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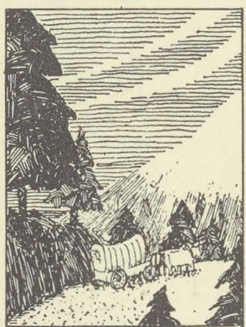
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USE AND ABUSE OF HISTORY IN THE NEW WESTERN NOVEL:

A CASE STUDY OF TRASK

by

JAMES DAVIDSON MOSS

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of History
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

December 1977

An Abstract of the Thesis of

James Davidson Moss for the degree of Master of Arts

in the Department of History to be taken December 1977

Title: The Use and Abuse of History in the New Western Novel: A Case Study of Trask

Approved: Edwin R. Bingham

Edwin R. Bingham

The novels of Don Berry rank among the best to emerge from the Northwest and can be considered as serious entries in a growing group of New Western novels. While the term "New Western" is widely used, definitions of its meaning are diverse and at times conflicting. This study delves into the diversity and presents a definition of the New Western novel as a historical tool. The New Western is seen as a probe into the themes and traditions of the western experience, and as such it can be used in the study of history. The use of fiction in the study of history presents several problems, however, because a novelist goes beyond the usual constraints of a factual record. How the novelist uses, or in some cases abuses, the historical record is important to the historian. This study examines Don Berry's Trask as an example of a New Western novel to determine the manner in which the historical records and traditions of the Northwest have been adapted to use in fiction.

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I. INTRODUCTION: THE NEW WESTERN NOVEL

Western fiction, western novels, western stories, or just plain Westerns; whatever terms are employed, all elicit a definite image in the collective mind of the reading public. Any writing labeled as 'western' is doomed to be stigmatized as primitive, shallow, stilted, and without any redeeming literary or historical value. Over the years the term 'western' has become synonymous with 'formula,' and certainly this circumstance has come about with a considerable degree of justification. As a source of literary material, the American West has been sorely abused almost from its inception. In the 19th century the West became associated with popular fiction or adventure fiction, and because of this identification most serious writers shunned western themes as degrading to their principles of art. Writing a review of James Fenimore Cooper's Wyandotte in 1843, Edgar Allen Poe reflected the thoughts of contemporary literati:

> This theme--life in the wilderness--is one of intrinsic and universal interest . . . a theme like that of life on the ocean, so unfailingly omniprevalent in its power of arresting and absorbing attention, that . . . success or popularity is, with such a subject, expected as a matter of course.

Poe goes on to relegate the theme of life in the wilderness to the "popular division" of fiction, in other words to the literary scrapheap, because such works must soon be "lost or forgotten; or remembered, if

at all, with something very nearly akin to contempt."[1]

Poe's rather harsh judgement proved somewhat prophetic. The hey-day of the 'dime novel' produced masses of mindless adventure stories, all highly formulized and all virtually indefensible as literature. Yet an increasingly crowded, industrialized, and urbanized Eastern public devoured the stories in huge quantities. Whether the hero was a miner, a settler, or a scout, he played out a stereotyped role in a repetitive plot. Depth of character was discarded in favor of overblown heroism and exaggerated virtue.

Deplorable as this fiction was, however, Irwin and Erastus Beadle grew wealthy after 1860 by exploiting the West to supply escape and broad entertainment in their dime novels. The public never seemed to tire of the same plot conventions and perfect heroes, and the writers were all too willing to continue providing what the public wanted. Explaining her ever-perfect protagonists, the highly popular and prolific Emma Southworth wrote that she had "catered for what I believed to be the popular taste."[2] To change the heroes was impossible, for how can one alter perfection? Stories based on the supposed exploits of real men such as Buffalo Bill Cody and Kit Carson were always doctored up a bit to fit the standard formulas of the day. One student of 19th century popular fiction has called Buffalo Bill "the perfect stuffed shirt of the story-paper wilderness." In all of his exploits,

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[1]Cited in Leslie A. Fiedler, The Return of the Vanishing American (New York, 1968), pp. 127-8.

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> he never drank. In /Prentiss/ Ingraham's stories, he never smoked, in /Ned/ Buntline's only occasionally and with apologies. In Ingraham's stories he never left off a "g" at the end of an "ing" word. He never swore or uttered a word of slang. In Buntline's a few liberties of speech were allowed him, but even in moments of unrestrained anger Buffalo Bill was conscious of his audience.[3]

Before Ingraham wrote his way to popular fame as the biographer of Buffalo Bill, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote of him what could nicely serve as his epitaph, "I think we may say that he writes the worst novels ever written by anybody. But they sell."[4]

A turning point came in 1902 when Owen Wister's The Virginian became a best seller. The Virginian broke from the mold of starched and stereotyped 'western' literature, as Wister attempted to bring depth to his characters and weight to his story. The Virginian is not an adventure story, although it has adventuresome moments; it is not a cowboy story, although it ostensibly portrays cowboys; and it is not fluffy popular fiction, although it became a best seller. The Virginian is about a moral dilemma that cannot be solved simply with blazing guns, physical stamina, or steely-eyed courage. The dilemma revolves around a theme that has become a staple of some of the best, and in a slightly altered form some of the worst, twentieth century western writing: the conflict between a moral code of law and a statutory code of law. Don D. Walker has outlined three types of law demonstrated in the West; a natural law encompassing the actions of animals and perhaps solitary men, a living law covering cultural mores and customs within a small community

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[3]Ibid., p. 157.

[4]Ibid., p. 18.

reflecting the needs of that community, and a positive law including statutory law and legal traditions of civilization.[5] The problem for the characters of The Virginian arises when the community law is in conflict with the statutory law, when neither civilization nor frontier community is completely in control. Civilization is overtaking the community, but it is not yet accepted as the characters struggle to solve problems with past standards and customs. Judge Henry thus can justify the lynching of rustlers by asserting the efficacy of living law over statutory law and by saying one

> must take justice back into his own hands where it was once at the beginning of all things. Call this primitive, if you will. But so far from being a defiance of the law, it is an assertion of it--the fundamental assertion of self-governing men, upon whom our whole social fabric is based.[6]

Wister resolved the dilemma in favor of civil disobedience as the only possible moral action for his characters, rejecting the inflexibility of statutory and civilized law. In so doing, Wister earned the approbation of those who deplore the formula Western that followed on the heels of The Virginian; and by raising the question of moral dilemmas for the characters in western fiction, Wister deserves the praise of those who hope for high quality literature from the West.

