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THE GOD BECOMING: SENSATION OF THE NUCLEAR IN WALTER VAN TILBURG CLARK

by
David John Kleis

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
(English Language & Literature)
in The University of Michigan
1974

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Sheridan Baker, Acting Chairman
Professor Joe Lee Davis, Chairman (Deceased)
Associate Professor David Y. Hughes
Professor Lyall H. Powers
Professor G. Max Wingo

I guess it was about then that I started, by way of the bone and the flesh, to evaluate my doing and my thoughts by means of the sensation of the nuclear. Not that I could have defined any such monitor then. I can't remember just when it was, but it was years later, anyway, that I began trying to formulate the sensation of the nuclear as a guiding principle . . . . A lot of words . . . mean something of what I mean by nuclear, but none of them quite gets it, and neither does any combination of them. It is a guide toward the whole which is more than any sum we have yet made of the parts. It is an impetus toward the God becoming.

Walter Clark
The City of Trembling Leaves

While humans may never
Know God directly
They may have and do
Palpitatingly hover
Now towards, now away
And some in totality
Come closer to God.

R. Buckminster Fuller
Intuition

In Memory of

Joe Lee Davis (1906-1974):

who sought truth in all of life,

who fought indifference and enmity in life
with genuine concern and personal charity,

who caught in all of its myriad complexity
the mystery and majesty of "the simple life,"

who taught that literature is integral to life,
especially when that work of literature is "nuclear."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EPIGRAPHS. ii

DEDICATION iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. iv

PREFACE. vii

CHAPTER I: "SENSATION OF THE MYSTICAL"--SPIRITUAL NATURALISM AND WALTER VAN TILBURG CLARK. . 2

CHAPTER II: "FRAGMENT OF THE CONSCIENCE" IN *THE OX-BOW INCIDENT* 41

CHAPTER III: "FIRE OF THE HAWK"--A STUDY OF CLARK'S SHORTER FICTION. 77

CHAPTER IV: "SOUND OF THE NUCLEAR" IN *THE CITY OF TREMBLING LEAVES* 115

CHAPTER V: "COURSE OF THE HUNT" IN *THE TRACK OF THE CAT*. 161

CHAPTER VI: CLARK'S TOWER TO HEAVEN--A TENTATIVE CONCLUSION. 193

CHRONOLOGY OF CLARK'S WORKS CITED. 212

LIST OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES CITED 214

PREFACE

Walter Van Tilburg Clark was born on August 3, 1909, in East Orland, Maine. When his father, Walter Ernest Clark, a Methodist minister, became president of the University of Nevada, the family moved to Reno. Young Walter was eight, and his awareness of Nevada focused on the desert winds and trembling aspens outside a small ranch house on the Carson City-Reno highway. Nearby were the verdancy of Truckee meadows, the beauty of Pyramid Lake, and the majesty of Mt. Rose. All were destined to play major roles in his fiction. Clark attended Orvis Ring Grammar School and graduated from Reno High School in 1926. He attended the University of Nevada and earned both a bachelor's and master's degree. Upon graduation in 1931, he became a teaching assistant at the University of Vermont, concentrating on American Literature and writing a critical thesis on Robinson Jeffers (dated 1934). He went to Cazenovia High School in New York for ten years of teaching English and dramatics while coaching basketball and tennis. He was a Rockefeller Foundation Lecturer in Creative Writing at the Universities of Oregon and Washington in 1953. He became an associate professor of English in 1954, at the University of Montana in Missoula. In 1956, he began a fruitful association with San Francisco State College, serving the last three years as the Director of Creative

Writing. He received an honorary doctorate (Litt.D) from Colgate University in 1958. He became a Fellow in English (creative writing), in 1960, at the Center for Advanced Studies, Wesleyan University in Connecticut.

Walter Clark returned to the University of Nevada in Reno, in 1962, as Writer in Residence, where he did some editing for the university press, and taught creative writing. In 1966, he was joined at the University of Reno by his son, Robert Morse, a Ph.D. candidate, now writing on his own. Clark died on November 10, 1971, after a long but futile fight against cancer. During his struggle for life, he underwent two operations on his prostate gland.

Walter Clark had not published anything noteworthy in the last twenty years of his life, perhaps because in The Track of the Cat he had achieved a final statement not easily followed by any other. Nevertheless, Robert McFadden, in reporting his death for the New York Times, called him "a gifted writer, facile with words and perceptive of human emotions and relationships." McFadden recalled part of an interview he had had with the author concerning writing, in which Clark remarked:

> A person isn't going to write anything worthwhile until he is driven by a concern for some specific qualities in life. No one is going to work very long at writing unless he is interested in the craft as more than an art form. His concern must arise from specific concerns in life.
>
> (New York Times, Nov. 12, 1971, p. 50)

According to one of Walter Clark's pupils and proteges at San Francisco State College, H. C. Brashers, who maintained contact with him until shortly before his death, one of the writer's major concerns was people, specifically, his students. Brashers called Clark, "a younger brother of God," and in a letter dated February 6, 1974, he explained to me what he meant by that phrase:

> He was a gentle man, but gave no quarter where honesty of perceptions was concerned. He sometimes wrote comments on papers that were nearly as long as the papers themselves, not so much to set the student right as to assure that he understood the issues at hand with both depth and perspective. He gave those of us who were his thesis candidates hours of his time, so that we and our writing benefited not only from his acumen and principle, but his personal warmth as well. He influenced many of us in ways we may never be able to assess . . . he was indeed a younger brother of God. He seemed omniscient, ubiquitous, and agape radiated from him. And there was a little of the martyr about him, for which we students felt no little guilt. We knew, of course, that his passion for perfection was keeping him from turning loose any new writing, but even more so we were aware that the time and energy he was giving us precluded his writing at that time.

Walter Van Tilburg Clark was thus a man with a "passion for perfection," in an era characterized by imperfection. He was a man, who, in an age of radical indifference, was concerned about life. He cared--deeply cared. He was aware that he was writing in and for an atomic age, the age of controlling and directing nuclear energy for both creative and destructive ends. In 1957, Clark wrote a very sensitive article for Holiday, entitled "Nevada's Fateful Desert." There he described the transformation of a lovely desert

sandcloud into a deadly mushroom cloud. America was testing a small part of its nuclear arsenal. The term "nuclear" had become an integral component in Clark's thinking and vocabulary. For Clark it became a metaphor based on the smallest unit of the atom--the nucleus for expanding energy. When Timothy Hazard, in a seminal passage in The City of Trembling Leaves (Chapter 21), says that, "the nuclear is the complete cell from which growth expands," he is expressing Clark's own opinion.

No one to my knowledge has adequately understood the writings of Walter Clark. Some critics, like Frederick Bracher and Vernon Young, place Clark in the mainstream of Western regionalism. Others, notably Frederick Carpenter, John R. Milton, and Herbert Wilner, see Clark moving beyond Nevadan provincialism. Max Westbrook, in the only full-length study of Clark's writings to date, seems closer to the compelling power of Clark's fiction. He places him in a tradition he calls American Sacrality in which God is viewed as a variety of energies too vast for orthodox-religious categories. Westbrook has also observed that the "nuclear" is for Clark central to his art, his religion, and his life. He does not, however, develop this essential insight in detail, as I propose to do. Critics like Chester Eisinger and John Portz seem even closer to Clark's intention. Eisinger tries to show that Clark's writing is infused with a kind of Plotinian mysticism in which the self struggles to merge with the all, an idea in accordance with

my perception that Clark is a spiritual naturalist. Portz, writing on the symbolism in Clark's fiction, tries to demonstrate that most of his work is controlled by a single concept, the conflict between contrary energies, both within and without man, moving him either towards unity and life or discord and death. It does seem that Clark is moving beyond mere regionalism, that he is using the Nevadan landscape to express a form of mysticism or spiritual naturalism, or, in his own phrase, "the sound of the nuclear." I intend to demonstrate that Walter Clark is a "nuclear" writer in the way his artist-hero, Timothy Hazard, describes the nuclear: "Now I suppose that I might say it's the philosophy of my life. I sit and listen for the sound of the nuclear" (City, p. 177).

What Walter Clark intended to suggest by "nuclear" is of central importance to my thesis; its salient features are described by Tim Hazard. While the nuclear is some kind of mystical perception which defies precise definition, it becomes the guiding principle for one of Clark's major protagonists. Tim Hazard first tried to formulate the sensation after winning a footrace. In Hazard's terms, the nuclear partakes of the incomplete, which is always greater than the complete, where the question retains its validity while the answers are all gradually abandoned. Clark's "nuclear" implies potential energy that will expand. It is, therefore, greater than the sum man tends to make of its parts and a guide towards the whole, the all. The nuclear

is a force, and in Hazard's words, an impetus towards "the God becoming." Mastery and skill suggest the nuclear, but exclude "the suggestion of the more." The nuclear is multiple to an infinite degree. That is why the language of metaphor must be employed to suggest its nuances. It is the drop of water which repeats the cosmos, tricking humankind into believing it is entirely comprehensible. Hazard seems to come close to the concept of mathesis ("infinity plus one") posed by Wallace Stevens, when he says that two plus two equals four, but we can never know why. In fact, claims Hazard, "I can never know what is the true nature, even of that mysterious and redoubtable digit one," which echoes Thoreau's statement in Walden, "I cannot count one." The nuclear defies precise definition, yet Tim Hazard trusts in its manifestations, because for him it is that mysterious something of being in touch, yet having room for motion. He likens this feeling to "running with the stallion," that sensation which came over him while running, a fusion and integration of physical sensation and spiritual aspiration, that rendered partial, if not total, satisfaction. He discovers this same feeling when composing music, until for him the most important thing in his life becomes a listening for "the sound of the nuclear."

The nuclear is as important to Walter Clark as to his artist-hero. It appears to be one of the controlling ideas underlying most of his major writings. This is certainly true if one affirms that Walter Clark saw life steadily,

and saw it whole. I believe that Clark's vision of life was steady and whole, and that to the end he was a God-seeker, striving for perfection, for unity, and for integrity among men and between man and his milieu. The only way I know how to give adequate substantiation to my personal conviction is to let the writings of the man, Walter Clark, offer their own verification.

My first chapter, "Sensation of the Mystical," sets forth a unique philosophico-mystical tradition called by Huysmans, "spiritual naturalism." It is essential, because it establishes an important historical, philosophical, and theological tradition for Walter Clark, who is distinctively a modern American author.

The second chapter, "Fragment of the Conscience," deals with the nuclear theme in The Ox-Bow Incident, written in 1938 but published two years later. In this novel, Clark takes the standard stuff of the "western" and elevates it to a high level of fictive artistry. Clark once wrote, "the nuclear is the skillful ease of an athlete or a writer . . . the nuclear is both positive and negative." It is Clark's skill as a writer, caught up in the tension he described, which makes the best known of his books a nuclear novel. Robert McFadden in writing Clark's obituary notice, perceptively observed that in The Ox-Bow Incident, "there are no villains or special heroes." That refusal to resort to sharp delineation, and to permit the submerging of the shades of grey in the spectrum between black and

white or good and evil is characteristic of a nuclear book.

A third chapter, "Fire of the Hawk," will deal with the idea of the "nuclear" in Clark's shorter fiction, especially in his novella, The Watchful Gods (1950). There Clark affirms that the powers of light and darkness need not be in polarity. Buck realizes an uneasy peace between the darker powers of the fog god and the brighter, if lesser, power of the "other" god. I also analyze other stories, notably his masterpiece about a hawk named "Hook," in terms of the "nuclear."

A fourth chapter, "Sound of the Nuclear," will analyze the structure of The City of Trembling Leaves (1945), whose primary theme is nuclear. This novel bears a certain relationship to the autobiographical novels of Thomas Wolfe and Vardis Fisher. I hope to demonstrate that Clark is more skillful in handling his material than either Wolfe or Fisher, due primarily to the use of the artist-hero to unify the narrative, and to the employment of sonata or symphony form.

In a fifth chapter, "Course of the Hunt," I will analyze the structure of The Track of the Cat (1949), tenably Clark's most ambitious novel, in which once again the nuclear theme predominates. The hunt for a black panther, who is both physical and symbolic of the supernatural, is superimposed on the theme of the hunt or the quest for self. This hunt takes place on several levels. The motif of the hunt and the hunted, and of the disclosure of personal identity in

the process, invites comparison with Faulkner's similar and justly famous "The Bear," Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea, Melville's Moby Dick, and Wibberley's Meeting With a Great Beast.

In a final summary chapter, I would like to suggest that Clark's holistic vision, which appears throughout most of his fiction, is necessary for the survival of humankind in modern society. His vision deserves to be compared and contrasted with that of Reich in The Greening of America, of Toffler in Future Shock, and Roszak in Where the Waste-land Ends. It is a vision of hope from a man seeking God, himself a human tower stretching towards the perfection of heaven, but standing firmly upon the earth.

The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical . . . He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms--this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness.

Albert Einstein

CHAPTER I

"SENSATION OF THE MYSTICAL"--SPIRITUAL NATURALISM AND WALTER VAN TILBURG CLARK

Walter Van Tilburg Clark is a writer following, at times intermittently, a mystical track.[1] My purpose is to trace that track from a traditional mysticism and enthusiasm to a naturalistic mysticism. My intention is to suggest an intellectual background, not exhaustive but supportive, in which we might more clearly hear what Clark calls his "nuclear sound," and understand the power and quality of his mysticism. In his "Defense of Mysticism," in The Nature of the Physical World, Arthur S. Eddington urges his readers not to "underrate the power of the mystic":

> Mysticism may be fought as error or believed as inspired, but it is no matter for easy tolerance--
>
> 'We are the music-makers
> And we are the dreamers of dreams
> Wandering by lone sea-breakers
> And sitting by desolate streams;
> World-losers and world-forsakers
> On whom the pale moon gleams:
> Yet we are the movers and shakers
> Of the world for ever, it seems.'[2]

The mysticism of Walter Clark, a maker of music and a dreamer of dreams, is also like that described by Bertrand Russell: "Mysticism is, in essence, a little more than a certain intensity and depth of feeling in regard to what is believed

about the universe."[3] The mystical sensibility, like a chameleon, adopts the cosmology of its own time. What was, and is, believed about the universe in the twentieth century, in which Clark lived and died, is decidedly different from what was believed about the universe in the nineteenth century. I would like to show how Clark transmutes traditional mysticism and enthusiasm in arriving at a mysticism which might be called humanistic, naturalistic, pantheistic, or all three. We begin with traditional mysticism as outlined by Evelyn Underhill in her classic study of that subject.

In the preface of the first edition to Mysticism (1910) Miss Underhill laments the fact that "mysticism" is one of the most abused terms in the English language. She then goes on to give her own broad definition: "I understand it to be the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order."[4] The human spirit is in a state of unrest, until, as Augustine affirms, "he finds rest in God." The human spirit aspires upwards, reaching up to what might be called, the God-above, wherein it can attain union with the divine spirit, "the transcendental order." In her preface to the twelfth edition (1930) Miss Underhill gives a compendious statement about her position, which she calls "a limited dualism," a position she has maintained:

> Twenty years ago, I was already convinced that the facts of man's spiritual experience pointed to a limited dualism: a diagram which found place for his contrasting apprehension of

> Absolute and Contingent, Being and Becoming, Simultaneous and Successive. Further, that these facts involved the existence in him too of a certain doubleness, a higher and lower, natural and transcendental self--something equivalent to that 'Funklein' spark, or apex of the soul on which the mystics have always insisted as the instrument of their special experience.[5]

Miss Underhill is almost perfervid in her description of "the full mystic consciousness," which can develop the power to apprehend Pure Being: "This all-round expansion of consciousness, with its dual power of knowing by communion the temporal and eternal, immanent and transcendent aspects of reality--the life of the All, vivid, flowing and changing, and changeless life of the One--is the peculiar mark, the ultimo sigilla of the great mystic. . . ."[6] Miss Underhill admits that philosophy has been unable "to resolve the paradox of Being and Becoming," but that certain mystical personalities have been able to apprehend what she calls a "two-fold Vision of Reality." She insists that the task of the goal of the mystic is "the attainment of Being, Eternal Life, union with the One."[7] This union is achieved by a pilgrimage along "the mystic way," in which the individual progresses through several stages en route to "the attainment of Being."

Miss Underhill calls the first of these stages "the awakening of the self." It is the coming to life of "the transcendental consciousness," conventionally thought of as being converted to a religious life. This experience of conversion precipitates an individual into a larger world

of being, and arouses in him a longing for the Absolute.

The second of the so-called stages or stations along "the mystic way," is "the purification of the self." Having been awakened, one must next be purged. Purification, indeed, accompanies conversion, and is essential to the attaining of "union with the One." During this stage the individual must allow the self to be stripped of all self-love. This is the "Negative" side of purification, designated "Detachment." The other side, the "Positive," is called "Mortification," which Miss Underhill claims is "the gymnastic of the soul," in which a deliberate attempt is made by the individual to mortify his flesh and spirit by undertaking difficult and often painful tasks.

Following his experiences of conversion and purification, the individual is ready to progress to the third stage, "the illumination of the self," which is an intermediate stage or the middle station. At this point in his progression, the individual experiences betrothal, but not yet marital bliss. As Miss Underhill says, "the claim of the mystic is not yet to supreme communication; the 'Spiritual Marriage' of the Christian mystic, or that 'flight of the Alone,' which is the Plotinian image for the utmost bliss of the emancipated soul."[8] The individual has passed through the preliminary, albeit, prerequisite stages, and in the traditional language of asceticism, "he is 'proficient' but not yet perfect."[9] The third stage of proficiency or enlightenment is midway, in which the self, though

purified, and actively engaged in "the practice of the Presence of God,"[10] is not yet united with the One.

Before this final communion, the individual must pass through "the dark night of the soul." During this stage of his pilgrimage towards Eternal Life, the individual undergoes the agonies of doubt and despair. He is tormented, or worse. Miss Underhill suggests that this is a period of stagnation in which the individual no longer has power to contemplate: "Impotence, blankness, solitude, are the epithets by which those immersed in this dark fire of purification describe their pains."[11] The fourth stage, like the second, is a period of purification for the individual. The purification, however, is more intense, since "the dark night" has in most cases followed a bright day of mystical awakening. Sorrow and even self-loathing are now his lot. It is necessary for the mystic to move beyond this experience to the realization of the mystic goal.

Miss Underhill formulates that goal as follows: "the mystic life is a life of love: the Object of the mystic's final quest and of his constant intuition is an object of adoration and supreme desire."[12] This "Object of the mystic's final quest" is attained in the final stage of "the mystic way," and is not unlike Paradise conceived by Dante as a white rose:

> What measure shall suffice for the amplitude
> Of the extremest petals of this Rose?
> The breadth, the height, my vision could include
> Undazzled, and that joy which blooms for aye,
> Its quality and its sum, I understood.
> (canto xxx, ll. 116-120)

The quality and the sum of the Rose, of Being, is at last understood in the ultimate stage.

The final stage of the progression upwards is "the unitive life," through which the individual attains union with the One, with the Being. At last the individual has arrived. He has earned the right to be spiritually immersed in the God-above, which is "the transmutation of the self in God," or "the Spiritual Marriage of the soul with God."[13] Whatever words are used to describe this communion, the unitive life is "the highest point of the mystic ladder . . . the homeward course of pilgrim man."[14] In this fifth stage, "those two aspects of truth which [Ruysbroeck] has so clumsily classified as static and dynamic, as Being and Becoming, now find their final reconciliation within [the mystic's] own nature: for that nature has become conscious in all its parts, has unified itself about its highest elements."[15] The pilgrimage is over. Miss Underhill underscores the idea of pilgrimage and progression: "The Mystic Way has been a progress, a growth, in love: a deliberate fostering of the inward tendency of the soul towards its source."[16] But her words "the inward tendency of the soul" also suggest another kind of religious sensibility in which the divine spirit is located within the individual, and might be called the God-within.

Emerson called this kind of sensibility, enthusiasm: "everywhere the history of religion betrays a tendency towards enthusiasm."[17] Enthusiasm for Emerson is a state of

being, of the divine spirit being within the human spirit. Although Emerson's idea of God is triple-faceted--in man, in nature, and over-all--he seems to emphasize the idea of God-within:

> The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great Nature in which we rest as the earth rests in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-Soul within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other . . . We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the Eternal One.[18]

No longer a pilgrim in progress, the individual is an acolyte "in succession," living within and following after Over-soul, "that deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object are one."[19] With these words, Emerson is implying still a third religious sensibility in which opposites like subject and object become as one; even as the individual soul of man becomes one with the universal soul:

> A certain tendency to insanity has always attended the opening of the religious sense in men, as if they had been "blasted with excess of light." The trances of Socrates, the "union" of Plotinus, the vision of Porphry, the conversion of Paul, the aurora of Behmen, the convulsions of George Fox and his Quakers, the illumination of Swedenborg, are of this kind . . . The rapture of the Moravian and Quietist; the opening of the eternal sense of the Word in the language of the New Jerusalem Church; the revival of the Calvinistic churches; the experiences of

> the Methodists, are varying forms of that shudder of awe and delight with which the individual soul mingles with the universal soul.[20]

Walter Van Tilburg Clark's "sound of the nuclear" is not unlike Emerson's "shudder of awe." But Clark transmutes both the sensibility of mysticism and the sensibility of enthusiasm. Clark's kind of religious sensibility is difficult to define. Words like humanism, pantheism, and naturalism come close, but each with a more than usual mystical intensity. One of Clark's reasons for writing is "to celebrate all the unknown, the mystical and the mysterious elements in nature."[21] But Clark also described himself as "driven by a concern for some specific qualities in life."[22] Walter Clark's mystical track meets and merges with the "philosophic naturalists,"[23] which is the term Miss Underhill gives to those Vitalists who, in general, separate "Becoming" from "Being."

Clark's quality is perhaps best defined as "spiritual naturalism." I borrow the term from J. K. Huysmans. In 1888, after viewing a Grunewald "Crucifixion" in the Cassel Museum, Huysmans adopted a new formula, to be expounded in the opening chapter of his novel, La-Bas ("Over there"). This formula, according to Robert Baldick, was presented as "a dichotomy of matter and spirit," and was called both "spiritual realism" and "spiritual naturalism."[24] In La-Bas, Durtal, whose discussion with his friend des Hermies has visibly upset him, admits that realism or naturalism is

limited. The only option is "the inflammatory futilities of the romantics," and Durtal did not want to write downy pieces of prose like Feuillet or teary tales like Theuriet. Durtal refuses to explain the mysteries of life by singular reference to the maladies of the senses, at which point he says, "In a word we must follow the road laid out once and and for all by Zola, but at the same time must trace a parallel route in the air by which we may go above and beyond . . . a spiritual naturalism!"[25] It is this parallel route, this track of spiritual naturalism, that I am maintaining is Walter Clark's.

I would like to discuss the spiritual naturalists under two headings: (1) thinkers--philosophers, psychologists, analysts--and (2) writers--poets, playwrights, novelists. I wish to underline the fact that Walter Van Tilburg Clark is primarily a writer, and secondarily a thinker, just as Hemingway, Faulkner, and Steinbeck are writers first, and thinkers, second. But the thinkers will illuminate Clark's thought.

The singular truth expressed by both thinkers and writers is expressed very early by Heraclitus's <u>panta rhei</u>, which means that all things are in flux or in the process of becoming. Bertrand Russell, however, has pointed out that Heraclitus also discerned a hidden unity beneath the flux, transcending all created opposites, and urged many of his followers "to confess that all things are one."[26] The dual dictum of spiritual naturalism can thus be expressed in an

apothegm: all things are in the process of becoming one. The individual is no longer a pilgrim or an acolyte. He is being in the process of becoming. As such he perceives the divine spirit as the God-throughout all of nature, pervading all of life, whether that life be animalistic or angelic, human or divine, for what is man, but "a little less than god,"[27] and yet still lord over all creatures created by YHWH (Jehovah, or the God of creation).

Alfred North Whitehead acknowledges his debt to Heraclitus's panta rhei, when he states rather categorically that "the . . . flux of things is one ultimate generalization around which we must weave our philosophical system."[28] Whitehead was in open revolt against dualism, which Albert Levi maintains was "a generic property of his philosophic temperament."[29] To oppose dualism, Whitehead formulated what is known as a philosophy of organism, in which he attempts to embody in a single philosophy, the entire universe. He maintains that "philosophy expresses the infinity of the universe and that it can exclude nothing."[30] I wish only to comment briefly on three ideas within that massive philosophy.

The first is the idea of process, which for Whitehead is inseparable from the idea of becoming:

> The actual world is a process . . . and the process is the becoming of actual entities. Thus actual entities are creatures . . . How an actual entity becomes, constitutes what that actual entity is . . . Its being is constituted by its becoming. This is the principle of process.[31]

The second idea, which is related to the first, is that of "ideal opposites," the title of the first chapter in the final section of Process and Reality. Whitehead maintains that ideals are erected on two antitheses, permanence and flux, "in the inescapable flux, there is something that abides; in the overwhelming permanence, there is an element that escapes flux."[32] Whitehead concludes, "In our cosmological construction, we are, therefore, left with the final opposites, joy and sorrow, good and evil, disjunction and conjunction--that is to say, the many in one--flux and permanence, greatness and triviality, freedom and necessity, God and the World."[33]

The third idea is what Whitehead calls "objective immortality," which he defines as a synergetic relationship between heaven and earth, between God and man:

> For the kingdom of heaven is with us today . . . What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world. In this sense God is the great companion, the fellow sufferer who understands.[34]

Whitehead's idea of God as "the fellow sufferer who understands," of God who is not indifferent to the needs of men, of God-throughout is in marked contrast to such modern authors as, for instance, Robinson Jeffers. Jeffers pictured God as indifferent, as the God-without, of whom he says in "The Great Explosion," "He is no God of

love . . . this is the God who does not care and will never cease,"[35] and in "Greater Grandeur," from The Double Axe:

> God is doing it. Sadly, impersonally, irreversibly, The tall world turns toward death, like a flower to the sun.[36]

The virtue of Whitehead's thinking is that his vision was whole.[37] It is this wholeness of vision that the poetry of Robinson Jeffers and many in his age lacks and needs. Alfred North Whitehead's ideas of process-becoming, of ideal opposites, and of objective immortality constitute him a leading thinker in the mainstream of spiritual naturalism. Three other lesser-known thinkers who underline much of Whitehead's thought are Baker Brownell, Launcelot Whyte, and Frederick Happold.

Baker Brownell in his "attempt to make head and tail of the modern world" picks up Whitehead's idea of process when he states that "all life is one process."[39] He later describes more fully the living process:

> Life is a rhythmic flow of energy in a unified pattern over the world. Here are three of the general characteristics of the vital process—unity, flow and rhythm . . . of all three, rhythm is the most distinctive mark of living. Though nature has her cycles . . . nowhere has rhythm within rhythm, cycle within cycle, and harmonic continuities of form been elaborated as in the living process.[40]

For Brownell, as I believe for Clark, "mysticism means essentially the opposite of objectification." Brownell posits the mystical in the present and in the personal. His is mysticism of place in which, "laughter, the arts, love, religion, the immediate sense of life itself, are mystical."[41]

Brownell believed that life was a process in which all things were essentially one, "The coherence and unity of all life, which the mystics from Buddhism and Christianity, to the secular Lao Tse and Walt Whitman so passionately affirm, find in modern science odd biological confirmation . . . Biology is full of examples of the organic interdependence of living things upon each other."[42] The idea of coherence of life and unity of opposites is almost synonymous with the conceptions of Launcelot Whyte.

Whyte is especially indebted to Whitehead, it seems, for the problem, as he states it, is that the language of permanence has led to spurious and fallacious dualisms. In his chapter, "Unitary Man," in The Next Development of Man, Whyte asserts that "a formative process pervades nature and man needs it to organize his thoughts and his feelings, and through his thoughts and feelings his actions."[43] In this connection, the idea of animal harmony "is integral to unitary thought, and this occurs only when man sees himself as one component in the unitary system of nature."[44] The idea of animal harmony is one of the major themes in Clark's writings. Whyte believes that the cosmic order of things is a unity that tolerates diversity. Man, to be really alive, must undergo change constantly, but, because man is anxious about constant change, he seeks to deny it and himself by imposing on it the principle of permanence. This, suggests Whyte, is the path to self-delusion, "Man does not know nature or himself until he has discovered [in life]

this underlying unity."[45] Whyte's important statements on unity within diversity appear in an earlier chapter:

> Unity and diversity are necessary aspects of an intelligible order. Each term implies the other. Unity without diversity is identity, and diversity without unity is chaos.[46]

Asserting that unity and diversity, or diversity within unity, is a necessary aspect of order, Whyte then combines in one statement the idea of process and the idea of the reality of ideal opposites:

> Process is primary, assuming that the unity of nature lies in the existence of one universal tendency or form of process. The diversity of nature is ascribed to the varied histories and structures of the individual system in which that universal process is displayed. Nature is a unity of process in a diversity of structures, and such a system permits all men to be treated as examples of one universal process, as one with the whole of nature.[47]

Clark repeatedly sounds the theme that man is one with the whole of nature, and that, when he disregards this unity, he destroys other life, at times his own.

Frederick Happold, in Religious Faith and the Twentieth Century, also maintains that everything is evolving or becoming, "for the mystics, as indeed, for the scientist, the universe is not static, but dynamic; it is a world of Becoming."[48] Along with Whyte, he affirms the idea of "Undivided Unity." He states, "Imprisoned as we are in a world of polar-opposites . . . Our deepest longing is to break through the polar-opposites and to find again the Primal Meaning which we feel exists beyond phenomena, so

that we may be restored to that Undivided Unity from which we spring, but which we have lost, and with which we long to be united."[49] Happold's "Undivided Unity" or "Primal Meaning," will appear again in the thinking and writing of other spiritual naturalists. The idea of Becoming and unity of opposites, although important to Happold, are not so important as his idea of God. I would call his conception "the God-throughout," who is "The Something, within and beyond the polarities of human perception, which simply is . . . This Something which is the Is-ness of everything, however, in its completeness, is concealed from human perception."[50] Happold asserts with Whitehead that God is involved with the world, "though eternal Being in Himself, and therefore outside of evolution, is for us in the process of formation all around us." As such, affirms Happold, anyone "may come to see God as the Heart of everything."[51] As the center of everything is the God-throughout, companion of humankind. On the ground of these convictions, Happold maintains that "the only possible religion for the twentieth century is a mystical religion."[52] Thinkers of the stature of Lewis Mumford, Ernest Barnes, and William James, I believe, would agree with Happold's conclusion.

Happold called his experience "the timeless moment," and, in an earlier anthology on mysticism, admitted that, before this experience, he had known nothing about the subject, and was not even familiar with the word "mysticism":

> It happened in my room at Peterhouse in the evening of 1 February, 1913, when I was an undergraduate at Cambridge. If I say that Christ came to me, for Christ comes to men and women in different ways, I should be using conventional words which would carry no precise meaning. When I tried to record the experience at the time I used the imagery of the vision of the Holy Grail; it seemed to me to be like that. There was, however, no sensible vision. There was just the room, with its shabby furniture and the fire burning in the grate and the red shaded lamp on the table. But the room was filled by a Presence, which in a strange way was both about me and within me, like light or warmth. I was overwhelmingly possessed by Someone who was not myself, and yet I felt I was more myself than I had ever been before. I was filled with an intense happinesss, an almost unbearable joy, such as I had never known before and have never known since.[53]

Lewis Mumford, in an essay, "Program For Survival," talks about the function of religion, and his "tiny spark of consciousness" is not unlike Happold's "Presence . . . like light or warmth":

> Not the least important force we must mobilize in the interests of survival, is an ancient one: that of religion . . . Though most of the classic religions have dwelled on the familiar facts of man's limitations and frustrations, centered on the ultimate mystery of death, they have guarded life itself as zealously as the vestals guarded fire. Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, even Mohammedinism, have sought to curb man's impulses to destruction and disintegration: each of them interdicts random killing, each of them encourages procreation, each of them fosters love . . . Religion's function . . . is to redress man's pride in his intellect, to reduce his conceit and his complacence, so that he will be better fortified to face the ordeal of reality. Mankind is afloat on a frail life-raft. Religion understands the monsters of the deep and the storms that come up in the night.

> Religion reminds man of his creatureliness and his creativeness, his impotence and his power, his cosmic littleness and his cosmic preciousness--for the tiny spark of consciousness man carries in his soul, may be, up to now, the final event towards which the so-called physical universe has moved.[54]

Lewis Mumford, prophet and poet, at least in this passage, underscores the strategic importance of religion to the life, indeed, to the survival of the human race.

