably never repeated.

When he is amongst the Indians he appears content; certain of the success of his voyage and of his unique position in the Indian community.

At such times his usual erratic style softens as the quiet and certain emotion of well-being attends his pen:

I took this man for my father and the woman for my mother, so the children consequently brothers and sisters. They adopted me, I gave everyone a gift, and they to me... In a word, we lead a good life.¹

He is constantly reminded of the Indians' goodwill toward him and of the simplicity of their code. Throughout the beginning of the Onandaga voyage, the first after his escape from his Iroquois captors to New Amsterdam in 1653, he fears meeting his foster tribe expecting, rightly, punishment at their hands. However, when he does encounter some Iroquois warriors they treat him with the same respect as before, regarding him again as a prodigal rather than a criminal:

Some of them knowed me and made much of me. They gave me a garland of porcelain and a girdle of goat's hair. They asked me when should I visit my friends. I promised to come there as soon as I could arrive at the upper village. I gave them my hatchet to give to my father, and two dozen of brass rings and two shooting knives for my sisters, promising to bring a cover for my mother. They inquired what it was it that made me go away, and how I told them (I escaped) through the woods and arrived at Three Rivers in twelve days and that I suffered much hunger by the way. I would not tell that I escaped by reason of the Dutch. They called me often devil to have undertaken such a task.²

With the two later voyages to the Mississippi and Lake Superior, Radisson's determination to explore becomes almost fanatical, and though he couches his purpose in terms of the common good, there is little doubt that he is out to ameliorate his own position; and thanks to his unique

¹Radisson, p. 130.

²Ibid, p. 63.

experiences he is able to do so. The Superior voyage did not start auspiciously, for the governor, D'avangor, realized the potential of the fur trade and insisted, as strongly as Radisson objected, that he take along two of the governor's servants and to give them a 'moiety' of the profits. Perhaps a distaste for regimentation or officialdom affected Radisson, for though he was willing to 'venture our lives for the good of the country',³ he was not willing to share his personal gain. The object of the voyage was definite - unlike the Captivity voyage - and was notably successful: 'to find a way how they might get down the castors from the Bay of the North by the Saguenay'.⁴ The route which Radisson and Groseillers followed was not via the Saguenay, but by way of Lake Superior to James Bay, and the information which Radisson acquired about the northern country, and which he later gave to the London merchants, initiated the formation of the Hudson's Bay Company.

With purpose attends concern for the future: for the captive, wilderness life is comprised simply of a desperate hope for survival in a series of disconnected adventures. Radisson well expresses the less strange, but no less terrifying prospect of exploration. The analogies are quaint and the experience very real, 'the breech in the water, the fear in the buttocks, to have the belly empty, the weariness in the bones, and the drowsiness of the body....'⁵ Radisson's new purpose includes vision: a realization that expansion of the fur trade is necessary for the survival of France's colony in the New World, and also a grander concept of a basic European need for new concepts, beliefs and purposes; and

³Radisson, p. 111.

⁴Loc. cit.

⁵Ibid, p. 80.

America, for Radisson, offers a Utopian vista for the jaded Europeans.

We embarked ourselves on the delightsomest lake of the world (Michigan). I took notice of their cottages and of the journeys of our navigation because the country was so pleasant, so beautiful, and fruitful that it grieved me to see that the world could not discover such enticing countries to live in. This I say because the Europeans fight for a rock in the sea against one another, or for a sterile land and horrid country... these kingdoms are so delicious and under so temperate a climate, plentiful of all things, the earth bringing forth its fruit twice a year, the people live long and lusty and wise in their way.⁶

Paradoxical that Radisson should write such a passage in a narrative designed to encourage the fur trade. Strange that he should not realize that such descriptions could only encourage later colonizers like Lord Selkirk who inhibited the fur trade by driving away the buffalo, the trade's food supply. But Radisson is more than a mercenary trader as is attested by his particular communion with the Indians and their land; he sees an essential quality in the savage life, beyond its brutality, which he felt could sublimate the European penchant for conquest and expansion. Perhaps he divined the ephemeral nature of the fur trade, and thus foresaw the necessity of the fur trade pushing to the extremities of Canada, opened by explorers like himself, and followed by the merchants and finally the colonizers purged of their aggrandizing passions by the beauty of the countryside and living 'long and lusty and wise'.

Radisson's prophetic eloquence still tends to descend to the banal and the horrific as it did in the Captivity journal. Sometimes, inured by experience and acceptance of the Indian personality, his descriptions

⁶Radisson, p. 91.

will be surprisingly factual, but no less frightening since it suggests the frequency of the incident. 'The prisoner was brought, who soon was dispatched, burned, roasted and eaten'.⁷ There is still something savage and insensitive in Radisson's makeup, an insensitivity which allows him to record the most brutal murders in an apparent unaffected and disinterested manner. This lack of sensitivity is not so prevalent in the later explorers who achieve a similar degree of communion with the Indians, but it doubtless derives from Radisson's period of captivity coupled with the constant uncertainty of life which plagued the early French colonists. Fewer though these macabre descriptions may be in Radisson's Exploration journals, the same base emotion is appealed to:

So said he turned to the other side, and gave a sign to some soldiers (warriors) that they brought for that purpose to knock those beasts in the head, who executed their office and murdered the women. One took the child, set foot on his head, taking his legs in his hands, wrought the head by often turning from off the body. Another soldier took the other child from his mother's breast, that was not yet quite dead, by the feet and knocks his head against the trunk of a tree.⁸

In the later journals he develops the characteristic ironic style which he displayed only occasionally in the Captivity journal. Although writing in a foreign language, he does not remove his own personality, particularly not this aspect of his sense of humor^u. Sometimes this humour is displayed coupled with grim descriptions of death and torture; at other times it sparkles childishly in idiosyncratic puns and epigrams. Such is the case in one instance of the Superior voyage when he lapses into, 'The snow increased daily. There we make raquets, not to play at ball but to

⁷Radisson, p. 83.