Western fiction after The Virginian had two paths to follow: one led to a thorough examination of the American character and the American epic as it was played out in the vast expanses of the West; and the other led to a return to the empty popular fiction of the 19th century with a slight modification of the standard plots and characters. Unfortunately,

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[5]Don D. Walker, "The Meaning of Outlaw in the Mind of the West," The Possible Sack, I, no. 8 (1970), p. 1.

[6]Owen Wister, The Virginian (Boston, 1968), p. 265.

writers on the West overwhelmingly chose the latter path. With Zane Grey's The Spirit of the Border (1906) and Riders of the Purple Sage (1912), both best sellers, the age of the cowboy Western arrived. The old wild-west weeklies and dime novels gave way to pulp and slick magazines which specialized in adventure stories aimed at nominal adults.

The birth of the modern Western formula coincided with several factors that assured its success, while at the same time sealing the doom at least temporarily of quality fiction about the West. Growing numbers of public school graduates swelled the reading ranks; turn of the century patriotism searched for distinctively American heroes and found them in the cowboys of the formula West. As people became familiar with novels instead of short stories through serialization in magazines, and as novels shrank in average size, the formula Westerns (along with other formula fiction such as detective stories) provided an escape from the problems of an increasingly fast-paced urban life. In a complex society the West seemed to offer a respite, an oasis of refreshing rural activity.[7]

Writers more and more moved away from the facts of the western experience in America and concentrated instead on mastery of the formula while producing interesting stories. Between 1928 and 1932, at least nineteen handbooks appeared giving hints to would-be writers, and as testimony to their effectiveness, many amateur writers were able to become quite successful by following the guidelines laid out for Western

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[7] Harold U. Faulkner, The Quest for Social Justice, 1898-1914 (New York, 1931), pp. 258-60; John R. Milton, "The Novel in the American West," Western Writing, ed. Gerald W. Haslam (Albuquerque, 1974), pp. 75-6.

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Richard W. Etulain has echoed Edgar Allen Poe's lament about the themes of the West in his studies of Ernest Haycox. In explaining the success of the amateur writer, he claims the formula leaves no room for the artist, only for the craftsman.[12] The formula has so stifled the

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[8]Trenton M. White, How to Write for a Living (New York, 1937), pp. 314-5.

[9]Frank Gruber, The Pulp Jungle (Los Angeles, 1967), p. 183; Robert Easton, Max Brand: The Big "Westerner" (Norman, 1970), p. 265.

[10]Quentin Reynolds, The Fiction Factory (New York, 1955), pp. 181-2.

[11]Luke Short, "Ernest Haycox: An Appreciation," The Call Number, XXV (Fall 1963), pp. 2-3.

[12]Richard W. Etulain, "The Literary Career of a Western Writer: Ernest Haycox, 1899-1950," Diss., University of Oregon (1962), p. 98.

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West as to leave no room for the development of social conscience or for the reflection on moral and philosophical questions. No matter that psychologists see mythic properties, as well as Freudian complexes, inherent in the genre, Westerns fail as literature.[13] And this failure has been generalized to all western fiction, thus branding all literature of the West as inferior or unworthy of attention. One critic has gone so far as to state that the chance for a distinctly western literature has been lost forever, because the original western experience was never recorded of, by, and for the West; the experience was always "adjusted to the dimensions, the tastes, the modes of the East."[14]

Such a judgement is too harsh, however, for in the last thirty-five years, the novel of the West has matured. Although the formula Western still rides the bookracks in great numbers, a western literature has in fact emerged. Writers have begun to examine the American epic and character as it evolved in the West, and they have revived the West as a literary setting. New Westerns, so named for the want of a better term, attempt to recover the much abused western experience and place it in context, complete with its own distinctive traditions, characteristics, and topography. Such a course entails a reassessment not only of the cheap myth created by the formula Western but also of the definition of the West and the themes associated with the western experience.

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[13]For example, Warren Barker, "The Stereotyped Western Story: Its Latent Meaning and Psycho-economic Function," Psycholoanalytic Quarterly (June 1955), pp. 271-2.

[14]Robert E. Lee, From West to East: Studies in the Literature of the American West (Urbana, 1966), pp. 155-63. For a similar though more temperate viewpoint, see Bernard DeVoto, "Phaeton on the Gunsmoke Trail," Harper's (December 1945).

The West is far more than just a physical setting, although geography must play an important role in any discussion of the West. It is an historical concept as well as an imaginative one. Western historical fiction needs in some fashion to come to grips with all the facets of the West; for, while the various aspects of the West are identifiable and subject to categorization, those aspects are all part of the same West. Just one of many problems for the western writer is to cope with the multi-leveled West.

The very size and vastness of the West tends to reduce all questions to physical dimensions. Most writers and historians place the demarcation line for the West somewhere between the 95th and 100th meridian; some consider the Mississippi River, some the Missouri River. Whatever the perception, the West comprises approximately half the land mass of the country. Despite the attempts by some to reduce the region to arid or semi-arid topography, the West encompasses deserts, broad plains, immense mountain chains, fertile valleys, and rain forests. What tie all of these components together are the concepts of space and scale; for, whatever the landscape, there is an accompanying impression of largeness. The mountains would tower over their counterparts in the East; the plains and deserts seem endless; and the trees along the coast are enormous. Many of the early travellers in the West commented on the vast size of everything; descriptions of the geography inevitably reflected the impact of size and distance on the observer. In 1845 Joel Palmer commented in his journal on the "almost countless number of mounds, in different directions" while on the prairies; and when he reached the Wind Mountains, he was impressed by the "huge masses of ice and snow piled up

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peak upon peak." Further, he "viewed the southern termination of this range; but they extend to the north farther than the eye can penetrate."[15] In 1842 Medorem Crawford in his journal, "the most remarkable thing I have seen is the deception in distances. Bluffs which appear within 1 mile are often 5 miles from us." Later as he approached Fort Vancouver he called the area "the most romantic country I have yet seen," and he commented on the "tall trees" and "Mt. Hood with its snowy peak glistening in the sunbeams."[16]

Washington Irving in Astoria described the tall timber country as "woods so close and entangled that it was almost impossible to beat up the game."[17] In 1874 Charles Nordhoff wrote that the sawmill at Astoria "with all its buzz and fuzz scarcely /made/ an appreciable impression upon the belt of timber, which so shuts in Astoria that I thought I had scarcely room in it to draw a full breath." The forest seemed perched to push the mill into the river. Nordhoff recorded another's exclamation, "Timber--till you can't sleep."[18]

Bernard DeVoto effectively caught the impact of the West on the pioneers in The Year of Decision: 1846 when he wrote:

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[15] Joel Palmer, Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains to the Mouth of the Columbia River, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, 1906), pp. 37, 70-1.