"The flash of revelation," which came to Ernest Barnes on a street in an Oxfordshire village, is like Mumford's "tiny spark of consciousness" and Happold's "Presence . . . like light":

> Four or five times in my life, the first time when I was a boy some fourteen years old, and the last time at the age of thirty-three, I have felt, enjoyed and wondered at a sudden exaltation which seemed to carry with it an understanding of the innermost nature of things. So vivid has been the experience that today I could go to the exact spot in the street of the Oxfordshire village where the flash of revelation first came. Always such experience has occurred in sunshine and out-of-doors, never in church. Always it has been unexpected. Always I have been alone . . . on the last occasion . . . I remember that I was going to bathe from a stretch of shingle to which few people who stayed in the village seldom went. Suddenly the noise of insects was hushed. Time seemed to stop. A sense of infinite power and peace came upon me. I can best liken the combination of timelessness with amazing fullness of existence to the feeling one gets watching the rim of a great silent fly-wheel or the unmoving surface of a deep, strongly flowing river. Nothing happened: yet existence was completely full. All was clear. I was in a world where the confusion and the waste and loss inseparable from time had vanished. At the heart of the world there was power and peace and eternal life.[55]

This long but eloquent description by Barnes of "the flash of revelation" could just as well have been written by Walter Clark and called "the sound of the nuclear." Barnes insisted that mysticism was not dependent upon creeds, which cannot express "the non-intellectual content of the highest forms of mystical experience." Moreover, "it is generally true that mysticism leads more readily to pantheistic optimism than to any other type of belief."[56] Barnes is a monist, as, I believe, most spiritual naturalists are, and for him, as for Happold and Whyte, there is a principle of unity beneath the apparent cosmic confusion: "the ecstatic sense of union with the Absolute, leads naturally, as William James says, to a monistic and optimistic interpretation of the universe."[57]

Arthur Koestler, in a mode distinct from that of Happold, Barnes, or Mumford, describes the mystical experience under the rubric, "the hours by the window," and participates in the same reality. He speaks of an "oceanic feeling" which overcomes him initially two or three times a week, and then twice a year, in which he feels he is floating on his back in a river of peace, under bridges of silence, until the sense of flow so overwhelms him there is no river nor an awareness of self. The "I" ceases to exist. He attempts to clarify his impression with a series of images:

> When I say "the I had ceased to exist" I refer to a concrete experience that is verbally as incommunicable as the feeling aroused by a piano concerto, yet just as real--only much

> more real. In fact its primary mark is the sensation that this state is more real than any other one has experienced before--that for the first time the veil has fallen and one is in touch with "real reality," the hidden order of things . . . What distinguishes this type of experience from the emotional entrancements of music, landscapes, or love is that the former has a definitely intellectual or noumenal content. It is meaningful, though not in verbal terms. Verbal transcriptions that come nearest to it are: the unity and interlocking of everything that exists, an interdependence like that of gravitational fields or communicating vessels. The "I" ceases to exist because it has, by a kind of mental osmosis, established communication with, and being dissolved in, the universal pool. It is this process of dissolution and limitless expansion which is sensed in the "oceanic feeling," as the draining of all tension, the absolute catharsis, the peace that passeth all understanding."[58]

What Koestler describes as "oceanic feeling" is precisely what Clark has in mind when he alludes to "the sensation of the nuclear." In contradistinction from Miss Underhill's final stage of the mystic way, the full experience of the wholly undifferentiated unity with the one, Koestler and Clark describe a penultimate state of being, an "almost-oneness," in which remains an awareness of sensations and thoughts. This quality of "almost-oneness" identifies Koestler's experience as an expression of spiritual naturalism or the mysticism of process.[59]

William James, in sketching the general characteristics of the mystical consciousness, does in fact say that the mystical sensibility "is on the whole pantheistic and optimistic, or at the least the opposite of pessimistic."[60] The great mystical achievement, as far as James is concerned,

is "the overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute":

> In mystic states we become one with the Absolute, and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime or creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make the critic stop and think . . . Mystical states wield no authority due simply to their being mystical states. But the higher ones among them point in directions to which the religious sentiments of non-mystical men incline. They tell of the supremacy of the ideal, of vastness, of union, of safety, and of rest. They offer us hypotheses, hypotheses which we may voluntarily ignore, but which as thinkers we cannot possibly upset. The supernaturalism and optimism to which they persuade us may, interpreted in one way or another, be after all the truest of insights into the meaning of this life.[61]

In this description of the mystical sensibility, James is saying much the same thing Mumford says about that spark in the soul as "the final event towards which the physical universe has moved." James, like Barnes and Happold, also remembers a personal experience, something which happened to that part of his consciousness which is not rational:

> Looking back on my own experiences, they all converge towards a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance. The keynote of it is invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity.[62]

This melting into unity of "the opposites of the world," this "kind of insight," is one of the themes expounded

brilliantly by two French philosophers, de Chardin and Bergson.

Teilhard de Chardin gives the name "cosmic sense" to that Being or affinity that binds the individual psychologically to the All in which he is enveloped. He then suggests the birth of this sense:

> The cosmic sense must have been born as soon as man found himself facing the forest, the sea and the stars. And since then we find evidence of it in all our experience of the great and unbounded: in art, in poetry, in religion. Through it we react to the world "as a whole" as with our eye to light.[63]

De Chardin again and again maintains that this "cosmic sense" within the psyche of the individual is driving each element of that psyche to become one with the whole that surrounds it. In this context, he defines mysticism as ". . . the need, the science, and the art of attaining the Universal and the Spiritual at the same time and each through the other. Simultaneously, and by the same significant act, to become one with All, through emancipation from all multiplicity or material gravity, that deeper than any ambition for pleasure, wealth or power, is the essential cream of the human soul."[64] De Chardin deeply and devoutly believed in what he called "a mystical ambience" to which everything flies and in which everything floats, "and in this rich and living ambience, the attributes seemingly the most contradictory, of attainment and detachment, of action and contemplation, of the one and the multiple, of spirit and matter, are reconciled without difficulty in conformity with

the designs of creative union: everything becomes one by becoming self."[65]

Henri Bergson's idea, élan vital or "vital energy," is similar to de Chardin's "cosmic sense." Bergson, like de Chardin, is a spiritual naturalist, who believes that everything is in the process of becoming, of becoming one with "the creative effort," which Bergson declares, "is of God if it is not God himself."[66] Bergson's idea of a great mystic is one who is able to rise above the human limitations, and to continue and even extend divine action. The image of "vital energy" is related to the life process, ". . . and we shall say that it is not the mechanical action of external causes, but an inward impulse that passes from germ to germ through individuals that carries life in a given direction, towards a higher complexity."[67] This inward impulse, or "vital energy" is that which also, according to Bergson, evokes in men a love for other men and women. Bergson distinguishes between this impulse and "a current" which drives his soul forward, "an indefinable presence," or "a boundless joy," like that "flash of revelation" experienced by Barnes. This is how Bergson describes a profound mystical experience (my italics):

> Shaken to its depths by a current which is about to sweep it forward the soul ceases to revolve around itself and escapes for a moment from the law which demands that the species and the individual should condition one another. It stops as though to listen to a voice calling. Then it lets itself go, straight onward. It does not directly perceive the force that moves it, but

> feels an indefinable presence, or divines it through symbolic vision. Then comes a boundless joy, an all-absorbing ecstasy or an enthralling rapture: God is there, and the soul is in God.[68]

As the soul of the individual pauses to listen as though to a voice calling, before advancing straight on, that soul is like Clark's, listening "to the sound of the nuclear," in a profound mystical experience.

James Leuba believes that the direction or motion of the mystical sensibility, "a manifestation of Life-Energy," or Bergson's "Élan Vital," is perhaps the only thing worth mentioning. Leuba is an empiricist not easily convinced about ecstasies or mystical experiences, although he does concede some evidence for Life-Energy:

> It is, of course, quite clear, that, conceived in this way, the Divine does not manifest itself only, or even especially, in mystical ecstasies. It is equally evident that this Life-Energy does not delight in praises and thanksgiving; it is not the God worshipped in churches.[69]

Leuba's "Life-Energy," this divine spirit not found in churches, reminds one of Barnes's "flash of revelation" that always happened outside in the sunshine, "never in church." Leuba's "Life-Energy" also looks beyond Barnes and Bergson to George Bernard Shaw. With Shaw, we shift our emphasis from thinkers about spiritual naturalism to writers of spiritual naturalism.

In his preface to Back to Methuselah, Shaw acknowledges his debt to Henri Bergson, whose Creative Evolution was published in 1907. He asserts:

> Creative Evolution is already a religion, and is indeed, now unmistakably the religion of the twentieth century, newly arisen from the ashes of Pseudo-Christianity, of mere skepticism, and of the soul-less affirmations and blind negations of Mechanists and Neo-Darwinians. But it cannot become a popular religion until it has its legends, its parables, its miracles.[70]

Shaw speaks of a "Vital Force," translating Bergson's élan vital, as he contends that physiologists confuse the issue by dividing men into mechanists and vitalists, the former viewing life as little more than physical and chemical action, the latter seeing little difference between living and dead bodies, the only difference being "the existence of a Vital Force."[71] Shaw goes on to comment that "since the discovery of Evolution in the method of the Life Force, the religion of metaphysical Vitalism has been gaining the definiteness and concreteness needed to make it assimilable by the educated man."[72] The religion of metaphysical vitalism becomes one more analogue for spiritual naturalism, Clark's mystical track.

John Davidson, another English poet and playwright, in his preface to The Theatocrat, a play the author claimed was written about people made out of the good and evil in himself, declaims about Immorality. His doctrine of Immorality recalls Whitehead and Bergson, though denying the existence of God. He writes: "we know now that there is no moral order of the universe, but that everything is constantly changing and becoming, and returning to its first condition in a perpetual round of evolution and devolution; and this

eternal tide of matter, this restless ebb and flow, I call Immorality."[73] Davidson's view of the cosmos is inseparable from his view of man:

> The universe is all mystery; the existence of a drop of water is as mysterious as the existence of music. Man is the universe, alive and conscious with the capacity of entire self-consciousness.[74]
>
> There cannot be anything higher than man because man is the whole universe become conscious and self-conscious . . . In him the universe thinks and imagines, and every man who trusts himself trusts the universe.[75]

Davidson is perfectly consistent with his doctrine of Immorality when he proclaims, "Now men know there is no God, that nothing was made, that all is becoming, that he is the Ether, condensed, evolved, and that he will devolve again into that invisible, imponderable form of Matter . . . Man is inhuman and cannot be other than inhuman."[76] Davidson's self-avowed purpose was to speak for the universe and "the natural mystery of matter,"[77] and as a spokesman for a universe becoming, he is brother to Clark. So too are Walt Whitman, Edward Carpenter, Conrad Richter, and John Steinbeck, whose perspectives are a little closer to home, to Clark's native land of America.

William James called Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter "naturalistic pantheists," whose mysticism differs radically from the more distinctively Christian type of Evelyn Underhill or Frederick Happold. Frederick Conner calls Whitman "a kind of poetic animist--or as others have called him, a 'mystic realist' or a 'vital materialist' . . . [who]

looked upon the world as an aggregation of living entities compounded like himself of body and soul."[78] Whatever or whoever he was, Walt Whitman represents a universe with a continuous procession of souls:

> All religion, all solid things, arts, government--all that was or is apparent upon this globe or any globe, falls into niches and corners before the procession of souls along the grand roads of the universe.

These words from "The Song of the Open Road," along with "All is a procession, the universe is a procession with measured and perfect motion," and the words ending his longest poem, "I tramp a perpetual journey,"[79] suggest a parallel to the traditional mystical notion of a pilgrim in progress towards the City of God or Perfect Union, like a divine vagabond in procession down the open road of life. Whitman, like Edward Carpenter after him, sought to sing that the divine essence pulsing in the cosmos was his own, not only his but all of humankind's. In "Chanting The Square Deific," the poet becomes "Santa Spirita," or God-throughout:

> Santa Spirita, breather, life,
> Beyond the Light, lighter than light,
> Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above the hell,
> Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,
> Including all life on earth, touching, including God, including Savior and Satan,
> Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all? what were God?)
> Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent, positive (namely the unseen,)
> Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man, I, the genēral soul,
> Here the square finishing, you solid, I the most solid,
> Breathe my breath through these songs.

Whitman's "Santa Spirita" is all-inclusive, "including all life on earth, touching, including God, including Savior and Satan, Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me . . . what were God?)"[80] Whitman speaks most eloquently for spiritual naturalism; indeed, as Conner suggests, in Whitman the tide of "cosmic optimism" reaches its highest level; "the major premise of cosmic optimism was that the universe is not alien to man but the embodiment or reflection or prototype of his own deepest self."[81]

Edward Carpenter's long poem, "Towards Democracy," like many of Whitman's longer poems, such as "Song of Myself," expresses a naturalistic pantheism or a spiritual naturalism in which man becomes the God-throughout:

> And I heard (in the heights) another voice say:
> I AM:
> In the recluse, the thinker, the incurable, and the drudge, I AM.
> I am the giver of Life, I am Happiness.
> I am in the good and the evil, in the fortunate and unfortunate, in the gifted and the incapable, alike; I am not one more than the other.
> The Lion roaring in its den, and the polyp on the floor of the deep, the great deep itself, know ME.
> The Long advances of history, the lives of men and women--the men that scratched the reindeer and mammoth on bits of bone, the Bushman painting their rude rock-paintings, the mud-hovels clustering round medieval castles, the wise and kindly Arab with his loving boy-attendants, the Swiss mountain herdsman, the Russian patriot, the English mechanic,
> Know ME. I am Happiness, in all-underlying.
> I am the Master, showing myself from time to time as occasion serves.
> I am not nearer to one than the other; they do not seek me so much as
> I advance through them.[82]

Carpenter's "I AM," who advances throughout nature and the cosmos, is a secularized echo of the Old Testament "YHWH"

or Jehovah, who named himself, "I AM THAT I AM." The kinship Carpenter suggests between "the Lion roaring in its den," and the "ME" is the same kinship Rod McKuen suggests between "man and Lion," in his poem, "When I was Nine":

> A mountain lion in a forest
> is by all accounts a curious event,
> but he was there.
> And written here
> between the lines
> is what gentleness he taught me
> and some hardness too.
> Most of all
> that though the forest's padded green
> is a different color from the green of its thick trees
> man and lion--different colors too--
> can share the same jungle
> if their eyes have kinship
> and they respect the distance
> that brings them close.

This kind of affinity or closeness between man and animal, a central tenet also for Launcelot Whyte, is at the very heart of Clark's fiction, most notably perhaps in the bond between Joe Sam and the panther in The Track of the Cat, and between Buck and the rabbit, in The Watchful Gods.

"Cosmic optimism," the conviction of an essential harmony between man and the universe, is also one of Conrad Richter's major premises. During the decade between 1940 and 1950, Richter published his "Ohio Trilogy" of three novels: Trees (1940), Fields (1946), and Town (1950). This trilogy shows the growth of a community from a wilderness into a city, in which the beauty and charm of the country contrast with the banality and decay of the city.[83] Richter's The Mountain and the Desert (1955) continues the philosophical tradition of "psycho-energics," which Clifford

Edwards maintains underlies the trilogy as well.[84] Richter's "psycho-energics" is similar to Whitman's "Santa Spirita," to Carpenter's "I AM," and even to Davidson's "Immorality." Richter, like them, is on the mystical track of spiritual naturalism. Edwards observes that "Richter's attempt to reconcile implications of a reductive science with a spiritual and mystical craving of his mind, by defining the mechanism of purposeful evolution, relates him to an earlier tradition of philosophical naturalism."[85] Richter thus views man in the process of becoming more fully alive, particularly with his hermit Michael in The Mountain and the Desert. Michael is a huge but tired individual when he begins his journey across a New Mexico desert, and he attempts to relate his personal intuitions to the primal relations of his surroundings. He attempts to discover "the mysterious life force within the human heart which explains the human drives."[86] The further Michael proceeds into the desert the more he sloughs off his artificial self, until he becomes an integral part of the desert and the mountain, for in them Michael discovers an almost savage delight in being alive. Conrad Richter, son of a Lutheran clergyman, sought to explain the mystery of being, not by supernatural claims but with scientific facts. Like Davidson, he affirms that the primary elements in man are material, but, unlike Davidson, Richter believes that behind phenomena is a final cause, which has many names. Edwards concludes that "in Richter's cosmology, natural law

represents the constant attendance of spiritual process in the universe whose purpose is to raise man's spiritual consciousness to a higher relationship with the creative power behind the universe."[87] Richter's careful attention to the process of life in an attempt to see life whole relates him to the Steinbeck of Sea of Cortez.

In 1940, the year Conrad Richter published the first book of his trilogy, John Steinbeck began a journey of his own on a sardine boat with his close friend Edward Ricketts. Their mission was to gather different forms of marine life from the beaches and tidepools in the Gulf of California. One year later, Steinbeck published the day-to-day account of their journey, and, like his other non-fiction works, Travels with Charley and America for Americans, it contains some of his most cogent and colorful writing. Above all, Steinbeck is affirming the wholeness of life, the oneness that pervades the universe: "The whole is necessarily everything, the whole world of fact and fancy, body and psyche, physical fact and spiritual truth, individual and collective, life and death, macrocosm and microcosm (the greatest quanta here, the greatest synapse between these two) conscious and unconscious, subject and object."[88] In Steinbeck's writing of the relationship between the teeming of life of the tidepools and the stars, we have, I would suggest, an apotheosis of spiritual naturalism:

> . . . it seems apparent that species are only commas in a sentence, that each species is at once the point and the base of a pyramid, that

> all life is relational to the point where an Einsteinian relativity seems to emerge. And then not only the meaning but the feeling about species grows misty. One merges into another, groups melt into ecological groups until the time when what we know as life meets and enters what we think of as non-life: barnacle and rock, rock and earth, earth and tree, tree and rain and air. And the units nestle into the whole and are inseparable from it. Then one can come back to the microscope and the tide-pool and the aquarium. But the little animals are found to be changed, no longer set apart and alone. And it is a strange thing that most of the feeling we call religious, most of the mystical outcrying which is one of the most prized and used and desired emotions of our species, is really the understanding and the attempt to say that man is related to the whole thing, related inextricably to all reality, known and unknowable. This is a simple thing to say, but the profound feeling of it made a Jesus, a St. Augustine, a St. Francis, a Roger Bacon, a Charles Darwin, and an Einstein. Each of them in his own tempo and with his own voice discovered and reaffirmed with astonishment the knowledge that all things are one thing and that one thing is all things--plankton, a shimmering phosphorescence on the sea and the spinning planets and an expanding universe, all bound together by the elastic string of time. It is advisable to look from the tide pool to the stars and then back to the tide pool again.[89]

John Steinbeck not only summarizes the religious sensibility of spiritual naturalism, but also anticipates, by about fifteen years, Rachel Carson, in The Edge of the Sea (1955):

> The shore is an ancient world, for as long as there has been an earth and sea there has been this place of the meeting of land and water [the tidepool]. Yet it is the world that keeps alive the sense of continuing creation and of the relentless drive of life. Each time I enter it, I gain some new awareness of its beauty and its deeper meanings, sensing that intricate fabric of life, by which one creature is linked with another with its surroundings.[90]

Clark's works also suggest this "intricate fabric of life," of which both Steinbeck and Carson speak; one senses in them, if nothing else, "the relentless drive of life." This energy is central to Clark's most significant idea, "the sound of the nuclear."

Clark clearly stands in a pervasive modern intellectual and metaphysical tradition. An awareness of the dynamic character of this tradition of the mysticism of process provides the context within which any serious analysis of Clark's novels and short stories must proceed.

Footnotes

[1]I am using track to mean a line or a path over which other thinkers and writers have passed.

[2]Arthur S. Eddington, The Nature of the Physical World (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 328.

[3]Bertrand Russell, Mysticism and Logic (New York: W. W. Norton, 1929), p. 3.

[4]Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1911), p. xiv.

[5]Ibid., p. ix.

[6]Ibid., p. 36.

[7]Ibid., p. 41.

[8]Ibid., p. 234.

[9]Ibid., p. 234.

[10]Ibid., p. 240.

[11]Ibid., p. 381.

[12]Ibid., p. 389.

[13]Ibid., p. 415.

[14]Ibid., p. 442.

[15]Ibid., p. 434.

[16]Ibid., p. 428.

[17]Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 1940), p. 269.

[18]Ibid., p. 262.

[19]Ibid., p. 262.

[20]Ibid., p. 269.

[21]Daniel Yankelovich, "The New Naturalism," SR, April 1, 1972, p. 35.

[22]Robert D. McFadden's obituary notice, New York Times, November 12, 1971.

[23]Underhill, op. cit., p. 43.

[24]In Robert Baldick's perceptive introduction to La-Bas, both "spiritual realism" and "spiritual naturalism" are given together, but Keene Wallis translates the key phrase, "spiritual naturalism." The Fortune Press translation renders it "spiritual realism." I have opted for Wallis.

[25]J. K. Huysmans, La-Bas, tr. Keene Wallis (New York: University Books Inc., 1958), p. 5.

[26]Russell states, "It is mysticism, too, which leads Heraclitus to assert the identity of opposites: 'good and ill are one,' he says; and again, 'to God all things are fair and good and right, but men hold things wrong and right' (p. 3).

[27]Psalm 8.5a (NEB).

[28]Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 317.

[29]Albert William Levi, "The Vision of the Whole," in Philosophy in the Modern World (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1959), p. 509, which is a citation from Whitehead's Process and Reality, p. 34.

[30]The term "philosophy of organism" is Whitehead's, to describe his own metaphysics; cited by Levi, p. 486. Whitehead is so important to an understanding of Clark's writings, precisely because as a thinker he saw things fully and whole.

[31]Whitehead, p. 34.

[32]Whitehead in attempting to delineate the two notions of permanence and flux, remembers Michelangelo: "The four symbolic figures in the Medici chapel in Florence--Michelangelo's masterpiece of statuary, Day and Night, Evening and Dawn--exhibit the everlasting elements in the passage of time. The figures stay there, reclining in their recurring sequence, forever showing the essence in the nature of things. The perfect realization is not merely the exemplification of what in abstraction is timeless. It does more. It implants timelessness on what in its essence is passing. The perfect moment is fadeless in the lapse of time" (p. 513).

[33]Ibid., p. 518.

[34]Ibid., p. 532.

[35]Robinson Jeffers, The Beginning and the End (New York: Random House) p. 4.

[36]Robinson Jeffers, The Double Axe (New York: Random House), p. 139. This collection of poems also contains, "The Inhumanist," from which the philosophy of inhumanism is drawn. This is yet a further step away from spiritual naturalism where man is in procession, and God-is-throughout. This is what Conner calls "the twilight of cosmic optimism," where man is in regression and God-is-without. Radcliff Squires, The Loyalties of Robinson Jeffers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), makes this comment, with which I concur, "Eventually when people cease to take his impersonal view of the species homo sapiens as an assault on humanity, he [Jeffers] will be seen as one of our master poets" (p. vii).

[37]Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, Robots, Men and Minds (New York: George Braziller, 1967). In this book, the author explores the ramifications of "general systems theory." This he suggests is, "a science of wholeness, or holistic entities, which hitherto under the mechanistic bias were excluded as unscientific, vitalistic or metaphysical" (p. 70). His theory is about one generation young, and holds forth some hope for truly interdisciplinary endeavors, since the primary goal of systems theory is not the finished product but the creative process.

[38]Baker Brownell, The Philosopher in Chaos (New York: Van Nostrand Co. Inc., 1941). The subtitle of this book is, "an attempt to make head or tail of the modern world."

[39]Ibid., p. 88.

[40]Ibid., p. 102. In fact, he calls the dynamic core of life, "the dance of living" (p. 44), and maintains that the great football teams of Knute Rockne at Notre Dame didn't play football, "they danced football" (p. 20). Brownell might be happy to know that under Ara Parasegian, they still do.

[41]Ibid., p. 125.

[42]Ibid., p. 99.

[43]Lancelot Law Whyte, The Next Development of Man (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1948), p. 249.

[44]Ibid., p. 253.

[45]Ibid., p. xi of introduction.

[46]Ibid., p. 11.

[47]Ibid., p. 11-12.

[48]Frederick C. Happold, Religious Faith and Twentieth Century Man (Baltimore: Penquin Books, 1966), p. 84.

[49]Ibid., p. 46.

[50]Ibid., p. 51.

[51]Ibid., p. 59.

[52]Ibid., p. 106.

[53]Ibid., p. 13.

[54]Lewis Mumford, The Human Prospect, ed. Harry T. Moore and Karl W. Deutsch (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1955), p. 253.

[55]Ernest William Barnes, Scientific Theory and Religion (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1934), p. 620.

[56]Ibid., p. 618.

[57]Ibid., p. 618.

[58]Arthur Koestler, The Invisible Writing (New York: Macmillan Co., 1954), pp. 350-354.

[59]Walter Stace, The Teaching of the Mystics (New York: Mentor New American Library, 1960), p. 233 argues that Koestler's reference to being "dissolved in the universal pool" identifies his experience as essentially similar to the final state of oneness which Christian mystics interpret as "union with God." This facile comparison fails to make the fundamental distinction between "oneness" and "almost-oneness" which is crucial in the definition of spiritual naturalism and falsely attempts to superimpose upon a naturalistic statement a theistic model.

[60]William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Crowell-Collier Pub. Co., 1961), p. 331.

[61]Ibid., p. 329, p. 336.

[62]Ibid., p. 305.

[63]Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Let Me Explain, texts selected by Jean-Pierre Demoulin, tr. Rene Hague and others (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 115, cited from Human Energy.

[64]de Chardin, cited from How I Believe.

[65]Ibid., p. 139, cited from Science and Christ.

[66]Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, tr. R. A. Audra and Cloudseley Brereton (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1935), p. 209.

[67]Ibid., p. 103.

[68]Ibid., p. 218.

[69]James H. Leuba, The Psychology of Religious Mysticism (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1925), p. 318.

[70]George Bernard Shaw, Back to Methuselah (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. lxv of preface.

[71]Ibid., p. lxi.

[72]Ibid., p. lxii.

[73]John Davidson, The Theatocrat (London: E. Grant Richards, 1905), p. 25 of his incredibly esoteric, indeed, almost psychedelic introduction.

[74]Ibid., p. 71.

[75]Ibid., p. 74.

[76]Ibid., p. 74. It might be of interest to compare the inhumanism of Davidson with that of Jeffers; it would seem that Davidson's would be more scientific and less vitriolic, although it is dangerous to generalize.

[77]Ibid., p. 24.

[78]Frederick William Conner, Cosmic Optimism (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1949), p. 101.

[79]cited by Conner, p. 116.

[80]In these lines Whitman seems to be anticipating Robert de Grimston and The Process (Church of the Final Judgment), started by de Grimston in London in 1963. The Process is said to have been born out of a series of Blakean visions in which de Grimston saw in the state of the world and the suffering of mankind the inevitable destruction of humankind. De Grimston, like Whitman, advocates the existence of four Gods: Jehovah, Lucifer, Satan, and Christ. Whitman's "Santa Spirita," or the third person in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost, is notably absent. It should be mentioned that two of the four gods are diabolic in nature, and that de Grimston teaches that we have already lived through the periods of Jehovanism and Luciferism and are presently living in the age of Satanism, thus the publicity about "Satanists," like Charles Manson who is a follower of

de Grimston. De Grimston predicts (and how many have not), that in the year 2000 the world will be destroyed, only to be resurrected again. One of the Processians put it this way, "The Process is the constant reaching outwards for a goal and as we get it, as we achieve our goal, we see another one, so we are always in the process of going from one to another" (Mich. Daily, January 25, 1972, p. 6).

[81]Conner, p. 118.

[82]Edward Carpenter, Towards Democracy (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1883), p. 93-94.

[83]This theme of moving from the sterility of the city to the vitality of the country is beautifully and sensitively handled by the modern Italian novelist, Casere Pavese, most notably in The Moon and the Bonfire.

[84]Clifford Edwards, Ohio Trilogy--Its Ideas, Themes and Relationship to Literary Tradition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan dissertation, 1962), where Edwards calls this the philosophy of "Psycho-energics."

[85]Ibid., p. 169.

[86]Ibid., p. 20.

[87]Ibid., p. 113. Edwards also lists the names which Richter gives to this power: "plan," "design," "Creator," "Supreme Intelligence," and "Great Inventor," so that most of the names attributed to deity have scientific or technological connotations.

[88]John Steinbeck, The Log from the Sea of Cortez (New York: Viking Press, 1951), p. 150.

[89]Ibid., p. 216-17.

[90]Cited by Sally Lindsay, "The Complex Life at the Ocean's Tide," SR, April 15, 1972, p. 33.

If we can touch God at all, where do we touch him save in the conscience? And what is the conscience of any man save his little fragment of the conscience of all men in all time.

Walter Clark
The Ox-Bow Incident (p. 49)

CHAPTER II

"FRAGMENT OF THE CONSCIENCE" IN THE OX-BOW INCIDENT

On a first, rapid reading, Clark's The Ox-Bow Incident, written in 1938, published two years later, appears to be little more than a well-written, fast-paced novel about hard-bitten southwesterners linked by a single incident--a lynching. The author has taken great care to construct the five parts of his novel around this incident. The contents of the novel may be summarized accordingly: (1) prelude to a lynching; (2) formation of a lynch-mob; (3) manhunt by a lynch-mob; (4) the lynching, and (5) postlude to a lynching. The summary will underscore the contention that the novel is a "taut"[1] "sinewy"[2] tale of "high drama,"[3] which is "a triumph of restraint and workmanship."[4] It is more, however. In the focusing upon the polarities of injustice and justice, of consciencelessness and an acutely sensitive conscience, Clark intends to explore the dimensions of a nuclear explosive situation.

In the short first part, "prelude to a lynching" (pp. 1-30), Art Croft and Gil Carter, two cow-punchers and riding companions for five years, ride into the Nevada town of

Bridger's Wells and dismount at Canby's saloon. An excited youth named Greene comes racing into town on a sweat-flecked horse, to report the rumor that someone has shot and killed Kinkaid, a small, dark but gentle Irishman who rode winter range for Drew. In addition, some forty or fifty head of Drew's cattle seem to have been rustled. When Art Croft asks, "What's up?" Canby says, "Lynching," in an almost offhand manner, adding "the men would go a long way, and all together to get the guy who killed Kinkaid" (p. 30). That simply is the kind of impact a man like Kinkaid makes on other men:

> He always seemed halfway sad, and though he had a fine, deep singing voice, he wouldn't often sing when he knew anybody could hear. He was only an ordinary rider, with no flair to give him a reputation, but still there was something about him which made men cotton to him; nothing he did or said, but a gentle, permanent reality that was in him like his bones or his heart, that made him seem an everlasting part of things. You didn't notice when he was there, but you noticed it a lot when he wasn't. You could no more believe that Kinkaid was dead than you could that a mountain had moved and left a gap in the sky (p. 30).

Kinkaid, who has ridden together with Farnley from the Panhandle to Jackson Hole ever since they were kids, is ostensibly dead. His killer or killers must be tracked down and lynched.

The second and longest part, dealing with the "formation of a lynch-mob" (pp. 31-94), opens with action: "Farnley was climbing onto his horse" (p. 31), momentarily crazed with lust for immediate vengeance. Davies, the local

storekeeper, and Osgood, the town minister, urge the men to control themselves, not to lose their sense of justice. No one heeds them. Bartlett, a cattle-rancher, like Farnley, wants immediate action. While other voices are raised in protest, the voice of non-reason, like that of Bill Winder, who "believed in action first and make your explanation later," prevails. Smith, the town drunk, and Mapes, the acting sheriff, strongly urge forming a posse. When Joyce, the clerk of Davies' store, tells Judge Tyler a posse will insure proper legal procedure and prevent a lynching, the judge quickly corrects him by saying, "that's not a posse . . . it's a lawless mob, a lynching mob" (p. 65). Major Tetley, called "God-Almighty Tetley," arrives to lead the posse. He persuades the men to ride out to hunt down the alleged killer-rustlers. Mapes duly, but illegally, swears in some twenty-eight deputies, including the town's black handy-man, Sparks, and Jenny "Ma" Grier. A lynch-mob is formed and armed.

The third part of the novel, "manhunt by a lynch-mob" (pp. 95-139), follows the mob as they hunt down the alleged killer-rustlers, surrounding them in a place called the Ox-Bow, "a little valley up in the heart of the range . . . maybe two or three miles long and half or three quarters of a mile wide" (p. 113). It is a place of beauty, which smells of pine cones and teems with sounds of blue jays. The Ox-Bow is not a place for men, certainly not for men

hunting down other men. This point is made by young Gerald Tetley, who asserts that a lynch-mob is even worse than a wolf-pack, because wolves at least do not hunt down and kill their own kind. The course of the conversation anticipates the lynching, which will take place in the Ox-Bow. Sparks tells how he, as a boy of seven or eight, saw his own brother lynched. He wants to see no more lynchings. The appearance of a stagecoach, and the subsequent confusion, including the wounding of Art Croft, offers only momentary respite. When the stagecoach departs, the posse closes in. Tetley, like an army field marshal, regroups his forces and gives them his final instructions as if to do battle with an army, not to lynch three men.

The fourth part, "the lynching" (pp. 140-187), concludes the manhunt and contains "the Ox-Bow incident," the lynching of three ostensibly guilty men who to the very end insist upon their innocence: a Mexican, an older, feeble-minded man, and a young rancher, all of whom are questioned throughout the night. The young man is Donald Martin, who claims to have run his own outfit in Pike's Hole and to have purchased the missing cattle from Drew. His claims are disbelieved. Without waiting for Drew to confirm his allegation, and without a shred of evidence, the mob prepares to lynch its hapless victims. A mock trial rages on through the night. When Tetley motions towards the biggest tree in the clearing, and orders each of the three tied and hanged separately, Martin receives permission first to write a

letter to his wife. In spite of Davies' efforts to use the letter to prove Martin's innocence, the fate of the three men is decided by a majority vote. In the morning, with no sunrise, the three are hanged.

The fifth and final part, the shortest, is "postlude to a lynching" (pp. 188-217), in which the truth is revealed: Kinkaid is alive, and Martin had bought Drew's cattle. Three innocent men have been lynched. Sheriff Risley goes through the motions of selecting a legal posse to bring the lynchers to justice, but he refuses to recognize the group of ranchers and cowpunchers as the actual lynchers; "we passed in a snowstorm, and I was in a hurry" (p. 190) is the explanation he offers. In the bitter aftermath of remorse, both Gerald Tetley and his father, the Major, commit suicide. Art and Gil prepare to leave Bridger's Wells, after having been called back to nature by the sounds of meadowlarks singing in the spring.

Others before me have tried to identify what makes Clark's first novel more than an ordinary western in the tradition of Zane Grey or Max Brand. The Ox-Bow Incident is more than a "magnificent incident,"[5] and more than "a parable of the posse,"[6] and even more than "a study of simple universals."[7] In his introduction to The Reader's Club edition (1942), Clifton Fadiman suggests that Clark takes a folk-form like the western and elevates it into an art form. Fadiman points out that Clark employs all the ingredients that comprise a good western, but claims artistry for the novelist on the

grounds that he uses the materials as "a pretext for saying something that goes beyond them."[8] Almost twenty years later, in his afterword to the New American Library edition, Walter Prescott Webb observes that Clark is "not content with surface manifestations; he probes for the deeper meaning . . . His refusal to pander, to join the parade of popular western writers, is something for which he probably deserves [no] little credit."[9] Webb cites Fadiman's statement: "Such a book [The Ox-Bow Incident] can never be followed by another of the same kind; it stands by itself."[10]

Jay Gurian observes that Clark is one of the few Western literary artists to break from the stereotypes of escapist adventure stories.[11] John R. Milton similarly observes that Clark brings "dramatically to the public's attention the non-romantic side of the Cowboyland conflict.[12] Milton's most perceptive comments, however, have to do with Clark's ability to divest himself of oversimplification and overstatement. He states that "the world of the Ox-Bow and the Bridger's Wells is full of contrasts and paradoxes--Good and Evil, moral strength and weakness, physical strength and weakness, deep concern and casual curiosity--and the problem is not resolved except by bare implication."[13] For Clark there is no easy answer to some of the most perplexing and most distressing questions men have asked from the beginning of time.