⁸Ibid., p. 69.

exercise ourselves in a game harder and more necessary'.⁹ Or, again, seemingly to avoid dull description or from appearing too didactic:

There was a good pool where were a good store of bustards. I began to creep (as) though I might come near. The poor creatures seeing me flat on the ground thought that I was a beast as well as they, so they came near me whistling like goslings, thinking to frighten me. The whistling I made them hear was another music from theirs.¹⁰

The white man, from the first contact, instilled in the Indians a respect for his ultimate symbols of mystery and power. This is the mystery which attended the first landings in America; the Indians amazement of the white man's ability to sail across seas that were inaccessible to themselves. The essential symbolism which this instilled - the land beyond the sea, the great white father, and the religious symbolism inherent in Christianity as taught by the Jesuits - was reinforced by less significant, but equally powerful and attendant symbols. Such symbols acted almost magically for the white man in territories where, unlike the Iroquois, the white man was still a mystery, awesome and powerful. It was this fear and respect which preserved Radisson and which allowed him to pass unharmed through the new Indian territories. And, aware of his power and the respect which the Indians naturally, through their own social and religious lives, gave to symbols, Radisson was not adverse to calling upon this tradition to cloak his gestures:

The first present was a kettle, two hatchets, and six knives, and a blade for a sword. The kettle was to call all nations that were their friends to the feast... The hatchets were to encourage the young people to strengthen themselves... the knives to show the

⁹ Radisson, p. 130.
¹⁰ Ibid., p. 126.

French were great and mighty... the sword to signify that we would be master of both peace and wars... The second gift was two and twenty awls (which) signifieth to take good courage that we should keep their lives... the third gift was of brass rings, of small bells, and rasades (mugs) of divers colours... that they should always be under our protection, giving them wherewithal to make them merry and remember us...¹¹

At this point, Radisson shows great courage considering he and Groseilliers have travelled further into the savage country than any white man to that date, and with only their ingenuity to preserve them. But at this early point in the relationship between white man and Indian such symbolic gifts could be expected to preserve them. Not until later, when the western Indians, like the Iroquois, have the opportunity to observe the white man's weakness, his symbolic powers negated by his own lack of unity, that the Indians are satisfied no longer with his symbolic gifts of slight value, but only with guns for protection and warfare, or liquor with its strange and debilitating effects. Hence, the very real fear of later explorers like Thompson, alone in the hostile Indian country of the West whose inhabitants can only be impressed with a show of force. The days of Radisson's kettles, awls, and rings passed with the advent of the English fur trader.

¹¹Radisson, p. 128-9.

2. The Explorer as Poet and Scientist

Kelsey - the explorer - poet

Henry Kelsey, was for some two hundred years, a curious myth¹² in the history of Canadian exploration. He was born the year of the Hudson's Bay Company charter, and his voyages were to be the Hudson's Bay Company's vindication of the charges that the company had done nothing to explore its vast territories or to find the North-west Passage to the South Seas. Kelsey was apprenticed to the company at the age of fourteen, and four years later, in 1688, was sent north of York Factory to Governor Geyer 'to discover and endeavour to bring to a Commerce ye northern Indians Inhabiting to ye Northward of Churchill River'.¹³ The voyage, if it could be so called, was a failure for the youth had only one travelling companion, a Thomas Savage, who defected claiming that Kelsey 'was not sensible of ye dangers'.¹⁴ The voyage comprised only six weeks and upon his return Kelsey was hardly acknowledged, being told that the governor did not require any account of his failure to contact the northern tribes.

However, pressure from opponents of the Hudson's Bay Company charter forced the governor to send Kelsey once again and Kelsey, who was described as 'a very active lad, delighting much in Indians Company',¹⁵ was not adverse to a new exploratory effort. This second voyage, designed with a purpose similar to the first, took him south and west of the Hudson Bay, and though no formal journal has survived, the verse account which he

¹²Journals not discovered until 1926 in Ireland.

¹³Kelsey Papers, p. 25.

¹⁴Ibid. p. 28

¹⁵Ibid. p. xiii

composed gives the spirit and sense of his accomplishment, though its ambiguous information confuses the geographer and historian.

The ninety lines which comprise Kelsey's journal-poem are irregular and immature dabbings in the poetic discipline, but since they are probably the first lines of poetry written in English in Canada that alone commands some attention. Apart from stylistic or aesthetic considerations, Kelsey's lines follow the traditional quest pattern -- purpose, doubt, involvement, and achievement. There is an appealing directness about Kelsey which shows not only in the drive that every explorer exhibits, but in the informal and solely informative material in his verse. Prose, doubtless, would have been more accurate and pleasing to posterity than to express his purpose as

Through God's assistance for to understand
The natives language and to see their land¹⁶

but it is so individual, almost a perverse insistence upon his own choice of metier. There seems a super abundance of ego in these men which refuses to be tied down to company, or social convention, and their individuality shines in their perversity: Kelsey writing poetry, the Canadien Radisson writing in English or Thompson awestruck and immobile in the Rockies.

Then, as though visualizing the havoc he will create for future geographers, he riddles:

This neck of land I deerings point did call
Distance from hence by Judgement at ye least
From ye house six hundred miles southwest
Through rivers which run strong with falls
thirty three Carriages five lakes in all.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 1.

or later, in the same mood, he describes the bear 'He is men's food and he makes food of man'. The riddle of the location of Deering's point will never be solved with so little accurate information,¹⁷ which is particularly annoying as it is from this point that he moves on and describes country which indicates he was the first explorer to see the prairies,

The plan affords nothing but Beast and grass
And over it in three days time we past
It being about forty six miles wide.

Kelsey's later explorations into the north country are factual to the extreme, very nearly extracting the man's personality and even the sense of adventure and achievement. Like Alexander Mackenzie, his prose journals are primarily diaries of distance travelled and he seldom allows himself to reflect on the danger or uniqueness of his adventure. And, perhaps, only once in his writing, either in prose or verse, does he attempt to rise into the ethereal atmosphere of true poetic consideration of the human situation:

For many times I have been opprest
With fears and Cares yet I could not take my rest
Because I was alone & no friend could find
And once yet in my travels I was left behind
Which struck fear and terror into me
But still I was resolved this same country for to see

The area of endeavour and the experience is unique, but the expression of human terror, the fear of being alone in a strange country amongst

¹⁷various conjectures: Cedar Lake (Dr. C.N. Bell); the Pas (Hugh Conn), and doubtless many others.

savage peoples, is common to all explorers; and in their attempt to strengthen themselves they reflect the heroic desire of all man.