[16] F. G. Young, ed., The Journal of Medorem Crawford (Eugene, 1897), pp. 10, 21-2.

[17] Cited in David Stratton, "The Dilemma of American Elbowroom," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, 56 (January 1965), p. 33.

[18] Charles Nordhoff, "The Columbia River and Puget Sound," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, XLVIII (February 1874), p. 339; for a similar view of the forests, see Joseph Williams, Tour to the Oregon Territory (1841-2) (New York, 1921), p. 49.

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> The very width and openness of the country was an anxiety. It had no bound; the long heave of the continent never found a limit, and in that waste, that empty and untenanted and lonely waste, the strongest personality diminished. There was no place to hide in, and always there was the sun to hide from, further shrinking the cowering soul. Consciousness dwindled to a point: the little line of wagons was pygmy motion in immensity, the mind became a speck. A speck always quivering with an unidentified dread which few could face and which the weaker ones could not control . . . Some survived it unchanged or strengthened in their identity; some suffered from it, inflicting it on their families, for the rest of their lives.[19]

Earl Pomeroy has rejected concentration on environment as a tool in the study of western history, arguing that such a concentration distorts the reality of the West.[20] While Pomeroy may be correct in aiming historical study away from the environment, literary efforts need to concentrate on the environment and its effects on individuals. Not to do so would be to ignore a large body of journals and diaries of those persons who experienced the early West first hand. (In fact it would ignore the impact that the West with its size and openness continues to have on newcomers from the East.) Don D. Walker has argued that the early journals are more than just the basis for literature and that they have intrinsic literary merit.[21] While historians may be able to justify the study of the effects of man on the environment, those who study literature must

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[19] Bernard DeVoto, Year of Decision: 1846 (Boston, 1942), p. 160.

[20] Earl Pomeroy, "Toward a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, LXI (March 1955), p. 581.

[21] Don D. Walker "The Mountain Man Journal: Its Significance in a Literary History of the Fur Trade," Western Historical Quarterly, V (July 1974), p. 307. Walker also makes the point that the journals are themselves a state of mind of man in the West.

come to grips with the effects of the environment on man.

Authors of New Western novels certainly feel the presence of the land in the West. Paul Horgan has stated that "if there is a single pervasive theme in writing about west, . . . it could be identified as the theme of man, alone, against the immensity of nature."[22] According to Walter Van Tilburg Clark, "nature, we might say, must become an actor, not a backdrop."[23] Clark later re-emphasized the point that "landscape is character, not background. It's not a stage. It's an active agent. It must be."[24] James Stevens has written that his concern "is with man's place in nature; specifically with his place on the land of the Pacific Northwest."[25]

But the West is far more than just geography. Historians have long studied a West that began in Europe along the Atlantic seaboard, continued to the New World shores, and progressed across the continent. The historians' West might be termed the frontier, the line of demarcation between the untamed wilderness and the encroaching civilization. The frontier remains the point of departure for the study of western history, although historians, as is their wont, do not agree as to its specific significance in the scheme of American history.

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[22]John R. Milton, "The Western Novel: A Symposium," South Dakota Review, II (Autumn 1964), p. 28.

[23]Ibid., p. 17.

[24]John R. Milton, "Conversations with Western American Novelists," South Dakota Review, IX (Spring 1971), p. 31. See also Zane Grey, "forward" of To the Last Man (New York, 1923).

[25]James Stevens, "Paul Bunyan, Thunderbirds, and Wobblies," Northwest Harvest: A Regional Stocktaking, ed. V. L. O. Chittick (Portland, 1948), p. 109.

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Whether or not the frontier had a major effect on the political thinking of the American people, the West had an effect on the imagination of the country. Neal Lambert of Brigham Young University writes of the West as a "cluster of ideas" rather than as an historical concept or a physical fact.[26] These ideas are numerous and often contradictory, for the "terrestrial paradise" of Columbus is also the "howling wilderness" of the New England Puritans.[27] The natives are savage yet noble; frontier life is anarchic and democratic. But above all the West is opportunity, whether for rebirth, freedom, success, simplicity, maturation, or escape.

A number of themes develop from the western experience and from the West of the imagination. The landscape and the human drama of history suggest movement, struggle, and tension. Movement in the West was constant as settlers moved the frontier line across the face of the continent, as long caravans of Conestogas trudged over the plains, or as bands of trappers roved the streams in search of beaver. The movement west was also one of progress, from discovery to settlement; it reflected a maturation, civilization, and success. Usually the movement in the West has been seen as a change from simplicity to complexity, from wilderness to civilization. Yet certainly no small part of the movement in the West was an escape from complexity to simplicity, a rejection of the social

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[26]Neal Lambert, "Heroes and Villains, Virtue and Vice: American Values in the Literature of the West," Essays on the American West 1972-73, ed. Thomas G. Alexander (Provo, 1974), p. 29. See also Wallace Stegner, The Sound of Mountain Water (Garden City, 1969), p. 146.

[27]For a fuller discussion of the concepts of 'west' prior to New World settlement, see Fiedler, pp. 31-43.

Whether or not the frontier had a major effect on the political thinking of the American people, the West had an effect on the imagination of the country. Neal Lambert of Brigham Young University writes of the West as a "cluster of ideas" rather than as an historical concept or a physical fact.[26] These ideas are numerous and often contradictory, for the "terrestrial paradise" of Columbus is also the "howling wilderness" of the New England Puritans.[27] The natives are savage yet noble; frontier life is anarchic and democratic. But above all the West is opportunity, whether for rebirth, freedom, success, simplicity, maturation, or escape.

A number of themes develop from the western experience and from the West of the imagination. The landscape and the human drama of history suggest movement, struggle, and tension. Movement in the West was constant as settlers moved the frontier line across the face of the continent, as long caravans of Conestogas trudged over the plains, or as bands of trappers roved the streams in search of beaver. The movement west was also one of progress, from discovery to settlement; it reflected a maturation, civilization, and success. Usually the movement in the West has been seen as a change from simplicity to complexity, from wilderness to civilization. Yet certainly no small part of the movement in the West was an escape from complexity to simplicity, a rejection of the social

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accoutrements of civilization in favor of the freedom and individuality of the frontier.

The theme of the West is also the theme of struggle; it reflects the endurance of an individual, a family, a community, or a civilization, whether in the face of the elements, the land, the natives, or the unknown. There is hope; there is endeavor; and there is success. The West is the scene of determined optimism within the struggle for survival, and it has not been a stage on which losers tell their stories.