Clark's ability to face both sides of a question and to

see things "steadily and whole" belongs to the essence of spiritual naturalism and lends solid support to my thesis about his writings. John Portz further amplifies Milton's contention: "The Ox-Bow Incident, Clark's first and least symbolist novel, is much more complex than its rapid style, overworked situation and shallow genre would suggest."[14] The reason he gives is that "the energies of life and death are rather ambiguously embodied in the characterizations."[15] He goes on to analyze in some detail the forces of both evil and good characterized in the novel. Others, like Max Westbrook, argue that the personal or the individual concerns in the novel are more important than the ethical overtones. He argues that Clark's theme is the destruction of man's ego by himself, that "man does not achieve his real self in idea, or office, or emotion, but as an individual part of a larger whole."[16] Though this is correct, Westbrook fails to show how Clark deals with "the larger whole," the entire cosmos of which individual man is only an important part.

Of all critics, L. L. Lee comes closest to the kind of mysticism that Clark calls "the sound of the nuclear." Lee's insights about Clark's world are alternately--even simultaneously--social, ethical, political, and individual. He calls Clark "a notable ironist,"[17] in spite of the author's occasional sentimentality and surface simplicity. He states categorically, and accurately, that Clark is speaking in his

fiction to the human person as a unique individual, and that we as human persons either learn to love and live with one another, or die. Lee argues that Clark's first novel is "a bitter indictment of social inequality, as well as of injustice."[18] The only way for man to live is "as a holy fool with high moral courage in and with the natural world and with other men," to which Lee adds, "above all, man's way with man corresponds to his way with nature."[19] Finally, Lee observes that if Clark is a moralist he is also a realist who believes that man should be good, but that evil most certainly exists. He indeed describes what I have tried to define as spiritual naturalism or humanistic mysticism:

> And evil can be everywhere. For Clark the natural world is usually a good, but is also a mystery, a sometimes terrifying mystery. The natural world can offer images to live by; it can give and restore human integrity; it can be fulfillment, if one comes as a worshipper, with love but also with awareness. I use the word "worshipper" deliberately. Clark's fiction is filled with the gods of nature who are to be recognized as gods. They are not devices of bad poetry or mere abstractions; they are true images of man's sense of the real powers of nature . . . Clark's gods . . . exist in the natural world as well as in man. Clark's "nature," then, is divine, but we must remember that the divine is also human.[20]

Based on the idea that in Clark's fiction the natural world is not only good but "a sometimes terrifying mystery," Lee argues that Clark is most concerned about "man as a political animal, that is, man as a member of a community."[21] Clark is not simply protesting against injustice. He is asking the ambiguous question, perhaps even the unanswerable

question: how do we, as men, arrive at justice; can we arrive at justice? I hope to be able to show how Clark tries to answer this question, which is the nucleus of The Ox-Bow Incident. In a letter dated September 1, 1959, Clark writes:

> . . . So, in part, I set about writing The Ox-Bow Incident as a kind of deliberate technical exercise. It was an effort to set myself free in that western part by taking all the ingredients of the standard Western (which were real enough after all) and seeing if, with a theme that concerned me, and that had more than dated and local implications, and a realistic treatment, I could bring both the people and the situation alive again.[22]

The novel's immediate critical acclaim as something unusual in western writing is a tribute to Clark's triumph in making both people and situation come alive again. Clark's method of transmuting the standard stuff of Westerns into elements of spiritual naturalism, notably the idea of unity of opposites--justice and injustice--in moving towards "the sound of the nuclear," is my central concern.

In the natural world of Clark's novel, God, man, and society are one. They are united. To destroy a part of that world is to damage all of it. What Clark shows us is that the natural world contains two opposing forces: (1) destructive forces, culminating in mass hysteria and lynching by the many; (2) constructive forces, evolving from the "sense of justice" and "the fragment of conscience" in the few. These phrases are Arthur Davies' in trying to dissuade the mob. He pleads with them "not to go as a lynching party, not to weaken the conscience of the nation, not to commit

this sin against society" (p. 48). When Winder mocks Davies, he makes the following statement concerning the notion of law and justice and conscience (my italics):

> True law, the code of justice, the essence of our sensations of right and wrong, is the conscience of society. It has taken thousands of years to develop, and it is the greatest, the most distinguishing quality which has evolved with mankind. None of man's temples, none of his religions, none of his weapons, his tools, his arts, his sciences, nothing else he has grown to, is so great a thing as his justice, his sense of justice. The true law is something in itself; it is the spirit of the moral nature of man; it is an existence apart, like God, and as worthy of worship as God. If we can touch God at all, where do we touch him save in the conscience? And what is the conscience of any man save his little fragment of the conscience of all men in all time (p. 49).

Justice, or "the conscience of society," is a process to be worked out in time; indeed, "it has taken thousands of years to develop." Yet, just as man's "little fragment of the conscience of all men in all time" needs time to evolve and to be evaluated, paradoxically, the man without conscience can easily be influenced by an authoritarian figure like Tetley at any moment. Clark himself, in a letter to Walter Prescott Webb, acknowledged that, writing the book in the late 30's, he had in mind a kind of American Naziism. He then qualified his statement: "but what I was most afraid of was not the German Nazis, or even the Bund, but the ever-present element in any society which can always be led to act the same way, to use authoritarian methods to oppose authoritarian methods."[23] The Ox-Bow Incident is about

that "ever-present element in society," that vocal and emotional majority of ordinary people who can easily be led to act without conscience, with little, if any, regard for justice. It is also, however, a novel about a small minority of men who are fragments "of the conscience of all men in all time."

The problem of justice is one of the grandest themes in Western literature. Aeschylus in his Oresteia, the House of Atreus trilogy, most notably dramatized the problem of justice as part of a process unfolding in time. In The Ox-Bow Incident, the same theme, in a different form and at a later time, transmutes the typical western book into meaningful literature. Clark's God is not a force of power, but a presence throughout all of nature. God is nature in process. Man is part of this process, and society, collective man, is also part of the process. As Davies maintains, if we touch God at all, we do so "in the conscience, and this conscience has taken thousands of years to develop."

This growth of a fragment of the conscience, as it relates to the problem of justice, is at the center of Clark's novel. It entails a gradual process, involving a minority of men. It is a process of civilization, a delicate, even precarious process, easily disrupted by the emotions of the moment. Davies, in talking to Art Croft, one of the members of the mob and the narrator of the novel, says, "The soul of a nation or a race grows the same way

the soul of a man does" (p. 50). This statement is an apothegm of his discourse in dialogue on "the conscience of society;" furthermore, it unifies the spiritual [soul], the social or racial [a nation or a race], and the individual [a man], elements of the natural world. What is envisioned is the process of becoming aware of "true law, the code of justice, the essence of our sensations of right and wrong," which "is the conscience of society," and which takes time, "thousands of years to develop." The spiritual, the societal, and the individual elements of the world are all involved in the natural process where order, justice, and reason should prevail, not chaos, injustice, and emotion. The process is precarious because the destructive forces of chaos and injustice are ever-present within the souls of men to prevent the opposing constructive forces of order and justice from prevailing.

I wish to underscore this conflict as I assess the persons in the lynch-mob from Bridger's Wells, and those who stand apart from them. My concern is to evaluate the growth of "the soul of a man," and to determine the degree of development of "his little fragment of the conscience of all men." I propose three possible groupings of characters:[24] (1) most men, with little or no growth of conscience at all; (2) some men, with a slight degree of growth of conscience, with the conscience undeveloped or perhaps stunted; and (3) a few men, with a significantly higher degree of growth of conscience.

Major Tetley has the least conscience, an almost total absence of human soul--"God-Almighty Tetley" (p. 78). Without him, the rest of the mob might not have acted so violently and wrongfully. The son of a former Confederate cavalry officer, he is the first big rancher in the valley, and, besides Drew, the biggest man in the area. He despises his son Gerald, who resembles too closely his dead mother. Tetley is not a big talker, yet, when he speaks, he speaks with authority. He has style. Though he is not arrogant, he is far from compassionate. Before he arrives on the scene, Art comments, "there was only one reason I could see for Tetley's interest, that he wanted that lynching" (p. 80). And what Major Tetley wants, he gets. By the time he finally arrives, the mob has been "pulled back and forth enough" (p. 87). Major Tetley is the leader for which the mob has been waiting. Without him, as Art comments later, they would have been merely a leaderless mob. Ironically, he tells the judge that "we shall observe order and true justice" (p. 93). What Tetley observes may be order, his own kind of rigid, military order, but it achieves a total injustice. Tetley is a tyrant who will have his own way, in his own time. As such, he is ruthless and conscienceless, "a butcher" (p. 183), as Martin calls him, or "a beast" (p. 202), as Davies calls him in his confession to Art Croft, "a depraved, murderous beast." Of the lynching, and all that leads up to it, Croft remarks, "he loved it," and Davies replies that, "he seemed to enjoy the suffering of his

victims, prolonging it as long as he could."[25] Davies then concludes that the only two things that mean anything to Tetley are "power and cruelty," that Tetley is incapable of pity or guilt and therefore is not a complete man.

Bill Winder, a former stagecoach driver, is unheroic. He hates railroads, and his hatred makes him blind. He does not believe in waiting for justice; "he believed in action first and make your explanation to fit" (p. 40). He is committed to lynch-mob justice: "we gotta do this ourselves. One good fast job, without no fiddlin' with legal papers" (p. 44). Against Davies, who argues that it takes "a bigger 'we' than the valley to justify the hanging, and that the only way to get it was to let the law decide" (p. 47), Winder counters that the lynch-mob must decide what justice to mete out. The law for Winder is carried in his holster and at the end of his rope. He leers at Davies when asked if he ever knew a lyncher to talk about the lynching afterwards, and replies, "we never knew a lyncher. We'll tell you later" (p. 48). Winder is a man without a conscience.

Old Bartlett, a rancher who lives in the village with his two sons, Carl the fair and Nate the dark,[26] is the first to arouse the mob. He makes an almost classical statement for human rights--if you happen to be a cattleman:

> "Do we have rights as men and cattlemen, or don't we? We know what Tyler is. If we wait for Tyler, or any man like Tyler . . . if we wait,

> I tell you, there won't be one head of anybody's cattle left in the meadows by the time we get justice." He ridiculed the word justice by his tone. For that matter . . . what is justice? "Is it justice that we sweat ourselves sick and old every damned day in the year to make a handful of honest dollars and then lose it all in one night to some miserable greaser because Judge Tyler, whatever God made him, says we have to fold our hands and wait for his eternal justice? Waiting for Tyler's kind of justice, we'd all be beggars in a year"(p. 34).

He concludes his emotional appeal with the counsel, "stretch the bastards . . . stretch them" (p. 36), and goes off to get a gun and a rope, promising that he and Farnley, together with his two sons, will track down and hang the rustlers themselves, if necessary. Art Croft recalls Bartlett's success in stirring up the mob:

> Thinking about it afterward I was surprised that Bartlett succeeded so easily. None of the men he was talking to owned any cattle or any land. None of them had any property but their horses and their outfits. None of them were even married, and the kind of women they got a chance to know weren't likely to be changed by what a rustler would do to them. Some out of that many were bound to have done a little rustling on their own, and maybe one or two of them had even killed a man. But they weren't thinking of those things then, any more that I was. Old Bartlett was amazing. It seemed incredible so much ferocity hadn't killed him, weak and shaky as he appeared. Instead it made him appear straighter and stronger (p. 36).

Old Bartlett is another conscienceless man.

Jenny "Ma" Grier, the only woman in the mob, is not very feminine. Next to Tetley, according to one of the men, she "was a person who could head them up" (p. 75). She is massive and masculine, with a loud but good nature, which

makes people less afraid of her. Despite her own filthy appearance, she keeps a surprisingly clean boarding house. She dislikes Osgood, the town minister, and is always ridiculing and mimicking him. She has settled in the mountains, by her own admission, because they bring out "what little good was in her" (p. 76). She can make men laugh, and still listen, an ability the judge and the minister both lack. "She wasn't given to thinking very far, but she did a lot of intelligent feeling" (p. 77), and, until seeing the victims face to face, "she'd be as much for lynching a rustler as Winder or Bartlett" (p. 76). To prove it, she carries a coil of rope on her saddle. When the men hesitate in the hanging, she takes her place behind the horse, whip in hand, to execute one of the victims. She out-mans the cowards of conscience.

Butch Mapes, who fires a shot into the air to signal the lynching, always looked angry. He is acting sheriff, "a powerful man, and a crack shot with a six-gun." He is also a bully, and "like most bullies, he was a play-the-crowd man" (p. 51). He, like Winder and Bartlett, cannot assume responsibility as leader, but is led to do anything. He, too, is a man without conscience. When Tetley orders him to deputize the mob illegally, he makes a total mockery of his office, reciting an oath, "which he seemed to have not quite straight" (p. 93). Thus, the conscienceless man fires the shot that sets in motion the lynching of three innocent men.[27]

Monty Smith, the town drunkard, whom Craft likens to "a sponge" (p. 117), because he "sponges" on cowpunchers at Canby's saloon (p. 7), is another consciousless man. He seems to enjoy bumming, maintaining a balance "between begging and a conceited, nagging humor that made people afraid of him" (p.7). He is ugly, outwardly and inwardly. Of the lynching, he remarks to Moore, "I wouldn't miss it" (p. 37), slyly implying that Moore may be the one to be hung. But he cannot look Moore in the eye. Smith is weak playing to the crowd. Having been told that he is to handle one of the ropes, he returns "with a coil of rope in his hand," and pronounces himself ready and primed as "head executioner" (p. 51):

> He held the end of the rope up next to his ear, and nudged it a couple of times, as if he were tightening the knot, and then suddenly jerked it up, and let his head loll over to the other side. He stuck his tongue out and crossed his eyes. Then he laughed. "Don't tell me I don't know the trade," he said (p. 51).

This grotesque acting infuriates Carter. As Smith carries on about how the victims of hanging get black in the face, Carter hitches up his gun belt and walks straight at him. Smith, like the conscienceless coward he is, "backed to the side as Gil came closer" (p. 52). Monty Smith is a shell of a man, without a conscience.

Jeff Farnley, the last of the group, is in part redeemed. He has a fragment of the conscience. Initially, he seems much like Winder or Bartlett, a man of reckless action.

Kinkaid, the man ostensibly murdered, is after all Farnley's riding companion, and his relationship to Kinkaid is not unlike that of Gil Carter to Art Croft. Farnley, like Kinkaid, is a cowpuncher who rides for Drew. He is short-tempered, and goes slightly berserk when he learns of his friend's ostensible death. When Bartlett finishes his emotional speech, Farnley's presence, sitting there on his horse, stirs up the mob even more: "he became a hero, just sitting there, the figure which concentrated our purpose" (p. 36). Yet Farnley is not a villain. As several critics point out, The Ox-Bow Incident has no clear-cut villains, or heroes, only men with fragments of conscience or none. Even though Farnley, like "Ma" Grier and Butch Mapes, participates in the lynching, he shoots the strangling Martin, and is somehow different. He has a certain ruthless honesty. When he learns that they have killed three innocent men, and that his friend Kinkaid is alive, he is deeply sobered. When Sheriff Risley selects him to go on a legal posse, having passed over both Tetley and Mapes, Farnley has another chance to act responsibly. His friend Kinkaid recognizes this:

> Kinkaid looked up at that, smiling a little and raised one hand off the horn just enough so Farnley could see it. Farnley straightened as if he'd had half a life given back to him. Farnley was mean with a grudge, but honest. If he didn't like Risley right then, he liked himself a lot less (p. 190).

Farnley's honesty partly redeems him. He admits that he dislikes himself for doing what he had done. Farnley has

a very small fragment of the conscience of all men.

A second transitional grouping of characters has a slightly larger fragment of conscience. Judge Tyler, the town's leading citizen, is one of these. Tyler, described as "wide and round" (p. 59), lives in a three-story house in the village one story high. The whole valley is the judge's backyard, and he knows it. He makes others recognize it too, as when Art Croft and Joyce ask him to appease the mob and he comes to greet Art "as if he were conferring a special favor" (p. 61). But the judge does not speak with as much authority as "Ma" Grier, who can talk like a cowpuncher, and make them laugh and listen, establishes "the style Judge Tyler would like to have had" (p. 76). Although Tyler has a lot of public manner, Art recognizes he would be little help in a crisis, (p. 63) a judgment that proves accurate. He knows the difference between a posse and a lynch-mob, but lacks the character to dissuade the mob. When he finally arrives on the scene, everyone waits for him to speak, because "he was the law, and they waited to see what line he would take" (p. 81). But the men do not respect him, and even the right words are not persuasive. Scorned by Smith and mocked by "Ma" Grier, Judge Tyler is ineffective. Yet in him is a tiny "fragment of the conscience of all men." The judge attempts to do right, but cannot carry it off. His strength of conscience is too weak.

Osgood, the town minister, is much like Tyler, another

fragment of conscience without conviction. Croft classes Osgood with Smith, the town drunkard, as "a weak sister" (p. 117). The townspeople are not at ease with him because he is over-enthusiastic and pompous, with pretensions to greatness far beyond him. His pathetic attempts to convince the mob of their wrongdoing make Art ashamed and fill Gil with disgust: "he was trying to do what he thought was right, but he had no heart in his effort" (p. 33). His strongest statement about justice goes unheeded:

> "Men," he orated to us, "let us not act hastily; let us not do that which we will regret. We must act, certainly, but we must act in a reasoned and legitimate manner, not as a lawless mob. It is not mere blood that we want; we are not Indians, savages content with a miserable sneaking revenge. We desire justice, and justice has never been obtained in haste and strong feeling" (p. 33).

He seems about to say more, but stops and merely stares at the mob "pathetically." Croft adds that "he talked with no more conviction than he walked" (p. 33). Most pathetically, he refuses to join the mob, speaking with a "surprising sharpness . . . that stung, but not usefully" (p. 72), which echoes the words of Pilate: "If you men choose to act in violence, and with no more recognition of what you're doing than this levity implies, I wash my hands" (p. 72). Osgood, like Tyler, is a man whose fragment of conscience lacks conviction.

Gil Carter, cowpuncher and companion of Art Croft, is of Farnley's temperament. Canby offers the cowpunchers who came into his saloon five choices: eating, drinking, sleeping,

playing poker, or fighting. Gil practices all five, particularly after learning that his dream of getting married to Rose Mapen, whom Art regards as a whore, and settling down with her in a ranch somewhere, has been broken because she has only recently left for San Francisco. When she appears later in the novel, married, the manner in which Gil controls his jealousy indicates a certain growth, not unlike Farnley's. Gil likes to fight, and, according to Art, is "a quick but not a grudgy kind of fighter and always talks as if he had a little edge" (p. 91). He fights as he plays poker, honestly and for keeps. Gil Carter cares neither for braggarts like Monty Smith nor for manhunting at night in the snow, without having chosen a boss. He finds the cat-and-mouse game of the self-appointed leader Tetley disgusting. "Hanging is one thing" he said, "To keep men standing and sweating for it while you talk is another" (p. 158). Despite his dislike for Tetley, "the damn reb dude," he determines to persist in the plans for a lynching: "I'll see this thing out as far as any man will" (p. 111). Carter's fragment of conscience is quite small, and yet, toward the end of the novel, he exhibits a remarkable degree of restraint in his reaction toward Rose Mapen and her new husband. He has experienced enough senseless violence to avoid inflicting more. At the sound of the meadowlark singing, Gil says, "I'll be glad to be out of here" (p. 217)--out of the confinement of the saloon into the open air of the Sierra Nevada.

Art Croft is the last of this transitional group with fragments of conscience. His is a somewhat larger fragment, which is apparently growing. Art, unlike Gil, is a listener, not a talker. From this perspective he functions as the narrator, weaving together the important thematic sections of the novel. Art is physically Gil's opposite. Gil is tall, and built like a bull; Art is flat and thin. He is, however, more mature than Gil. He reflects seriously on what Davies says about true law "expressing the conscience of society, and the individual conscience springing from that mass sense of right and wrong" (p. 50), and finds it new and thought provoking. Art knows he must work on certain things in his life to grow. But Art lacks the courage to speak out. When Judge Tyler labels the group a lynch mob, in contrast to a posse, Art recognizes the truth, stretching it a bit, but refuses to add his voice to the judge's: "I didn't say anything, though" (p. 65). Similarly, Gil objects to keeping the victims sweating and answering questions, but then "said nothing more" (p. 165). Both Art and Gil represent variations of the ordinary cowpuncher in whom the fragment of conscience is not fully developed. Art remarks that the lynch-mob is an instrument of divine vengeance, but, asked if he could find that in his conscience, replies, "I'm not sure I've got a conscience any more" (p. 118). Art's fragment has not matured. Nevertheless, in his narrative he calls attention to that small minority in whom the fragment of human conscience seems larger and more

fully developed.

This minority of five has the conscience and courage to stand against the majority, headed by Tetley: Moore, Carl Bartlett, Sparks, Gerald Tetley, and Davies. The first two are minor; nevertheless, they illustrate an important point underscored by Davies earlier in the novel, when Gil Carter says that he and Art Croft are only a minority of two. Davies replies, "Sometimes two or three men will listen" (p. 49). This is precisely one of Clark's major concerns in The Ox-Bow Incident, to show that one or two men do listen, and learn to stand up for what they, as individuals, believe to be right. Moore, the old, heavy-set foreman of Drew's ranch was once a great rider, but now is a sick man. Nevertheless, he is "still worth his salt" (p. 13), because he knows both cattle and the country. He also knows time is running out for him, "and he was really scared he wouldn't be fit to work much longer" (p. 13). He is, therefore, conscientious in his work and his dealings with men. Moore tries to reason with Farnley, and Farnley nearly runs him down for his efforts. Moore labors with Davies and Carter to remove a bullet from Croft's shoulder. And Moore, who stands against Tetley and the majority of twenty-three, ultimately whips the horses to hang the men to save Tetley's son from this odious duty: "The boy's seen too much already. You shouldn't press him, man" (p. 182). In taking another's place, Moore identifies himself as a man of conscience.

Carl Bartlett, the fairer of Old Bartlett's two mean sons, is even more minor. But he stands with the minority of five, in an even bolder affirmation of conscience, because he must oppose both his father and his brother.

Sparks, a third member of the minority, is one of Clark's most memorable and colorful characters. Art believes that, if anybody comes out of the lynching clean, it is Davies and Sparks, and he says to Davies, "You and Sparks, and Sparks was just letting it go" (p. 200). He describes Sparks as "a queer, slow, careful nigger, who gets his living as a sort of general handy man to the village, splitting wood, shoveling snow, raking leaves, things like that . . . he did things up thorough and neat, and was honest to the bone" (p. 71). Well liked and trusted by all, Sparks, when the minister refuses, goes along in case he is needed for "prayin' or singin'." Sparks finds himself riding next to Croft, who offers him a drink. The black refuses, with a wry comment: "There's devil enough in me bah mahself, he explained" (p. 118). Sparks has seen his brother lynched and never wants to "see a thing lahk that again" (p. 119). He finally accepts Art's offer of his coat, although he protests, and Spark's happiness over the gesture of friendship makes Art feel better than he has since morning, "which seemed a long way back now, like another life" (p. 120). Sparks is a man of soul and strength, a quiet man of conscience, and, when the critical moment comes, he takes his stand with the minority of five. Sparks attempts to

console Gerald Tetley, when he tries to kill himself, and, though frightened like the others, his helpfulness contrasts sharply with their resentment. Sparks finally comes to Davies with the news young Gerald Tetley has succeeded in hanging himself. As a man of conscience, he is the link between Gerald Tetley and Arthur Davies, the two men in the novel in whom the fragment of the conscience is the most developed.

Gerald Tetley, the only son of Major Tetley, looks as much like his mother as a "sullen, sick boy can look like a woman with all her spirit and knack for happiness" (p. 79). He is far from happy. His father despises him and might have killed him had he not so much resembled his mother. Young Tetley is hyper-sensitive. He overstates the human condition as a "wolfpack." Man is the worst animal, he says. He hunts in packs like wolves and holes up in warrens like rabbits, acting like "the cocks of the dungheap," "the bullies of the globe" (p. 100). In fact, man is worse than wolf: he hunts his own kind, and, not daring to hunt alone, he hunts in packs. Having mastered domestic animals, like cattle and horses, man now wants to control the human animal. Unlike the wolf, he weeds out the fittest and best of his kind, "the ones who have more beauty or charm or independence or anything than they have" (p. 102). To drive home his point, Young Tetley cites Rose Mapen, driven out of town because she was more beautiful and desirable than the other she-wolves, like Frena Hundel, who wants three

men dead because Kinkaid has been killed: "she'd take any dead man as her personal grief because it made her feel important" (p. 103). When Art accuses Gerald of not thinking highly of women he replied, "men are no better":

> "Men are worse. They're not so sly about their murder, but they don't have to be; they're stronger; they already have the upper hand of half the race or so they think. They're bullies instead of sneaks, and that's worse. And they're just as careful to keep up their cheap male virtues, their strength, their courage, their good fellowship, to keep the pack from jumping them, as the women are to keep their modesty and their hominess. They all lie about what they think, hide what they feel, to keep from looking queer to the pack" (p. 104).

What Gerald says is true, especially of Art and Gil, who try to keep up their male virtues in large part to avoid being jumped by the pack. Art admits that something Gerald Tetley says has caused the whole world to become a part of his own half-darkness, and he speculates:

> To me his idea appeared just the opposite of Davies'. To the kid, what everybody thought was low and wicked, and their hanging together was a mere disguise of their evil. To Davies, what everybody thought became, just because everybody thought it, just and fine, and to act up to what they thought was to elevate oneself. And yet both of them gave you that feeling of thinking outside yourself, in a big place; the kid . . . even more, though he was disgusting. You could feel what he meant; you could only think what Davies meant (p. 106).

Actually, what Davies says about the fragment of the conscience of all men is not unrelated to what Young Tetley says about wolves. Human wolves, in lying about what they think and hiding what they feel, violate what fragment of

conscience they have. Gerald Tetley hides nothing. He admits to Croft that he is weak, and that his father is strong, precisely because, unlike his father, Gerald has known better than to do what he has often done, as a member of a pack of wolves, "I've always known better, and not done it" (p. 107). This is the pity of young Gerald Tetley. He vows that if the pack hunts down and lynches the three men, he would hang himself, because "it's better to kill yourself than to kill somebody else" (p. 107). When the critical moment comes, however, Gerald refuses to take part, even though his father openly berates and hits him. Art describes him as "passionate and womanish, but with a man's conscience and pride" (p. 188). Gerald Tetley does commit suicide after failing in a first attempt. His death expresses a self-imposed sentence for his failure to persuade his father and the others against the lynching. He has "a man's conscience," and obeys its mandates ruthlessly.

Arthur Davies has the most developed fragment of conscience, is far stronger than Gerald Tetley. Yet even he fails to listen to his conscience at the critical moment. John Portz has suggested:

> Both Gerald and Davies fail to accept the responsibility which accompanies their position of choice. They succumb to the dangers of the St. Francis attitude, passivity and indecision. Their failure to act puts them in the wrong according to their own consciences.[28]

Davies' also fails, in part, from an oversensitized conscience, and in part from a conflict unresolved in his

conscience. He realizes that the only way Tetley can be stopped is to kill him, but he feels no freedom to stop the lynching by shooting the Major. Though Davies and Tetley stand at opposite ends of the spectrum, both are victims of circumstance. This polarity and similarity is apposite to "the sound of the nuclear."

Arthur Davies, store owner in Bridger's Wells, is the most fully presented character in the novel. He is an old man with round shoulders and white silky hair, who would have looked like a miser except for his eyes, blue, clear, and humorous. By the novel's end, most of his humor and life have vanished from those eyes. Davies wants justice to be done, but, Hamlet-like, he cannot act to prevent injustice, because he lacks conviction. Osgood earlier remarks that "any man is weak when nobody cares for the things that mean something to him" (p. 37), and Davies is weak in that the things he cared about--law and justice--are not matters of concern to others. In a pivotal scene, when Davies maintains that he believes in Martin's innocence, "Ma" Grier quietly replies, "then I guess you're the only one that does, Arthur" (p. 155). Apart from four others, her statement is true.

Davies, from the beginning, pleads with the men not to be led by emotion, to be guided by reason and by law. His logic is impeccable: "without doing what the law says, forming a posse, and bringing the men in for trial, then by the same law, we're not officers of justice but due to be

hanged ourselves" (p. 47). Gerald Tetley urges the same reasoning, hanging himself after the lynching. Davies points out that "it's infinitely more deadly when the law is disregarded by men pretending to act for justice than when it's simply inefficient" (p. 47). But he speaks haltingly about the soul of a nation and the fragment of the conscience of all men, because he realizes he is wasting something precious. His earnest efforts to disband the mob prior to Tetley's arrival win only pity for him. "God I felt sorry for the man," says Croft, "an old man running stiffly in the road after armed men on horses who wouldn't pay any attention to him" (p. 94). Davies, the old man with a fragment of the conscience of all men in all time, developed over the years, cannot gain the attention or respect of other men:

> Davies was resisting something that had immediacy and a strong animal grip, with something remote and mistrusted. He'd have to make his argument look common sense and hardy or humorous, and I wasn't sure he could do either. If he couldn't he was going to find that it was the small but present "we," not the big, misty "me", that shaped men's deeds, no matter what shaped their explanations (p. 57).

Unable to dissuade the mob, treated with contempt, he then joins the illegal posse unarmed, even refusing an offered gun. Davies represents the conscientious man of non-violence, who will not, under any circumstance, support his convictions with violence.

Davies staunchly believes in Martin's innocence, and makes an eloquent plea for a responsible trial, in the

interests of justice:

> I'm not trying to obstruct justice. But I do want to see real justice. This is a farce; this is as Mr. Martin has said, murder if you carry it through. He's perfectly within his rights when he demands a trial. And that's all I've asked since we started, that's all I'm asking now, a trial (p. 154).

When his plea falls on deaf ears, he becomes savage and angry. But too late. Martin entrusts Davies with a last letter to his wife. Davies tries to use it to convince Tetley and the others of Martin's innocence. His efforts fail. Davies abides by the majority decision. As L. L. Lee says, "Evil does exist; but man should not surrender just because he may not win."[29] That five men, including Davies, do not surrender to the majority helps make of the novel more than a negative comment on a pack of wolves. Man's fate is not hopeless as long as men like Davies and Gerald Tetley, Sparks, Moore, and Carl Bartlett will stand up and fight evil against a majority. Davies' promise to find someone to look out for Martin's wife and children, after his efforts to save Martin have failed, indicates the acute responsibility he feels toward the young rancher. Davies is a man with a sensitive conscience. As a result, when Martin is lynched, the bitterness is gone from his face. He dies with "a melancholy expression," which has prompted critics like Milton to suggest that he is a Christ-figure.[30]

Davies keeps his promise to Martin. He persuades Drew to take Martin's letter and ring to his wife, and to promise that he will send a woman to help her. Davies, however,

remains fretful, "like a man with a very orderly mind who is dying and can't remember if everything is arranged" (p. 192). At the end, he confesses his sin of omission to Art Croft. Art awakens to find Davies in his room looking tired, eyes red and crazed, as if "he was still fighting something" (p. 198). What Davies is fighting are the furies of guilt for having murdered three men. Tetley is wrong. His is a sin of commission. Davies' is also wrong. He has refused to pursue the logic of his convictions. Art's response is forthright: he and the rest share the blame, indeed, their responsibility should be worse because they did not try to do anything about the situation. Davies did. For that reason Davies stands at the sensitive extremity of the spectrum of the fragment of the conscience of all men. He tries harder than anyone else. But his failure haunts him because he set himself up as "the power of justice . . . as the light to the people" (p. 207), and yet is unable to persuade the others. As Art says: "his conscience was getting too big for me" (p. 208). Davies' flaw is that "he had never really hoped to save those men or force justice" (p. 211). The flaw extends to Davies' self-conception. Art remarks that Davies is "trying to play Christ all right, but it wasn't a part for cowards, and it hadn't needed a Christ anyway; all it had needed was a man" (p. 211). And Davies is not sufficiently a man.

This, I believe, is the most poignant and powerful insight to be derived from the novel. Davies, the man of conscience par excellence among the men in the lynch-mob, is also the least aggressive and the least virile, whereas Tetley, the man without a vital conscience, is the most aggressive and the most virile. Consequently, Tetley and Davies, at opposite ends of the spectrum of conscience, are united in terms of their humanity. Tetley, possessing strong, powerful convictions, acts upon them without appeal to conscience; Davies, possessing a strong, developed conscience, cannot act because he lacks the strength of his convictions, and because he is ridden by guilt and self-contempt. Both Tetley and Davies are victims. Tetley is the victim of a rigid military code that demands and gets its own kind of honorable end; he dies by falling on his own cavalry sword. Davies, on the other hand, plagued by self-doubts and tortured by thoughts of what should-have-been, is the victim of his own impotence. We last see Davies being helped upstairs, "whimpering constantly now, like a woman crazy with grief" (p. 214).

The Ox-Bow Incident focuses upon the spectrum of the conscience of all men, only fragments of which are found in any one man. At the polar ends stand Tetley, the conscienceless man, and Davies, in whom the fragment of conscience is more fully developed than in any of the other characters. Clark's triumph in this novel is to bring these seeming opposites together, in the uncontrollable

energy of a nuclear situation. That even the man of conscience fails is inherent in Clark's commitment to spiritual naturalism, or the mysticism of process, in contradistinction from Christian mysticism. What Clark perceives as the core of reality is a striving which falls short, an almost-oneness, as opposed to oneness. The nuclear situation is one that furnishes a guide towards the whole, but has built into it that which finally frustrates completion. In The Ox-Bow Incident, I hear Clark listening for the voice of the conscience of all men, even as Tim Hazard listens for "the sound of the nuclear." What he hears is a fragment of sound, torn between silence and articulation, a striving for an absolute that falls short of its goal. The striving is itself characteristic of spiritual naturalism or the mysticism of process.

Footnotes

[1]Robert D. McFadden, New York Times (November 12, 1971), p. 50. In his obituary notice, he also points out that Clark's best-known novel was "the first western not to glamorize the west of the rancher and cowboy." He provides one of the most succinct summaries of the novel given anywhere.

[2]Ben Ray Redman, "Magnificent Incident," SRL, XXIII (October 26, 1940), p. 6.

[3]Walter Prescott Webb, in "Afterword" to The Ox-Bow Incident (New York: Signet), p. 222.

[4]Max Gissen in New Republic, cited by Webb.