The scientist as explorer

Based solidly upon eighteenth century rationalism, science exploded into the field of exploration with an energy reminiscent of the earliest Elizabethan voyagers. The impetus for this new breed of explorers was in part the lure of natural resources, but there was a strong altruistic curiosity about the lands recently discovered and colonized. It was such scientific curiosity which persuaded Darwin to undertake a five-year circumnavigation in the 242 ton Beagle. Darwin's position as naturalist aboard a survey vessel hardly qualifies him to be termed explorer, but at several points in the voyages, notably in South America, he struck out across the country arranging to meet the Beagle at her next port of call. Although Darwin traversed relatively unknown country infested, evidently, by savage Indians¹⁸ and an equally savage Spanish army; what is remarkable is the number of naturalists who had visited the country before him. Darwin had available an incredible number of botanist's, geologist's and naturalist's reports of South American expeditions, and some of them so detailed that he comments upon these reports as in his examination of the banks of the Parana:

M. A. d'Orbigny found on the banks of the Parana, at the height of a hundred feet, great beds of estuary shell, now living a hundred miles lower down near the sea.¹⁹

¹⁸Entry for September 15th, 1832;

"Rose very early in the morning, and shortly after passed the posta where the Indians had murdered the five soliders. The officer had eighteen chuzo wounds in his body". The Voyage of the Beagle,

¹⁹ed. Leonard Engel, (New York, Doubleday & Company Inc., 1962), p. 114.
¹⁹Ibid, p. 130.

Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle is not only one of the most readable of exploration journals, but he manages, within his demanding discipline, to express his awareness of the totality of the country he explores and thus he is not adverse to making political or social comments, or just generally to express his concern for humanity.

Among these early naturalists who preceded Darwin to America were two Englishmen and their explorations nearly coincided with the fervent exploratory activity on the west coast at the close of the eighteenth century. W. E. Cormack traversed Newfoundland in 1822, and the following year David Douglas arrived in New York to start his specimen collection for the Royal Horticultural Society. Each of these men, as in the case of Darwin, are remembered for specific achievements in their own discipline, but this same awareness of place and purpose gives their journals a quality which is seldom achieved within the strict expression of a scientific undertaking. This can only be accounted for by the individual's ability to absorb and understand the country he moves in beyond the immediate interest of his scientific purpose.

Cormack is less successful in the description of his Newfoundland traverse, though the difficulties and fears which he experienced were no less than those of Douglas on the West Coast. The influence which worked upon both these men must have been similar, both having grown up in Scotland, having the same interests and similar destinies. That Douglas' journal presents more consistently a high level of expression is due partly to a more patient and optimistic nature and a relaxed pace, as opposed to Cormack's fear of being trapped by winter in the interior of the island. At times both men manifest the literary spirit of their age: in Cormack

it takes the form of the early romantic poets, the awe of nature coupled with a rationalistic need for control of passion; in Douglas the romantic element seems more pronounced:

It is impossible to describe the grandeur and richness of the scenery, which will probably remain long undefaced by the hand of man. In vain were associations: in vain did the eye wander for the cattle, the cottage and the flocks.²⁰

The view from the summit is of that cast too awful to afford pleasure-nothing as far as the eye can reach in every direction but mountains towering above each other, rugged beyond all description; the dazzling reflection from the snow, the heavenly arena of the solid glacier, and the rainbow-like tints of its shattered fragments, together with the enormous icicles suspended from the perpendicular rocks; the majestic but terrible avalanche hurtling down from the southerly exposed rocks producing a crash, and groans through the distant valleys only equalled by an earthquake. Such gives us a sense of the stupendous and wondrous works of the Almighty. (near Mt. Brown and Hooker in the Rockies).²¹

Both men demonstrate an ability to integrate into the country and its people. Douglas' three year perambulation of the west coast area gave him greater opportunity to absorb and understand the wilderness; though Cormack's particular concern for the disappearing Beothuck Indians of Newfoundland shows his anthropological interest and his preconceived sympathy for a people whom he viewed only at a distance during his traverse. When contacted, the Indians of the west coast found in Douglas a man of spirit who was able to meet cunning with

²⁰W. E. Cormack, Narrative of a Journey Across the Island of Newfoundland in 1822, (Longman, Green & Co. Ltd., London, 1928), p. 140.

²¹Journal kept by David Douglas during his travels in North America, (London, William Wesley & Son, 1914), p. 72.

cunning and force with force:

At last I commanded a search and found it secreted under the belt of one of the knaves. When detected he claimed the premium, but as he did not give it on first application, I paid him, and paid him so well, with my fists that he will, I daresay, not forget the 'Man of Grass' for some days to come.²²

Cormack contacts only one family of Indians, and those were Micmacs, native to Nova Scotia rather than Newfoundland. Although his companion, Joseph Sylvester, was a Micmac and numerous times threatened to desert his employer, Cormack was still able to appreciate the idyllic aspect of the natural Micmac encampment and to express his joy in discovering this 'sylvan happiness':

Abundance and neatness pervaded the encampment. On horizontal poles over the fire hung quantities of venison steaks, being smoked dry. The hostess was cheerful, and a supper, the best the chase could furnish, was soon set before us on sheets of birch rind. They told me to 'make their camp my own, and use everything in it as such'. Kindness so elegantly tendered by these people of nature in their solitude commenced to soften those feelings which has been fortified against receiving any comfort except that of my own administering. The excellence of the venison, and of the flesh of young beavers, could not be surpassed. A cake of hard deer's fat, with scraps of suet, toasted brown, intermixed, was eaten with the meat; soup was the drink. Our hostess, after supper, sang several songs at my request. They were plaintive, and sung in a high key. The song of a female, and her contentment in this remote and secluded spot, exhibited the strange diversity there is in human nature.²³

However, both Cormack's and Douglas' contacts with the Indians are superficial in comparison to the captives, or even the explorers who opened the land to the scientists. The latter, perhaps, bring a degree of

²²Ibid, p. 199.

²³Cormack, p. 60.

sophistication and learning to the new country, but their civilized sensitivity is offset by the explorer's dependence upon the uniqueness of experience and submission to the land. Cormack is first an anthropologist and naturalist and Douglas is naturalist of the first order, but their particular disciplines narrow their field of perception and their journals reflect their scientific genius rather than an awareness of place.

3. Alexander Mackenzie - The Commercial Explorer

There is primarily in Alexander Mackenzie a highly developed commercial spirit; the same which initially drove the first English trader, Alexander Henry, to penetrate the vacated French trading area. The spirit which later gave impetus to the North West Company, and which gave Montreal its commercial ascendancy in Canada, second only to New York in America. From Mackenzie and his type, there was established in Montreal the hierarchy of commercial interests - Simon McTavish, the McGillivrays, Mackenzies and, indirectly, the Molsons. Their base was solid Scotch Presbyterianism, their concern, the fur trade, and their strength, ambition resulting from poverty and the realization of a unique opportunity in history - a continent to be explored and exploited. In considering the achievements of Mackenzie, it is essential to keep the latter two concepts together - he was neither trader nor explorer but a synthesis of these two drives: a man who would not be crossed in his design and who had the power and determination to fulfill a conscious destiny.