Above all else, however, the West suggests a theme of tensions between value systems, tensions that blur the distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil, moral and immoral. The idea of a frontier necessarily delineates a tension between the wilderness on the one hand and civilization on the other, between West and East. What Jay Gurian has called "the circular, communitarian and non-progressive Indian world-view" contrasts sharply with what Don Berry terms the "Roman road-building" world-view of white society.[28] Within the white society itself, tension radiated between individual freedom and social responsibility, which brings us back to Don D. Walker's ideas on law in the West, and in turn back to The Virginian.

In commenting on this tension in the West, Wallace Stegner has written that "done in almost diagrammatic mythic terms, or done as realistic fiction, it is as inextricable from western writing as the theme of color

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[28]Jay Gurian, Western American Writing: Tradition and Promise (Deland, Fla., 1975), p. 128; Doug Shaeffer, Interview with Don Berry, 1974 (cassette); see also Gordon Dodds, "Man and Nature in the Oregon Country: A Historical Survey," The Western Shore, ed. Thomas Vaughn (Portland, 1975), pp. 343-4.

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The formula was not upset until 1940 when Walter Van Tilburg Clark wrote The Oxbow Incident. Clark presented the dilemma of moral ambiguities and the problem of conflicting value systems in the West. He defined sharply the tension inherent in the interface between civilization and nature by pointing out that obedience to one form of law often brought about the tragic consequences of violating a different code of law. In rejecting the usual themes of progress and success, Clark discovered tragedy in the West, a quality previously all but ignored in western writing.

Success and achievement have always been the keynotes of western

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[29] Wallace Stegner, "History, Myth and the Western Writer," The American West, IV (May 1967), p. 77.

[30] Robert Heilman, "The Western Theme," Northwest Review, IV (Fall/Winter 1960), p. 10.

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fiction, and there has been what Robert Heilman notes "an excess of triumph."[31] He postulates that "western materials are simply defective in the tragic component, that they are too exclusively a melodrama of victory." Heilman goes on to say that there has been "no all-encompassing tension and destruction and fight for physical and moral survival."[32] Yet beginning with Clark's The Oxbow Incident, western writers have increasingly turned to examine the human struggle with human problems. Writers have begun to reject the narrow heritage of unqualified success and progress and to probe instead the vagaries and conflicting passions of human endeavor. As Neal Lambert writes, western literature must focus on the essential theme of "man alone or in small groups working out the problems of his own humanity in the context of a landscape that is vast, unsettled, and uncivilized."[33] Heilman, too, claims that western authors must seek out the tragic human errors inherent in the western experience in order to develop literature and art; they must develop an awareness

> not only of the victory, but of the cost of the victory, or of the failure in apparent victory; of the ambiguities of earning and learning; of the moral hazard, of the moral doubleness; of the oblique motive or the evil deed in the very fabric of pure intent, the struggle, the strenuous search.[34]

Traditionally western fiction has recognized only physical losses as tragic, the loss of crops, cabins, livestock, or family. All but ignored have been the losses of indigenous cultures and alternative

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[31] Levi S. Peterson, "Tragedy and Western American Literature," Western American Literature, VI (1971), p. 243; Heilman, p. 9.

[32] Heilman, pp. 9-10.

[33] Lambert, p. 29.

[34] Heilman, p. 10.

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world-views; rarely mentioned is the loss in human spirit in the clash between the wilderness and civilization. New Westerns must question the quality of the civilization which supplanted the wilderness and do so in the light of the native structures that were superseded. New Westerns must assess whether the change brought progress, and they must make a judgement whether the arrival of civilization was good or evil.[35] New Westerns must impose a moral force on the western experience, rather than just chronicle the action or perpetuate the romantic stereotypes. In so doing, New Westerns can probe the ambiguity, the tension, of the western experience and arrive at an assessment of the self-contradictory ideals associated with the West of the imagination. The elements of tragedy must necessarily be tied to the questions such an assessment requires.

Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis may have fallen into disrepute among most historians, but much of what he saw in the American frontier is inseparable from the traditions of the West, and thus it remains fecund material for literature. Wallace Stegner is certainly reacting to Turner's frontier characteristics when he writes of his "sadness at what our civilization does to the natural, free, and beautiful, to the noble, the self-reliant, the brave."[36] Yet the freedom, independence, and self-reliance that Stegner sees as having been destroyed were themselves at odds with the communitarian, non-linear world-view of the Indian and the wilderness. But more important for western literature, those qualities mourned by Stegner were also at odds with the social

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[35] James K. Folsom, The American Western Novel (New Haven, 1966), pp. 31, 155; Gurian, pp. 130, 9; Dodds, p. 362.

[36] Stegner, "History, Myth," p. 77; Stegner, Sound, p. 147; Gurian, p. 120.

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values of the civilization that moved in behind the pioneers. Yet Americans tend to affirm at the same time the traditions of individualism and the traditions of democratic settlement, both of which grow out of the western experience.[37] What a New Western novelist must do is explore the nature of the contradictions in the traditions of the West, while at the same time the novelist must use those very traditions as his material. John Milton claims that one of the primary problems western literature has had in the past is the fact that "because the West is relatively new in terms of culture and social organization, the novelist must in a sense create or locate the traditions he wishes to use, and he must do so at the very same time that he uses them."[38] In doing so, the novelist must take care that the identification of a tradition does not overshadow the evaluation of the tradition. The New Western must not only recreate the West, but also come to terms with it.

In his critique of the New Western, The Return of the Vanishing American, Leslie Fiedler maintains that the West must symbolize a movement toward the future, and it must therefore reflect renewal not nostalgia, rebirth not re-creation. He concludes that hallucinating is the opposite of remembering, so New Westerns must move into mind-expansion and madhouses.[39] This argument ignores a major body of tradition in the West, namely: the constant attempts to escape constraints of society, to press into a primitive environment, to return to an individual relationship with nature, in essence to re-create the pre-civilized past. To

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[37]Folsom, p. 136; Gurian, pp. 5-6; Lambert, p. 31.

[38]Milton, "The Novel in the American West," p. 78.

[39]Fiedler, pp. 175-7.

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The New Western is not Fiedler's hallucination; it is more than Folsom's search along the landscape of the soul; it is more than Etulain's good characterization within a western setting; it is more than Stegner's return to heroic virtues; it is more than Gurian's probe of today's moral decay in terms of the old West; and it is more than Lee's first-hand experience. All of these critics shed light on the New Western, but each fails to come to terms with the historical nature of the New Western.[41]

The role of the western novelist becomes the role of the historical novelist. Because western literature is young, and because western traditions are often contradictory or poorly defined, the western novelist finds it necessary to explore the past to find patterns for the

[40] Gurian, p. ix; Folsom, p. 158.