[5]Redman, op. cit., p. 6.

[6]James K. Folsom, The American Western Novel (New Haven: College and University Press, 1966), p. 123.

[7]Frank T. Marsh, cited by Robert McFadden, p. 50.

[8]Clifton Fadiman in "Introduction" to The Ox-Bow Incident (New York: Reader's Club Press, 1942), p. viii.

[9]Webb, op. cit., p. 220. Part of the reason for writing a dissertation on Walter Van Tilburg Clark is to give him a "little credit" for his not so little literary achievement; though not a great figure in American letters, he is not a small one either.

[10]Cited by Webb, op. cit., p. 224.

[11]Jay Gurian, "The Unwritten West," The American West II (Winter, 1965), p. 61.

[12]John R. Milton, "The Western Attitude: Walter Van Tilburg Clark," Critique II (Winter, 1959), p. 59.

[13]Milton, p. 61. Milton also sees Clark's light-dark symbolism as not unlike Conrad's in Heart of Darkness.

[14]John Portz, "Idea and Symbol in Walter Van Tilburg Clark," Accent XVII (Spring, 1957), p. 121.

[15]Max Westbrook, Walter Van Tilburg Clark (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), p. 67. But Westbrook pushes the archetypal reality of Jung too far when he claims that "the natural prey of the mob-beast grows from man's neglected unconscious."

[16]Loc. cit.

[17]L. L. Lee, "Walter Van Tilburg Clark's Ambiguous Dream," College English XXVI (February, 1965), p. 382.

[18]Ibid., p. 383.

[19]Ibid., p. 383.

[20]Ibid., p. 383.

[21]Ibid., p. 386.

[22]Cited by Webb, p. 222.

[23]Cited by Webb, p. 224.

[24]These are a selective, not an inclusive grouping of characters, so that some characters, like Gabe and Drew, are not specifically placed on the spectrum.

[25]Several scholars, including Hannah Arendt in her remarkable study on the banality of evil in Eichmann in Jerusalem, have pointed out that Eichmann, one of Hitler's mainstays, used to derive sadistic pleasure and sexual release from Jews tortured and gassed.

[26]There is a suggestion of Shakespearean fair-and-dark here, which is quite valid in the end, since Carl, who is fair, turns out to be one of the minority of five to stand against the majority of twenty-three, who rule, though not in the right.

[27]While all three men, Martinez, Hardwick, and Martin are innocent as charged, only Martin is innocent to the same degree as Billy Budd, or, as Milton suggests, Christ.

[28]John Portz, p. 122.

[29]L. L. Lee, p. 387.

[30]John R. Milton, p. 61. "There is a possible parallel between the lynching and the crucifixion of Christ. Of the three victims, two, though innocent of the 'crime' for which they are hanged, are not altogether guiltless in a broader sense. But Martin appears to be spotless, pure, and childishly innocent in every respect. Just before the hanging, 'even the bitterness was gone from his face'. He had a melancholy expression, such as goes with thinking of an old sorrow. It is as though young Martin is grieving for the entire human race as represented by the foolish men who are taking his life." This is a perceptive observation since Martin very well embody "the fragment of the conscience of all mankind," and is murdered wrongfully by the system as was Jesus by a similar system. What Clark is attacking is a system of injustice masquerading as a system of justice.

In this last conflict, however, there had been some moments of the supreme *fire of the hawk*, whose three hungers are perfectly fused in the one will, enough to burn off a year of shame.

Walter Clark
"Hook" in *The Watchful Gods*
(p. 30)

CHAPTER III

"FIRE OF THE HAWK"--A STUDY OF CLARK'S SHORTER FICTION

Walter Van Tilburg Clark has published eighteen short stories, including his novella, "The Watchful Gods," the title-story in Clark's final publication, The Watchful Gods and Other Stories (1950), a collection of ten stories. Eight stories remain uncollected. The eighteen stories, by year of publication (an asterisk indicates those collected in The Watchful Gods), are:

1941: *"Hook"
"Prestige"
*"The Anonymous"
*"Why Don't You Look Where You're Going?"
*"Portable Phonograph"
*"The Rapids"
"Trial at Arms"

1942: "The Pretender"
"Letter to the Living"
"The Ascent of Ariel Goodby"
"Personal Interview"

1943: "The Rising and Passing of Bar"
*"The Indian Well"
*"The Buck in the Hills"

1944: *"The Wind and the Snow of Winter"

1946: *"The Fish Who Could Close His Eyes"

1949: "Chuangtse and the Prince of the Golden Age"

1950: *"The Watchful Gods"

Through the vehicle of these stories, Clark exposes his fascination with the theme of man and animals in confrontation with the tension between nature and society. Most of them explore aspects of the spiritual naturalism to which Clark was committed. They center in the process of matur ing from adolescence or an adolescent disposition to self-insight. The search for the self is situated in the context of a dynamic situation, which permits the recovery of something elemental, even primeval, in the human psyche. A desire for mystical identification with the natural world, and a tendency to act in a ritual manner, is discernible in his characters. While five of the stories, "Why Don't You Look Where You're Going?", "Personal Interview," "The Wind and the Snow of Winter," "The Ascent of Ariel Goodby," and "Chuangtse and the Prince of the Golden Age," are essentially situation-pieces, exploiting the related themes of humor and irony in a defined situation, the remainder of the tales contribute to an appreciation of Clark's mystical vision.

Critics have not recognized this in assessing Clark's shorter fiction. The small group of critics who have commented on the short stories disagree sharply concerning their value. Apart from three stories, "Why Don't You Look Where You're Going?", "The Anonymous," and "The Buck in the

Hills," Bernard DeVoto dismisses the collection as pretentious. He fails to appreciate Clark as an ironist, condemns the title story in The Watchful Gods, and defines "Hook" as a statement of "low-grade Western mysticism."[1] Harvey Swados considers "The Wind and the Snow of Winter" the high point of Clark's collection, but berates the author for his overlengthy title story, labels "Hook," "a glittering tour-de-force, which describes the life cycle of a hawk with the cold brilliance of a documentary nature film,"[2] and faults Clark for his lack of dialogue. Vernon Young maintains that Clark over-emphasizes the "thinness of the American experience," and proves to be incapable of enriching "human types": "The Man on Clark's natural stage is never sufficiently conscious of his position to turn that position into one of tragedy."[3] He describes Clark's literary gift as "a talent by default."[4]

John Portz, on the other hand, sees implications of tragedy in much of Clark's fiction, because "his work carries the recognition of the dignity of anguish, the essentially enigmatic quality of life and death, the notion that death is prerequisite for rebirth; and his central concept comprehends the painful paradoxes of tragedy."[5] Nevertheless, he finds Clark's view of man incomplete because he has not written "a novel which minutely and carefully analyzes adulthood, and especially adult love, and because he has not clarified the nature of that head-god toward a perception of which Buck is moving."[6] Chandler Brossard, an

approving reviewer who ignored the title story, "The Watchful Gods," feels his own "vestigial memories" stirred.[7] Max Westbrook praises the title story as "a fictive study of sacred unity," but seems uncertain about "Hook," on grounds similar to those of Young and Swados.[8] On the other hand, Herbert Wilner finds "Hook" "one of the masterpieces of the American short story," although he recognizes in Clark both "the superb and the awkward."[9] His most perceptive insight is that for Clark, Nevada is not only a place, but a point of view whose major concept is space (my underlining):

> Nevada space makes man lonely. It does so very literally, but it does so metaphysically as well. If man is forced to tolerate his own company, he is also obliged to scrutinize it. If he finds within himself all the oppositions of a larger society, he might also discover how inner peace is achieved <u>through harmony of these oppositions</u>. He may also learn that his life--his own point of space--is only a minute and temporary arrangement in a much larger and more fixed proposition. There is a vast "non-human" life endowed with universal meaning. Space is his teacher, albeit <u>a mystical one</u>. Clark's fictional characters are ordinarily measureable in terms of those who confront and those who fail the teacher and what there is to be taught. The former live in accord with a principle of human limitations and <u>balance</u>. The others annihilate the self through false views of identity.[10]

Wilner underscores three tenets of spiritual naturalism: (1) peace is achieved only "through harmony of oppositions"; (2) a vast non-human life teems with meaning; (3) space, the mystical teacher of man, attempts to instruct so that some men might live "in accord with a principle of human limitations and balance."

Balance, as Westbrook notes, is crucial to Clark's shorter fiction, and its reality is always precarious.[11] But Wilner concludes that the components of Clark's vision, which include man's isolation, spatial vitality, and "the mystical spiritual qualities of animals . . . and of values humans cannot always articulate because the texture is predominately mystical," forced Clark into what Wilner calls "unevenness," or lack of balance, where vision was not conjoined with skill.[12] Clark himself implied as much as Tim Hazard sits and listens "for the sound of the nuclear." Sometimes Clark heard that sound and reproduced it brilliantly, but at other times his stories are awkward and his style uneven.

Walter Clark's interest in the imprint of mystical vision upon a sensitive young man is explicit in his story, "The Fish Who Could Close His Eyes." Tad Manson indulges in day dreams of becoming part of everything, sea, stars, space between stars, wind and light of day, grass on the headlands, brush in the canyons, even the singing of insects. The scope of his dreams and the striving for union suggest Clark's own commitment to spiritual naturalism. Moreover, Manson is aware of the tension between his outer and inner self. He has a curious dislike for scientists, "who could see only the motions of his arms and legs," but saw nothing of "his inner tempo" (p. 154). His work, feeding fish in an aquarium, brings him in contact with "a pathetic, even

a tragic fish" (p. 160), whom he named Hamlet. Manson keeps imagining Hamlet in his native habitat, and goes to considerable difficulty to liberate the purple fish and return him to the sea. Rather than the expected reprimand from the icy Dr. Litter, who makes no distinction between the several fish, Tad is greeted the next morning with the cheerful observation, "So you threw that pink pig out after all" (p. 174). The fish with which Tad had identified so intimately is actually dying of a fungus and is already blind. Tad's dream of uniting what man has artificially separated, the fish and the sea, which has seemed to him "an enormous and shining unity" (p. 158), is shattered, and he feels himself "falling apart inside" (p. 175). The dream of releasing Hamlet to live in harmony with his native waters has inadvertently turned into a nightmare, for Tad has consigned Hamlet to certain death.

L. L. Lee has argued perceptively that the story is a variation upon Clark's "ambiguous American Dream": "in every man's definition and in every artist's realization of the Dream must appear the American land, sometimes a new Eden, sometimes something very near to Hell, sometimes mother and destroyer both, always a great ambiguity."[13] In Clark's conception of the American dream, the question of what man has to do with the mystery of nature must be asked and explored. Tad Manson's dream of Hamlet reunited with the sea is a microcosmic fragment of the macrocosmic whole. The sea is for him the shining Eden to which he, saint-like, has

restored Hamlet that he might experience life. The irony that Hamlet would experience not life but death causes Tad's dream to crumble and within himself "the saint part was falling out fast" (p. 175). The blindness of the dying fish is reflected in the unknowing blindness of Tad Manson's act, exposing the ambiguity of his dream and of the nature to which he feels so deep an affinity. This ambiguity is a constituent element in Clark's concept of the nuclear and accounts for that striving for almost-oneness which distinguishes the mysticism of process from traditional Christian mysticism.

The concern with ritual and the power latent in ritual, which is evident in several of the stories, is related to the concept of mystical vision. Clark assigns a post-catastrophic setting for "The Portable Phonograph." The situation indicates his profound awareness that he is writing in a nuclear age, where the American dream turned nightmare haunts the thoughts of sensitive men and women. The story focuses upon a professor, Dr. Jenkins, and three other survivors, huddled together in a cave-like dwelling dug into the bank of an already frozen creek "lined with leafless alders and willows" (p. 180). The references to winter and leaflessness, which evoke an aura of decay and death is reinforced by explicit statement: "a sensation of torment, of two-sided unpredictable nature, arose from the stillness of the earth air beneath the violence of the upper air" (p. 179). An awareness of torment and

violence permeates the atmosphere of the cave, where Dr. Jenkins functions as host and barbaric priest. Clark's description sets the mood for ritual performance:

> He was an old man, his long matted beard and hair grey to nearly white. The shadows made his brows and cheekbones appear gnarled, his eyes and cheeks deeply sunken. His big hands, rough with frost and swollen by rheumatism, were awkward but gentle at their task. He was like a pre-historic priest performing a fateful ceremonial rite. Also his voice had in it a suitable quality of deep, reverent despair, yet perhaps, at the moment, a sharpness of selfish satisfaction (p. 181).

He is entertaining two middle-aged men and a young musician in a quasi-religious exposure to the last remnants of western culture, a few books and phonograph records. A reading from The Tempest merits "the religious attention of the three" (p. 182). The record requested by the excited musician, who appears to be dying of consumption, is Debussy's "Nocturne," a fitting commentary on a post-catastrophic and dying world. When "a whirling of the sacred disk" (p. 186) ceases, the three guests depart, leaving the professor to perform a "fateful ceremonial rite" (p. 187). Lowering the canvas over the entrance to his cave, like some sanctuary curtain, he picks up the portable phonograph and the books and deposits them in a deep hole dug from the earth which serves as a reliquary. The hole is then resealed with a board, and Dr. Jenkins takes up his position like an animal guarding his lair, recites a prayer, and then, before reclining for the night, feels with his hand "the comfortable piece of lead pipe"

(p. 188). Living amid the death of a nuclear world, he is thoroughly prepared to add to the devastation by violently destroying anyone who might attempt to pillage his sacred possessions. The irony inherent in the concept of a culture-cult conducted in a crude cave, and in the contrast between the romantic impressionism of Debussy and the calculating realism of a lethal lead pipe, is heavy. It serves to emphasize the uneasy fusion between the polar concepts of the benevolent, gentle host and the malevolent, barbaric priest in a world which forgot to strive for harmony with nature and men. In such a world, ritual becomes an empty gesture in a final attempt to recover that balance without which man cannot survive, according to Clark's reading of reality.

The function of ritual is different in "The Indian Well," which explores the intimate bond between an old prospector, Jim Suttler, and his burro, Jenny. The setting is the desert, ravaged by searing heat, "In this dead land, like a vast relief model, the only allegiance was to the sun" (p. 125). The water of Indian Well and the opportunity for Jenny to graze nearby afford a sense of respite from the death of the desert. On the wall of an abandoned cabin the prospector reflects upon the chronicle of human life recorded there, and added his own registration: "Jim and Jenny Suttler, damn dried out, March--1940" (p. 134). When Suttler discovers a strike in an abandoned mine-shaft, he claims "the diggins for [himself] and partner Jenny" (p. 137).

A closer affinity exists between the prospector and his burro than he feels for any man. When Jenny is killed by a cougar, therefore, it is predictable that Jim Suttler will abandon everything until he has tracked down and killed the cat. The patience with which he waits for his quarry, the sense of oneness he feels with the sacrificial weapon (he "drew slowly upon his soul in the trigger" (p. 146), and the way he kills the cougar combine to suggest a ritual of vengeance, avenging the slaying of his kin. The action that follows confirms the ritual character of Suttler's act: having skinned the cougar, he uncovers the buried burro in order to lay over her carcass the pelt of the killer. He then covers the carcass once more and rebuilds the cairn over the site. Only after this primitive ritual can Jim Suttler sleep peacefully. Vengeance accomplished, he feels "revived and volatile" in spirit (p. 148), and moves on. The restoration of harmony and balance he feels is reflected in the land as well; spring resumed, rabbits begin mating in the willows, rats return to playing in the cabin, coyotes and vultures clean the carcass of the cougar, and finally the antelope return to the well. The reader familiar with The City of Trembling Leaves will recognize the significance of Clark's commentary on the scene: "and in the gentle sunlight the new aspen leaves made a tiny music of shadows" (p. 148). The performance of primitive ritual redressing a ruptured harmony occasions the resurgence of life in a nuclear situation in which life and

death co-exist on a dynamic continuum.[14]

Two other stories, "Trial At Arms" and "The Buck in the Hills," explore the ritual significance of the violation of nature. The first is a patent analogy to the quest for the holy grail. Going on his first hunt, Watt, a thirteen year old, "felt as a neophyte knight might have, keeping dedicated vigil over his soaking armor in a dark chapel with moonlight in the windows, but with his first test at arms in the morning" (p. 15).[14] Confronted with the command to shoot at a flock of ducks, the boy loads his gun but does not "feel at all like the knight in the chapel" (p. 38). He feels a profound empathy with the fleeing birds. When the leading duck flies so close that Watt, "for an instant saw its desperate, intent little eye upon him," he cannot fire, for he realizes that "his whole being was up in that rush of wings, streaming ever higher and farther to the right of him" (p. 40). Alex, a brutish garageman, taunts Watt for his failure to take advantage of the hunt and goads him into shooting a defenseless snipe. When he picks up his prize, the bird nearly comes apart, "half in each hand" (p. 43). The violation of the sacral character of the quest and of the uneasy harmony between nature, embodied in a hapless snipe, and the intrusion of brutish men is so severe, Watt goes berserk and attempts to turn the gun on Alex. Characteristic of the dynamism of spiritual naturalism, the violation of nature invites the destruction of human personality.

The disintegration of the vision which excites Watt's first thoughts when contemplating the hunt is more starkly presented in the second story, "The Buck in the Hills." Clark pinpoints the savage cruelty in Chet McKenny, who purposely cripples a magnificent buck to force the animal to limp eight miles back toward his camp, simply to avoid having to carry out the carcass himself. The narrator observes in McKenny something "deeper than stupidity" (p. 99), and his companion, Tom, remarks that "McKenny is a first-rate bastard" (p. 101). The savage cruelty of McKenny is climaxed by the quasi-ritual slaying of the wounded deer by slitting his throat with a hunting knife while Tom holds the buck's antler's. The horrific impression left by this incident is graphically reflected in a startling alteration of tone and mood. The predominant tone of the opening pages is one of elation and excitement after climbing a sacred peak. After the violation of the ritual of the hunt and a noble buck, the tone alters to one of desperation. Both Tom and the narrator seem to sense "something listening behind each tree and rock, . . . something waiting among the taller trees down the slope," aggravated by the falling of the snow which was "their ally" (p. 109). The fragile, precious character of life has been violated by McKenny's brutish act and invites the sense of foreboding with which the story closes. The violation of nature in a reckless parody of true ritual deprives nature of its ability to refresh a man and consigns

him to an expectation of something horrible.

Another constituent element in Clark's spiritual naturalism is an awareness, that comes as a flash of insight, of the mystical identification between contemporary man and his primeval self. In "The Rapids," an urbane New England businessman establishes contact with an aspect of his self he had never known when he discovers a small boat in a stream where he is bathing. As a result of the discovery "he began to feel adventurous" (p. 56). In maneuvering the boat into some swirling rapids, he becomes aware of something primeval, of something elemental that possesses a greater urgency than the message he has received from a client. The risk and determination involved in the bold plan to bring the clumsy boat in front of a waterfall to see how far down he can get into the stony rapids below the pool revives a sense of "heroic erectness" (p. 61) within him that has been completely numbed by his over-civilized existence. The result is a momentary "return to the well-spring of origin,"[16] as John finds himself capable of confronting and contending with the rapids. The irony is that when his wife, who thinks him crazy for exerting so much effort on such a venture asks him what he is doing, he responds feebly "I was just fooling around with an old boat" (p. 64). The denial of the heroic in his response is the prelude to the clutching of his robe about him as he walks resignedly away from the stream, in the company of his wife. She is incapable of appreciating that what

he has discovered in the course of struggling with the swirling waters is a fragment of his primal self. It is this mystical intuition that he will not leave "uncovered" before her.

"The Anonymous" is the obverse of "The Rapids." A Navajo is being groomed to repudiate his past, and to deny his primal history. Peter Carr is the adopted ward of Mrs. Varney, a buxom widow who intends to marry him. He has become so thoroughly corrupted by wealth and privilege that he disrupts the order of a Piute school and imposes his will upon both students and staff without regard for their sensibilities. When his shadow first falls across the entrance to Mr. Gate's classroom, the teacher is filled with a sense of "foreboding" (p. 67). Carr's sole concern is with facts, which he masters in grocery-list fashion; "he was an insatiable sink for facts, and never put facts together, never saw a direction, never thought, just remembered" (pp. 75f.). There is a strong suggestion in the story that his inability to think and to relate is bound up with his denial of his own Navajo heritage. Having covered himself with a veneer of facts, he has closed himself to the manhood he should have enjoyed. The Shoshone girl, Jenny Jackson, contemptuously labels him "woman-man" (p. 89), a Piute insult which hints at homosexuality, but expresses equally the less-than-manhood which renders Peter Carr "anonymous" and faceless. The story concludes on a

note of bitter irony, when Mrs. Varney's chauffeur arrives at the school to bring young Carr back to his patroness. The chauffeur refers to him as a "coffee-colored fake" who "doesn't even know he's a toy" (p. 92). The cost of denial of one's primal roots and of the repudiation of an identity with the primal self is reduction to an object, "a toy" and a loss of identity so severe one becomes "anonymous."

Clark deals with the related issue of pretense in "The Pretender," the story of Jed Southwick and his dog.[17] Southwick pretends to be a hunter, when "he had never been a hunter, but only a man tolerated by the hunters" (p. 483). He pretends to be fearless, but in the encounter with coyotes in the night and the furies of nature he is brought so forcibly to a confrontation with his fear that he is forced to admit, "I was always pretending" (p. 481). Clark skillfully constructs his story, dividing it into four parts I call: (1) evening of the first day; (2) morning and evening of the second day; (3) morning and evening of the third day; and (4) early morning of the fourth day, when Jed is rescued by the Indian agent, Pete, and an Indian, Joe-Jack. As the story unfolds, Clark traces the gradual erosion of a man as he experiences physical and emotional degeneration in the isolation of the wild east shore of Smoky Lake. Jed Southwick has never confronted his own human nature stripped of pretense and is incapable of realizing the blessedness expressed in the beatitude, "blessed are the tamed, for they have conquered themselves." The story concludes on an

ambiguous note, for Jed continues to be "the pretender" in spite of three nights and two days that strip him, progressively, of all pretense. Jed's primal fear--in the night his heart beats like that of a wild animal--is an expression of his primitive self which he finds repeatedly necessary to deny before his rescuers. Fear is nuclear in Jed Southwick's character, because he is unable to confront the furies of the night that threaten to overwhelm him as he listens to the coyotes. Yet it is integral to the primeval self. The denial of fear achieves not selfhood but bondage to pretense and loss of authentic manhood.

Two other stories expose Walter Clark's interest in the dynamic situation that leads toward a nuclear conviction. In "Letter to the Living," a rare piece of Clark fiction written in the first-person, George Dubois, "once writer and artist, who lived chiefly by other work" (p. 679), contemplates how to die as he awaits his execution.[18] He is a revolutionary. From his cell, he has witnessed the execution of two other prisoners, one of whom dies as a hero, the other as a snivelling coward. He is sobered by the evident impact upon the firing squad of the demeanor of each of the slain men. The man who dies badly, who has to be gagged to stifle his pleas for mercy, makes a deep impression upon the men who had fired the shots that drain his life. They are noticeably disturbed; "even the firmest of them stared a little too much." Some of them stumble,

and the youngest among them almost cries as the firing squad slowly marches away. The execution has taken only four or five minutes, but there is something permanent about it, "for in that time the lives of both prisoners and soldiers stopped, and when time was resumed we had completed one life and begun another" (p. 680). Dubois and the soldiers remember the dead prisoner a long time: "his fear had conquered the place" (p. 680). The other prisoner dies as Dubois has always wanted to die, cleanly and courageously. He appears to welcome, indeed, to encourage, his death, which makes it easier for the firing squad. His courage encourages the remaining prisoners, and he dies well, but his death makes no visible impression upon the soldiers he has fought. Paradoxically, the prisoner who dies badly has stirred a deeper hatred for the enemy in the other prisoners and awakens a deeper fear in the soldiers themselves. Dubois realizes "it may even be that my death is more valuable if I die badly than if I die like a hero" (p. 679).

The reflections of a man facing execution for a cause in which he believes, contemplating the meaning of his death for his wife, Annette, for his fellow revolutionaries, and for "many who don't know me," offers a dynamic situation in which the polarities, of life and death, of love and hate, of courage and abject fear, can be explored. Clark shows them not so much as opposites, but as sensations that register on a continuum. Dubois concludes that when death is certain, the values of one's life undergoes change,

Few themes are more lofty than the meaning of life and death, or more banal than the taste of a cigarette. Dubois' final thoughts are of the taste of the cigarette that will be placed in his mouth just prior to his execution: "it should taste better than any other in the last five days" (p. 682). The irony of the juxtaposition of a lofty theme with the savoring of a last moment of personal pleasure is highly effective from a literary point of view. The juxtaposition, however, suggests a deeper intention. It expresses something of Clark's holistic vision, where every facet of human experience finds its coherence in the tension of the nuclear conviction.

The setting for "Prestige," unlike most of Clark's stories, is South America, specifically the area near Porto Velho, Brazil.[19] The story concerns the rescue of an American mining engineer, named Andrews, who has come out of the jungles of the Matto Grosso, sickened with fever and severely bitten by bugs. The captain of the "River Horse," an Englishman named Williams, attempts to extract from Andrews an account of his experience, but the American is too sick and confused to put details together: "he suffered the persistent belief that there was a single important fact, if he could get at it, which would relieve the confusion" (p. 73). His striving toward that "single important fact" is a recognizable variation of Clark's striving for the sensation of the nuclear which brings coherence into the seeming incoherence of life. Andrews only gradually achieves

the perception that resolves his confusion. He is the object of a cruel and bizarre plot to humiliate him and to keep him from uncovering the extensive rubber resources of the Matto Grosso. Ironically, the experience of being lost in the jungle serves ultimately to exorcise the furies of an unknown part of his past, and as the story ends, Andrews experiences a deep sleep, breathing "slowly and heavily" (p. 81) for the first time in a long period of unrest. He is no longer "a man encumbered by himself" (p. 81), but one who through the trauma of fighting for his survival has discovered a balance within his life he has not known previously. The dynamic situation has put him in touch with himself, and the peacefulness of his sleep, following an intense period of striving, is an integral element in Clark's holistic perspective on the nuclear character of life.

A decade after "Trial at Arms," Clark returns to the theme of a young man coming to self-awareness, through his first hunt, in the novella, "The Watchful Gods." Westbrook refers to the novella as "a fictive study of sacred unity."[20] It displays the unresolved conflict which persists between the explosive forces of good and evil in both nature and man. The conflict between a life-force and a death-force is "nuclear" and Clark strongly implies that the force of death is more powerful, although he remains philosophically optimistic.[21]

The novella falls structurally into six parts. The first part may be labelled "contest." It centers in Buck's

internalized theologizing about the nature of the gods found in the Bible and his own awareness of struggle: "The contest between him and the fog god was an old one, and his defense, a kind of rabbit's immobility, had been mounted at once when he remembered the day and the twenty-two" (p. 204). The novella will describe in detail Buck's contest or ordeal, following his twelfth birthday, when he receives a gift of a .22 calibre rifle. The conception of an ordeal, and its outcome, is already implied in the datum that the Tristram legend is Buck's "favorite theme" (p. 192). Clark, in an intensive study of the legend for his Master's degree, had written:

> Tristram is an earnest youth, caught in a net of circumstances, the basis of which he faintly comprehends, although certainty comes only with the death of Alfred. In love to the point of never being able to forget, his banishment sends him in quest of any sort of peace of mind . . . A singer, a fighter, a lover, made for romance and glittering chivalry, the sadness of birth seems to pursue Tristram through a succession of events which bind him into introspection, gloom, helplessness at the very time life should have been the bravest, the happiest. His is the tragedy of youth cheated, of life robbed of life, of glittering promise broken.[22]

Like Tristram, Buck is a musician, who enjoys playing the violin "by himself, inventing melodies" (p. 207).[23] He is also a fighter, for Clark, perhaps in parody, ascribes to him "the expressionless countenance of the fighter" (p. 306). When Buck dreams of being a lover, he identifies himself with Tristram:

> [he] found himself, without even knowing how he'd gotten into it, engaged in playing a strangely sensible but unorthodox, and therefore difficult Tristram who was gently but masterfully in love with Janet Haley--Isolt of Brittany . . . Despite the evils he foresaw, Buck-Tristram was about to make his final irrevocable vow (p. 198).

The Tristram legend controls his thoughts and anticipates the course of his experience, so intimate is the mystical identification Buck senses between himself and the tragic youth.

The second part of the novella can be called "ecstasy." It reflects Buck's overwhelming emotion whenever he swims naked on his secret beach: "to be naked hastened by the increased influence of all the sprites of the sea, sun, wind, and sand upon him the ascension into ecstasy" (p. 213). The "sprites" are the manifestation of the brighter god, whom Buck refers to as "the New Testament God." They become real, "only in moments of ecstasy" (p. 203). Unfortunately, such moments cannot be sustained; consequently, the dark god is also called "the fog god." He is equated with the Old Testament God. The mystical character of Buck's ecstasy is evident in his reaction to the waves of the Pacific, which seem to battle beneath him as he watches: "he experienced one unification after another with the whole dazzling wonderful world" (p. 221). His ecstasy makes him forget his remorse, and sets him dreaming of new conquests to impress Janet-Isolt.

The third part of the novella, which could be called "covenant," centers in the presentation to Buck of his

weapon for the ritual contest, a coveted .22 rifle, and the renewal of understanding with his father. In an important conversation between Buck and his father about the significance of being twelve and fifty, respectively, his father remarks, "there may even be compensations at twelve." This reassurance is to place a "fresh seal upon their enduring covenant" (p. 230). One of the compensations to which his father refers is the gift of the rifle, with its "tag tied to the trigger-guard with, 'Happy Birthday, Buck, from Dad,' on it in his father's bold neat printing" (p. 233). Overcome with awe, Buck sees his father grinning at him and knows "their understanding of that moment was the most complete of all their many understandings" (p. 233). The deep sympathy between father and son contrasts with Buck's resentment of his sister, his toleration of his younger brother, and his contempt for an over-protective mother.

The fourth part of the novella is pivotal. It should be labelled "sin," for in it Buck hunts down and kills a small rabbit. The scene is dominated by allusions to darkness. At the beginning of the hunt, Buck senses the dark fog god "was in his ascendency" (p. 248), and that "the dark spirit became present everywhere" (p. 251). He himself is an "armed deputy of darkness" (p. 251) who intrudes into nature. The gun proudly cradled in his left arm is plainly the "instrument of the fog god" (p. 253), intent upon death. A contest rages within Buck between the life-force and the death-force, but the voice of the fog-god is stronger, and

Buck kills the small rabbit. The realization of the finality of violent death fills him with revulsion; Buck feels "divided into two beings" (p. 258). His attempt to reunify the divided parts of his self can be only partially successful, since the spirit of the slaughtered rabbit seems to enter a living hawk who ascends "up toward God with word of an unforgiveable sin" (p. 259). The violation of the life-force and the repudiation of the voice of the brighter god constitute the unforgiveable sin. When Buck picks up the mutilated body of the baby rabbit to examine it, he feels for the first time the awesome presence of "the watchful gods." The consequence of sin is the fall from "ecstasy" into what Underhill calls "the dark night of the soul."

This is evident in the fifth part of the novella, which may be called "guilt." Buck senses keenly that, not only have the bright gods deserted him, but the dark gods have rejected him, so that "he was in no man's land, and in its isolation his own soul was withdrawn, small and heavy as a stone within him" (p. 268). The awareness of the disapproval of "the watchful gods" causes him to hope for "a miraculous resurrection of the rabbit" (p. 269). He determines to bury the animal at a point in the trail where he almost stepped on a rattlesnake. This was "a kind of dangerous watchgate to be entered in the spirit of Bunyan's Pilgrim" (p. 274). When Buck narrowly evades the lethal fangs of the serpent, he discovers "the snake and the rabbit

were related within the intentions of the gods concerning himself" (p. 280). The rattlesnake is "the defender of the rabbit" against the hostile invader with the death-weapon. This realization brings Buck to a significant conclusion, that "the powers of light and darkness were not wholly and always opposed to one another" (p. 280). This awareness of the union of opposites is an expression of Clark's spiritual naturalism. Buck, however, is unable to grasp this union. Rather than the sensation of the nuclear, he experiences a "sensation of guilt," which creates within him "the need for appeasement." This awareness is signaled by the confession, "poor damn little rabbit. What did you ever do?" (p. 281). This confession is the prelude to penance, in the realization that "the funeral of the rabbit became a grim, necessary and inadequate penance" (p. 285).

Buck finds a more adequate penance as the novella concludes in its final part, which could be called "penance." When Buck returns to his secret place, where he has experienced ecstasy, he feels the sensation of terror. The contest between the brighter and darker gods for his soul is still being waged as he buries the rabbit wrapped in his sweat shirt and lifts up a prayer to "the inconceivable head-god, from whom no response was to be expected" (p. 299):

> O Lord and Father, take this little rabbit unto You. Give him back, O Father, the life that I have taken away. Make him forget how it hurt and keep him with you forever and ever. Amen.

Tears of remorse fill his eyes. His penance, although inadequate, is completed. When he enters the waters just off

his secret beach he feels a strange and new presence, which makes him more "than ever reluctant to enter . . . the dark ocean under the low grey sky" (p. 304). Yet the bath is an act of purgation, and Buck becomes aware of the gradual transformation of nature: "everything was turning bright around him, with a faint, diffused shining that came from nowhere in particular . . . the sun had broken through the fog and was reaching out to sea in a long, slanting column of white light" (p. 305). The watchful gods have been appeased, and Buck feels a simultaneous desire to sing and weep. He once more assumes the posture of a fighter, and begins to wade out into deeper water, dismissing the betraying voice of the darker god.

There are obvious parallels between "The Watchful Gods" and "Trial At Arms." Buck, age 12, is the counterpart of Watt, age 13, engaged on a first hunt in which he blows apart a helpless animal. The ecstasy which each boy has felt earlier is followed by deep remorse and an act of contrition, through which sin and guilt are at least partially resolved. Both boys experience the struggle of an ordeal through which they attain enlightenment and a deeper empathy with the natural world. The correspondence to the mystical journey from innocence to experience and the partial restoration of innocence are more deliberately developed in "The Watchful Gods," however, than in "Trial At Arms."