As a result, Mackenzie as a journal writer is a disappointment. His sense of purpose is keenly developed, probably more than any other Canadian explorer, and his determination is undaunted. But where Radisson appreciates the value of 'common good' and instinctively believes in the therapeutic value of the new American vista to the jaded European, Mackenzie strides over the West like a latter day Cortez, conquering the land with his Scot's acumen and formidable prose. Pushed more by a precipitate sense of destiny

than danger of lingering in strange and hostile territories, Mackenzie pushes himself and his men to incredible feats: from Athabaska to the Arctic in forty days, across the Rockies to the Pacific by water and land in barely two months. The effect of such speed is disastrous beyond the completion of the feats themselves: the country he admits in his preface²⁴ was dreary and monotonous, the Indians generally rebellious and indolent, and his effort one of constant trials, disappointments and little sense of accomplishment. Never does he exhibit a desire to integrate into the savage manner of living or travelling. If he converses with Indians it is with an eye to later trading; when he records their speech, it is a desire to train his partners who will follow, to relieve them of the burden of expensive and undependable interpreters. If the rivers are too slow he portages over impossible terrain carrying his canoe²⁵, if the river favourable, he drives his men from one in the morning²⁶ until late evening. But such is his sense of involvement and responsibility that he partakes himself of the labour, and assumes the duty of nocturnal guard many times when the situation warrants it.

The journals of these two voyages reflect the haste and superficial nature of his experience. There is a highly developed degree of heroic purpose and fortitude, but his detachment suggests that whatever excitement he experienced is sublimated to his design, and that design so related

²⁴Alexander Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal on the River St.

²⁵Laurence, through the Continent of North America, etc., p. vi.

²⁶Ibid, p. 226.

²⁶Ibid, p. 71.

to his commercial ambitions as to negate the possibility of any aesthetic or truly significant awareness of his accomplishment. Through the pages of his journal, replete with calculations, bearings, distance reckonings and astronomic observations, the explorer's personality, other than his preconceived persona, remains buried. However, his letters to his cousin Roderick, stationed at Fort Chipewyan, demonstrate the ambitions, fears, and cautious certainty of the worth of his voyages to the trade:

I beg you not to reveal them (his 'distant intentions') to any person, as it might be prejudicial to me...²⁷

Then, later at the company's annual meeting at Grand Portage, after the Arctic voyage:

My expedition was hardly spoken of, but that is what I expected.²⁸

And, prior to the Pacific voyage:

I never was so undecided in my intentions as this year regarding my going to the Portage or remaining inland, I weighed everything in my mind over and over again, and cannot find that my opponents there can do me any injury.... Should I be successful I shall return with great advantage... I send you a couple of guineas, the rest I take with me to traffic with the Russians.²⁹

These reflect incredible certainty, years of contemplation since his first contact with Peter Pond's 'incomprehensively extravagant'³⁰ ideas,

²⁷L. R. Masson, Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie due Nord-Ouest, p. 23.

²⁸Ibid, p. 35.

²⁹Ibid, p. 42-3

³⁰Ibid, p. 25

but also they reflect not a sense of adventure, but expediency and business acumen.

Even at times of extreme personal danger, the style of the journal remains static and unemotional. Had the experience been in any sense real to Mackenzie at the time, not even a time lapse of seven or eight years between the action and the recollection or the pen of an amanuensis could erase the feeling of the man in danger. Emotional involvement or expression of uncertainty, so characteristic of other explorers, is so successfully erased that it appears not to have been experienced:

The rest now approached so near, that one of them contrived to get behind me, and grasped me in his arms. I soon disengaged myself from him; and, that he did not avail himself of the opportunity which he had of plunging his dagger into me, I cannot conjecture. They certainly might have overpowered me, and though I should probably have killed one or two of them, I must have fallen at last.³¹

Curiously, David Thompson, one of the most sensitive and observant of western explorers, met Mackenzie shortly after Mackenzie's short and eminently successful period of exploration, but in his journal Thompson made no observation on the man, but only his achievement. Considering their similar interests, it is an eloquent comment on Mackenzie's retractable nature. Then, some time after the voyages, Mackenzie wrote to Roderick who was still in the Athabaska region, to check on another explorer:

I wish you would give instructions to collect from the English chief and other Chipewans the fullest account they can possibly

³¹Mackenzie, Voyages, p. 353.

give of Hearne's journey with them to the North Sea, where,
to what I learn he never went.³²

There could hardly be any rivalry between Mackenzie and Thompson for the latter was a latecomer to the West - a surveyor, hardly even an explorer, and certainly not with any commercial ambitions. Hearne's feat, however, antedated Mackenzie's voyage to the Arctic, and he thus appears unwilling to accept a rival, though he tolerates a nouveau venu.

Hearne is a rival in more than accomplishment of design, for where Mackenzie's personality did not allow him to trust his guides, but alternately guarded and cajoled them, Hearne placed his life and venture in the Indians's hands. Mackenzie's 'English Chief' presents an interesting parallel to Hearne's Matonabee, and the former's treatment of his chief guide is a model for the powerful and independent explorers who failed to materialize after him:

The English chief was very much displeased at my reproaches, and expressed himself to me in person to that effect. This was the very opportunity which I wanted, to make him acquainted with my dissatisfaction for some time past... he accused me of speaking ill words to him...(and) concluded by informing me that he would not accompany me further... (later) I sent for the English chief to sup with me, and a dram or two dispelled all his heart burning and discontent.... I took care that he should carry some liquid consolation to his lodge, to prevent the return of his chagrin.³³

³²J. B. Tyrrell, Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812., (The Champlain Society, Toronto, 1916), p. 297.

³³Mackenzie, p. 105 - 7.

Unlike Hearne, Mackenzie regarded the Indians as weak and inferior beings; and whereas Hearne sympathized with his chief and his highly developed sensitivity, Mackenzie saw only the weakness and produced the expedient of the Montreal traders-rum.

Though Mackenzie's journal writing develops somewhat cautiously from the factual day to day recordings of the Arctic voyage to a sometimes excited, though objective relation of natural hazards on the western traverse to the Pacific, his writing is as barren and factual as the inscription he chose to mark in grease and vermillion at the successful termination of his dreams:

Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the twenty-second day of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three.³⁴

And that dream, though physically achieved, never materialized in the more capricious realm of the written word:

Did I sit down to write, I was sure that the very things that I ought not to have been thinking would occur to me instead of what I had to do... In short, my mind was never at ease, nor could I bend it to my wishes.³⁵

³⁴Ibid, p. 349.

³⁵Masson, p. 45.