[41] Fiedler, p. 177; Folsom, p. 32; Richard W. Etulain, "The New Novel," Idaho Yesterdays, 15 (Winter 1972), p. 12; Stegner, "History, Myth," p. 78; Gurian, p. 130; Lee, p. 156.

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present and traditions for literature. The novelist must attempt to bring western materials under control and find the form inherent in those materials, rather than impose a form (or formulas) from without. Such a task is historical in its very nature; it must study the past to find form and tradition and to illuminate the impact of the past on the present. Thus Vardis Fisher approached his western materials by asking what part of today is yesterday.[42] Wallace Stegner calls for a search of the past for a continuity with the present. Such a course is necessary because the real western past "has been mythicized almost out of recognizability" and the real western present seems "cut-off and pointless."[43]

The New Western novel, then, must carry the burden of identifying the traditions of the western experience as well as the burden of using those traditions to forge a western literature. In the process the novel must evaluate the contradictory nature of those traditions and discard the romantic, devitalized, and stereotyped notions that have heretofore rigidly isolated the western experience from serious scrutiny.

Like any good regional writing, New Western novels must spring from within the region and must reflect its uniqueness, yet they must also embody a strand of universality beyond the region. The plots, the scenes, and even the characters must be regionally authentic, but the passions, the probing into humanity's foibles, and the moral dilemmas must transcend the region. Great literature is regional literature before it is

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[42]Vardis Fisher, "The Novelist and his Background," Western Folklore, 12 (January 1953), p. 4.

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universal.[44] Commenting on regionalism, T. Frank Dobie writes that writers must "always be listening to the rhythms of their living places" but regionalism is actually only a framework on which to hang universal truths.[45] Joseph B. Harrison and Joseph K. Howard shared the same viewpoint at the Conference of Writers on the Northwest held at Reed College in 1947. Harrison advised that regionalism may provide an author a comfortable setting, but it "must manifest its place in the scheme of things entire." Howard commented that "the true concept of regionalism encompasses study of one's neighbors, the physical features of one's environment, and the area's historical tradition, with intent to make a worthwhile intellectual contribution to the welfare of the nation or the world."[46]

Since New Westerns, insofar as they aspire to be called literature as they do, must probe the themes and traditions of the western experience, it follows that New Westerns will be predominantly historical, for the literary materials spring from the historical, regional past. Because of this, New Westerns are of interest to historians seeking new ways to interpret the West. A problem arises for the historian concerning the use to which historical literature may be put. Is there a place for

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[44] Milton, "The Novel in the American West," p. 78; Charles Caldwell Dobie, "Literature on the Pacific Coast," American Writers on American Literature, ed. John Macy (New York, 1934), p. 414.

[45] T. Frank Dobie, "The Writer and his Region," Southwest Review, 59 (1974), p. 428.

[46] Joseph B. Harrison, "Regionalism is not enough," Northwest Harvest: A Regional Stocktaking, ed. V. L. O. Chittick (New York, 1948), p. 147; Joseph K. Howard, "Culture, Climate, and Community," Northwest Harvest p. 119.

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historical fiction, and in particular western historical fiction, in the study of history? Should the historian reject historical fiction as too subjective for the study of objective history or can the thoughts and emotions distilled from history by fiction have a value that reaches beyond subjectivity? If the historical novel does have a place in the study of history, on what basis should it be judged by the historian? Factual content? Thematic purpose? Literary merit? Ideally all three, for as Wallace Stegner says, "The trick /for the historical novelist/ is to make the twin cutting tools of sound research and a sense of the dramatic work together like scissors blades."[47] The drama must flow from the documents themselves, an all too rare occurrence in the writings of historians. One critic maintained that "academic historians. . . conceive it to be their duty to relate minutely exactly what occurred, not to make judgements of value."[48] In other words, historians spoil a good story. The critic went on to say that the historical novelist "must give a true picture of the mind of the past, besides an accurate record of public events."[49] A. B. Guthrie claims to seek his universal truths in the history itself and to recreate the historical problems in a fictional setting.[50] Thus it would seem fair to judge the merits of historical

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[47] Wallace Stegner, "On the Writing of History," Western Writing, ed. Gerald W. Haslam (Albuquerque, 1974), p. 26.

[48] "Fictional History," Times Literary Supplement, Nov. 3, 1961, p.789.

[49] Ibid.

[50] A. B. Guthrie, "The Historical Novel," Western Writings, ed. Gerald W. Haslam (Albuquerque, 1974), pp. 57-8.

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Historical fiction must do more than that, however, for competently written history records facts, themes, and traditions. The novelist must go beyond the actions and memoirs of the period of his setting; he must retrieve the emotions and passions, the sensations felt by the characters in response to the environment and actions. The author needs to create characters that are full, individual, and believable, and through them he needs to construct a morally sound and aesthetically pleasing work of art.[51] The historical novelist can neglect neither the literary nor the historical aspects of his craft. Helen Cam has called for exacting standards to judge the historical novel, writing "it may be a hybrid . . .but we are surely entitled to demand that a historical novel be both good literature and good history."[52]

The place of historic literature, that is, the literature produced during the period under study, is assured in the study of history, for it is a part of that historical period as much as any legal or economic fact. Historical fiction however is the product of a later period, viewing the past from a distance. Since its primary purpose is to perform a literary function, it produces a portrait of the past rather than a photograph.[53] It is for this very reason that many historians reject historical fiction

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[51] Jackson K. Putnam, "Down to Earth: A. B. Guthrie's Quest for Moral and Historical Truth," Essays on Western History, ed. Robert P. Wilkins (Grand Forks, 1970), p. 61.

[52] Helen Cam, Historical Novels (London, 1961), p. 295.

[53] Nelson M. Blake, Novelists' America: Fiction as History (Syracuse, 1969), p. 4.

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The place of historic literature, that is, the literature produced during the period under study, is assured in the study of history, for it is a part of that historical period as much as any legal or economic fact. Historical fiction however is the product of a later period, viewing the past from a distance. Since its primary purpose is to perform a literary function, it produces a portrait of the past rather than a photograph.[53] It is for this very reason that many historians reject historical fiction

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[51] Jackson K. Putnam, "Down to Earth: A. B. Guthrie's Quest for Moral and Historical Truth," Essays on Western History, ed. Robert P. Wilkins (Grand Forks, 1970), p. 51.