In the novella, Clark has transmuted the traditional

character of mysticism, as outlined by Evelyn Underhill;[24] he uses much of the same kind of terminology, but he reaches a humanistic or naturalistic conclusion. Buck is a young man in process towards "the God-becoming,"[25] in the awareness of that "unimaginable head-God to whom all the rest were subordinate" (p. 201). This God is manifested throughout nature and within man, but appears to elude the grasp of men like Buck. Clark returns repeatedly to the theme of man, and nature, in process, expressed as struggle or conflict. The process is almost invariably painful and seldom completely fruitful. The important component is not really the goal attained, but the process or conflict itself. Clark is no sentimentalist. He details the conflict or achievement. It is almost always muted. It is also vague, tenuous, and ambiguous. This is evident in the conclusion to both "Trial At Arms" and "The Watchful Gods." The note of conquest as the affirmation of life rather than death is sounded in the final paragraphs. In this sense Clark, like both Steinbeck and Faulkner, is optimistic about human nature. His optimism, however, is based upon the ability of nature, both human and animal, to contend with the forces of darkness and death, and, in the struggle for survival, to endure. But if they endure, they do not finally prevail, though they are moving in that direction. This conviction is the throbbing heart of Clark's spiritual naturalism or the mysticism of process.

Two of Clark's shorter pieces of fiction explore

spiritual naturalism through the animal world, giving us naturalistic myths from the animals' point of view. Herbert Wilner calls "Hook," Clark's detailed study of the life-and-death cycle of a hawk, "one of the masterpieces of the American short story."[26] Max Westbrook calls "The Rising and Passing of Bar,"[27] a parallel story of a wild stallion, "an even finer story."[28] Certainly both are among Clark's best pieces of shorter fiction.

"The Rising and Passing of Bar" concerns a wild stallion's taking command of a remuda of horses, until his death. "Bar," an "iron grey with the black bar along the spine" (p. 86), begins his ascent when he defeats and kills Nomad, his own sire, "a great leader and the winner of eight duels." The notation that "Nomad's is a shameful death" p. 80), casts a dark shadow over the young stallion, who never can achieve the greatness of his sire's leadership. He is at this time unprepared for leadership. Sage, the brood mare of the remuda, has to keep the wild horses together until she can teach Bar "to select his look-outs, to chivy the remuda according to their natures, and give them the rest they needed" (p. 83). Bar learns from her "the master maneuver . . . the split flight" (p. 85). He also learns from her repulsion of his approach "his place in the generation of the remuda" (p. 85). He selects Fran as his mare, but discovers that his power is limited when a mare is about to foal. In fact, Bar "remained uneasy at each foal" (p. 86), accepting its factuality, but never understanding it. Finally, Bar must learn to fight to keep

his leadership, challenged by Rocky, a harlequin pinto whose experience and skill are almost too much for him, and Cloud, whom he ejects from the herd "although not so easily" (p. 88).

After Sage dies, Bar gradually assumes absolute control over the remuda, and successfully keeps them from being corralled; "in time Bar's domination became absolute . . . there was no longer even a silent question of his complete control" (p. 92). This moment marks the high point in Bar's life. He earlier attempts to install Fran as brood mare of the remuda, but is thwarted by Sage and Blue. Following Blue's death, he succeeds, but Fran "afforded the remuda no defense against any of his whims" (p. 93). New challenges appear. An unknown buckskin tries to join the herd but Bar drives him away, yet cannot break him. A monoplane harrasses the remuda to panic, and four new foals and three mares are lost. Bar never recovers his control. His age, now fifteen, begins to show painfully. He regularly falls asleep in the sun, or wanders off by himself. The end is evident when his son, Cloud, trumpets a challenge, just as Bar earlier challenged his sire, Nomad. Bar withstands repeated attacks until "his body hung with a net of blood" and he is finally driven to his knees. He knows for the first time a new sensation: "Bar wished to escape . . . it was a dull yearning, like irresistible sleepiness, to avoid further punishment" (p. 96). Cloud permits him to escape; snorting a final blast of triumph, as he swings back to take up his command. Bar very slowly dies, stooping often

to rest, "but without raising his head" (p. 96). Ernest Thompson Seton has similarly noted this sense of shame and defeat, commenting that "the life of a wild animal always has a tragic end."[29]

Clark's story gives us a cycle of three generations, covering the passing of Nomad, the rising and passing of Bar, his son, and the rising of Cloud, the son of Bar. It is a sensitive rendering of the cycle of life and death in the natural world, against the ravages of nature itself and men. It expresses Clark's spiritual naturalism. This cycle of being born, maturing, fading, decaying, and dying, replaced by another cycle at an antecedant point on the continuum, is his statement of the rhythm of reality.

Clark makes a parallel statement in "Hook," the account of a hawk who becomes a metaphor for the whole cycle and sweep of nature--animal and human--from birth to death. Jack London, Ernest Thompson Seton, and Charles G. D. Roberts have similarly used life cycles of animals as a metaphor for human experience. They are deeply influenced by the humanitarian movement, as represented by Henry S. Salt, who believes animals have the souls of men.[30] While I have discovered no direct connection between Clark and this movement, he could hardly have escaped some sense of it through London and the popular Seton. Certainly, "Hook" reflects this tradition and draws its magnitude from this humanitarian concept.

The story is divided structurally into five parts.

Part one, "will of a hawk," follows Hook from the moment of his hatching to his experience of three primal drives, the urges to kill, to soar, and to mate. Hs is struck early from the next by his "single-willed parents" (p. 3), but is unable to fly. His eyes gradually assume that wide, alert, challenging look, and Hook learns to survive on the ground. He tastes his first blood when he kills and eats a field mouse, and finds himself driven by "the blood appetite" as he begins to grow "in strength and will" (p. 5). Conflict with a squirrel awakens in him a sensation of exaltation; "he realized his world was a great arena for killing, and feels the magnificence of it" (p. 6). Soon afterward, Hook experiences the ecstasy of flight, and both his range and deadliness increase, for he "had mastered the first of the three hungers which are fused into the single flaming will of a hawk, and he has experienced the second" (p. 6). Hook fulfills the third primal drive, the urge to mate, after crippling a male rival. Three baby hawks hatch, and Hook drives them from the nest and returns to "love circling above his own range" (p. 8). All three hungers have been fused into the oneness of his flaming will.

The second part of the story, "master of the sky," describes Hook's magnificence in flight. He is "a lovely and certain thing, so that he played with the treacherous currents of the air with a delicate ease surpassing that of the gulls" (p. 8). He is "master of the sky and the hills of the range" (p. 8). Only one smell disturbs him,

"the mixed smells and incomprehensible activities of the people at the Japanese farmer's home . . . across Hook's river" (p. 9). The Japanese farmer's home is Clark's World War II embodiment of evil. But Hook does not allow this singular doubt to cloud his life. He is challenged four times and rebuffs each challenge, experiencing "the fighter's pride and exultation from the sting of wounds received in successful combat" (p. 11). From each new combat, he learns a new skill, so that he increasingly becomes "a more dangerous bird" (p. 11). Able to satisfy his three great hungers with ease, "he was not only complete but supreme" (p. 11).

The third part of the story, "blow of the second," details the reversal of Hook's fortunes in the autumn of his second year. He is shot by the Japanese farmer, "Hook felt the minute whips of the first shot, and the astounding, breath-breaking blow of the second" (p. 12). With one wing broken, he dropped to the ground, "lifting his good wing and cocking his head for a serpent-like blow, his beak open but soundless, his great eyes hard and very shining" (p. 12). The Japanese farmer looks for Hook in vain. The hawk, however, is forced to live again like a ground owl, even devouring a fish dropped by two gulls.

The fourth part of the story, "life of the nestling," continues to describe Hook's unhawkish life as a ground owl. The hawk heals slowly, but incompletely and is denied the ability to soar. Deprived of "the joy of space, without which the joy of loneliness was lost, the joy of battle and

killing, became his whole concentration" (p. 16). Hook's blood-lust, however, begins to fade when he loses one eye to some gulls. After waiting until "his will was somewhat replenished" (p. 19), he emerges from hiding, sensing for the first time "the ever neighboring possibility of death" (p. 19). This sensation of death "helped solidify him into his last stage of life." During this final stage of life, "truly he lived in the wheat and the brush like a ground owl, ridden with ground lice, dusty or muddy, ever half-starved, forced to sit for hours by small holes for petty and unsatisfying kills" (p. 20). The tragic contrast to the master of the sky sailing with such ease on the currents of the wind is underlined by his emaciated form; "save for his great talons and clappers . . . he should have been like a handful of air." Nevertheless, in Hook, "the faintest spark of valor still glimmered" (p. 22).

In the fifth and final part of the story, "fire of the hawk," Clark shows how that very faint spark is fanned into a brilliant flame. Deprived of flight and the ecstasy of killing, Hook still has one remaining hunger, the urge to mate, "but the season of love passed over to the nestling season, and Hook's love hunger, unused, shriveled in him with the others, and there remained in him only one stern quality befitting a hawk, and that the negative one, the remnant, the will to endure" (p. 23). This will to endure, sharpened by the second drought experienced by him in his four years, drives Hook, almost dead of hunger, to hurl his

broken body over the fence of the Japanese farmer's chicken coop. Once again, and for the final time, "the urge to kill took him . . . He could let nothing go" (p. 26). Hook revels, if briefly, in his mastery over the hens. Challenged by a "burly cock," which he is able to kill, he screams in triumph, "a thin and exhausted cry, but within him as good as when he shrilled in mid-air over the plummeting descent of a fine foe in his best spring" (p. 27). Alerted to the disturbance by the cacophony of screeching hens, the shrill cry of the hawk, and the barking of his dog, the farmer "relinquished the sport to the dog" (p. 27), a large Airedale. He and his wife and son then watch "the sport," of the dog battling the wounded, emaciated hawk. As Clark observes, "courageous and cruel death, however it may afterward sicken the one who has watched it, is impossible to look away from" (p. 27). After a ferocious struggle, Hook dies, going limp and lifeless only after a long and heroic contest. The real victory, however, belongs not to the dog, but to the hawk, and Clark underscores this emphatically: "In this last conflict, however, there had been some minutes of the supreme fire of the hawk, whose three hungers are perfectly fused in the one will, enough to burn off a year of shame" (p. 30). Although the man praises his dog, "smarting from his cuts," the wife praises the hawk, "Oh, the brave bird" (p. 30). One is reminded of the lines from one of Clark's poems:

> No hate works in the heart of a hawk but the
> cruel clean cruising;
> What he cannot kill will fly in that sky,
> and he flying.[31]

The experience of triumph in apparent defeat, through the fusion of three hungers in the one will, so that the shame of a year is burned off in the intense flame of the moment, expresses Clark's conviction that a nuclear moment is one in which the whole of experience is brought into a harmonious balance that can scarcely be sustained. It is what Tim Hazard, in The City of Trembling Leaves, will call "the sensation of the nuclear." In choosing a regal fighting bird to fictionalize this awareness, Clark demonstrates again how spiritual naturalism expresses his holistic vision.

Footnotes

Unless otherwise noted, pagination refers to *The Watchful Gods and Other Stories* (New York: Random House, 1950).

[1]Bernard DeVoto, "Tame Indian, Love Sailor," *The New York Times Book Review*, LV (September 24, 1950), p. 18.

[2]Harvey Swados, "Hawks and Men," *The Nation*, CLXXI (Oct. 7, 1950), pp. 317f.

[3]Vernon Young, "Gods Without Heroes: The Tentative Myth of Van Tilburg Clark," *Arizona Quarterly*, VII (Summer 1951), p. 113.

[4]*Loc. cit.*

[5]John Portz, "Idea and Symbol in Walter Van Tilburg Clark," *Accent*, XVII (Spring, 1957), p. 128.

[6]*Loc. cit.*

[7]Chandler Brossard, "Noble Hawks and Neurotic Women," *New American Mercury*, LXXII (February, 1951), p. 232.

[8]Max Westbrook, *Walter Van Tilburg Clark* (New Haven: Twayne Publishers, 1969), p. 113.

[9]Herbert Wilner, "Walter Van Tilburg Clark," *The Western Review*, XX (Winter, 1956), p. 103f.

[10]*Loc. cit.*

[11]Westbrook has observed that "balance" is one of Clark's favorite words. It signifies "the precarious and yet historically realistic type of unity in which he believes" (p. 47).

[12]Wilner, pp. 103f.

[13]L. L. Lee, "Walter Van Tilburg Clark's Ambiguous American Dream," *College English* XXVI (February, 1965), p. 382.

[14]See below the analysis of *The City of Trembling Leaves* in Chapter IV.

[15]Pagination refers to "Trial At Arms," *Saturday Evening Post* CCXIII (January 25, 1941), p. 15ff.

[16]J. Portz, p. 115.

[17]Pagination refers to "The Pretenders," The Atlantic CLXI (April, 1942).

[18]Pagination refers to "A letter to the Living," The Nation, CLVI (June 13, 1942).

[19]Pagination refers to "Prestige," Saturday Evening Post, CCXIII (April 19, 1941).

[20]Max Westbrook, p. 113. Westbrook provides a detailed and pertinent analysis of the novella, especially in the section entitled, "The Methodology of Watching Gods," pp. 118-121.

[21]In his analysis, Max Westbrook employs the categories of Jungian psychology, especially the category of the "collective unconscious." I feel that an interesting, though equally valid, approach to Clark's writings might appeal rather to Freudian categories, especially in terms of "Eros," a life-force, and "Thanatos," the death-wish.

[22]Walter Van Tilburg Clark, "The Sword Singer: The Tristram Legend Retold" (M. A. thesis, University of Nevada, 1931), pp. xxxviii. Clark clearly stated in his thesis, that, "it is a story, not a study, that I offer to you--The Sword Singer" (p. xlvii). It could be argued, therefore, that Clark has written nineteen stories, as listed in my chronology.

[23]According to his son Robert, Walter Clark played the violin, and while not proficient, did study the instrument formally in grammar school. He did not play or study trumpet.

[24]Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1941). See the analysis in Chapter I, above.

[25]This phrase is borrowed from The City of Trembling Leaves, where Tim Hazard describes the nuclear sensation as "an impetus toward the God becoming" (p. 174).

[26]Wilner, p. 104. Wilner provides a brilliant analysis of the story, and claims it provides "the perfect expression of what [Clark] most wishes to say . . . it offers the touchstone for all his work, wherever it is good and wherever it is lacking" (p. 106). I support Wilner's contention.

[27]Pagination refers to "The Rising and Passing of Bar," Virginia Quarterly Review XIX (Winter, 1943), pp. 80ff.

[28]M. Westbrook, p. 156.

[29]Ernest Thompson Seton, Wild Animals I have Known (New York: and Dunlap, 1966), Preface. He adds: "the fact these stories are all true is the reason why all are tragic . . . Such a collection of histories naturally

suggests a common thought . . .: we and the beasts are kin . . . Animals are creatures with wants and feelings, differing in degree only, from our own."

[30]Cf. Henry S. Salt, Animal Rights (New York: Macmillan, 1894).

[31]"Love As of Hawks," Poetry XLIV (September, 1934), p. 311. This is a superior poem, similar in some ways to Whitman's muscular poem, "Dalliance of Eagles."

. . . although I can't explain what I mean by the nuclear, I've fallen into the habit of trusting its manifestations . . . Now I suppose I might say it's the whole philosophy of my life. I sit and listen for the sound of the nuclear.

Walter Clark
The City of Trembling Leaves
(p. 177).

CHAPTER IV

"SOUND OF THE NUCLEAR" IN THE CITY OF TREMBLING LEAVES

Clark published The City of Trembling Leaves (1945) five years after The Ox-Bow Incident. It "was so unlike the first that it confused the critics."[1] Chester Eisinger and Herbert Wilner find the novel too long.[2] Edmund Wilson and Vernon Young fault the author for his inability to create convincing characters.[3] Diana Trilling,[4] Orville Prescott,[5] Lincoln Barnett,[6] and most notably Frederick Carpenter,[7] argue that this was Clark's first novel and was, therefore, autobiographical. Carpenter, in comparing The City "with Thomas Wolfe's sprawling autobiographical novels," judges "it comes off second best . . . because it lacks the single-minded intensity of Wolfe's absorption in his own experience while sharing the formlessness of Wolfe's fiction."[8] Edmund Wilson, on the other hand, argues that the novel, "is not . . . a book like the novels of Thomas Wolfe, in which the author pours out streams of language in a lava that is always amorphous and that may or may not be incandescent."[9] Max Westbrook, in an effort to resolve the issue, wrote to the author. Clark replied that The City "was not written before Ox-Bow and published later . . . Nor

is it anything like an autobiographical novel as has been generally assumed."[10] If, as Clark states in the same letter to Westbrook, The City is not "a loose, picaresque novel, a mere loose, sequential accumulation of remembered experiences," what is its essential character? In spite of Clark's denial, we can best understand The City as a novel well within the outline of a recognizable autobiographical tradition.

Two prominent variations of the autobiographical novel captured America's attention during the thirties: the multiple novels of Thomas Wolfe and Vardis Fisher. Both Wolfe and Fisher wrote their concealed life-stories twice. Wolfe's story comes in two parts, four novels and two protagonists: Thomas Wolfe appears as Eugene Gant in Look Homeward, Angel (1929) and in Of Time and the River (1935); Wolfe appears as George Webber in The Web and the Rock (1937) and in You Can't Go Home Again (1938). Vardis Fisher wrote a tetralogy in the thirties, which made him famous, in which he appears as Vridar Hunter: In Tragic Life (1932), Passions Spin the Plot (1934), We are Betrayed (1935), and No Villains Need Be (1936). Fisher, like Wolfe, revised his concealed life-story in 1960 in a single novel, Orphans in Gethsemane, radically altering the data in the final section of the tetralogy.[11] Somewhat like Wolfe and Fisher, with their double attempts at expressing their concealed life-stories, Clark admits to several attempts at The City, making "several bad passes at something like The City

before . . . Ox-Bow."[12] Clark did not, however, like Wolfe or Fisher, feel compelled to write and rewrite his own story.

Indeed, Clark's City fits clearly within the genre Joseph Flora describes for Fisher's tetralogy: it "belongs to a tradition of the apprenticeship novel, which is largely autobiographical and . . . is the story of Vridar's attempts to come to grips with the two sides of his personality or being. When he can come to terms with both he's served his apprenticeship and can be a writer."[13] Flora maintains that the key word in the tetralogy is "pilgrimage," which describes the quest for meaning undertaken by Vridar Hunter in Idaho. The City has been compared loosely to Frederick Manfred's World's Wanderer,[14] or unfavorably to James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,[15] and structurally to Thomas Wolfe's Of Time and The River.[16] But it compares more properly with Fisher's tetralogy. The City of Trembling Leaves is an apprenticeship novel in which Timothy Hazard, like Vridar Hunter, must come to terms with himself. Only after he has served his apprenticeship can he become a composer.

Maurice Beebe, in Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts, commenting on the importance of Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (1795-96), states that it "had little influence on British fiction until Carlyle's translation of 1824, but then it inspired a type of novel which has remained popular ever since."[17] That type, or genre, of novel is the Bildungsroman, the apprentice-novel. In her excellent

study of the English Bildungsroman, Suzanne Howe identifies the following pattern of apprenticeship:

> The adolescent hero of the typical "apprentice" novel sets out on his way through the world, meets with reverses usually due to his own temperament, falls in with various guides and counselors, makes many false starts in choosing his friends, his wife, and his life work, and finally adjusts himself in some way to the demands of his time and environment by finding a sphere of action in which he may work effectively.[18]

The City of Trembling Leaves reflects this pattern, with a single qualification. The traditional apprentice-novel has a linear or a chronological development. Clark superimposes a circular or a symphonic structure on Tim Hazard's apprenticeship during his "years of learning." This is the major point of difference between Clark's novel and those of Wolfe and Fisher.

The novel is guiltless of the charge of formlessness. Clark's description of Hazard's apprenticeship to music and his pilgrimage to manhood is sustained throughout the novel by musical motifs or themes, as L. L. Lee notes.[19] The completion of a symphony, whose title is identical with the title of the novel, "The City of Trembling Leaves," is a major consideration in Hazard's maturing, and is the source of a tension not resolved until the end. Lee points out the relationship between music and nature in the novel, observing that the novel has the form of a musical composition. The fact that its protagonist, Tim Hazard, "finally succeeds in writing a symphony with the same name as the

novel" brings the account to a conclusion on a note of affirmation. The symphony serves to evoke the theme of trees announced in the first section of the book, and the symbolic significance of the symphony, which appears repeatedly. Clark writes that the symphony "was whole, circular, complete, and in the last rustling notes the question was there as much as in the first" (p. 586),[20] and this comment is as pertinent to the structure of the novel as it is to the character of Hazard's magnum opus.

The novel, like the symphony composed by Tim Hazard, is circular, and in the end its protagonist is still searching for meanings, for answers to the question that "didn't die" (p. 586). That question is an integral part of what Tim Hazard earlier labelled "the sensation of the nuclear" (p. 174). The City of Trembling Leaves is not only a transitional piece in Clark's own literary pilgrimage but a key to understanding his brand of spiritual naturalism or mysticism of process--"the sensation of the nuclear," as it relates to "the lives and loves of Timothy Hazard" (p. 5).

The relationship of "the sensation of the nuclear" to the circular structure of the symphony and the novel is clarified by Calvin S. Brown's interpretation of the sonata form: "the term 'sonata form' is somewhat confusing, for it applies in a general way to a work in several movements, but its specific application is to the structure of a single movement" (p. 161).[21] Brown goes on to compare it to the

fugue, which is "an expanded A B A pattern, divided into an exposition, a development section, and a recapitulation" (p. 162). The sonata is also A B A, differing from the fugue, however, in that "sonata form is devoted to the reconciliation of opposite or discordant themes . . . whereas the fugue exploits the possibilities of one theme" (p. 162). The City of Trembling Leaves is thus a novel with sonata form. The Prelude to Book One, corresponding to the initial A of the sonata form, where the author gives an exposition of Reno's "dissonant themes," contains the entire novel in microcosm. These dissonant themes or motifs are then sounded again and again throughout the two major books of the novel, chapters 1-64, corresponding to section B, which describes Hazard's development. The final chapter, "In Which the Circle Closes," marks a return to A, as the author recapitulates his major themes. The brief Postlude, which follows, furnishes a coda or a concluding section. It is formally distinct from the main structure of the novel since another cycle or process of learning for Tim begins in another musical composition, and with a family.

In the Prelude to Book One, the author introduces three things: (1) important regions, (2) significant characters, and (3) primary themes. All three are interrelated, however, because the novel "is the story of the lives and loves of Tim Hazard, and so, indirectly, a token biography of Reno, Nevada . . . the city of trembling leaves" (p. 5). The

novel thus begins by linking the central character, Tim Hazard, with the major location, Reno, Nevada, while the remark that the trees of Reno "have regional meanings within their one meaning, like the themes and transitions of a one-movement symphony" (p. 5) introduces the natural and musical metaphors to be sustained throughout the composition. The author then boldly states that the reader cannot understand the protagonist "without hearing these motifs played separately before you hear them in the whole." Thus, sectional rehearsal prior to orchestrated performance is important. The several regions, characters, and themes are all intimately related to Tim Hazard's apprenticeship and pilgrimage. They provide the indispensable clues to the meaning of the interlocking episodes in the composer's life.

Clark skillfully weaves together the imagery and symbolism of the trees of the several regions of the city with the motif of unorchestrated sound to introduce his central characters and themes. The Winfield Park-Court Street region characteristically has many old trees evoking sadness, especially in the older part. The newer part has younger trees, "like a light motif dropped into the melancholy central movement in anticipation of the theme of the outskirts" (p. 6). This symphonic description of trees, and variations, anticipates the juxtaposition of natural and musical symbolism later in the novel. Beyond this section of the city and to the south, "this mood goes

through a gradual and almost constant brightening." Because of big rooming houses and apartments, the trees in this quarter give the impression "that only their topmost leaves should accept sunlight, and tremble." In this quarter once lived Tim's best friend, Lawrence Black, "whose life will at times seem almost synonymous with Tim's" (p. 7). Tim's "great single love, Rachel Wells, also lived in this quarter . . . until she had finished high school." Moving out of this quarter south and west, "this region seems to become steadily more open, windy and sunlit . . . and at some point you will realize that the Court Street theme has become inaudible" (p. 7). The "Court Street theme" sounds the first and dominant note of the novel. In this initial section, Clark skillfully introduces the reader to Lawrence Black and Rachel Wells and links them both to Tim and to a region whose trees "should be motionless, even in a plateau gale." The region typifies melancholy to the point of intertia.

The Mt. Rose Quarter, to the contrary, is filled with new trees, not much taller than a man, "always trembling so they nearly dance, and most of the grown trees are marching files of poplars, in love with wind and heavens" (p. 7). There is no inertia here. All is vitality and motion. The peak of the mountain holds one's attention as it towers majestically in the west--"even at night, when the summit of the mountain is only a starlit glimmer,

detached from the earth, it is the strong pole of all waking minds in that quarter." Tim Hazard could sit on the front steps of his small bungalow, on the east side of Plumas Street, the main street of the Mt. Rose Quarter, "and look at Mt. Rose while he waters the lawn, and Mary can see it through the kitchen window while she works at the sink" (p. 8). Mary Turner Hazard is Tim's "gentle, golden-brown wife." Clark underscores the contrast between the two sections of the city and the temperament they support by commenting upon the difference between the bungalow in which Tim and Mary live and the houses in the Court Street region: "houses are incipiently evil which have been intended to master time and dominate nature." This, concludes the author, "is a moribund intention" (p. 8). Within three pages of tightly written description, Clark describes two regions of Reno and introduces all four of the major characters, Tim, Lawrence, Rachel, and Mary.

A third region, the north edge of the city, "where Virginia Street becomes the Purdy Road," is called "the region of upper Ralston Street" (p. 8). The symbolism of the trees and musical composition is sustained in the description. Entering this region, a new theme, "higher, clearer and sharper than that of the south edge," can be heard. From this section of the city, one feels removed from the downtown section, and one can see "the whole billowing sea of the treetops of Reno." The University of

Nevada is here, "which indirectly affects the meaning of the trees," because "it has a tone of active, enduring quiet, and is big enough to impart much of this tone to all the north end, except the eastern corner, which is drawn into the influence of the race track" (p. 9). After his boyhood, the University section of the city was for Tim Hazard "the city of the hills seen from the plains." The metaphors of trees and symphonic sound are now enriched by reflection on the character of the landscape. The high north edge of the city also has its mountain. In contrast to the low south edge, where "Mt. Rose is the sole, white, exalted patron angel and fountain of wind and storm to south Reno" (p. 9), Peavine Mountain is black, less austere, much wilder, and the home of two winds. That Clark intends a deliberate symbolism is clear from the pronouns ascribed to each of the mountains. Mt. Rose is feminized: "her reign is strongly contested . . ." (p. 9). Peavine Mountain is masculinized: "He is barren and often lowering, but he reaches out and brings unto him, while Rose stands aloof." Peavine Mountain "begets love," while Mt. Rose "begets reverence." While Mt. Rose conveys the aura of the austere and sacred, in the Peavine Mountain region, "there is a liveliness . . . which gets into everything." Lawrence Black lives here somewhat sporadically in a cabin on the top of the mountain. Tim often comes here to converse with his friend, and Lawrence's "dark and beautiful wife Helen," and even on occasion with the narrator, who is later revealed

to be Walt Clark. The fact that Tim once tells the narrator that the theme of the north edge of the city of Reno "is identified with a little aspen that grew in the yard by Lawrence's cabin" (p. 10) is singularly important. The sounds of the aspen's trembling leaves can be heard even when the wind blows out of Peavine, and as Tim, Lawrence, and Mary watch it, "all their thoughts and words were touched by the twinkle of the sun on the aspen and by the whispering and rushing of its leaves" (p. 10). Where the leaves tremble, there is life and vitality; where the leaves of the aspens or poplars are motionless, there is inertia and stagnation. This appears to be the primary meaning of the trembling leaves.

A fourth region of Reno is the north-east quarter, "with the ranching valley on the east of it and the yellow hills with a few old mines on the north" (p. 10). This region, "is drawn out of the influence of the university and Peavine into the vortex of the race track" (p. 10). It is a fast-moving place to live, even though the race-track "was alive only two or three weeks out of the year." In this quarter of the city, "the trembling of the leaves . . . rises easily into a roaring through tall Lombardies set in rows in dust and open sunlight." The theme of this quarter, due to "this quality of thin, hasty brightness," is, "almost strident, and saved from being as intolerable as persistent whistles only by the yellow hills." Tim Hazard lives in this north-east region of Reno as a young boy, and sees many races,

rodeos, and even circuses. In front of his white-board house were three large poplar trees, "and when in his bed he heard the poplars, winter and summer, windy and quiet, and saw them, morning and night, cloudy and clear, moonlight and starlight and dark" (p. 10). The three poplar trees thus play an important part in Tim Hazard's growth. The sight and sound of movement among the leaves of the poplars awaken in the mature man a desire to compose a final statement, a symphony of trembling leaves.

Still another region in Reno is the south-east quarter which "combines the qualities of the north-east and the south-west, and yet has a quieter and more uniform tone, because it is dedicated to the valley, into which it is slowly spreading, and is not so much influenced by the mountain" (p. 11). As if to underscore the significance of the auditory nuances of his description, the narrator interjects to repeat that "none of the themes of Reno is isolated . . . they merge into one another, and so one corner of this quarter, the Mill Street toward Virginia Street corner, echoes the Court Street theme and the rumblings and cries of the center of the city" (p. 11). The center of Reno is dominated by two streets, Virginia and Fourth, "called the main arteries, or the purveyors of the life-blood of the city" (p. 11). Mary Turner lived in a bungalow on North Virginia Street when she was a girl in the Orvis Ring School, with Tim. Behind the school runs a single Western Pacific railroad track, "a dividing line between the university

region and the race-track region" (p. 12). The larger Southern Pacific lines run through the busy downtown section, and on them run huge freight trains whose whistles "cry in the night and echo above the trees." Mary's homelife, unlike Tim's, is rather peaceful. This is largely due to her parents. While Tim's father works in a lumberyard in the north-east quarter, her father is a quiet man who works for the university and in his spare time "took up taxidermy for the secret reason he hated to think of so many lovely creatures leaving no tangible memories" (p. 13). Her mother was an affectionate woman who devoted most of her attention to her family, and was interested in the growing and tending of roses. The three of them would often sit together on their front porch in the summer, to watch "the last light slowly ascend the trees on the university campus" (p. 13). Clark's language in describing Mary Turner's homelife effectively creates the context for her solidarity and serenity. Tim Hazard constantly moves toward these qualities but never reaches them, not even through his marriage to Mary. She remarks one day, "You never married me, you know, Tim . . . you couldn't marry anybody" (p. 583), and her comment implies the absence of solidarity in her husband more graphically than direct statement of the fact.

There is one more section to Reno, "the treeless center of the city, which we have worked all around, though not without hearing it several times, in sudden shrill bursts

from the brass or deep mutterings in the rhythm section" (p. 13). The narrator reminds the reader that the world-at-large is most familiar with this region, and it is not "unlike any moribund city, or the moribund region of any city." The word "moribund" in the Prelude underscores several times the impression of dying and of lethargy.[22] The houses in the Mt. Rose section are "moribund," as is the center of the city. While this "is the ersatz jungle," the narrator underscores a singular difference between this region and other "truly moribund cities of the world." This difference "makes Reno a city of adolescence, a city of dissonant themes, sawing against each other with a kind of piercing beauty like that of a fourteen-year-old girl or a seventeen-year-old boy, the beauty of everything promised and nothing resolved" (p. 13). This central section of the city is treeless. The absence of trees serves to reinforce the note of dissonant sound and the painful realization of "everything promised and nothing resolved." Nevertheless, one can still see "the infinite shoals of the leaves hovering about the first lone crossing light . . . even from the very center of Reno" (p. 13). On that note--of hovering leaves--the Prelude to the first book of the novel ends.

In his narrator's reflections, and his sustained symbolic description, Clark has achieved much in his initial pages: (1) he introduces the reader to all major characters and some important minor ones; (2) he describes in detail places of symbolic significance, especially those sections

of Reno that affect Tim Hazard's character; (3) he states the primary themes and associates them with the several sections of the city and with the vocabulary of sound; and (4) he establishes the connection between Reno and Tim. Jennings Rice calls The City of Trembling Leaves primarily a study "of the development, from boyhood to early maturity, of a sensitive youth who wishes to become a composer."[23] That qualifies it as a Bildungsroman; but it is more. The novel is also the story in "sonata form" of an adolescent boy and his city, whose dissonant themes can be heard throughout. The story of Tim Hazard in books one and two will clearly underscore the theme of "everything promised and nothing resolved," associated with the center of Reno, or what Clark, in his poem "Dwight Marlowe," calls the "bitterness of insufficiency."[24] This insufficiency, with both bitterness and promise in balance, is Clark's first hint of the "nuclear."

The lengthy central section of the novel, corresponding to the B section of the sonata form, (chapters 1-64), consists of five divisions: (1) Tim's early years up to the formulation of what he called, "the whole philosophy of his life" (p. 177), (chapters 1-21); (2) Tim's first dark period ending with his ascent of a sacred mountain with Rachel, described by Jennings Rice as "his unattainable Beatrice"[25] (chapters 22-35); (3) Tim's restless years ending with his decision to leave Nevada for California

(chapters 36-43); (4) Tim's second dark period ending with creative ferment, a vision of Rachel, and a desire to return to Reno (chapters 44-56); (5) Tim's search for his friend Lawrence Black and his eventual return to Reno and Mary (chapters 57-64). These divisions are not wholly arbitrary, and are derived in part from the following passage describing the effect on Tim of the race against Red Laughry:

> It was only years later, after his dark period, after the pilgrimage to the mountain, after the dream which freed him and perhaps changed Eileen Connor, that he believed he recognized a transformation to have begun in him after that mile run. Nevertheless, the transformation began almost at once (p. 173).

The note of pilgrimage or quest, indigenous to the five sections, makes mandatory a consideration of Tim's growth as a composer and as a man, the two, of course, being inseparable. Lincoln Barnett has drawn a parallel between Timothy Hazard's "tortured evolution as a musician" and "the evolution of his masculine emotions, his transition from unrequited idolatry of Rachel Wells into serene and contented love of Mary Turner."[26] Although Tim Hazard never does achieve serene and contented love with anyone, his evolution as a musician and a man concerns this major section of the novel.