4. David Thompson

Had Alexander Mackenzie been given the task that fell to David Thompson there would not be the controversy there is today over the Canadian failure to establish a trading post at the mouth of the Columbia River before the Americans. With Mackenzie there would not have been the questions of cowardice, ineptitude or indecision which surround Thompson, but then neither would there be Thompson's maps or narrative. The latter was written about 1840 when Thompson was seventy years of age, and though becoming old and forgetful he was still able to recall the spirit of his adventure. With his meticulous diaries to help him, he recreated the country and inhabitants of early western Canada hoping, perhaps, by the publications of the narrative to alleviate the poverty which stalked his old age. That hope never materialized in his lifetime, but the manuscript remains as a superior account of human endeavour, but even more as the private testimony of a man beset by fears and doubt, and whose sensitivity forced a close association with the land and people he contacted.

Thompson, unlike Mackenzie, had a long career as explorer and surveyor in America, from 1784 when he was apprenticed at age fourteen to the Hudson Bay Company, until his final retirement in 1826. His travels were exhaustive, covering much of the territory from Hudson Bay northward and westward to the Pacific, and the area along the United States - Canada border which he surveyed from 1816 - 1826. Thompson's narrative, therefore, has not the strong sense of quest and purpose that Mackenzie's has, but rather it is diffused in time and space, and consequently absorbs

and reacts as Mackenzie's never does. Strongly religious, abstemious, and inclined to melancholy and doubt, there is little in Thompson's character that could relate to his predecessor in western exploration. But his character, and in part his weaknesses, produced the narrative with which neither Mackenzie, nor even Hearne, could compete.

His mapping was, of course, an outstanding achievement and can in no wise be belittled; ...Only Thompson, on the other hand, could have produced the Narrative. No other early Canadian writer had seen so much country, from Hudson Bay to the Pacific; ... Mackenzie and Hearne, especially the latter, had also made great journeys, about which they wrote great books. Mackenzie, however, had only the story of a couple of summers to tell, and the bulk of Hearne's book deals with the events of rather less than three years. Thompson, on the other hand, had the experience of over a quarter of a century for his subject, and he put posterity splendidly in his debt when largely from his journals, he rewrote in book form the story of his travels and adventures over all those years.³⁶

Curious that the man who appeared to fear the Indians the most, who delayed and changed the direction of his traverse of the Rockies³⁷ because of unfriendly contact with the Pagan Indians, was the one, even to a greater degree than Hearne, to sympathize with them. Hearne associates with one Indian, Matonabee, but Thompson relates to the Indian race as a whole. His narrative is replete with anecdotes of the Indian's bravery, selflessness, religion, ethics and social customs - as a worthy foe, he fears, but honours them.

Often the amateur scientist-naturalist Thompson comes into conflict with the Indian superstitions or traditional beliefs. Basically

³⁶Richard Glover, editor, David Thompson's Narrative 1784-1812, (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1962), p. lxxv.
³⁷Masson, p. 41n.

self-taught, Thompson's embryonic scientific nature rebels against the pantheism of the Indians, but his science seems weak in comparison to their certainty and more than once he succumbs, as he must do as he absorbs their life. One dramatic instance of his surrender occurred when Thompson and some natives were estimating the numbers of deer in an annual migration which took two days to pass York Factory. Though there was no quarrel over numbers, the purpose of the migration was broached:

...They said, You that look at the Stars tell us the cause of the regular march of this herd of Deer. I replied 'instinct' ...Oh Oh, then you think this herd of Deer rushes forward over deep swamps, in which some perished, the others ran over them; down steep banks to break their necks; swam across deep Rivers, where the strong drowned the weak; went a long way through the woods where they had nothing to eat merely to take care of themselves. You white people, you look like wise men and talk like fools... Do you not perceive this great herd was under the direction of their Manito. I have sometimes thought instinct to be a word invented by the learned to cover up their ignorance.³⁸

The Indian's victory is a subtle one and based not only on Thompson's imperfect scientific training, but also on his fascination with the Indian philosophy.

There is in Thompson a remarkably ingenuous character which allows him to describe fondly the most minute natural phenomena, 'I shall therefore only give those traits of them which naturalists do not, or have not noticed in their descriptions',³⁹ or to express faultlessly his fear of

³⁸David Thompson's Narrative, ed. J. B. Tyrell, p. 101 - 2.

³⁹Ibid, p. 68.

inexplicable phenomena as he would any other:

As we were about to rise, a brilliant light rose over the east of the Lake, it was a Meteor of globular form, and appeared larger than the Moon, which was then high; it seemed to come direct toward us, lowering as it came, ^{thn} within three hundred yards of us, it struck the river ice, with a sound of a mass of jelly, was dashed into innumerable luminous pieces and instantly expired... the next morning we went to see the marks this meteor had made on the ice, but could not discover than a single particle was marked...⁴⁰

This naive attitude toward nature and the Indian allows him to record the most incidental, but often revealing, details of the country he passes through. His is a rationalist's mind coupled with a romantic and idealistic nature, and the conflict which ensues could explain the indecision which apparently plagued him at times when force and direction were needed.

His vision of the white man in America is that of the exploiter, the romantic notion of an ideal wilderness ruined by the hand of civilized man. At times his philosophy assumes a symbolic bent and, like the Indians, he sees man battling Nature for ascendancy, a constant striving for survival. Perhaps, though, Thompson sees Man and Nature locked more in a rationalistic state of balance or golden mean than in a battle for ascendancy. The beaver becomes the symbol of Nature for Thompson: as long as it thrives and maintains its level Nature is secure and ascendant:

Man was Lord of all the dry land and all that was on it. The other race was the Beaver, they were safe from every animal but Man and the Wolverine⁴¹...Thus all the low lands were in possession of the

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 118.

⁴¹considering the loathing the Indians felt toward this animal, the association with Man is particularly damning.

Beaver... the dry land with the dominions of Man contracted, everywhere he was hemmed in by water without the power of preventing it... they (the Indians) procured from the French Axes, Chisels, Knives, Spears and other articles of iron... Thus armed the houses of the Beavers were pierced through.... and their Borrows laid dry...⁴²

Such deliberate rhetoric is rare in Thompson's narrative, but it expresses well his impatience with man in conflict with nature, but also points out who Thompson feels is the real culprit - the European.