[52] Helen Cam, Historical Novels (London, 1961), p. 295.

[53] Nelson M. Blake, Novelists' America: Fiction as History (Syracuse, 1969), p. 4.

in the study of history; but to do so is to reject a valuable probe into the past, for as Thoreau accurately points out, "when out of history the truth shall be extracted, it will have shed its dates like withered leaves."[54] The purpose of historical fiction is to evoke the past to reveal a truth about humanity or a truth about ourselves. The novelist uses history as a tool, and he should not be bound tightly to the written record. On the other hand, he must be bound tightly to the traditions of the past, to the emotions of the past, to the 'feelings' of the past. The novelist must operate within the constraints of the historical setting and the historical pattern he has chosen, but he is also charged to produce a literary fiction. The novelist is not bound completely by the facts, but should he ignore or twist the historical record too much, he will lose the illusion of history and with it the experience of the moment. The historical novelist who is successful in his efforts will create a believable past with believable characters, and he will promote an understanding of the human and historical experience.[55] If the historical novelist succeeds, his work has a definite place in the study of history, not to learn about the facts of a given period but to learn about the spirit, the traditions, and the human experience of that period.

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[54] Henry David Thoreau, Week on the Merrimac and Concord Rivers, cited in Fiedler, p. 114.

[55] Hervey Allen, "History and the Novel," Atlantic Monthly (Feb. 1944), pp. 119-20; Lambert, pp. 29-30; Blake, pp. 111, 262; Don D. Walker, "The Western Explorer as Literary Hero," Western Humanities Review, XXIX (Summer 1975), p. 247.

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II. DON BERRY AND TRASK

One of the best of the 'New Western' novelists is Don Berry, a writer of the Northwest whose three historical novels Trask (1960), Moontrap (1962), and To Build a Ship (1963), probe the traditions, spirit, and experience of early Oregon. Although Berry limits his plots to the Northwest, his novels are actually much broader in scope, encompassing ideas more generally associated with the West as a whole. The themes of movement, struggle, and tension; the impact of the environment on man and man on the land; the clash of value systems and ideas of law; the definition and use of historical traditions; all are a part of the 'New Western' and all are a part of Berry's novels. At the same time, however, the novels all emerge from the rhythms of the Northwest, much the way A. B. Guthrie's works derive out of the broad landscape of Montana. As a group, Berry's three novels must be considered among the best yet produced in the literary tradition of the West, standing among or above the works of H. L. Davis, A. B. Guthrie, Wallace Stegner, Paul Horgan, Vardis Fisher, or Walter Van Tilburg Clark. Berry's novels arise from local history to emerge as successful literature, grappling with the problem of man's place in the universe while retaining contact with their earthy origins.

Don Berry was born in Redwood Falls, Minnesota, in 1932, and grew up travelling around the country with his musician parents. At the age of 15, he embarked on a literary apprenticeship by writing science fiction under a pseudonym, selling his first story after 144 rejections. Although never garnering any formal training in history, he became intrigued with

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it after reading a research paper by historian Dorothy Johansen concerning the Tillamook Indian land claims. She described an incident involving Elbridge Trask and said nobody had ever been able to explain why he had acted as he had; Berry recalled his reaction later: "I thought, well I know why he did that. That's what I would have done. ... That moment, which I didn't recognize at the time, but that moment was the first time that I ever realized that history...had a bunch of guys like me that had done something that somebody had written down."[56]

Four books grew out of Berry's involvement in historical writing, the three novels and an informal but well-researched history of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, A Majority of Scoundrels (1961). A fourth novel, a sequel to Trask in an intended trilogy, was withdrawn from the publisher and destroyed by Berry. In all his novels, Berry managed to grasp the flavor of the historical period in question and to breathe life into the characters he either created or used. In the process of so doing, Berry adapted the historical record to his own purposes to some extent.

Like all of the 'New Western' novelists, Berry has more than just a story to tell, yet he has the obligation of all writers to research and present accurately the themes, traditions, and events around which his story is woven. In writing historical fiction, an author can more easily control the descriptive background of the story, and, with it, the state of the reader's mind. In a contemporary novel, the reader can identify himself with the situation, and thus confound the thoughts the author is trying to present. In a historical setting, the author can remove the

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[56] Doug Shaeffer, "Interview with Don Berry," (Spring, 1974); biographical information from Glen Love, "Interview with Don Berry," (May, 1977).

story from the everyday experience of the reader, and thus concentrate the reader's attention on what is written. As Berry told one interviewer, "Trask never had a clutch go out."[57] A historical setting removes the reader from his own reality and focuses his attention on the human events in the story as presented by the writer. The success of such a mechanism depends upon the accuracy with which the author portrays the past, for if the author distorts the setting or makes errors in portrayals of historical characters, the reader's attention may be diverted, or, worse, the reader may reject the novel out of hand. Thus, the historical novelist must research the arena in which he will work in order to be able to create the setting without making the reader uncomfortable about its accuracy.

At the same time, however, the novelist is presenting a pattern of events that are important to his message, events that are not necessarily historical in nature. The characters, with their accompanying thoughts, emotions, and actions, are fictional, as is the plot of the novel in most cases. Yet the characters must square with the historical record, as well as the literary function they perform. The situation calls for the use of history within the framework of literature, as well as the use of literature within the confines of history.

Such a situation lays open the potential for abuse of history instead of the careful use of it. A novelist may succeed in a literary sense, but he may do so at the expense of historical accuracy. If such is the case, if the novelist has abused the historical record--whether it be by warping events to fit the story to such an extent as to distort

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A 'New Western' novelist must strive to control an accurate historical setting, create plausible and timely characters, and probe the traditions, emotions, and patterns of the past. If he is successful, the result will provide regional authenticity and universal comment on the human condition. By accurately identifying the western traditions, and then by coming to terms with them through probing their moral ambiguities, the 'New Western' novelist provides insight into the growth and progress, or lack thereof, of western man.

In his novels, Don Berry investigates the tergiversations of social and cultural laws in settings where two cultures or societies are in conflict. Although each novel is a very personal exploration of his own soul, Berry also provides insight into the traditions of the past, whether real or mythical. At all times Berry is conscious of the costs of change, of progress, of victory, as the Northwest was opened to white settlement. His novels are both a celebration of the human spirit and a condemnation of the restraints placed on that spirit by society. He ponders the values of Frederick Jackson Turner's American character traits within the settings of cultural and social conflict: Indian and white, frontiersman and settler; independence and social responsibility, self-reliance and community

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interdependence.