Tim's early years of conflict and confusion set the tone for his life. He is described as "a fool or a dreamer . . . he was a personality which automatically sought meanings rather than manifestations" (p. 14). This initial description of the central character is later clarified when

Tim attempts to formulate "the sensation of the nuclear," to the narrator:

> We believe that we share certain truths because we have, in the inexplicable wisdom of our complete beings, experienced certain manifestations which are enough alike so that we may speak to one another with partial understanding. Actually we take it all on trust, and root only in the manifestations, so that, speaking largely enough, we are all absolute fools, but speaking humanly the only fool is that man who, like Kant, having arrived at the point where he perceives the impasse, insists upon completing the structure to fulfill his own desires, or that much more numerous breed which falls into the habit of accepting manifestations which have occurred often enough as explanations of themselves, and ceases to wonder at all . . . (p. 177).

Tim's quest for meaning sets him apart from most of the other students attending Orvis Ring School.

Tim Hazard's life from the beginning is dominated by music. "From the time of his first thoughtful experience with music, it became almost synonymous with successful prayer in his world, which was very much a world of feeling" (p. 31). The concept of music as "successful prayer" contrasts with his earlier experience with the act of praying, which was "a failure that did not end in soaring joy" (p. 25). The most important phase of his early beginnings in music is a friendship with Jacob Briaski. Jacob is a Russian-Jewish boy whose father was dedicated "to spreading the gospel of music" (p. 32). The allusion to "successful prayer" and to "spreading the gospel" place Hazard's response to music on a distinctly mystical, as opposed to a merely aesthetical, plane of meaning. This is crucial to Clark's

framework of the mystical journey and his concern with the mysticism of process. He is aware, however, that the quest for meaning is laden with danger. Jacob Briaski's father spread the bad news of self-negation, a concept essential to classical mysticism, to his own son. Haunted by a feeling of defeat, Jacob Briaski, years later, shoots himself through the head with an old six-shooter. In him, as in Tim Hazard and Lawrence Black, there was great promise, but little fulfillment.

A distinctly religious vocabulary pervades the account of Tim Hazard's experience with the realm of deep feeling. Tim's love for Mary Turner is initially as idolatrous as his unrequited love for Rachel Wells. Lucy, who kisses him; Gladys, who smells bad; Miss Frost, who causes him to dream; and even Dorothy, who "assumed, in his imagination, a place of provocative unreality halfway between the dark earth that was Lucy and Gladys, and the cloud-bastioned sky where Mary dwelt" (p. 42), all are lesser creatures than "the Virgin Mary of Pyramid Lake" (p. 42). Mary's place in the heaven of Tim's imagination is soon usurped by Rachel, but not before he composes a song of love to Mary, "a kind of Ave Maria inspired by the thought of riding home beside Mary in the back seat of the old Dodge" (p. 54). Tim, like Buck before him, is an inventor of melodies.

Tim's bloody initiation into high school ended with the freshmen and sophomore boys engaging in what D. H. Lawrence calls a "gladiatorial" game, in which boys tackle

and fight other boys. Afterwards, as he sits on the front porch feeling the wind and hearing it moan in the poplar leaves, "the wine of conquest was gone out of him, but in the cool emptiness remained a nuclear conviction" (p. 92). For the first time Clark introduces the adjective "nuclear," which will become the seminal concept in unfolding his tale. When gripped by a nuclear conviction, Timmy is able to compete with effectiveness as an athlete or to compose with ease as a musician. His entire life becomes a search for this nuclear feeling. In this quest, an experience of communion with a small aspen tree provides an important anticipation of his formulation of the nuclear. Left alone at a party, Tim sits and stares at a small aspen tree on the lawn. He feels no movement at all in the air, and yet some of the leaves on the little tree are trembling. Occasionally they all tremble, "as if in an excess of joyous but nervous expectation, and Tim would feel a sympathetic ascension" (p. 95). The narrator remarks: "Perhaps this five-minute communion, stirring nearly forgotten leaves of the magic wilderness within him also, gradually become one tremulous expectation of something, performed the last preparation for Tim's conversion" (p. 95). Communion with trembling leaves, both in the aspen and within the deepest recesses of his self, commits the young man to the mystical quest for an awareness of empathy with and participation in the unity of life:

> I was partitioned among all things, and free of the limits of any of them, or of time or of space. I felt so near the center of what is, the answer, that a little fear, half joy, raised the hair on my neck. I actually felt that if I held out my two hands, the answer would be in them, and I was hungry for it and afraid of it at the same time (p. 96).

This moment of "immensely important nearness" fades, and, though Tim may have felt he had the answer, he does not.[27] The mystical journey of the soul is arduous and tedious, and Tim's process of becoming, of seeking meanings in life, of even briefly belonging at the center of things, is only beginning.

A significant part of his quest for unity is related to his quest of Rachel Wells. The transfer of his affections "from Mary, the worshipful symbol of all womankind, to Rachel, a personal deity" (p. 76), has its beginning when Tim and Rachel watch a race horse, Sunday Wind, run and lose at the track in Reno. Deeply attracted to this unknown girl in the yellow dress, who emotes as much feeling for Sunday Wind as Tim feels himself, he returns home to work out the deposing of Mary-Isolt in favor of Rachel-Isolt, in which he becomes Tim-Tristram. He identifies himself with a number of other lives, and seldom lets a day pass by without setting forth "upon some new quest of Rachel" (p. 112). On one such day, he takes his violin and composes a song of melancholy praise to Rachel, who is separated from him by malice and ignorance. This song furnishes a counterpart to the Ave-Maria composed for Mary, and is a further

indication that Timothy Hazard's thirst for meaning will assume the form of composition. The fact that Rachel remains unattainable reinforces the theme of promise unfulfilled, which is integral to the concept of the nuclear. In the subsequent account, the narrator jumps ahead in time and place to Lake Tahoe, where he and Tim try to dive to the bottom of the clear lake for a shining object, and "might as well have gone diving for the sun" (p. 147). The language is well chosen to underscore the idea of the unattainable, and furnishes another anticipation of Tim's formulation of the nuclear, the reaching for the impossible. The narrator's observation that Tim is trying to live two lives that didn't get along well together,[28] expresses the tornness of the composer at this stage in his quest. He is constantly frustrated in his aspiration after Rachel, whom Wilner describes as "a vision not intended for fulfillment."

In his frustration Tim turns to running, which may be conceived as questing, accelerated and intensified. In running, he remembers a stallion he has seen on the range north of the Pyramid. "It wasn't exactly that he was the stallion, but more as if he were following it with equal speed and ease, endurance and grace" (p. 156). This experience becomes an important part of his formulations about the nuclear, which Tim later describes as "running after the stallion" (p. 160). Tim's awareness of the sensation of the nuclear in running recalls his experience in

reading aloud one day in Mrs. Boone's eighth grade class. After reading the first ten lines of "The Lady of the Lake," he senses that "the rhythm caught him" (p. 28). In a similar fashion, when he runs the mile for his high school, he is caught by the rhythm of running in beating his rival for Rachel's affection, Red Laughry, by "following the stallion" (p. 170). Later he says that it is while running that he began "to seek the sensation of the nuclear, of being in touch and yet having plenty of room, as the test of doing well" (p. 177). He realizes that "from the running it worked over into the music," and "that the same quality was present in some music itself, and not in other music" (p. 177). The search for "the sensation of the nuclear" becomes "the whole philosophy of his life." It all begins with a footrace and the sensation of the nuclear.

While the footrace with Red has transforming effects on Tim, "the victory over Red seemed to Tim a hollow one" (p. 172). With this admission one of the novel's most poignant themes is voiced again: great promise, little pleasure. Yet following the race with Red, Tim began to formulate his philosophy of life in terms of what he calls "the sensation of the nuclear."

Max Westbrook comments that "the nuclear, perhaps more than any other single theme, is central to The City of Trembling Leaves."[29] Indeed, this concern to catch the "sound of the nuclear" functions in much the same way in this novel as "the whiteness of the whale" does in Moby

Dick.[30] It is pivotal for all that follows, and informs the alternating symbols which appear throughout the novel with context and meaning. Tim concludes that the nuclear cannot be defined, but that it partakes of the whole, which is greater than any of its parts, and that it is concerned with the question, "which remains real while its answers one by one, are abandoned" (p. 174). The "sensation of the nuclear" functions as "a guide towards the whole," and "is the suggestion of the more." It is "an impetus toward the God-becoming . . .", "the complete cell from which growth expands." This sensation is mystical, as is the vocabulary with which Tim seeks to express it. The pursuit of the nuclear becomes Tim's reason for existence as well as his interpretation of life. That is why he sits and listens for its sound.

The second part of the central section of the novel (chapters 22-35) describes the beginnings of Tim Hazard's "dark period." Here the language reflects traditional descriptions of a specific stage in the mystical journey:

> It is impossible to fix the lines, or even the time of this period. I could select arbitrary dates for its beginning and its end . . . But when did the dark years really begin? . . . the difficulty . . . is equally great in the other direction . . . When I try to think of the dark period in a calendar sense . . . it refuses more stubbornly than ever to hold shape (p. 292).

A conflict in Tim's mind and body between "the two sensations" (p. 213) evoked by Marjorie Hale and Rachel Wells dominates this section of the novel. Marjorie evokes a

heavy sensation, "like a physical burden being let down on his shoulders." Rachel evokes a newer, livelier, cleaner, and somehow better sensation, one of movement. Ironically, Tim realizes physical union, with Marjorie, but never any real satisfaction or self-realization. Although he never attains physical union with Rachel, he does achieve a spiritual union as they ascend and then descend a holy mountain, in Tim's mystical journey. The section ends with Tim's and Rachel's pilgrimage up Mt. Rose.

The new section opens with a phone call from Marjorie Hale, inviting him to a party, which will change his life. From the night Tim enters Marjorie's house, and she begs him to tell her he loves her, to the night he leaves, slapped for making love to Rachel, Tim's life is tormented. With her he knows no fulfillment: "there was never anything between them but this unfinished love-making, and Marjorie's hunger for something, which was pulling at him" (p. 195). His exit from Marjorie's life serves to end Tim's conflict between his feelings of adoration for Rachel and his feelings of devotion to Marjorie. Clark observes that "he was devoted, in a stern and monkish way, to his devotion to her" (p. 197). Polar tensions are building around the nucleus.

The center of gravity in Tim Hazard's confusion now shifts to the sensation of Rachel Wells. Her presence, real or imagined, pervades his relationship with Marjorie. With the coming of spring and the reviving of Rachel in his

life, Tim returns to running, and following the stallion, and "attained to the clarifying sensation of the nuclear" (p. 222). At the end of his senior year, Tim signs Rachel's yearbook, "for my partner" (p. 229), and invites her to go out to Bower's Mansion with Fred and Doris, who "were like people who have been happily married for a long time" (p. 232). Their relationship counterpoints not only the one between Tim and Rachel, but the one between Tim's mother and father, which has "never been joyous or tranquil or fulfilled" (p. 288). At the Bower's Mansion, while Tim plays a strange violin, "thinking he was playing for Rachel" (p. 248), he experiences in still another way what he had earlier tried to describe as a nuclear sensation:

> Then he forgot everything else and played. He was joyous . . . He wasn't even thinking about anything, but bursting with the hope that he could make the violin strong and soft and sad-happy enough to belong out there under the sky and down there among the poplars as in a deep well of moonlight and leaves. He felt everybody listening and dancing and loving, but they were all one, and he was a part of the same great love and listening with them, and he and they were all part of the same great thing without a name that the leaves and the mood were part of too (p. 249).

The language recalls Tim's empathy and participation in the unity of life as he watches the trembling aspen leaves in an awareness of deep communion (p. 96). He cannot sustain, however, this impression of personal and noumenal integration. Pressured by time and heeding the promptings of an inner voice to hurry, Tim buys Rachel a moss-agate he admires, "because of the dreams which surrounded it and the

vague hopes it began to represent" (p. 224). Rachel's refusal of Tim's gift and proposal of marriage turns him into a recluse. He moves into a single room. Unable to compose anything significant, and tired of doing stock arrangements for Gleaman's band, he expresses his frustrations by pounding the piano. He is forced to move again and again, on a disastrous pilgrimage into dissonance and rootlessness. "His movement toward the dead center [of Reno] continued at an accelerated pace, a circular movement, a movement like that of a leaf in a whirlpool" (p. 296). The treeless center of Reno, the symbol of decay and death, is here, the center of the circular motif, as a single leaf, in this city of trembling leaves, moves into the whirlpool. This is the lowest point of Tim's dark period. Nevertheless, he retains "the hope of the never-was . . . and it was the saving touch" (p. 302). In this dark depression, Tim dreams, and from his dreams composes two preludes, "The Empty City Prelude," and "The White Horse Prelude," expressing the tension between his present emptiness and his memory of "following the stallion," and experiencing the "nuclear."

One sultry August afternoon, Rachel suddenly appears, inviting him out to her old house. He opens the piano and plays "Moon in the Street," one of his blues numbers, and then another, "I'm Always Thinking Too Many." She asks about his symphony, and he plays a few measures of the Court Street theme, which "sounded very thin and sad on an

untuned piano in the empty house" (p. 319). He then launches into a self-parody as a horn-blower in a very bad honky-tonk band. The music, like the self he caricatures, is empty. Then Rachel suggests they climb Mt. Rose. She becomes "the finger of God" erasing "the Prayer of Evil Days," which Tim, in the flush of anticipation, yanks down from the wall over his bed and throws away, casting aside the first phase of his dark period.

Primarily, Clark's spiritual naturalism sees an individual as a being in the unending process of becoming an integer, a whole person. Because Tim's ascent, with Rachel, of the sacred mountain most closely approximates that almost-oneness, it is pivotal "in the process of his education" (p. 343). When Rachel asks Tim what music means to him, he replies that music is not everything; "just being is the main thing" (p. 339). With this realization, Tim is filled with contentment, and for the first and the last time in his life, "there were no questions in his spirit" (p. 346). Going down the mountain, Tim feels that he and Rachel are almost one. In reality, they are not, nor are they destined to be.

Clark sounds this delicate theme as the third part of his major section begins (chapters 36-43). The descent from Mt. Rose is symbolic of the descent into another dark period of restlessness. This more serious descent, however, is gradual. During this time, Tim composes "The Enchanted Mountain," a full-length orchestral work in three movements

rather than in the usual single movement. He intends to dedicate it to Rachel, but fails to finish a letter asking her permission. The composition reinforces his sense of contentment and integration; but his failure to finish his letter to Rachel mocks it. Tim ties up the score and throws it into the corner atop his unfinished "symphony of leaves." Not long afterward Tim meets Mary Turner and, for a short time, works with her at the Music Box in Reno. His buying her a drink to celebrate "the re-union of Turner and Hazard" (p. 356), anticipates the eventual marriage of Tim Hazard and Mary Turner, which will end the novel's "B" section, and will mark the transition to the concluding "A" section of the sonata form (chapter 65).

But this "B" section continues, in its third part, to follow Tim's struggles to compose his symphony. Finishing "The Enchanted Mountain" inspires Tim to go on writing. In a letter to the narrator, Tim records his good intentions and two more attempts at finishing the symphony of leaves. He also cites a few short studies and his self-doubts when "the black dog" of despair comes, the conviction that "T. Hazard hasn't it in him to do anything bigger than songs" (p. 359). He is "possessed by the notion that he must finish the trembling leaves before anything else could stir in him" (p. 377). To bring that symphony alive, he takes a trip to Lake Pyramid. He spends fourteen days there with his friend Lawrence Black, but the symphony remains dormant.

Returning to the city, Tim sings one of his ballads, "The Sweet Promised Land of Nevada," where lush imagery ironically describes the desert, again underlining the novel's major theme, "the beauty of everything promised and nothing resolved:"

> Oh, this is land that Moses shall see;
> Oh, this is the land of the vine and the tree;
> Oh, this is the land for my children and me,
> The sweet promised land of Nevada (p. 387).

When Tim arrives at Black's cabin at Pyramid Lake, he finds that Black has sold it and is about to begin his own pilgrimage. A little aspen trembling in front of the cabin, reminds Tim of other trembling leaves, especially at his old house with its three poplars by the race track. Again, the leaves tie the novel together symphonically, and remind us that the symphony of trembling leaves remains unfinished.

The need for resolving, for reaching a moment of resolution, which dominates the narrative, finds its focus in the unfinished symphony. A journey with Mary Turner to the last valley before Pyramid Lake inspires Tim to compose "a symphony of Light and Shadow, or Desert Storm" (p. 394). This stirs him to still another attempt to finish the symphony of leaves, but he burns both as inadequate. Tim is disturbed "by his willingness not to write" (p. 394), and filled with "the old restlessness" (p. 395). He finds new hope in meeting Knute Fenderson, a composer with wide musical knowledge: "the only real talks about serious music he'd ever had before were those first talks with Jacob

Briaski and his father" (p. 399). Fenderson keeps repeating that Tim "would have to come down to Carmel, so they could have some [music] all the time" (p. 399). Tim goes, determined to get the symphony started again, but ironically fails, until he returns to Reno and Mary Turner.

The fourth part of the developmental "B" section (chapters 44-56), the Carmel section, might be designated Tim Hazard's middle or formative years as a composer. This is a crucial time of learning, although Tim's experiences are a continuing part of his dark period, having no valid beginning or ending.

Tim's life in Carmel is filled with music, in Fenderson's house, "without much in it but this hunger and anger for music" (p. 408). He composes during the day at Fenderson's, and plays chamber music at night at the house of Teddy Quest. He learns a great deal from both men, who "taught by methods as different as their natures" (p. 407). Learning from Fenderson is a conflict, "a process of battling for every inch of ground . . . Make it new. Make it tough. Make it hurt. Make them listen. A composer has to be a prize fighter to live these days" (p. 418). These are the words of a man who covets only one thing, neglect, a fact Tim learns when Stephen Granter tells Fenderson's life story. Quest's teaching usually comes in an offhand remark, which later takes on wider application. In Quest, "music and life, both viewed gently and largely, flowed back and forth through each other" (p. 420). Quest asks Tim to play

trumpet in his band, and Tim decides to stay in Carmel.

But the trumpet in Quest's band and the violin in his salon orchestra renew Tim's old conflict with himself. He cannot hold both worlds in tension. He is overwhelmed by "the old sensation of despair . . . As he tried to put himself more fully into both kinds of music, it became like living over again in the flesh that long war of the mind which had preceded his pilgrimage to the mountain with Rachel" (p. 424). He is his old divided self. He is haunted by "his continual failure, even now, when all his time was given to his true work, to write anything which seemed to him clearly marked with its own singular nature" (p. 454). He grows morose and melancholy again.

Nevertheless, he writes a piano quartet, "The Smoky Bar," which Quest calls "a symphonic poem reduced to a piano-quartet" (p. 450). Stephen Granger helps Tim see that the piece "had projected a troublesome portion of his past . . . and so had brought about at least an armistice in his long war with himself" (p. 450). The conflict is being partially resolved. Tim also writes another single-movement piece, "The Stone Woman," but it, like "The Smoky Bar," is created out of self-contempt. He again destroys both compositions. They have failed to express an authentic resolution to Hazard's conflict.

The narrator tells us that "The Stone Woman" is "the monument to the crucial hours of all Tim's time in Carmel" (p. 454). These crucial hours are really the torment and

frustration of Tim's second encounter with Eileen Connor, whom Tim had known three summers before while playing in Quest's band. Though she had seldom understood what he said, she usually understood what he felt. Nevertheless, he had written her a cruel letter ending the affair. Now, in the Marine Room, three years later, Tim sees her and hopes to escape, but she says "hello." From the flush of that greeting, Tim composes a ballad about a returned lover, "My Heart With the Sun Arising," which is "A Very Short Biography of Eileen Connor" (p. 462). Eileen later sings a more jazzy version called "Get Up With the Sun."

During the next month, Tim writes seven additional songs beginning with "Why Do I Always Do Wrong?" He spends much of his time with Eileen. He doesn't know whether or not he is in love. Finally, he makes love to the acquiescent Eileen, only to realize "his desire done, and yet no union achieved, but only one of the flesh . . . He kissed Eileen's shoulder, more in penitence than anything else" (p. 470). From this experience comes, "The Stone Woman," which helps him battle his "conviction of sin"--though Eileen hardly seems a woman of stone. The affair continues, and so does his torment. He beings thinking restlessly about Reno again, "taking possession of his own past" (p. 480). Two mornings later, he awakes with the symphony of leaves working in him once again. He yearns to return to Reno. "He believed that the entire symphony was taking shape in him, one great movement, flowing strongly and evenly through all its changes

from the little aspens out to the little aspens again . . . Even so, it didn't come, after all" (p. 490). In his dejection, he seems to see Rachel standing at the foot of his bed talking to him. The vision is intensely real. Then he remembers that her dress is one she had worn years earlier, convincing him, "against the belief of his whole body, that Rachel hadn't been there" (p. 495). The vision of "the unattainable Beatrice" summons him to resume his pilgrimage. Five days later, Tim leaves for Beverly Hills, in response to an urgent note from Helen concerning his friend Lawrence Black. Clark may have chosen the name Black to underline the theme of both Tim's and Lawrence's "dark night of the soul."

The fifth and final part of the "B" section of the novel (chapters 57-64) focuses primarily on Tim's quest for Black and introduces the vocabulary of the beatific vision at the end of the mystic way. In her huge white mansion in Beverly Hills, Helen tells Tim that Black has "a saint complex," which she finds "unholy" (p. 505), because he will not sell his paintings. He is "in love with failure," (p. 505), living in dead mining camps and run-down saloons. Helen shows him one of Lawrence's letters, which she cannot comprehend. In it, Tim recognizes his own desires:

> Wasn't the mutual recognition of these desires, which was always immediately present, making a single something, a love and an alliance greater than the sum of desires, and needing no words, when he and Lawrence met and shook hands after a day or after a year? Lawrence would always desire to understand; Lawrence would always desire to believe; Lawrence would always desire every man to be himself, not unchanging, but

> not outwardly compelled to change. Lawrence would always desire, above all, to record these desires greatly, to oppose them, like established truths, against the dark wilderness. Yet the dark wilderness was never finally conquered. It broke different men at different times, and often it was by little things . . . (p. 512).

Tim leaves to find Black, wandering in "the dark wilderness" of the desert, but not before studying, with loving attention to detail, the painting Lawrence will not sell. It is Lawrence's "The Promised Land," which captures visually "the city of trembling leaves," together with one of Tim's ballads, "The Sweet Promised Land of Nevada," which he and Black had sung together.

The unfinished symphony of trembling leaves and the unwanted painting of the city of trembling leaves throw into bold relief the dominant symbolism of the novel. In Tim's dark period, two persons keep Tim moving, Lawrence and Mary. "He began to look forward to speech with Lawrence and to the embrace of Mary . . ." (p. 521). Tim visits Black, his friend, his alter-ego, for ten days, and proposes to Mary by letter. She accepts. In the swift conclusion to his central section, Clark reintroduces the recurrent themes of bewilderment, the sweetness of promise, and the circular return. Lawrence and Tim head for Reno, drinking and singing at Luigi's Bar in Tonopah, where no drink was offered to you "without a silent and gentle understanding of your part in the bewilderment of humanity" (p. 551)--concluding with a rousing duet of "The Sweet Promised Land of Nevada." The "B" section concludes, in a circular return,

as Tim embraces Mary in Reno.

The final chapter, "In Which the Circle Closes" (65), is the sonata's second "A" section, recapitulating the major themes. Tim begins the circle of his life in Reno, forming his philosophy, listening "for the sound of the nuclear." He swings out to the central-California coast, for his instructive years in Carmel, where he struggles to finish his symphony of leaves. He circles far south, to Beverly Hills, to find himself in the art and friendship of Lawrence Black. He circles northward again to find Black, and, finally, Mary, in Reno. The geographical and spiritual circle closes in Reno, at one with Black, and Mary, and himself--or almost so--as he finally finishes his symphony, as his self-awareness deepens.

Tim's symphonic circle has been a process of becoming integrated with all of life, and process is at the heart of Clark's mysticism, or spiritual naturalism. Tim's quest for oneness is not the traditional mystic's union with an absolute Being. Tim's pilgrimage is a cyclical process, not a vertical ascent. It is much like the "Inverted Mystical Experience" James E. Miller sees in Whitman's "Song of Myself." The mystical state is achieved not by mortifying the senses but in celebrating them; "consistency in faith to self is supreme."[31] In this kind of mystical experience, the self does not contract but expands, and excludes nothing. The self is both body and soul. Miller comments: "nothing,

not God, is greater than one's self is . . . it is only through the united self that God may be apprehended . . . death is not the end of self but the outlet for it."[32] The beauty of Tim's quest for unity is its renewal, its growing and deepening awareness of self and of life. Tim Hazard is caught between unity and multiplicity, between Mt. Rose and Mt. Peavine. He must find some ground between, in a unity not quite unity. As J. R. Milton implies, "his task is to create,"[33] and Tim's struggle to create lies at the very center of the novel. John Portz says about that struggle:

> If Tim Hazard's experience is any criterion, the struggle to become an artist is a severe and unending one, and involves the assertion of one's uniqueness against the pull of the world . . . In the introductory chapter to the manuscript version, Clark says the artist is a sort of perennial adolescent, and as such always lives on the razor's edge between infinite discovery and finite failure. The hazardous life of the artist has its compensations . . . in the feeling that one has penetrated toward the dark mystery behind the forces of life and death, and that one has joined the current of creativity. The artist's search for understanding involves a return to Nature's principles, so that the unity of the art work (and the artist's interim life) may be said to be an imperfect but an inspired copy of the organic pattern of the universe itself. Yet Nature saves no one . . . mutable Nature cannot grant that ultimate union, intimations of which may be experienced mystically now and again. The essential condition of each human being remains that of a quite pragmatic struggle to believe in oneness and to reach toward it as often as possible.[34]

Tim Hazard feels this suggestion of ultimate union, experienced mystically now and again by the creative artist,

who "is sort of perennial adolescent," one who lives "the hazardous life," in what he calls "nuclear moments." Tim Hazard's life is the hazardous commitment of pursuing the sensation of the nuclear, as a composer--one who puts things together. After many failures, Timothy Hazard finally does succeed in finishing his symphony of leaves, which has circular structure. Even more significant, however, is the relationship of the symphony to "the sensation of the nuclear." The symphony is itself a statement of the nuclear, which finds its final impetus in the sensation of the nuclear. Timothy Hazard first experiences this in the rhythm of running, in the erratic rhythm of the trembling leaves of a small aspen, and in the geographic symphony of leaves surrounding Reno, with its ominously leafless nucleus.

After their marriage, Tim and Mary move to Gleaman's cabin on a mountain overlooking Lake Tahoe. During his first weeks of marriage, Tim enjoys his wife, but as autumn fades into winter, Tim begins to compose and to feel the demand for total commitment to composition. The process is gradual, "even after his writing began Tim was always full of awe and wonder about having her [Mary]" (p. 581). But Tim does not want her often, "the Music used all his desire" (p. 583). The unity, for which he constantly strives, comes not through his marriage but through completion of the "Shadow and Light Symphony." He goes on to write a concerto for piano and orchestra, "Ghost Town," and

three or four songs, including one Mary especially liked, "After Snow the Shining Peace."

The lull of silence following this spurt of creativity is broken one morning in January, as Tim gets up, filled with creative tension, and finally begins his symphony of leaves, "and this time it came" (p. 585). The urge for resolution, which haunts the fifth section of the main body of the novel, is partially fulfilled. The symphony becomes a reality, but ironically, its central theme is Rachel, not Mary. Clark's statement is filled with muted excitement: "She brought the Court Street passages with her, and the islands in the river, and the white peak that was the symbol of oneness, the height toward which the music always reached, and she wandered in and out of all the rest" (p. 585). The symphony, like its composer, constantly reaches towards unity, the unity with life that Tim Hazard has glimpsed in the presence of Rachel during their pilgrimage to the top of Mt. Rose, the white peak of the sacred mountain that was the symbol of oneness. Because it is Rachel's presence which excites that vision, it is Rachel that pervades the symphony. All the people and places of the symphony move around Rachel as well. Yet Tim's feelings about Rachel are ambivalent. Unlike the traditional mystic, Tim does not realize pure ecstasy. He experiences mingled joy and sorrow. The "dissonance of the laughable and the tragic" pervades this novel about "the

city of dissonant themes," and is integral to the symphonic statement that brings those themes into an orchestrated whole. As Tim attempts to recreate symphonically this dissonance, he has to stand apart from Rachel, and watch both "the shameful and the beautiful antics of another Tim Hazard in the expression of his adoration, and such pain as he felt was bearable pain which was half joy and which had always lifted itself toward ecstasy . . ." (p. 586). His symphony is movement towards ecstasy, and his own quest for unity. He stands closest to understanding the final answer to his persistent question of meaning during the moments when he experiences the clarifying "sensation of the nuclear." Tim Hazard's symphony of leaves is nuclear. It is whole, circular, complete, "and in the last rustling notes the question was there as much as in the first. There was no answer but the question didn't die" (p. 586). It lives on in the circular structure of the symphony, which expresses the sensation of the nuclear. This final section of the novel ends on the notes of Tim's completed symphony of leaves.

The brief Postlude to the second book, like a symphonic coda, is an extension, though distinct, of the novel's main structure. In this brief coda, the cycle begins once more. Tim is working on an oratorio, "The Tower to Heaven," combining the history of humankind as told by the poplar trees of Bowers' Mansion with his own version of the Tower of

Babel. In this work, humanity is victorious, not defeated. This perspective is inherent in spiritual naturalism. "The idea of all the people working together on that magnificent tower filled him with hope, and the vengeful confusing of the tongues and scattering of the races made him gloomy and rebellious" (p. 27). The novel ends appropriately with Tim Hazard composing an unfinished oratorio. He has read and re-read The Education of Henry Adams, and in a letter to the narrator candidly admits that he has studied it "as . . . a gospel" (p. 364). Tim underscores the affinity between Adams and himself. Adams, "far from coercing life into a shape that would please himself, leaves the Education unfinished" (p. 364). Tim has finished his symphony of leaves, but his education is not finished. The ecstasy of oneness still eludes him, and the sensation of the nuclear, the awareness of almost oneness, is not something that can be frozen and preserved. Consequently, Tim remains a being in process of becoming, still reaching out towards unity. He is also a husband and father, now living amid the multiplicity of the earth. Tim Hazard goes back to his roots, looking for the answer.

The answer is never ultimately satisfying, and after each attempt the cycle begins again. As the novel ends, the cycle begins for the third generation of Hazards and Turners with Tim and Mary's two children, young Lawrence and little Mary outside playing. Tim has planted a small aspen on the lawn, but its leaves are motionless. Little

Mary races across the lawn to study it. From her kitchen window, Mary sings, "Upon the east the slow, white dance begins," and Tim replies, "Upon the west the splendid peaks behold it," both lines from the unfinished oratorio. One leaf on the aspen trembles. Little Mary reaches up to stop it. Young Lawrence watches her lift her hand from the leaf, "and it began to dance again, by itself" (p. 589). The scene evokes a montage of scenes scattered throughout the novel, and serves to emphasize a perspective by now well established. While aspen leaves still tremble, so does hope for vitality and creativity. As aspen leaves seem to tremble with some inner vitality, so does Tim Hazard, after long periods of inertia, through the sensation of the nuclear. Because Tim is aware of unity, and struggles to reach out for it, we assume that once again he can "sit and listen for the sound of the nuclear" (p. 177).

Footnotes

[1]Max Westbrook, Walter Van Tilburg Clark (New York: Twayne Pub. Inc., 1969), p. 68.

[2]Chester Eisinger, Fiction of the Forties (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963). Eisinger says "a more judicious selection of materials" (p. 317), should be evident in the novel; Herbert Wilner, "Walter Van Tilburg Clark," The Western Review, XX (Winter, 1956), called the novel "lengthy and sprawling" (p. 122); and Lincoln Barnett in his review, "Adventures of Timothy Hazard," The New York Times Book Review (May 27, 1945), suggested that the novel "should be edited by a third or even half" (p. 4).

[3]Edmund Wilson, "White Peaks and Limpid Lakes: A Novel About Nevada," The New Yorker, XX (May 26, 1945), feels Clark is a superior depictor of landscapes, mountainscapes, lakescapes, but is furious at his ignorance in creating a character like Timmy who "seems an idiot about women" (p. 75); Vernon Young, "Gods Without Heroes: The Tentative Myth of Van Tilburg Clark," Arizona Quarterly, VII (Summer, 1951), agrees with Wilson, going even further and maintaining "he cannot enrich human character" (p. 133); of interest is the excellent review by Mari Sandoz, "The Atlantic Bookshelf," The Atlantic, CLXXXVI (July, 1945), in which she argues that Clark can create characters and cites some of the "many good incidental portraits of men, swiftly and skillfully done revealing Mr. Clark's deepening insight into life in the more remote West" (p. 130).

[4]Diana Trilling, "Fiction in Review," The Nation, CLX (June 23, 1945), in which she calls the book, "a novel of boogie-woogie Weltschmerz" (p. 702).

[5]Orville Prescott, "Outstanding Novels," The Yale Review, XXXV (September, 1945), pp. 191-92, is one of the many critics who misread The City, erroneously assuming it to be a purely autobiographical novel, because it was his first, when actually it is his second major novel, and autobiographical only in a rather complex way, as Clark portrays his artistic struggle both as the narrator (named "Clark") and as Tim Hazard.

[6]Lincoln Barnett maintains that the novel is "a long labor of love which he [Clark] interrupted to hammer out the smooth and professional Ox-Bow Incident" ("Adventures of Timothy Hazard," New York Times Book Review, L (May 27, 1945), p. 4).

[7]Frederick I. Carpenter, "The West of Walter Van Tilburg Clark," College English, XIII (February, 1952), stresses the autobiographical quality of the novel, which in tandem with the theme of romantic adolescence, "challenges comparison with Thomas Wolfe's sprawling autobiographical novels" (p. 243).

[8]Ibid., p. 244.

[9]Edmund Wilson, p. 75.

[10]From a letter written May 12, 1963, cited by Max Westbrook, p. 69.

[11]For more information see Joseph Flora's excellent study, "Vardis Fisher's Study of Vridar Hunter," (Dissertation: University of Michigan, 1962).

[12]Cited by Max Westbrook, p. 69.

[13]Joseph Flora, p. 46.

[14]John R. Milton, "The Western Attitude: Walter Van Tilburg Clark," Critique, II (Winter, 1959), p. 63.