Constantly Thompson sympathizes with the natives. He succumbs to their philosophy, he admires their courage and social code, and deplores the white man's destruction of their purity and innocence⁴³ by disease and greed. Thompson has been described as an individual too often 'beatified'⁴⁴ by Canadian biographers, but it cannot be denied that he had qualities antithetical to many Canadian explorers, and it is paradoxical that he should be representing a company noted for its excesses in pursuing the trade. It may have been those unpleasant excesses that drove Thompson to his association with the Indians - the ungodly, rum-bearing fur traders who were his associates were hardly comparable to the notion of the natural savage that Thompson maintained:

Their walk is erect, light and easy, and may be said to be graceful. When on the plains in company with white men, the erect walk of the

⁴² Tyrell, p. 198-9.

⁴³ Next morning at the dawn of day, we attacked the Tents, and with our sharp flat daggers and knives cut through the tents and entered for the fight; but our war whoop was instantly stopt, our eyes were appalled with terror; there was no one to fight but the dead and the dying, each a mass of corruption. (related to Thompson by some Plains

⁴⁴ Indians), Tyrell, p. 336-7.
Glover, p. xii.

Indian is shown to great advantage. The Indian with his arms folded in his robe seems to glide over the ground; and the white people seldom in an erect posture, their bodies swayed from right to left, and some with their arms, as if to saw a passage in the air. I have often been vexed at the comparison.⁴⁵

Thompson's apparent vacillation which resulted in his arrival at the mouth of the Columbia River in time to witness the construction of Astor's trading post was doubtless a great disappointment to the North West Company as it was to Thompson. But a few years later the company remedied the default when it bought Fort Astoria, and Thompson's maps remained to appease the partners and impress later geographers like Tyrell. But Thompson's greatest achievement, the intimate record of a savage land and people, continues to breathe life into an often maligned historical figure.

⁴⁵Tyrell, p. 350.

5. Samuel Hearne - The Captive Explorer.

Mr. Norton was an Indian; he was born at Prince of Wales's Fort, but had been in England nine years, and considering the small sum that had been expended on his education, he had made some progress in literature. At his return to Hudson's Bay he entered into all the abominable vices of his countrymen. He kept for his own use five or six of the finest Indian girls... took every means in his power to prevent any European from having intercourse with the women of the country... and showed more respect to one of their dogs, than he ever did to his first officer...⁴⁶

Hearne's years as a sailor aboard the frigate Bideford during the Seven Years War inured him to privation, which stood him in good stead during his stint to the Coppermine River; but it could never prepare him for the profligate half-breed Moses Norton, governor of Prince of Wales Fort. Son of a former governor and a Southern Indian mother, a tribe that Hearne rates as 'the most debauched wretches under the Sun',⁴⁷ Norton was a certain antidote to Hearne's remaining at the fort. Although Hearne was posted at Prince of Wales Fort specifically to undertake an expedition to the area that had yielded some interesting samples of copper, and incidently to relieve the pressure of company critics, he was probably not expected to exhibit much initiative. However, faced with a lieutenancy under Norton, Hearne chose the uncertainty of the wilderness to the certain hell of so notorious a superior. Without this explanation it would be difficult to account for the alacrity of Hearne's repeated attempts to reach the Coppermine River.

Hearne's first voyage carried him only a few hundred miles west of

⁴⁶ Samuel Hearne, A Journey to the Northern Ocean, edited Richard Glover, (Toronto, 1958), p. 39.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 81.

Hudson Bay, and with the desertion of his guide, the conjurer Chawchinahaw, and the Indian hunters, he was to return to the fort with his two unhappy European comrades barely a month after his departure. Then, undaunted, or not wishing to remain with Norton, he struck out again within two months of his previous failure. The second expedition was hardly more auspicious, though he had learnt from the first and he took no encumbering Europeans. Thus he had his first move toward integration and psychological captivity by the Indians. Though unencumbered by Europeans, he was not yet free of European inexperience and inappropriate equipment:

...what considerably increased the handicap was... the coarseness of our lodging... the tent we had with us was not only too large and unfit for barren ground service, where no poles were to be got, but we were obliged to cut it up for shoes...⁴⁸

On his final and successful trip with the guide Matonabee, he learned to prepare his tent poles before entering the barren ground, and with the numerous Indian women that Matonabee insisted attend them, there was never a shortage of footwear, packhorses or warmth for long winter nights.⁴⁹ Meantime he was at the mercy of Norton's ineffectual guides for he did not meet the fabled Matonabee until September of 1770 as he was returning to the fort after breaking his quadrant. Then,

⁴⁸Hearne, p. 19.

⁴⁹Matonabee on women, 'Women were made for labour; one of them can carry, or haul, as much as two men can do. They also pitch our tents, make and mend our clothing, keep us warm at night...',

mysteriously appearing from the west at a point when Hearne was being deserted by his Indians, the 'stranger' Matonabee proceeded to enliven Hearne's travels by his company and encouragement. So much so that Hearne's initial impression, 'the courteous behaviour of the stranger struck me very sensibly',⁵⁰ contains an epithet that Europeans would hardly associate with the savage. Subtly the Indian life, and specifically this Indian chief, was absorbing Hearne.

Matonabee, always free with his advice, diagnosed the reason for Hearne's repeated failure in terms that Hearne could appreciate and second - the misconduct of his guides and, principally, the lack of women. The latter concept was antithetical to the views of Governor Norton, but by the time Hearne was prepared for his third venture, Matonabee and his ideas had gained ascendancy. Scarcely two weeks after returning to the fort, after an arduous seven-month journey, Hearne commences his third and final voyage. The trip took eighteen months and twenty-three days and during that time Hearne had no intercourse with a European. From the time of departure Hearne follows closely the dictates of a later Arctic explorer, Steffanson, by allowing himself to be dictated to by the Indians and their experience with the country. Soon he appears to have no authority, at least he does not assert himself as might an explorer like Mackenzie:

On the nineteenth, we pursued our course in the North West quarter; and, after leaving the above-mentioned creek, with empty bellies, tell the twenty-seventh... it was the twenty-seventh before the

⁵⁰Ibid, p. 34.

meat was brought to the tents. Here the Indians proposed to continue one day, under the pretence of repairing their sledges and snow shoes; but from the little attention they ^{paid} to those repairs, I was led to think that the want of food was the chief thing that detained them, as they never ceased eating the whole day.⁵¹

Thus with some humour Hearne describes his capitulation, and soon after he shows his dependence upon Matonabee's judgement when the party spends two weeks impounding deer before attempting to traverse the barren ground.