The problem for the historian is to evaluate the 'New Western' novels to determine whether the author has performed a service or disservice in identifying the forces and events that produce historical and literary traditions. Has Don Berry used or abused the historical record in developing his novels? Do the fictional characters evolve from an accurate sense of the period? Do the historical characters, appearing in fictional form, reflect their counterparts in history? If deviations from the record do in fact arise, are they serious enough to undermine the validity of the judgements Berry makes, or can his novelistic analysis of the western experience be sufficiently accurate and useful despite changes in the historical materials? These questions are central to the value of historical fiction in the study of history. Departures from objective factual information, such as dates, may not significantly alter the value of a novel, whereas an inaccurate portrayal of a historical character or an erroneous depiction of an ambient mood may do irreparable damage to the reliability of the novelist's analysis. While Elbridge Trask may be relieved of his children, while Dr. John McLoughlin's house may be located incorrectly, and while the isolation of Tillamook Bay may be overstated, do these alterations in fact impugn the validity of Berry's probe into the Northwest's heritage? On the other hand, subjective judgements concerning moods, motives, and emotions of the past are vital parts of the fictional approach to history, and novelists must certainly retain the freedom to interpret history in their own way. Should not these interpretations be in accordance with recorded events, however, and if they are not, what is the effect on the novel's historical validity? Don Berry commented at one

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time concerning Trask that he "made whatever departures from history best suited my purposes."[58] Berry considers history to be a tool for his writing, as a structure for a coherent idea, not as an absolute chiseled in stone. To the extent that history is objective, it is useful for controlling the scene of action; but to the extent that history is subjective, Berry sees the novelist's interpretation as no less valid than the historian's. He uses his writing like a "focusing lens" to burn away the surface of the past to reveal the "meaning of the experience that lies behind."

> I don't worry an awful lot about deviation from history unless dealing with actual facts, because history itself is the fiction that historians write. They too look at the data and look at the facts, but they invent their own picture because there is nothing else they can do.[59]

Yet care must be taken that the departures and deviations do not distort the time and place of which the author writes. Do the departures in Trask suit the purposes of historical interpretation as well as they suit Berry's literary interpretation?

Don Berry's first novel is perhaps his most successful novel from the point of view of historical fiction, for Trask presents a situation and series of events that are highly plausible. Berry has provided an excellent recreation of the setting of the Oregon coast and of the settlement on the Clatsop Plains. Beyond this, however, Berry has also drawn heavily on Indian traditions and folklore. In the process, he has presented various thematic aspects of the West, probing and evaluating the

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merits and demerits of the western experience: the restless impulse, the personal struggle against the elements and the unknown, and the tense clash between the encroaching white civilization and the native cultures. Yet Trask succeeds equally as an adventure story and as a personal search for one's identity. It is as a historical novel set in the West, however, that it draws the attention of historians.

From the very first page of the novel, Don Berry establishes in the reader's mind that this is no bit of fluff, but rather that it is a part of the historical record. Using an excerpt from the journal of a well-known mountain man turned settler, Berry sets up his plot. Drawn "from the later journals of Osborne Russell, 1845-1857," the excerpt indicates that

> there is some "Dam Fool" of a white man has got himself into trouble with the Killamooks down at the coast, which have a prety hard reputation. And who shd it turn out to be but my old Comrade Elbridge Trask that I free-trapped with out of Fort Hall. Well I am not surprised any but hope he does not get himself killd which wd be just like him. He was the most restless man I ever knew. . . .[60]

Elbridge Trask is restless and vaguely uncomfortable with his situation on Clatsop Plains in the Spring of 1848. Unable to explain to his wife Hannah exactly how he feels, he decides to pay a call on his old friend Solomon Smith who lives with his Clatsop wife, Celiast, near the village of Neahcoxie. Almost unconsciously he asks Smith what he knows of Murderer's Harbor, which is 50 miles to the south along the coast. Smith tells him that it lies in Killamook country, and the Killamooks and

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the Clatsops do not see eye to eye. In fact the Killamooks seem not to see eye to eye with many people, for Smith tells Trask that he walked mighty carefully some years back when he was through the area. Celiast recalls the story of Captain Robert Gray's crewmember being killed when his ship put into the bay, giving the area its threatening name, and she adds that the tyee is not favorable to the idea of whites coming down to settle in his country. Furthermore the trail, if it could be called a trail at all, must cross Neahkahnie, a huge hump-backed mountain that juts out into the ocean. Smith tells Trask, "Bridge, there are places you have to cross on that mountain where the trail is no wider than a man's two hands. Tilted like a roof, sliding shale--and if you slip it's five hundred damn feet straight down into the sea." If that were not enough, Neahkahnie is thought by the Indians to be the body of the god Kahnie turned to stone, and it serves as the dividing line between the Clatsops and the Killamooks; either of which facts would make most if not all Clatsops refuse to guide Trask down to Murderer's Harbor.

Trask is determined to scout the country, however, and within a few days he starts south, guided by Charley Kehwa, the tamanawis man or shaman of the Clatsop Indians, whose spiritual powers discomfort Trask. Accompanying them are Wakila and Doctor McLoughlin; the former a young Clatsop ravaged by the vices of two cultures and without the benefits of either, and the latter a hip-shot mountain pony that proves surprisingly nimble. Progress down the coast is agonizingly slow, for they have to cut their own trail through the dense growth of briar and salal as they cross a series of headlands. A bond develops between Trask and Charley as they begin to respect each other, and Wakila gains a sense of self-respect as he is given responsibility by Trask. But Neahkahnie, home of

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the fire spirit Kahnie who created the waves by throwing red-hot rocks into the ocean, Neahkahnie proves to be a formidable obstacle. As Wakila gingerly leads the horse along the edge of a gravelly precipice, Doctor slips and pulls the youth to his death on the rocks below. At Charley Kehwa's request, Trask joins the medicine man's grief by cutting off his own forelock for Him-who-died.

The two now proceed down the south side of Neahkahnie to a small village of the Nehalems, the northernmost band of the Killamooks. There they receive a cool welcome from the leader, who engages Trask in a competitive potlatch, attempting to humiliate the white man before the gathered band. Through the cleverness of Charley Kehwa, Trask emerges triumphant. Their safe exit is assured when Charley reveals that he is a tamanawis man and threatens to shrivel the manhood of any who would harm them.

Camping along the beach just north of Murderer's Harbor, Trask and Charley are captured and escorted into the main village of the Killamooks. The principle tyee, rumored to be a black man, is not present, but the lineal chief, Illga, tries to enlist their aid in overthrowing his rival. Preferring to wait and deal with Kilchis, Trask declines Illga's offer, thereby engendering the Indian's deep hatred.