[15]Chester Eisinger, who compares Clark's hero with Joyce's, "Since its protagonist Tim Hazard becomes a composer, what we have is a portrait of the artist as a young man; but this is an American Artist very unlike Stephen Dedalus" (p. 314). After giving a very inadequate summary of the novel, which he claims wrongly is not unfair to the novel, he goes on to elaborate why Joyce's novel is superior to Clark's basing his conclusions on another critic's belief that "a part of Clark's failure is the result of the thinness of the American experience and of his [Clark's] identification with the greater American boy-man." Then he compares Joyce to Clark in terms of setting: "The justice of these comments is apparent when we place Joyce's book beside this one. Joyce had the Church, the city of Dublin, the history and myth and legend of Ireland to draw upon. Clark has Reno, Nevada" (p. 315). Clark, however, does not try to imitate Joyce. In point of fact, he does as much with the themes and motifs of Reno, Nevada, for his artist-hero, as Joyce does with the themes of Dublin, Ireland, for his. The question of the superior achievement is moot.

[16]Frederick I. Carpenter, "Both novels have two levels: actual experience and symbolic imagination" (p. 244). Carpenter also suggests that Clark's chapter headings are humorous and recall John Steinbeck's "mock-heroic tales of Tortilla Flat rather than Wolfe's solemn novels" (p. 244).

[17]Maurice Beebe, Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 79.

[18]Suzanne Howe, Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsman: Apprentices to Life (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), p. 7.

[19]L. L. Lee, "Walter Van Tilburg Clark's Ambiguous American Dream," College English, XXVI (February, 1965), p. 385.

[20]This quotation and all that follow come from: Walter Van Tilburg Clark, The City of Trembling Leaves (New York: Popular Library Eagle Books Edition, 1945).

[21]Calvin S. Brown, Music and Literature, A Comparison of the Arts (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1948), p. 161

[22]Even though Clark admits that in his composition there are "bursts and rumblings in the rhythm section," he seems to avoid the brassy and gawdy center of Reno. At the center of "the biggest little city in the world," are a number of gambling casinos, where men gamble and lose large amounts of money. The center of Reno has several streets lined with such places, glittering with lights. Paradoxically, Clark seems almost embarrassed by them, for he certainly does not allow them to play an important part in his novel or in Hazard's "Symphony of Trembling Leaves."

[23]Jennings Rice, "A Life's Awakening to Music," New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review, XXI (May 27, 1945), p. 4.

[24]Walter Van Tilburg Clark, Ten Women in Gale's House and Shorter Poems (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1932), p. 22.

[25]Jennings Rice, p. 4.

[26]Lincoln Barnett, p. 4.

[27]Jimmy Webb's poignant song, "Didn't We," seems to express much of the feeling evoked by Tim's love affair with Rachel, which "almost makes it" each time they meet. One can almost imagine Timmy singing to Rachel, "This time we almost made the pieces fit, didn't we girl,/ this time we almost made some sense of it, didn't we girl,/ this time I had the answer right here in my hand, and I touched it and it had turned to sand . . . didn't we almost make it, this time."

[28]Another article or two can and should be written on what I would call, "The Divided Self," in The City, which would isolate and discuss Tim's conflict with Tim, Rachel's conflict with Rachel, and Lawrence's conflict with Lawrence. I have only hinted at those individual struggles.

[29]Max Westbrook, p. 85.

[30]The "sensation of the nuclear" passage can also be compared to "the Persian rug passage," in Maugham's Of Human Bondage.

[31]James E. Miller, A Critical Study of 'The Leaves of Grass,' (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), especially the first chapter, "Song of Myself as Inverted Mystical Experience," p. 34.

[32]Ibid., p. 31

[33]John R. Milton, p. 63.

[34]John Portz, "Idea and Symbol in Walter Van Tilburg Clark," Accent, XVII (Spring, 1957), p. 118.

He went carefully over the course of the hunt so far, and tried to estimate the distances roughly by the over-all time. He couldn't be very sure of his guess, because his pace had changed so often, and because he was uncertain about what time it was now.

Walter Clark
The Track of the Cat (p. 60)

CHAPTER V

"COURSE OF THE HUNT" IN THE TRACK OF THE CAT

In his remarkable study of Love and Death in the American Novel, Leslie Fiedler observes that, "in our more serious fictions, from Moby Dick to Faulkner's 'The Bear' or Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea, such tales are redeemed from sentimentality by making of the animals involved not mere occasions for the loss of virginity but monstrous embodiments of the natural world in all its ambiguous and indestructible essence."[1] To this list of "serious fictions" belongs Walter Van Tilburg Clark's The Track of the Cat (1949). Max Westbrook lists Moby Dick and 'The Bear' among Clark's favorite works of literature.[2] Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea was yet to be written (1952). But The Track of the Cat demonstrates that Clark stands in the tradition of serious fiction established by these writers. Clark's black panther is comparable to Melville's white whale, Hemingway's blue marlin, or Faulkner's black bear, as a representative of the natural world into which the characters read their own feelings. The theme of Clark's third novel is the process of growing from boyhood to manhood in the context of a hunt. As we have seen, Clark had already treated this theme more briefly in "Trial at Arms" and "The

Watchful Gods." He again transports the hunt, and the sacral character of maturation in primitive society, into the American west. Again, the deeper nuances of the rite de passage (the ritual of passage from adolescence to manhood) furnish his substructure. The primitive character of a ritual hunt, a totemic beast, some magic to neutralize the totem, and the paralyzing fear inspired by the totem are easily discernible beneath the regional coloration of Clark's novel. In addition, Clark transposes the sensation of the nuclear into its elemental or primal key.

Arnold van Gennep's Les Rites de Passage, recently translated,[3] suggests that, "the life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another . . . transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization, and death."[4] Van Gennep adds that for every one of these events, "there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined."[5] In Clark's Cat, Hal makes the passage from boyhood to manhood. Hal's ritualistic initiation has three distinct yet related elements: the hunt, which becomes the major symbol for the ceremony "whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from

one defined position to another . . ."; the hunted, the totemic animal, the panther, whose destiny is inextricably linked to that of the hunters; and the hunters, who include a brute, a guide, and an initiate. Clark's focus on the process of growing from adolescence into manhood is already familiar from The City of Trembling Leaves. But his hunt for a totemic beast more clearly exposes the sacral aspects of spiritual naturalism than the natural and auditory metaphors of the earlier novel. The difference, however, is one of degree, not of kind, one of expression, not of essence.

The hunt is perhaps the world's primary ritual of passage from adolescence into manhood.[6] The great trial that awaits Hal Bridges near the end of the novel is the tracking and shooting of a panther, a feat his older two brothers, Art and Curt, have failed to accomplish. The cost of failure is death. Arthur is ambushed by a real cat, and Curt falls to his death while fleeing from the spectre of a cat. Only in the second part of the novel is the test of the hunt minimized, as Clark focuses on the domestic life of the Bridges and the burial of Arthur. In the other three parts, the hunt is central and its ritual overtones are both explicit and implicit. By facing up to a totemic beast in a ritual hunt, Hal Bridges learns to become a man.

The ritual character of the hunt identifies the hunted animal as a "totemic beast." In 1887, Sir James Frazer published a small book entitled Totemism, and its impact on

anthropology was exceeded only by his Golden Bough (1890). Malinowski states that, "in his first theory dating back to the original book of 1887, Frazer finds the origins of totemism in the widespread belief in the external soul, a belief in which primitive man associates his welfare and destiny with some symbolic object . . . with an animal or plant species [which] becomes in substance, totemism."[8] To Leslie Fielder's list of "totemic beasts,"[9] which includes Moby Dick, who cannot die because he is ubiquitous and immortal, and the giant marlin of Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea, who cannot be brought back as a trophy, we should add Clark's black panther. All three of these beasts are totems, "monstrous embodiments of the natural world in all its ambiguous and indestructible essence . . . sacred embodiments of power, taboo objects whose death is a blasphemy if it is not a rite."[10]

The panther in Clark's novel is clearly a totem in Frazer's terms. Hal's destiny is linked to that of the beast. Moreover, the panther is a sacred embodiment of deific and diabolic force. Arthur Bridges, early in the novel, sets the tone for this understanding. Awakening from a dream of a panther screaming in the night, he smiles and says to his youngest brother Hal, "Curt needs me in case the cat is black." He is a carver of wood, and whittles from mountain mahogany for the Indian guide, Joe Sam, a copy of a mountain lion to be worn under his shirt as a protecting

amulet. When his mother dismisses the notion as "heathen nonsense," Arthur replies, "Joe Sam just likes a god he can see . . . and a black panther is as good a god as any to mean the end of things" (p. 23). In response to the big cat's killing of cattle, Curt says "god's had enough of us" (p. 65).

Clark's totem, the symbol of deific power, is equally diabolical, a cruel and cunning force, both malevolent and destructive, and according to Joe Sam, the "cause of all the trouble in the world" (p. 80). When Curt and Arthur are tracking the cat in the first part of the novel, they discover three of their best cattle severely mauled, wantonly pulled down by the panther after he had run them "like he was a wolf . . . a devil or crazy" (p. 67). The reality of the so-called "black devil" is demonstrated by his tracks, and drops of blood, on the snow. In the final section, after Hal has shot and killed a mountain lion, he stares down at the cat who is neither black nor the beast dreaded by Joe Sam, but who is identified as "Devil" by the old Piute war chief.

The wanton, diabolical character of the totemic beast and the destruction it leaves in its wake are related to the theme of vengeance for the wanton destruction of the wilderness by white America. Clark's novel underscores this theme. In the words of Max Westbrook, The Track of the Cat "is about the frontier, the rape of the land for commercial purposes."[11] Early in the novel, Arthur speaks about the

American dream of plenty of land for everybody, but adds, "that was a kind of dream too, a big fat one and it's over. We've gone from ocean to ocean, Curt, burning and butchering and cutting down and plowing under and digging out, and now we're at the end of it . . . now we turn back" (p. 13). Later, the theme recurs, only this time Clark uses the black cat to emphasize the white man's raping of the wilderness and his running out and ruining the red man. Hal is speaking to Gwen, whom he wants to marry someday, talking about the Indian's possession of the land, about Joe Sam, the black cat, and the white man's rape of the land (my italics):

> Anyway, they'd been getting along on it for a lot longer than there'd been white men anywhere in America, and the country was still as fit to live in as it ever had been. Our kind wrecked it worse in ten years than they had in lord knows how many hundreds, maybe thousands . . . Joe Sam was one of them that wouldn't come back to the reservation. He took his family and traveled clear up into the mountains somewhere northwest of here. Arthur thinks that the black cat got started up there, in some extra bad winter. He thinks it's kind of Joe Sam's personal evil spirit, not a regular one for the Piutes. Either way, it's got so, in his mind *it kind of stands for the whole business of being run out by the white man*, the end of things, you might say (p. 54).

Reckless exploitation invites reckless killing of the totemic beast in revenge for the violation of the sacramental view of the wilderness.[12] When men fail in their piety and reverence for the land, a totem, a sacramental manifestation by the violated wilderness, appears to signal "the end of things."

The participants in the ritual of the hunt fall roughly

into three categories: the brute, the guide, and the initiate. Arthur Bridges does not fit any of these categories, and, in his uniqueness, he may possibly be a Christ-figure.[13] As a carver of wood, he uses his hands and tools as Jesus did. A religious man, he maintains contact with the sacred and eternal dimensions of the cosmos. The profane brother Curt refers to Arthur as priest (pp. 36, 61), preacher (p. 38), and padre (p. 44). On three occasions, Clark stresses that he serves his father. And in his dying, Arthur, "the quiet center of things," is most Christ-like. As Curt stares at his death-cold face, he recognizes in Arthur a quiet look of rest and peace, and remarks that his older brother "even peacefully accepted death" (p. 96).

By contrast, Curt Bridges is gross, insensitive, and selfish, ruled by his appetites. He falls into the category of the brute. He is brutish in his lack of intelligence and his baser instincts. Both base aspects combine to kill him. His lack of intelligence hinders him from achieving balance (the great Clarkian virtue, as Westbrook has seen), while the absence of balance accounts for the lack of unity "within himself and of himself within the universe."[14] His lust for Gwen Williams drives him to his destruction. His brutality bears directly on Clark's concept of the nuclear.

Curt Bridges as a hunter is a killer. Early in the novel, he lashes out at his older brother Arthur, ridiculing him for his dreams. "We'll raise cattle not dreams, and kill anything that kills cattle" (p. 13), he raves. Hal,

his younger brother, says of Curt that "there's only two things he loves: money and his own way" (p. 29). Grace, Arthur's wife, is even more acidic in commenting on Curt's selfishness: "you and your cheap sneering, and your self-importance, and your always judging others by yourself" (p. 43). Curt's baiting of the old Indian, Joe Sam, shows his small respect for anyone or anything but himself. Curt rides horses "recklessly," and this recklessness proves his undoing.

Returning home for boots and supplies, Curt makes a pass at Gwen, promising boastfully to bring her back a black pelt. Max Westbrook sees this ritualistically as "a degraded version of an ancient rite, the winning of a maiden by conquest."[15] He returns to the hunt only to find his older brother dead. His tears of grief become sobs of rage, and he vows revenge on the black cat: "I'll get him Art, if I have to chase him to the Pacific" (p. 98). Captain Ahab, too, vowed to chase the white whale to the antipodes of the earth. As Leslie Fiedler says: "At any moment, the pure huntsman may find himself transformed into his anti-image . . . Captain Ahab who thrusts at the un-fallen world not in reverence but in rage."[16] Curt is another irreverent huntsman filled with rage and pride, rage against the black beast, and pride that he can outsmart him, and bring a trophy to "Welshy." The irony is that Curt, like Ahab, becomes the hunted, destroyed by the spectre of a totemic beast. Max Westbrook has observed that the first

time Curt faces the beast, the would-be black cat, he must confront himself, which he cannot do. Westbrook adds, "Curt becomes the hunted, as he trusts reason to save him . . . but factualist reason cannot guide a man in the sacred mountains of the universe."[17] He possesses the wrong kind of information, and he lacks reverence and respect for the unknown. In his contempt for dreams, he openly ridicules both Arthur and Joe Sam. His irreverence, combined with greed and arrogance, seals his doom. The bitter irony is that Curt feels early in the hunt that the cat is no match for him; "that was his game not the cat's." But, instead of the cat, Curt the hunter is hunted down by Curt the careless, tactless, insensitive, irreverent, and relentless brute.[18]

A distinct category of hunter is the guide, who guides the initiate into manhood. As Westbrook says: "Joe Sam, the Indian who like Faulkner's Sam Fathers, instructs the young hero from a distance, guides his journey into a world that once was the domain of minority man."[19] Joe Sam is in touch with the supra-real world. The bond between him and the feline totem is intimate. Throughout the novel, the panther is referred to as Joe Sam's "black painter." So aware of the deeper significance of the beast is Joe Sam, that Arthur must annually, before the first snowfall, carve him an idol of a black cat, which the former Piute war chief wears around his neck in a small pouch, a magic totem to neutralize the power of the totemic heart. In Joe's thinking,

the black panther is an active evil force. Shortly after the panther is first seen, two of his sons dies in a disastrous battle that broke the power of the Piute nation. Soon after sighting the panther one winter, another of his children died of pneumonia. As Hal says to Gwen, "by that time he was blaming everything on the black panther, and it wasn't just an ordinary cat any more" (p. 58). He recognizes the panther as a totemic beast, the "cause of all the trouble in the world" (p. 80). Whenever the first snowfall blankets the ground, Joe Sam thinks about the black cat and bad luck and death.

Joe Sam's intuitions about the sacral significance of the first snowfall, as Clark's novel opens, prove prophetic. The cat ambushes and kills Arthur Bridges, Joe Sam's friend and admirer. Clark underscores the ritualistic bond between Arthur and Joe Sam. Arthur has always watched the ritual of Joe Sam's feeding the chickens: "the sense of ceremony . . . Joe Sam's movements suggest ritual, that act is holy," in Westbrook's words.[20] Soon afterward, Arthur is dead, carried back to the ranch on Curt's horse, which, in a ritual Hal watches, Joe Sam later stabs with the knife given him by Arthur. The ritual purges the youngest brother of anger, and he helps the old chief make Arthur's coffin. Joe Sam, like Arthur, senses the spiritual dimension in life, and he instructs Hal toward the same awareness.

Joe Sam, the feline totem around his neck, is himself sometimes catlike. Hal wakes to discover Joe Sam naked,

crouching like a cat, whispering and breathing with excitement (my italics):

> Joe Sam wasn't watching him at all; he was watching something down at the foot of the bunk. He was turned a little toward the foot of the bunk, holding himself ready to leap at it. Harold . . . didn't dare move his feet for fear Joe Sam would pounce on them like a cat. He was watching them like a cat watching a hole where he's seen something move. That's it, Harold thought, the cat. He's holding the cat back, but he's ready to help it too. They're together. The image was distinct then it passed and he wasn't so sure. Or maybe he's helping Curt . . . what's the good of making fool guesses . . . (p. 200).

For a moment, Joe Sam and the cat are together. Later, after the bizarre ritual of knifing the horse and Arthur's burial, Joe Sam asks Hal to kill the black cat: "black painter not dead," said Joe Sam mournfully. "Not kill. You stop" (p. 240). And, at the end, with Joe Sam as his guide, Hal does shoot and kill a mountain lion, but not the black cat. As they head for home, with Curt's dead body lashed to a sled pulled between them, Hal thinks almost aloud, "a queer guide for your last ride, he thought once, addressing the dead Curt between them" (p. 404). Joe Sam has conducted Hal into the ritual of manhood and a deeper awareness.

Hal is, of course, the initiate, the third member of the ritualistic hunt. Clark's final section brings together the essential elements of the ritual: the initiate and his guide, the tracking and shooting of a large cat, and the yet living presence of the black feline beast. Early in the book, Curt tells Hal he must stay home while he and Arthur

track the cat; "You gotta stay here and tend to the future. You're the white hope of the Bridges" (p. 15). As the novel ends, the boy who stayed home has matured into the man who has successfully sustained the ordeal to guarantee a future.

Max Westbrook observes that "Clark's hero is an initiate, a man on the edges, the intruder into someone else's nature . . ."[21] Hal does stand on the edges and doesn't intrude into the wildness of nature until the short final section where he becomes the hunter and slayer of the feline totem. The hunt for the cat begins with Hal and his guide, "slack as a cat in the sun," tracking the cat. Like Arthur, before the cat kills him at Cathedral Rock, Hal jokes to himself; "you'll worry yourself to death yet, my friend." But unlike Arthur, he is ready: "the carbine was ready and he was holding it ready, far enough back from the platform to swing it where he had to" (p. 389). Then the hunt is over. The cat is dead, "tangled in the first willows, his head and shoulder raised against the red stems, his legs reaching and his back arched downward, in the caricature of a leap, but loose and motionless" (p. 393). The hunter-initiate stands momentarily looking down at the dead body of the cat. The boy-become-man experiences a surge of loneliness and reverence similar to that of Watt and Buck:

> He wished to make a prayer, or at least some ceremonial gesture of the spirit which would move him as a prayer should, but nothing stirred any deeper than the word-making surface of his mind except a weak, nagging worry about how he should tell the mother, and even

> since it was Curt, the father, and how he could manage the burial without letting them see what the rocks had done. Finally, he thought, well, we got the painter for you anyway, fellow and was swept by a terrible loneliness. It was more for Arthur than for Curt, but Curt was in it too, a sense of real loss that his powerful body and angry will would never move anything at the ranch again. The surge of loneliness drained slowly out of him and left only an autumnal sadness in the sunlight around him and on the bound and straightened body, and he let that do (p. 400).

Killing the beast has been part of a ritual, with a movement toward prayer, or some other ceremonial gesture of the spirit. Hal's feelings indicate his maturity, as he senses a loss not only of the sensitive brother, but of the insensitive brute as well. As they start for home, Joe Sam holds up the pelt of the cat, saying that it will make a good blanket for Hal's marital bed. Hal says that it will be up to Gwen, but Joe Sam knows she will marry him because he has now attained maturity: "you boss now." Hal, the initiate, realizing for the first time "the enormous difference this could make," replies, "I guess I am at that" (p. 403). The hunter, become man, returns to the Bridges ranch, to a father who lives on booze and to a mother who quotes the Bible, to a father who had felt that Curt was the rancher's only hope for survival, to a mother who has called the woman he intends to marry a whore. He returns a man with the knowledge gained from the hunt, with the secret knowledge that he has kept his promise to his brother Arthur at his graveside, "I'll try and make things go the way you wanted them to." Hal Bridges, not yet twenty-one, has passed

through the ritual of the hunt and is ready to take his place as the man of the Bridges ranch.

By focusing on the hunt, rather than its conclusion, Clark explores the dynamic relationship between the hunters and the hunted. The hunted and the hunters are inextricably bound together in a dynamism essential to Clark's concept of the nuclear. The hunt is "nuclear" in that it throbs with an energy both destructive and creative. The cat is bigger than life. It is more than feline, and it cannot be killed in an ordinary way. It is wholly unpredictable; Curt describes it as "crazy." And the hunters are equally unpredictable in their fear, rage, and stark terror. The problem of the deadly black cat remains both volatile and unresolved, as characteristic of Clark's nuclear idea. The spectre of the black panther haunts the hunt. Yet when the narrative ends with Hal killing a mountain lion, the black feline totem, the object of the hunt, is still hunting.

The hunt proceeds on two levels, the hunt without and the hunt within. The hunt without is the attempt to track and kill the black panther, which has been wantonly killing the Bridges' cattle, becoming a symbolic ritual involving Joe Sam and the three brothers. The hunt within concerns the tracking down of one's ultimate identity. This entails a penetration to that innermost self, the self-within-the self, which has been untamed by society and whose deepest affinities are with the untamed wildness of nature. The essence of self-knowledge is to penetrate to that core,

through an ever-increasing empathy with the wild. That the brutal hunter will never know anything more than his appetites is amply demonstrated by Curt. The hunt within demands the finer sensitivities of an Arthur, the dreamer, or of Hal, the initiate, who is guided into maturity by an Indian war chief who maintains contact with the supra-real world, or what Max Westbrook has called "the secret."

Max Westbrook has defined this concern with the recovery of the innermost self as Clark's quest for sacrality. Because the authoritative and archetypal voice of the unconscious has an ontological status, life holds reality deeper than its mere ethical surface, "Man is neither non-ethical or unethical, but there is another way of thinking, a possibility of knowing through the unity of thought and things . . . Real knowledge is knowledge in things, not in words about things."[22] The goal of knowledge, accordingly, is an attitude or sensation, felt but never possessed, toward a reality which touches but is never confined by the intellect, which Clark describes as "the sensation of the nuclear." Evil is seen as an intellectual confusion of forces which are an intrinsic part of man and nature. These forces are essentially brute drives, which can be appeased or neutralized only through an individual's courage to be authentically human, to listen to the voice of the self-within-the-self. The hunt within holds ultimate significance because one glimpses his true self only in recapturing the primal relationship between man and nature in a balance or wholeness,

which is basic to the nuclear. The hunt without thus exposes one to wild and primal nature, devoid of the supports of civilization, and permits the hunt within.

Leon Balzagette's study of Henry David Thoreau provides an insight into the character of the wild, and its significance in disclosing the self.[23] He finds in Thoreau's long treks into the deep woods an expression of man's primal need to engage in quest (my italics):

> Henry's vocation is to start out every afternoon, rain or shine, for half the day, three, four hours or more, according to the occasion and the season, half for adventure, half with an object, in search of . . . in search of what, indeed? Does one ever know? Simply in search.[24]

The deep satisfaction of engaging in a quest, even with the object undefined, is placed solidly within the context of the hunt by Balzagette, in a passage which distinguishes Thoreau from the category of brutal hunter (my italics):

> So Henry seized his gun and set off on a stroll through the woods. Perhaps today he would bring back some rare bird to study, for he had a true passion for the birds, the plants, and all the creatures of the open air. In any case he would undoubtedly bring back something, if only the certainty of his own happiness in the deep woods. This man who was setting out, with his gun on his shoulder, for the fields, was no common huntsman in quest of game; he might not take a single shot with his gun but he would not return with an empty bag. There are different kinds of good hunting. The discoveries, the surprises, the confirmations, an attention awakened by a certain phenomenon do not fill your game bag, but fur and feathers would not satisfy you half so much. But he was not a mere brute . . .[25]

Thoreau's deepest form of satisfaction, Balzagette discovers, is an awareness of self in an increasingly acute awareness

of the inextricable bond between the man and the untamed wilderness. Thoreau accepted a job of surveying some wild country (my italics):

> With a will he set to work surveying in mid-winter for sixty, eighty days without intermission, at a dollar a day . . . Penal servitude, if you like. But you take it in good part if you are a man. Deprivations like this toughen your hide. They are like a long journey in the land of trivialities--from which you never return empty-handed if you have the eye of a good huntsman; on your return you have a better perception of some things, including your own naked self.[26]

The good huntsman, in the course of a long journey, arrives at a better perception of the nature of things, including his "naked self," or what Thoreau describes as "another self within [him], who is grateful for [his] rested nerves and head, and who suddenly appears after the day is over, refreshed and keen, ready to catch any sound and gather in any shade of beauty, that is entirely free from toil and wages."[27] The willingness to confront the self is essential to Clark's nuclear vision. He stands in the tradition of Thoreau, who found in searching a means of tracking the naked self. This is the essence of the hunt within, which takes place simultaneously with the hunt without, whenever the hunter is not a "mere brute."

In The Track of the Cat, Curt is limited to the hunt without by his impatience and materialistic aims. After the cat kills his brother, his blind rage and terror preclude him from that balance between man and nature which affords the nuclear disclosure of self. By temperament, Arthur is

singularly suited to the hunt within. He appreciates the spiritual character of life; he feels an affinity with Joe Sam's ceremonial qualities. He dreams of a harmony between man and the land, although he knows that dream is beyond fulfilment. During the hunt, he does discover something of the self, as he reacts to Curt and the beast, but he dies without penetrating to the naked core of his self. Hal, then, the youngest of the brothers, sustains the hunt within as much as the hunt without. For him, the alternating sensations of fear and wry humor, of exhilaration and dread, permitting him to penetrate beneath a surface knowledge of himself, are more significant than the moment of killing the mountain lion. He is heir to Arthur's earlier affinity with Joe Sam, through which he appreciates the sacral, supra-real character of the land and its recurring seasons, along with the black feline totem that hovers as a presence ever near. The recognition that the boy has become a man in the course of the hunt, is voiced in Joe Sam's statement, "You boss now," and Hal's acquiescence, "I guess I am," expresses a degree of resolution to the hunt within as well as to the hunt without, as, characteristic of Clark's nuclear idea, both "hunts" remain partially unresolved. Though one cat is dead, the black panther will continue to haunt the region. Similarly, though Hal has discovered something of his own deeper character and manhood, some levels of the ultimate self remain undisclosed. Wallace Stevens, in other terms,

catches the essence of the unresolved in the nuclear:

> There is a man whom rhapsodies of change,
> Of which he is the cause, have never changed
> And never will, a subman under all
> The rest, to whom in the end the rest return,
> The man below the man below the man,
> Steeped in night's opium, evading day.[28]

By exploring the dynamism of the hunt within concurrently with the element of the unpredictable in the hunt without, Walter Clark exposes yet another dimension of the sensation of the nuclear.

Clark's concern with the nuclear demands that he confront another aspect of reality, evil. For Clark, evil and good are in continual process, contending in an evolutionary context. They are on a continuum, as in The Ox-Bow Incident, not in conflict with one another. Clark sees evil as brute drives or base instincts, both expressions of energy out of control. John R. Milton suggests that "Clark deals with the problem of evil on three different levels, or through three different relationships which we might call the human, the natural, and the supernatural attitudes."[29] But the three levels Darrel Abel finds in Hawthorne--psychological, sociological, and cosmological--are perhaps better. The psychological level or aspect of evil is found in "the individual consciousness," which is, "the theater in which . . . evil is manifested."[30] The sociological aspect of evil is "a spreading blot on the fabric of society," and may be defined in relation "to other elements in the moral system of the universe."[31] The third

level, the cosmological or metaphysical is especially crucial to my analysis of the novel. Evil is seen, "as the abstract idea in its relation to other ideas which, when given actual embodiment, constitute the moral system of the universe."[32] All three levels are evident in The Track of the Cat.[33]

The psychological aspect of evil is most clearly and significantly embodied in the character or consciousness of Curt. "Clark does not underestimate the impulses to disintegration which drive men into evil deeds," says John Portz, adding that, in The Track of the Cat, "the most compelling figure is Curt."[34] What gives Curt an extra dimension is his resemblance to Ahab in Melville's Moby Dick, a resemblance recognized by several critics, most notably John R. Milton, who observes, "Curt pursues the black mountain lion with the same motives, confidence, and intensity that marked Ahab's pursuit of the white whale," to which he adds, "and like Ahab, he is defeated."[35] Curt pretends to be a man of courage and independence. But Clark shows him to be a man of superstition and dependent upon others. He derides and mocks Joe Sam, but in the course of his hunt, when he faces the moment of truth, it is evident that the apparent nonsense of Joe Sam has claimed Curt, not Arthur, as Curt had steadfastly maintained. There is no harmony possible between Curt and nature, especially nature defined as "the wild." This disjunction with nature, combined with his superstition, makes Curt an easy prey to the huge black mountain lion of his imagination. In his irreverence, nature becomes Curt's

enemy and he must fight the snowstorm, nature's "derisive whiteness" (p. 308). In addition, Curt must also fight against time and distance during the course of his futile and fatal hunt for the black cat. Curt, like Ahab, is cunning and strong. He is practical and ambitious. According to his younger brother Harold, Curt loves only two things, "money and his own way" (p. 29). He runs the ranch successfully and is a deadly and relentless hunter. But he is no match for the even deadlier hunter--the black feline totem. Curt, like Ahab, is a victim of his past. He pokes fun at Arthur's dreams of the future, but himself dreams in vain of rich strikes and Comstock Lodes in the past, no longer possible in 1900. Curt's color, like Ahab's, is black, signifying evil. As John Portz perceptively observes, "around him circle the symbols of death and violence: the black panther of his imagining, 'big as a horse'; Kentuck, his black stallion; his murderous rifle; and the flights of dark birds signifying his fear."[36]

The most significant thing about Curt, however, is that he loses control. Heightened fear replaces haughty courage. A sense of doom replaces a sense of duty--an oath to kill the black cat for Arthur, who earlier saw in Curt a man at war with himself, "always fighting something," even in his sleep (p. 6). A feeling of utter consternation replaces momentary feelings of elation. About midway through his hunt, he tries to protect himself "against the doom of the proud" (p. 311), which allows for "another little burst of elation

within him" (p. 311). The irony is that as the hunt is prolonged, he is dominated by one major emotion, one primary drive; "the desire to get home . . . was the only positive force left in him" (p. 309). It requires almost sixty more pages of narrative to describe the gradual erosion of Curt Bridges. His degeneration, from a dreaded hunter to the doomed hunted, is not unlike the degeneration of a sensitive and caring Ahab--captain of the Pequod--to an uncaring and insensitive sub-man, dominated by pride and controlled by revenge. The end result is that Curt, like Ahab, goes mad, as James K. Folsom points out. Curt "cannot cope with the idea of a metaphysical evil, and when such a principle is inadvertently forced upon him he goes mad."[37] Such madness leads both Curt and Ahab to horrific death.

The sociological level of evil is of least consequence to my analysis of the novel. Nevertheless, it is inherent in the fabric of the narrative. Its focus is the Bridges house. John R. Milton observes "the house from which he [Curt] goes forth is a little nest of evil."[38] There is for all three brothers an association between literal tracks and symbolic tracks, between the obligation to track well and the notion that something is wrong at home. Max Westbrook suggests, "It is the home which distracts, for the tracks in the snow, whether those of Joe Sam or the cat, reveal a connection between the inner reality of the Bridges family [the hunt within] and the external reality of nature [the hunt without]."[39] In the Bridges house, the most obviously

malevolent figures are the father and the mother, who stand in sharp opposition temperamentally. The father in earlier days held the values now embodied in Curt. His mentality is not unlike Curt's, in whose killer instincts, ranching abilities, and hunting skills he has the utmost confidence. He expresses the kind of evil represented earlier by Clark in the lynch-mob, the wolfpack, in the Ox-Bow Incident. He spends most of his time in self-indulgence. He drinks whiskey, smokes cigars, or plays cards. He delights in derision. The atmosphere at the Bridges house is filled with accusation and hostility, envy and scorn.

The situation within the house is magnified by the mother, Lettie. Her self-denial contrasts with her husband's self-indulgence, but as Clark sketches her character it is evident that she is vicious rather than virtuous. She reads the Bible and dislikes blasphemy and swearing. Her face is like Arthur's but has a tired look, "the look that comes from war inside which is never ended, but never lost, either" (p. 20). This interior war is evident in her mistreatment of Gwen Williams, whom Harold is to marry. She rants and raves at her, and is convinced that Gwen is a woman of loose morals, because she saw her in an embrace with her youngest son. The pathetic irony of the situation is that her husband has charged her with being a worthless whore who is like a wooden clothes-pin in bed. Frustration and seething anger work as much havoc within the Bridges family as the marauding panther creates outside the house

among the cattle. Even Grace, the sister who loves Arthur deeply, is not untouched. She resents that Arthur must accompany Curt, "a cheap dirty-mouthed bully" (p. 43), on his hunt for the mountain lion. Gwen Williams, Harold's invited guest and fiancee, is a symbol of fertility and vitality. She is equally the object of Curt's lustful desires. But if Curt sees her as an object of lust. Hal sees her as the subject of his love. She represents a life force in opposition as to the force of death embodied in the mother, who alone feels comfortable in the oppressiveness of the evil house.

One by one the three sons leave the house, with its constant noise of bickering and quarrelling, the sounds of hell. First Arthur, "the quiet center of things" (p. 122), then Curt, who according to his father is "the best hunter [he's] ever known" (p. 47), and finally the youngest brother Hal, whom Curt calls "the white hope of the Bridges" (p. 15). Each brother hunts the black cat, but is tainted by the evil of the household. Both Arthur and Curt die during "the course of the hunt." Joe Sam's ritual sacrifice of Curt's horse purges Hal's rage, inherited from his father and Curt, and prepares him for the hunt. Only to the degree that Hal is able to impose upon the remaining members of the family the insights perceived during the course of the hunt, will the ranch, as a focus of sociological evil, be significantly transformed. Only then will the motto "Someday" (p. 29), first voiced by Arthur and then echoed by Hal, have any real hope of

altering a malignant situation.