The release of his responsibilities allows Hearne's sensitive powers of observation to roam not only over the natural life that he contacts, which he records with the thoroughness of Thompson, but also to direct it to the Indians themselves. The Northern Indians strike him as the finest he knows, and his sympathies lie with neglected women, first humourously:

Ask a Northern Indian, what is beauty? he will answer, a broad flat face, small eyes, high cheek-bones, three or four broad black lines a-cross each cheek, a low forehead, a large broad chin, a clumsy hook-nose, a tawny hide, and breasts hanging down to the belt.⁵²

but individually with much feeling:

The instant, however, the poor woman was delivered, which was not until she had suffered all the pains usually felt on those occasions for nearly fifty-two hours, the signal was made for moving when the poor creature took her infant on her back and set out with the rest of the company; and although another person had the humanity to haul the sledge for her, (for one day only); she was obliged to carry a considerable load beside her little charge, and was frequently obliged to wade knee-deep in water and wet snow.⁵³

⁵¹Hearne, p. 43.

⁵²Hearne, p. 56-7.

⁵³Ibid, p. 58.

His real sympathies, however, remain with Matonabbee whose nobility and sensitivity makes him an easy mark, despite his exalted tribal position, for warriors stronger or less responsible than himself. Throughout the trip Matonabbee is dogged by problems involving his eight wives: the youngest and most comely elopes, and another is forcibly taken from him. In the latter instance he is so disconsolate that Hearne notes, 'he took this affront so much to heart, especially as it was offered in my presence, that he almost determined not to proceed any further'.⁵⁴ Hearne's reaction is predictable for he has placed all his hopes upon this guide. The argument Hearne uses to encourage Matonabbee is notably opposite to Mackenzie's tactics with his English Chief; for Hearne, in terms reminiscent of Radisson's use of symbolism, appeals to Matonabbee's honour. He assures him 'not only of the future esteem of the present Governor of Prince of Wales Fort, but also of that of all his successors as long as he lived...'.⁵⁵ The effect is spontaneous, Matonabbee orders the party to move on immediately although it was then late afternoon. Perhaps the psychology Hearne used would not have influenced the English Chief, but then Mackenzie never achieved the degree of integration of Radisson or Hearne, so could not have appealed on so blatantly a personal note.

Hearne, the consummate story teller, builds his narrative not only toward the goal of his explorations, but parallels his quest with the goal of his guide - the destruction of the Eskimo encampment at the

⁵⁴Ibid, p. 71.

⁵⁵Hearne, p. 72.

mouth of the Coppermine River. As the party approaches the river its numbers increase, as does its certainty in executing its design and, as Tanner was caught up in the spirit of innumerable profitless war parties, so Matonabee's party increases until it far outnumbers any resistance the Eskimos might muster. Hearne's reaction initially is to condemn the Indian's design, but by that point the success of his venture is so tied to the Indians that his hesitancy is interpreted as cowardice and his own design is jeopardized. Dramatically he acquiesces, again realizing the unique and dangerous position he holds:

I never afterwards ventured to interfere with any of their war-plans. Indeed, when I came to consider seriously, I saw evidently it was the highest folly for an individual like me, and in my situation, to attempt to turn the current of a national prejudice...⁵⁶

Virtually a captive of the Indians by this time. Hearne is forced not only to condone the inevitable massacre of the Eskimos, but he, like the captive Radisson and Tanner, takes an active part, if largely a defensive one, in the attack.

...I determined to accompany them, telling them at the same time, that I would not have any hand in the murder they were about to commit, unless I found it necessary for my own safety. The Indians were not displeased at this proposal; one of them immediately fixed me a spear, and another lent me a broad bayonet..⁵⁷

Hearne minutely describes the preparations for the attack, both the

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 75.

⁵⁷Hearne, p. 98.

physical and superstitious, and his own trepidation. The actual battle, as expected, is a farce. The sleeping Eskimos are quickly massacred as they flee their tents, and though both Thompson and Tanner recount more numerically impressive massacres, Hearne's involvement is so personal and the effect so real that his description transcends the involvement he so assiduously had rejected earlier. The climax of the battle description, the murder of a young Eskimo girl who seeks his protection, is a powerful symbol of Hearne's guilt over his approbation of the massacre.

... when the first spear was stuck into her side she fell down at my feet, and twisted around my legs, so that it was with difficulty that I could disengage myself from her dying grasps.. even at this hour I cannot reflect on the transactions of that horrid day without shedding tears.⁵⁸

The aftermath with its profusion of naked dead bodies provides Hearne's Indians with an opportunity for some amateur anthropological observations on the differences between their victims and themselves. Their disgusting examinations and remarks provoke Hearne into observing with calculated humour that 'however favourable the opportunity... had there actually been as much difference between them as there is said to be between the Hottentots and those of Europe, it would not have been in my power to mark the distinction'.⁵⁹ Hearne's epilogue to the Indians' cruelty is less severe, but so pathetic and final as to maintain the level of the description of the earlier butchery. An old and blind Eskimo woman,

⁵⁸Ibid, p. 99-100.

⁵⁹Hearne, p. 103.

oblivious to what had passed a few hundred yards away, was fishing by a waterfall then, turning to greet her supposed relative, was instead 'transfixed to the ground in a few seconds, and butchered in a most savage manner'.⁶⁰

Hearne remained only long enough to take a few soundings of the river, observe the ocean to which it flowed and which he determined was impassable, and to claim the area formally on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company. Appropriately he named the spot Bloody Fall, and years later Franklin rediscovered the spot by the profusion of bones and skulls which still marked the area a century later. The return to Hudson Bay was uneventful though the route Matonabee chose took Hearne around Lake Athabaska which a few years later played so important a role in the competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and its rivals from Montreal. But by that time, the Northern Indians were as corrupt as the Southern Indians, and acceptance of the white man by the Indian had largely been despoiled by the wholesale introduction of rum.

It is doubtful if Hearne could have achieved the degree of integration that he did without the catalytic effect of Matonabee, and doubtful too if Hearne had any effect on the party of Indians that accompanied him; but the communion he developed with the individual Matonabee is very like that of a contemporary captive, Alexander Henry and his protector, Wenniway. So great was the communion between these two men that when La Perouse captured Prince of Wales Fort in 1782 and

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.103

Hearne, then governor, surrendered to the French commander and was carried off a prisoner, Matonabee quietly hanged himself. Whether this final act by an Indian still in his prime of life was through sorrow or shame for his white brother, Hearne notes that 'he is the only Northern Indian who, that I ever heard, put an end to his existence'.⁶¹ Probably no Canadian explorer depended so much upon one Indian for the success of his venture, and probably also no Indian exists in early Canadian journals with so dichotomic nature, so split between the ideals of the Indian and the white man, and yet so dedicated to the execution of the wishes of both races. It is impossible to conceive of the success of Hearne's last expedition without the degree to which Hearne allowed himself to be physically and psychologically captured by the Indians, and more specifically by his attachment to, and affection for, Matonabee. Hearne's journal, as a consequence, is the product of a strong sense of purpose and an inquisitive spirit, and a unique degree of integration into a voyage and into the only people who were a real part of the territory he covered.

⁶¹Hearne, p. 228.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

All travel journals, whether of Initiation or Exploration, are dichotomic by their intrinsic nature - at once purposeful, direct and immediate; yet moving into realms of the archetype: the quest, self-preservation, alienation and search for identification. Each Explorer's journal, then, starts with either a scientific, geographic, or commercial purpose as each Captivity journal commences with the single theme of preservation; but both, depending upon the nature of the individual, develop to some degree toward universality, toward themes essential to the human situation. Thus, the journal reflects this spirit of altercation, between immediacy and universality, between developing its scientific or commercial form or its artistic form. The more readable journals, those which transcend their immediate and contemporary purpose, like Tanner's and Hearne's, unconsciously approach the genre of the novel, and thus can be judged both in their actual and archetypal categories.

Overt heroism may be accepted, even applauded, in the literature of heroic ages, but in more sober and rationalistic periods the reader distrusts this type of hero and his criticism is liable to be cynical and damning. Few Canadian journal writers could be accused of this type of self-sufficiency, if anything they are only too aware of their own physical and psychological weaknesses. Their heroism, then, is the identifiable kind: the essentially weak or very ordinary man forced by circumstances to endure and to exceed his own expectations. In this

way, since the explorers know, and more or less accept, the privations of the Canadian wilderness, they would seem to suit the term hero more than the captive who only endure in ignorance, though paradoxically the latter journal often appears more heroic. Either man, however, be he explorer as Thompson or captive as Jewitt, is identifiable by the reader, an enduring individual, bent upon self-preservation or completion of a task which demands his best qualities. Heroism, then, becomes admirable, personal and, ultimately real.

But that racy individuality of phrase and diction is not the whole secret of the fascination which the language of the voyagers exerts. If one seek farther, one will come in the end, I suspect, to a trait which almost all the earlier travellers have in common. And this common feature of their language is inseparable from the nature of their undertaking. It is, in a word, the way they have of clothing the very stuff and substance of romance in the homely, direct and everyday terms of plain matter of fact. There was really little else they could do. They sailed into regions of the fantastically new, and had words, for the most part, for accustomed things alone. And so the strange assumed perforce the guise of the familiar, and familiar terms took on enchanting connotations through their involuntary commerce with the strange.¹

Cormack surveying Newfoundland's interior vainly looking for 'the cattle, the cottage, and the flocks'; or Douglas describing the fearful lightning in the Blue Mountains of the West Coast are both attempting desperately to associate their novel experience with the familiar and the knowable. The feeling which they experience demands the utmost of their creative powers to describe, whether it is natural phenomena or unexpected human communion as Henry's surprise in being preserved by

¹John Livingstone Lowes, The Road to Xanadu, (Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927), p. 313.

an unknown Indian, or Hearne's reaction to the Eskimo girl dying at his feet. Again, these are essentially average men reacting to completely novel happenings, and their attempts to describe them in terms familiar to their age helps give the journals their authentic and immediate spirit. The expression of novelty may not always be successful, often, in fact, it seems forced and ludicrous, but the demands of literary expression upon the man who lacks a facile ability to express himself is as poignant to the reader as the act itself. The Canadian journal writers, representing consciously or unconsciously many quite antithetical literary traditions have this ability in common, they do indeed marvelously clothe 'the stuff and substance of romance' in 'everyday terms of plain matter of fact'.

The Canadian experience as reflected by the journal writers is not unique, the qualities demanded of the explorer or captive are as common to the Elizabethan voyagers or to Richard Burton as to Alexander Mackenzie. But perhaps the Canadian explorer and captive are identifiable, or at least separable, by the spirit of their experience. At least this may be true of the truly successful Canadian journal writers, those who integrated with the land and the people. There must be a unique spirit in the writings of these men, perhaps not overtly a Canadian spirit, but an awareness of time and place which in some way is identifiable as Canadian.

The country, soil and climate in which we live, have always a powerful effect upon the state of society, and the movements and comforts of every individual, he must conform himself to the

circumstances under which he is placed, and as such we lived and conducted ourselves in this extreme cold climate.²

To identify Thompson's experience solely as Canadian would be an injustice to the journal, and yet his experience is not unrelated to the awareness of place that later Canadian novelists have attempted to express.

Perhaps the most tenuous task would be to assess these journal writers, to determine some hierarchy of perfection once the criteria for perfection have^{ve} been established. However, for combination of immediacy and universality, of experience and artistic relation of events, awareness of self, integration, and spirit of conscious purpose, Samuel Hearne of all the Canadian explorers and captives comes the closest in his journal to duplicating the success of his Elizabethan forbears in this genre.

²Thompson, Narrative, ed. J. B. Tyrell, p. 12.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Burton, Richard F., Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah, ed. Isabel Burton, New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1964.
- Cormack, W.E., "Narrative of a Journey Across the Island Newfoundland in 1822" in Howley, James P., The Beothucks or Red Indians, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915.
- Darwin, Charles, The Voyage of the Beagle, ed. Leonard Engel, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1962.
- David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in North America 1784-1812, ed. J.B. Tyrell, Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1916.
- David Thompson's Narrative...etc., ed. Richard Glover, Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1962.
- Douglas, David, Journal Kept by....1823-27, London: Royal Horticultural Society, 1914.
- Hearne, Samuel, A Journey to the Northern Ocean, ed. Richard Glover, Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1958.
- Henry, Alexander, Travels and Adventures, ed. James Bain, Toronto: George N. Morang and Company, Ltd., 1901.
- Jewitt, John R., Narration of the Adventures..., New York: 1815.
- The Kelsey Papers, ed. Arthur Doughty & Chester Martin, Ottawa: The Public Archives of Canada and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, 1929.
- Lowes, John L., The Road to Xanadu, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927.
- Mackenzie, Alexander, Voyages from Montreal...1789 and 1793, London: 1801.
- Masson, L.R., Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest, 2 vols., New York, Antiquarian Press Ltd., 1960.
- Radisson, Pierre Esprit, The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson, ed. Arthur Adams, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Ross and Haines, Inc., 1961.
- Stefansson, Vilhjalmur, The Friendly Arctic, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943.
- Tanner, John, A Narrative of the Captivity..., ed. Edwin James, Minneapolis, Minn.: Ross and Haines, Inc., 1956.