There is also a distinctly cosmological, or metaphysical, dimension to evil that is explored by Clark under the image of the black feline.[40] That the panther who invades the disturbed dreams of Arthur, or the savage visions of Joe Sam, and finally the terrorized dreams of the vaunted "realist," Curt, is a totemic beast, has been demonstrated. The concept of a totemic beast expresses a primitive attempt to grapple with metaphysical reality which eludes facile formulation. A totem assigns a definite configuration to aspects of reality which by definition defy reduction and concrete manifestation. Moreover, it includes in its nature both contrary, elemental energies, the deific and the diabolical. The deific aspect of the black feline totem in Clark's novel is very narrowly defined when Arthur affirms "a black panther is as good a god as any to mean the end of things." This totemic beast is essentially destructive, and the inherent contradiction between traditional conceptions of God as good along with the association of a totemic deity who embodies catastrophe and death, expresses the tension of the nuclear. The darker, malevolent character of the beast is continually underscored by the repeated epithet "devil" and by characterizations traditionally associated with the devil in the biblical tradition, as in Joe Sam's conviction that the black cat is the cause of all the trouble in the world. The violence left in the wake of the cat, both at the animal and human level,

expresses the uncontrollable brute force characteristic of metaphysical evil in Clark's vision.

It is possible that Clark is endebted to the Bible for the symbolic significance of the cat as metaphysical evil, as much as he is to the primitive conceptions behind the notion of a totemic beast. In the Bible, Satan is described as "a roaring lion who prowls, looking for some victim to tear apart" (I Peter 5:8). The association of metaphysical evil with the image of a primal beast informs the visions of Melville in Moby Dick and of Leonard Wibberley in Meeting with a Great Beast.[41] It is equally present in the allusion to the "rough beast" in Yeat's "The Second Coming," which slouches toward Bethlehem to be born:

> A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
> A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
> Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
> Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.[42]

Similarly, Stephen Crane, sketches the Pieta, with Death a totemic beast,

> A woman's arms tried to shield
> the head of a sleeping man
> from the jaws of the final beast.[43]

Clark's treatment of metaphysical evil as a totemic beast is clearly part of a larger tradition of attempting to capture the cosmological dimensions of evil through symbolic animals. The black cat, like the white whale, the blue marlin, the black bear, the grey elephant, or the final beast, embodies cosmological evil, and like the image of Satan in the Bible, is still unrestrained when the narrative has reached its

conclusion. The brute force and the uncontrollable energy of metaphysical evil, which are intrinsic to man and nature from a nuclear perspective, are appropriately embodied in the conception of a black panther which appears to be supra-real in character.[44]

The hunt has entailed the confrontation of destructive force. In the wake of the hunt, cattle, two of the brothers, Curt's black stallion Kentuck, and a large mountain lion are dead. The black cat is not dead. Yet the confrontation has been creative. Hal Bridges returns from the hunt a matured man who has discovered something of his naked self. At the beginning of the novel, he is told "he must tend to the future." Now he can do so. The black panther, however, has not been slain, and the ravages of his raids which goaded the Bridges into undertaking the hunt will presumably continue. The situation remains nuclear: there is hope for the future, which is yet unresolved.

Footnotes

[1]Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), p. 359.

[2]Max Westbrook, Walter Van Tilburg Clark (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1969), p. 36.

[3]Arnold Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

[4]Ibid., p. 2

[5]Ibid., p. 3.

[6]In the initial section of "The Bear," Faulkner, in a moving passage which sets the hunt in its primitive ritual perspective, describes the hunt as "the ancient and unremitting contest" (see William Faulkner, "The Bear," in The American Tradition of Literature, Vol. II, ed. Sculley Bradley, Richmond Croom Beatty, and E. Hudson Long (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1967, p. 1364). For an analysis of the ritual hunt in the novels of Faulkner, see Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), pp. 129-133.

[7]This is the judgment of Bronislaw Malinowski, Sex, Culture and Myth (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), p. 277.

[8]Ibid., p. 279.

[9]L. Fiedler, p. 359.

[10]Loc. cit.

[11]M. Westbrook, p. 97.

[12]For a consideration of this theme, from a sociological perspective, in the novels of William Faulkner, see William Van O'Connor, The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), pp. 129f.

[13]For a treatment of Arthur as a "St. Francis Man," see J. Portz, pp. 118-120.

[14]M. Westbrook, p. 99.

[15]Ibid., p. 102.

[16]L. Fiedler, p. 360.

[17]M. Westbrook, p. 100.

[18]Max Westbrook calls Curt's hunt a "mythologem of the journey into the unconscious" (p. 93). The fact that in part three, which centers in Curt's hunt, he remembers that cats can see in the dark, then completely forgets the cat in the fighting of time, distance, and snow, only to begin running after he has discovered that he has been wrong about time, distance, and place, lends support to his statement.

[19]Ibid., p. 45; cf. p. 104.

[20]Ibid., p. 162.

[21]Ibid., p. 49.

[22]Ibid., p. 69.

[23]Leon Balzagette, Bachelor of Nature: Henry David Thoreau, translated by Van Wyck Brooks (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1924).

[24]Ibid., p. 114.

[25]Ibid., p. 34f.

[26]Ibid., p. 262.

[27]Ibid., p. 260.

[28]Wallace Stevens, "Sombre Figuration" from "Owl's Clover," Opus Posthumous (New York, 1957), p. 66.

[29]John R. Milton, "The Western Attitude: Walter Van Tilburg Clark," Critique II (Winter, 1959), pp. 69-70. While the treatment of the human and the natural attitudes or aspects of evil is suggestive, his understanding of the supernatural or cosmological level of evil is superficial.

[30]Darrel Abel, The Immortal Pilgrim: An Ethical Interpretation of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1941), p. 24.

[31]Darrel Abel, p. 10.

[32]Darrel Abel, p. 8.

[33]In his review of the novel, "Man Against Relentless Evil," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXII (June 4, 1949), pp. 9-10, Edmund Fuller nowhere gives a real analysis of evil in the novel, nor does he make any worthwhile suggestions one might expect from his title.

[34]John Portz, "Idea and Symbol in Walter Van Tilburg Clark," Accent 17 (1957), p. 120.

[35]John R. Milton, "The American Novel: The Search for Home, Tradition, and Identity," Western Humanities Review, XVI (Spring, 1962), p. 179.

[36]John Portz, p. 121.

[37]James K. Folsom, The American Western Novel. New Haven: College and University Press, 1966, p. 174, cited by Max Westbrook, p. 160.

[38]John R. Milton, "The American Novel," p. 129.

[39]Max Westbrook, p. 109.

[40]Dr. Joe Lee Davis has pointed out to me the distinction between Faulkner, who concerns himself with sociological evil, and Melville, Hemingway, and Clark, who explore the metaphysical dimension of evil as well. In Faulkner's "The Bear," for example, Ike McCaslin is a man torn between two conflicting worlds, the old, which is passing, and the new, in which he is trying to find his own identity.

[41]Leonard Wibberley's Meeting with a Great Beast (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1971), deserves to be better known than it is. It is the tale of quintessential Man and quintessential Animal meeting in the oneness of life and death. The primal beast is, in this instance, a monstrous and dangerous bull elephant whose left eye has been shot out by poachers, and who is dying. The swift moving story is the setting for some profound reflections about the sacral character of life and death and the intimate bond between all living and dying creatures, set within the context of a hunt. Two passages will suffice to show the affinity of Wibberley's statement with Clark's concept of the nuclear and spiritual naturalism, respectively.

> "A hunt is like life. It doesn't last very long--neither does life itself. But it has the depth of a lifetime and we had hunted together, Thompkins and I. (It is only in putting this down now that I have realized that the reverse is true, and life itself is a hunt. But what is the quarry?)" (p. 89).

> "And about Death itself. Is Death then a hunter too--not merely a killer, a murderer? Does Death study the nature and essence of the prey, tracking him down, watching his habits of body and of mind and of spirit, until he is thoroughly understood and absorbed, and does Death, only then take aim?

> Is Death Thompkin's Something--a purpose, and not an end? Had I been looking at Death wrongly and mistaking the shape of it, not seeing that it might be a beginning and not at a conclusion?" (p. 104).

The conviction that life and death is a process, and in every conclusion there is a beginning, is basic to the concept of the nuclear.

[42]William Butler Yeats, Collected Poems (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p. 185.

[43]Stephen Crane, Portable Library (New York: Viking Press, 1969), p. 540. Related to Yeats's "rough beast" or Crane's "final beast" is the white killer shark celebrated in Peter Benchley's Jaws (New York: Doubleday, 1973), which, like Melville's white whale or Clark's black panther, assumes totemic proportions. Known as "the great white," or "white death," its massive size, its malevolent pleasure in reckless killing, its possession of an intelligence superior to that of the men who hunt it, and its invincibility to every attempt to kill it, suggest a quasi-demonic character to the white beast. See the incisive gloss by Clifton Fadiman reprinted from the Book-of-the-Month Club News, inserted in the book.

[44]Mark Schorer, "An Eloquent Novel of Place," New York Times Book Review (June 5, 1949), p. 1, disputes the analysis offered here on the ground that "Mr. Clark presses no symbolism and this novel is a novel without metaphysical overtones." What Schorer has failed to appreciate is the role of the ritual hunt and the concept of the totemic beast, which is essential to a proper understanding of Clark's intention. The metaphysical overtones in the concept of totemism are clear. For a more subtle and complex analysis of the significance of the cat, see J. Portz, pp. 112ff. J. R. Milton, "The American Novel," speaks of "the black cat, symbol of eternal evil" (p. 179).

I had heard fragments of the symphony . . . and more of an oratorio he was working on at the time, The Tower to Heaven . . . a version, in which humanity triumphed, of the legend of Babel which had so troubled him in his boyhood.

Walter Clark
The City of Trembling Leaves
(p. 587)

CHAPTER VI

CLARK'S TOWER TO HEAVEN--A TENTATIVE CONCLUSION

Early in The City of Trembling Leaves, the young artist-hero, Timmy Hazard, acknowledges his confusion about certain stories in the Bible. That confusion, I believe, is one Walter Clark shared. Timmy admits that certain biblical stories have long troubled him, among them the account of the tower of Babel. A vision of a tower stretching up to heaven fills his mind: "the idea of all the people working together on that magnificent tower filled him with hope, and the vengeful confusing of the tongues and scattering of the races made him gloomy and rebellious" (p. 27). That vision remains with him; in the postlude of the novel, corresponding to the coda section of a symphony, Tim Hazard conceives of an oratorio, "The Tower to Heaven," which expresses his vision of the triumph of the human race. That unfinished oratorio offers an appropriate key for this summary chapter. I see in Walter Clark's writings a vision of a man reaching up for "the God becoming," stretching up and out for universal wholeness and harmony. To illuminate Clark's distinctive holistic vision, I have placed it alongside three other competing and contrasting visions, those

of Charles Reich, Alvin Toffler, and Theodore Roszak.

Charles Reich in The Greening of America is basically optimistic about the future of America. He maintains that "Consciousness III can make a new society."[1] Although America is dealing in death, he argues that a revolution unlike any previous revolution is coming. It will begin with the individual in his response to culture and will change political structures only as a final result. It will be non-violent, and it will not be resisted by violence. This revolution will impose itself through a new consciousness based upon the absolute worth of every human being--every self. An exalted vision of man informs Reich's concept of Consciousness III. In his search for meaning, for community, and for liberation, man exercises his true nature in loving and trusting his own kind, using to the full his unique gift of conscious life. Reich presents an essentially Utopian vision of "a new way," which he believes will free all of humankind "to grow toward the highest possibilities of the human spirit."[2]

In Future Shock, Alvin Toffler offers a much more pessimistic vision. He contends that human beings are overwhelmed by change and are unable to adapt quickly enough to change when not overwhelmed. He concludes that, "unless man quickly learns to control the rate of change in his personal affairs as well as in society at large, we are doomed to a massive adaptational breakdown."[3] He speaks at great length about the problem of transience, which he

designates as "the Throw-Away Society," and "the New Nomads." He also discusses the problems of novelty and diversity, and concludes his book by suggesting some "strategies for survival," which will permit our culture to tame technology and cope with tomorrow. Theodore Roszak's appraisal of Toffler's book is apt: it "is a fast cruise over the glossy surface of the artificial environment, finishing with a facile endorsement of urban industrialism."[4]

Roszak's vision in Where the Wasteland Ends is neither optimistic like Reich's nor pessimistic like Toffler's--a kind of mediating optimism. In his introduction, he writes:

> We are as Samuel Beckett has said, "between a death and a difficult birth." The possibilities are clear to see. I know which I reject and which I long to see achieved. But I trust to nobody's optimism, nobody's despair. Not yet.[5]

He attempts to chart how the religious impulse in American culture was exiled. In addition, he discusses the crucial role that the energies of transcendence must play if an urban-industrial society like ours is to be rescued from self-annhilation. He argues that to discover a politics that goes to the roots of such problems as environmental collapse, world poverty, technocratic elitism, psychic alienation, and the death of the soul, requires a new radicalism, "which refuses to respect the conventions of secular thought and values and insists on making the visionary powers a central point of political reference."[6] The "visionary powers," for Roszak, are the essence of what

he calls "the visionary commonwealth," in which "people have integrated the great ethical issues of the time into their very eating habits,"[7] in the anticipation of apocatastasis, the great renewal or restoration. Roszak, and others like him (notably John Killinger in The Salvation Tree) see signs in our culture for such a renewal, especially in the heightened appetite for experience, and the excited urgency to explore all aspects of nature and self. He talks about the gradual breakdown of traditional dichotomies, and contends that, "even science, in its awkward single-visioned way, has led to continuities that baffle traditional assumptions . . . no longer [can it] draw hard lines between matter and energy, organic and inorganic, man and lower animal, law and the indiscriminate, mind and body."[8] He then concludes that there is another way, and his vision of that way is similar to Clark's:

> There is another progress, that is not a cheat and a folly; the progress that has always been possible at every moment in time. It goes by many names. St. Bonaventure called it, "the journey of the mind to God"; the Buddha called it the eightfold path; Lao Tzu called it finding "the way." The way back. To the source from which the adventure of human culture takes its beginning.[9]

Clark, via Tim Hazard, calls it "the sensation of the nuclear," and for him too it meant the way back, to the beginning, but also the way forward, outward, and upward to the All, to the One, to the End which has no Beginning, to the God becoming.

Throughout this dissertation I have tried to emphasize Clark's holistic vision, or what Tim Hazard calls, "a nuclear

conviction," in which all aspects of life are related to one another. I also contend that Clark considered the striving for integration of greater importance than the actual attaining of that wholeness or oneness. Throughout the various struggles of his protagonists, one feels the author's conviction that life is sacred only insofar as man struggles to maintain harmony within himself and with his environment. Another important aspect of his vision is the manner in which man as a functioning individual reflects phases of the whole, or nuclear man. Clark deals with man as cowpuncher in The Ox-Bow Incident, with man as athlete-runner and artist-composer in The City of Trembling Leaves, with man as rancher in The Track of the Cat, and, of the highest significance to my thesis, with man as hunter in much of his shorter fiction, including "Trial At Arms," "The Indian Well," and "The Watchful Gods," and particularly, and again, in his final novel, The Track of the Cat. Clark's concept of man as hunter, not only draws upon the past, evoking the figure of the primal hunter, but anticipates the contemporary descriptions of modern man in some of the most vivid statements published in recent years. Specific periods of time appear to seize a particular metaphor to express the essence of the human condition. The metaphor that has commended itself to modern artists (poets, novelists, and film-makers[10]) during the last few years, with increasing insistence, is that of man as hunter.

Frances Minturn Howard's poem, "When All the Animals,"

is a brilliant example of this tendency. It points to man as the one who, alone among other animals, hunts and kills again and again, not to survive, but to satisfy his spite and his sport:

> When all the animals
> are gone,
> padded into oblivion . . . .
>
> When dog and cat,
> household deities,
> have enjoyed the last
> of our loyalties,
>
> And standing alone
> on dwindling space
> we have at last
> ourselves to face,
>
> Will we not miss
> the innocence
> of beasts that only
> killed but once?

Three recent novels are also highly suggestive in their exploration of man, hunter-beast; as David Reeves says, "He who makes a beast of himself/Gets rid of the pain of being a man."[11] The beasts in Glendon Swarthout's, Bless the Beasts and the Children, are buffalo. They are kept on a preserve about twelve miles from Flagstaff, Arizona. Ninety such "beasts" are slaughtered every other year in a three day "shoot." Swarthout describes one killing of one such beast, and then interprets the event:

> It was not called a "hunt." The hunters were referred to as "shooters." There were invariably more shooters than buffalo to satisfy them . . . On the day appointed, the permit holders' names were called in the order in which they had been drawn. Three animals were released from the pens every half hour, and the shooting began . . . To kill thirty

> buffalo required between six and seven hours. At that close range, a single round in the ear would have erased an animal as instantly and humanly as cattle were destroyed by packing companies, but male or female, old or young, skilled marksman or weekend shotgunners, strange things happened to Americans when they attempted to fix in their sights the most American of all species. Shooting from out there a hundred yards at enormous stationary targets, using heavy .30-06 and .30-30 caliber weapons, they were somehow emotionally or psychologically incapable of killing well. They gut shot. They blasted horns from heads. They blundered. They crippled, shattering hocks and fetlocks. They bled buffalo to death before striking a vital organ. A festive atmosphere developed. The hunt became at once a school picnic, a revival meeting, a civic barbecue, a patriotic ceremony and a carnival of slaughter.[12]

Swarthout concludes:

> There was more here than profaned the eye or ear or nose or heart. There was more here than mere destruction. The American soul itself was involved, its anthropology. We are born with buffalo blood upon our hands. In the prehistory of us all, the atavistic beasts appear. They graze the plains of our self-conscious, they trample through our dreams, they cry out our damnation. We know that no species was created to exterminate another, and the sight of their remnant stirs in us the most profound lust, the most undying hatred, the most inexpiable guilt. A living buffalo mocks us. It has no place or purpose. It is as a misbegotten child, a monster with which we cannot live and which we cannot live without. Therefore we slay and slay again, for while a single buffalo remains, the sin of our fathers, and hence our own, is imperfect. But the slaughter of the buffalo is part of something larger. It is as though the land of Canaan into which we were led was too divine and until we have done it every violence, until we have despoiled and murdered and dirtied every blessing, until we have erased every reminder of our original rape, until we have washed our hands of the blood of every lamb in the blood of every other, we shall be unappeased.[13]

Unappeased and unashamed, Swarthout, like Gent and Bogner, depicts today's many Americans turned atavistic beasts, consumed by lust.

Peter Gent's North Dallas Forty is about eight days in the life of Phil Eliot, an offensive end for the Dallas Cowboys. The novel opens with a barbaric slaughtering of mourning doves by what Swarthout calls "weekend shotgunners," and ends with an even more barbaric killing of two people by a pudgy Texan named Beaudreau with a .357 magnum. One of those butchered is Charlotte, with whom Phil had shared his theory about energy:

> We all get this certain amount of energy each day and if we don't use it, it drives us crazy . . . We must reach a balance and that balancing mechanism, if you'll pardon the unscientific expression, is fucking. Hunting used to be the way energy was balanced. A good hunt was a combination of muscular and emotional energy. But now hunting just degenerates into butchery which creates more energy rather than depleting it. Almost all human endeavor is that way. That surplus of energy is the cause of crimes of passion and spectator sports.[14]

In Norman Bogner's The Hunting Animal, Daniel Barnet spends Valentine's Day as he does most of his days; he drives to his insurance business where he works hard enough to maintain his status as millionaire, interrupting only for lunch and the day's diversion before returning home for a formal dinner party. The section, "Afternoon at Kit's," describes the day's diversion, as he encounters the sexual wizardry of Pauline Bianco. The chapter contains a seminal passage about man turned hunter "of passing glandular secretions."

It is a powerful and poignant gloss on the epigraph to the novel, in which Cioran mourns the passing of "human beings" replaced by "a swarm of dying creatures stricken with longevity, all the more hateful in that they are so good at organizing their agony." To them, says Cioran, any animal is preferable. Daniel Barnet is "the hunting animal," and there is nothing noble about his hunt:

> Surfacing from the jackknife dive into his past, Daniel like a human dactyl, appeared to have the stress in the wrong place. His life had never been relieved by the desire to develop a grooved golf swing, by tennis of any description; no elderly, cracking, worn, stained handball gloves were to be found residing in his abandoned trunks in the basement of his home, nor any warped squash racket, cobwebbed from disuse, to remind him of the simple athletic joys of past sweats. His was a history devoid of games, and the trophies while human were the immaterial dockets of passing glandular secretions.[15]

When we recognize the pervasiveness of the hunting metaphor, we see Clark's careful delineation of the nuances within that metaphor not only as crucial for an adequate understanding of the human condition but as a seminal facet of his holistic vision. Clark's hunt is for the nuclear sensation. When we put the holistic vision of Walter Clark, a relatively unknown figure of American letters, alongside other competing visions in the larger social, political, and cultural context, we can appreciate more deeply that for which he strove. He had an "impetus toward the God becoming," which supports his commitment to spiritual naturalism. Once we see this, we can see the

related mystical longings in other writers, as well.

Some of these, like Franz Kafka, came slightly before him. In his summum opus, The Castle, the protagonist K. is tired of his quest, and realizes that the only answer is to be found in death. Kafka could not finish his novel, because there is no end. In the realization that K's search for God, for an experience of grace, cannot end, Kafka affirms the nuclear conviction that the only real question is the one with no answer.

Others, like Henry Miller, were Clark's contemporaries, and in the brilliant introduction to The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder, Miller states, "Like the clown . . . we die struggling to get born . . . We are always in the process of becoming. . . ."[16] The celebration of the struggle and the underscoring of the process remind one forcibly of Clark's mysticism of process.

Still others were and are destined to follow Clark. The quality of Clark's holistic vision makes this inevitable. What Clark formulates in terms of his "nuclear conviction" has become the dominant motif in some of the most perceptive writing of recent years. A cantata and a final novel suffice to substantiate this statement.

Dave Brubeck finished his cantata, Truth Has Fallen, in 1971. It was first performed in Midland, Michigan, and for that premiere, the composer included rather extensive annotations, one of which resonates with Clark's nuclear conviction (my italics):

> Essentially our agony is that of the human spirit struggling to be itself. The divine spark that ignites love and human compassion is within each of us. How do we stir it? How do we make it glow? Isaiah says we must first acknowledge our kinship to other men by feeding the hungry, but we must do so with love; then we must satisfy the afflicted soul. When we are one with all, then shall our darkness be as noonday. It is this connective web that binds all life and all matter together that I hoped to convey throughout the music.[17]

The yearning for oneness with all, and the awareness of a connective web binding all life and matter together, express a mystical vision not unlike Clark's. Of interest, to the major thrust of this thesis, is that Brubeck dedicates his cantata to his children, "in their search for truth."

David Morrell's First Blood (1972), is the story of Rambo, a former Green Beret who has been trained to kill, who enters the peaceful town of Madison, Kentucky, and is forced into fighting a bloody war with several of the town's leading citizens, headed by Teasle, the chief of police. The novel contains near its conclusion a passage that closely approximates Clark's "sensation of the nuclear" passage in The City of Trembling Leaves:

> [Rambo] had never been so aware of things before, so with them. It was true that in the past in moments of action he had felt a little like this. He would be performing each gesture smoothly and properly, running, pivoting to aim, a gentle squeeze on the trigger, the recoil filling his body solidly, his life depending on his grace, and he would be absorbed in himself, his mind gone, just his body in that instant, totally in tune with its operation. The native allies in the war called it the way of Zen, the journey to arrive at the pure and frozen moment, achieved only after

> arduous training and concentration and determination to be perfect. A part of movement when movement itself ceased. Their words had no exact English translation, and they said that even if there were, the moment could not be explained . . . But this that he felt now was different. There was no movement involved, and the emotion was not isolated in one eternal second . . . He had never felt so good . . . He would do anything. What he had come to feel, he would do anything to anyone to keep.[18]

What Morrell describes as Rambo's feeling, Clark has described as a nuclear sensation, a sense of oneness, of wholeness with life. Rambo's cruel destiny, however, would not allow him to keep that feeling. But having felt it once, in the actual moment of dying, he experiences something akin to it: "Then since it was the total of what remained, he let it happen, went with it, erupted free through the back of his head and his skull, catapulted through the sky, through myriad spectra, onward, outward, forever dazzling, brilliant, and he thought if he kept on like this for long enough he might be wrong and see God after all."[19]

The propulsion toward the vision of God indicates the same reaching out that Clark so often describes. Two of Morrell's phrases express essential facets of Clark's nuclear conviction. The first is Rambo's "determination to be perfect," and the second is Rambo's dying aspiration that "he might be wrong and see God after all." To the end of his life, I believe that Clark struggled for perfection. If, as Tsanoff suggests, "we conceive of God as the Apogee of Value, then God's perfection must be dynamic: it is not the alleged terminus of perfectibility, but it is cosmic

course, it is heart and soul."[20] He then goes on to say that "Man's idea of God is his gesture towards the dizzy utmost of value, the infinite reach and endless span of it."[21] More recently Buckminster Fuller makes this postulation:

> But exactitude can be bettered
> And measurement refined
> By progressively reducing
> Residual errors,
> Thereby disclosing
> The direction of truths
> Ever progressing
> Toward the eternally exact
> Utter perfection,
> Complete understanding,
> Absolute wisdom,
> Unattainable by humans
> But affirming God . . . .
> While humans may never
> Know God directly
> They may have and do
> Palpitatingly hover
> Now towards, now away.[22]

Fuller's concept of man hovering close to God is similar to Tsanoff's. That conception is not foreign to Clark. Throughout his life he listened for "the sound of the nuclear." His writings express a reaching up, a stretching out for that elusive almost-oneness central to the nuclear. The figure of the tower that extends from terrestrial desert to celestial realm where man gains ever-deepening awareness of God becoming, is apposite to Clark's holistic vision of life, and to spiritual naturalism.

Another striking parallel to Clark's Tower is Vigeland's "Monolith." Gustav Vigeland was an early 20th century Norwegian sculptor who died in 1943. He is best known for Vigeland Sculpture Park in Oslow, Norway. Dominating this amazing collection of sculptured stone figures, many of them

contained in circles, is the "Monolith," a tower of phallus-like human flesh of over 200 figures sculpted in rock reaching upward towards heaven. But they are doomed to fail. They struggle in vain because Vigeland did not believe in heaven. He once observed, "Paradise is something beyond my imagination." Nevertheless, Vigeland, like Clark, gives artistic expression to man's lofty but unfulfilled struggle. For Clark, Vigeland and other Twentieth Century artists, man is thus left alone in the limbo of a heavenless cosmos, where God is always becoming, never Absolute Being. God is no longer timeless, but evolving in time. Clark tries to reconcile a God who is outside or above time with a God who is inside and throughout the world. Clark's problem is how to place a timeless God into time. As such, he seems caught, in conflict, a lost soul who tries, but cannot do much in a linear or horizontal universe in which God is always becoming, even though Clark sometimes appears to be reaching upwards, outwards, and towards a God who is Being. In a poem he wrote early in his career, "A Tired Poet's Prayer," Clark gives expression not only to his pain but the pain of much of our modern culture:

> Oh God, take
> Me to
> The warm world's breast
> Let me rest,
> I am through.
> I have striven,
> I have given
> All I knew
> And have failed. . . .
> Only
> God
> Grant me this
> Ere I go,
> Lonely
> From the way I've trod
> To dust's kiss--

That the slow
Pain I've known
Bitter grown,
May take fire
Of desire,
May grasp
Fiercly clasp
All that I have longed to see
Of the beauty that must be.

Walter Clark anticipates and documents one of the most ardent longings of our times--the longing for wholeness. Those who precede him, who gave at least partial expression to his vision, like those who follow him, use their own vocabulary. They do not anticipate Clark's nuclear vocabulary and metaphors, which express a distinctively modern mood. In the realities of a nuclear world, Clark finds a more adequate vehicle for expressing a holistic vision. No evaluation of Clark's place in American letters which fails to appreciate his nuclear vision can properly estimate his achievement. Moreover, Clark is, I believe, what Hemingway called "a true writer," in his Nobel-prize speech:

> For a true writer, each book should be a new beginning where he tries again for something that is beyond his achievement. He should always try for something that has never been done or that others have tried and failed. Then with great luck he will succeed.

In each of his three major novels Clark tries for something beyond him. He begins in The Ox-Bow Incident, by evaluating the "stock stuff" of the Western into a genuinely well-written, fast-paced novel about the human conscience. In The City of Trembling Leaves, he continues by writing a lengthy and occasionally wordy novel about the growth of a man and a musician. This time he succeeds in superimposing a sonata form on an otherwise loose episodic structure. He

concludes in The Track of the Cat, his major work, by attempting to explore the ramifications of a dual hunt: a hunt for a black cat both real and supernatural, and a hunt for one's own self, that inner self-below-the-self. Like Moby Dick, one of the magnificent failures in American literature, this final novel is flawed not by depth or reach but by length, especially in its second and longest part.[23]

Norman Cousins has recently scrutinized the whole notion of progress in America: "it is not too exotic to suggest," he writes, "that the leading world scientists ought to be working on ways of plugging into the basic energy of the universe."[24] Walter Van Tilburg Clark suggests this idea some twenty years earlier, but Cousins ends his editorial with words that resonate with themes of Tim Hazard's unfinished oratorio, "The Tower to Heaven":

> The grand leaps of the creative intelligence and the resolute determination that pushed back the American frontier can now be put to work on the most magnificent research project of all time--creating a human habitat congenial not just to human physical presence but also the human spirit.[25]

Two of the titles from Hazard's oratorio reflect Clark's holistic vision and nuclear conviction, "Yet Will I Hope," and "All Nations With One Tongue." These songs and the oratorio as a whole, even though unfinished--itself indicative of the nuclear conviction--project a vision of hope for the survival of humanity. It projects a needed vision of a man who, in his writings is reaching out for the perfection of almost-oneness, is seeking a God always becoming, and is giving human flesh to "The Tower of Heaven."

Footnotes

[1]Charles Reich, The Greening of America (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 328.

[2]Ibid., p. 19. Cf. pp. 233-278, 426.

[3]Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 2. He partially defines future shock as "the most dizzying disorientation brought on by the premature arrival of the future," which, "may well be the most important disease of tomorrow" (p. 11).

[4]Theodore Roszak, Where The Wasteland Ends. Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1973), p. 467.

[5]Ibid., p. xxxiv.

[6]Ibid., p. xxii.

[7]Ibid., p. 444.

[8]Ibid., p. 462.

[9]Ibid., p. 464.

[10]Although the major body of my thesis concerns writers, a plethora of recent films centers on the theme of man hunting down and killing other men. Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather, based on Mario Puzo's novel about "the family," is a primary example. He is now making a spinoff, Godfather II. Sam Peckinpagh's Straw Dogs shows how a civilized scientist turns into an utterly savage hunter and killer of men. In the final scene, he uses a bear trap to impale a human being. The entire series of black "sexploitation" films should be mentioned, the most notable being Tamara Dobson's performance in Cleopatra Jones. Richard Roundtree has starred in three major films, Shaft, Shaft's Big Score, and Shaft in Africa, in addition to an insipid television miniseries. Jim Brown has done two films, Slaughter and Slaughter II. Bruce Lee also capitalized on the murder and mayhem market in such films as Fists of Fury and Enter the Dragon, before he met an untimely death in China. Clint Eastwood embodies the hunter-killer in Dirty Harry and its bloody sequel, Magnum Force. Walking Tall, advertised as one of the most popular of all films, deals with an honest sheriff who alternately shoots down crooks and is almost killed himself. A final entry, in an open listing which could go ad nauseum, is Richard Harris in The Deadly Trackers. These films indicate, with brutal clarity, that our culture is

glutted with films about men hunting down and killing other men.

[11]David Reeves, "The Loser," from Arrows Four, ed. T. D. Allen (New York: Pocket Books, 1973), p. 26.

[12]Glendon Swarthout, Bless the Beasts and Children (New York: Pocket Books), pp. 107-109.

[13]Ibid., p. 110.

[14]Peter Gent, North Dallas Forty (New York: William and Morrow Co., 1973), p. 189. James Prescott, a developmental neuropsychologist of the National Institute of Child Health and Development, tends to support Phil's theory; lack of physical affection can cause brain damage in children that can lead to violent behavior in adults. In a recent interview with Barbara Boynton, he said, "We are at the crossroads between Judeo-Christian ethics and humanism, between violence and pleasure. Suppose we ask ourselves, 'Is mankind still evolving? What will be the next stage?' I think one major next step might be the elimination of the difference between the conscious and the unconscious so that we would have a brain that functions as a total unity . . . members of the species who tend to express physical pleasure rather than violence will be selected out. Thus physical violence, which originated through sociocultural customs that caused somatosensory deprivation, will become fixed genetically, and the species will no longer be capable, genetically, of expressing affectionate, peaceful behavior. Mankind will be able to express only physically violent behavior. Mankind will self-destruct." See "Touching," Intellectual Digest (March, 1974), p. 10.

[15]Norman Bogner, The Hunting Animal (New York: William and Morrow Co., 1972), p. 202. Norman Mailer, in Why Are We in Vietnam? (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1967), explores the same phenomenon of American hunter turned beast by lust as do Swarthout, Gent, and Bogner.

[16]Henry Miller, The Smile at the Foot of the Stairs (Kansas City: Hallmark Editions Inc., 1971, first published 1948).

[17]Taken from notes to a performance in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on January 17, 1974.

[18]David Morrell, First Blood (Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1972), pp. 215ff.

[19]Ibid., p. 255.

[20]Radoslav Tsanoff, The Nature of Evil (New York: Macmillan Co., 1931), p. 399.

[21]Loc. cit.

[22]R. Buckminster Fuller, Intuition (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 176.

[23]In July, 1950, Signet published a shortened, paperbound version of The Track of the Cat. The title page of that edition of the novel reads, "Abridged by Alice Ten Eyck." Inside a special note states, "This edition of The Track of the Cat has been abridged with the author's approval to make possible its production in this form." This information, secured with the aid of Elizabeth Roberts, on staff of the Getchell Library in The University of Nevada in Reno, supports my point about the excessive length of the novel, even though Clark may have permitted the shorter version for other than literary reasons.

[24]Norman Cousins, "Survival Without Abundance," SR/World (January 26, 1974), p. 4.

[25]Loc. cit.

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