When Kilchis returns from a trip to the Nestucca area where he had been summoned to settle a dispute, he negotiates with Trask concerning the latter's desire to settle in the bay. Trask manages to convince Kilchis that a gradual controlled settlement is preferable to war with the whites, but when the plan is presented to the council, Illga steps forward. The Killamooks should not treat with Trask, for he is not a man;

he has not gone on the Searching for a guardian spirit, without which no one is a man. Against the advice of Charley Kehwa, Trask agrees to undertake the Searching, despite the fact that it is early in the year and he has had no preparation for it.

Armed with a torch and blanket, Trask strides off into the mountains, there to remain, fasting, until he perishes or receives the power of a Vision. After incredible hardship, he hears a person approaching. He assumes it is Illga or a cohort, for Charley had warned him that the vengeful Killamook might try to kill him on the Searching. Trask hides, then lunges at the dark figure, thrusting a rude spear through the small body, only to discover it is Charley coming to help him. In a delirious state and weak from injury and hunger, Trask manages to carry the Clatsop back to the Killamook village, urged on by the voice of the dead tamanawis man. Trask's absence of fear of death and dead men demonstrates to the Killamooks a powerful Vision, and a strong spirit helper. The novel closes as Trask recognizes his unity with the world around him and rejects the rapacious lust for possession of the land that had driven him to Murderer's Harbor to begin with.

III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From the outset, Trask seems to be a filled out version of an actual historical story. In a comment accompanying a review of the book in Saturday Review, Berry claimed to have fleshed out the connective tissue between isolated and seemingly unrelated bits of information, in a manner reminiscent of what Washington Irving used to call adding 'filigree'.[61] The characters not only ring true, but most are based on actual persons; anyone with a working knowledge of Oregon history may easily recognize Solomon Smith, the former teacher at Fort Vancouver, with his wife Celiast; Trask himself filed one of the first claims in Tillamook Bay and appeared, albeit somewhat briefly, in Osborne Russell's journal of his trapping days; Kilchis and Illga were the two chiefs of the Killamooks when the whites began to settle the area, and Kilchis was an enormous black man; the settlement of Tillamook Bay was a peaceful and reasonably orderly one; and the Killamook Indians had enjoyed a "hard reputation" from when Lopeus of Captain Gray's crew had been killed at their hands in 1788. Given the outline in history, the novelist need only heighten the drama, draw out the characterizations, recreate an authentic setting, and Trask would be complete. The only question that might arise for the reader would be how likely it is that Trask would have gone down to scout out the country a full four years before he actually moved down to file a claim. But Berry supplies Osborne Russell's words in his

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[61] Berry, "Comment," p. 17; see also Pierre Irving (ed.), The Life and Letters of Washington Irving, vol. II, p. 302, cited in Lee, p. 68.

journals to assure the reader that Trask was indeed in the area.

To create an effective historical novel, an author must convey the reader to the historic period of the setting, not just through recreating the physical surroundings (although this is important) but also through attaching the plot to actual events, movements, and people of the period. One of the most important bits of information in anchoring Trask to the frame of history, and thus affirming possibility and plausibility of the plot for the reader, is the April 29, 1848 journal entry of Osborne Russell establishing that Elbridge Trask was indeed among the Killamooks.

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Like his fictional counterpart, Elbridge Trask was a thirty-three year old transplanted New Englander, having been born in Beverly, Massachusetts, on July 15, 1815.[63] In 1833 he signed on as a sailor with Captain Lambert of the "May Dacre" and arrived in the Columbia River in September, 1834. After a trip to the Sandwich Islands that winter and a summer doing odd jobs around Fort William, Trask joined Nathaniel Wyeth's Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company on September 30, 1835, as a trapper for the wages of sixteen dollars a month.[64] On his way back East to pursue a more profitable line of work, Wyeth released all his trappers from their contracts in the summer of 1836.[65]

Trask became a free trapper, generally working out of the Fort Hall area. By 1838 he had joined up with Osborne Russell, and the two were more or less constant companions until they left the fur trade four years

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later. Russell described Trask as "being bred a sailor" and therefore "not much of a landsman, woodsman or hunter."[66] When Trask became separated from Russell and two other trappers during a Blackfoot attack in August, 1839, they were unable to locate him, so they proceeded to Fort Hall without him. Despite a serious arrow wound in the right leg and hip, Russell managed to get to Fort Hall in seven days without horses or, for the most part, food. Trask, uninjured, did not show up for another nine days, having wandered lost until he happened upon a recent trail which pointed out the direction of the fort.[67] The next year Russell commented on Trask's judgement, or lack thereof, when Trask wanted to go buffalo hunting; Russell vetoed the idea because the horses were far too weak for such a strenuous activity.[68] On another occasion shortly after the Blackfoot attack, Russell declined to accompany Trask on a trip up to the Yellowstone Mountains, saying that he intended to trap "with a party who would not leave me in a 'pinch.'"[69] Despite Russell's misgivings about Trask's abilities in the woods, however, the two men stayed together for the most part.

By November of 1841, over a year after the last Rendezvous, Russell was able to see the approaching end of the fur trade. As he put his journal into order for publication later and looked back on that autumn, he wrote

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[66] Russell, p. 98.

[67] Ibid., pp. 103-9.

[68] Ibid., p. 111.

[69] Ibid.

> In the year 1836 large bands of buffalo could be seen in almost every little valley on the small branches of this stream. At this time the only traces of them which could be seen were the scattered bones of those which had been killed. Their deeply indented trails which had been made in former years were overgrown with grass and weeds. The trappers often remarked to each other as they rode over these lonely plains that it was time for the white man to leave the mountains, as beaver and game had nearly disappeared.[70]

The following summer, Russell, Trask, and a few other trappers decided to say quits to the fur trade. Some like Alfred Shutes went back East to their original homes; others like Russell and Trask determined to start new lives in a new country, and headed west to the Willamette Valley. On August 22nd Trask left Fort Hall with Russell in the company of Elijah White and several emigrant families.[71] Included in the group were William T. Perry, his wife Ann, and her widowed sister, Hannah Abel. Hannah had left two small daughters with relatives in Indiana but had brought along her most recent child, Rosaltha.[72]

Proceeding from Fort Hall the group attached itself to a Hudson's Bay brigade and moved on ahead of the remainder of emigrants. Earlier in the trip White had become somewhat of a persona non grata for the manner in which he directed the operation, and undoubtedly he wished to arrive

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[70] Ibid., p. 124.

[71] Ibid., p. 125.

[72] Bethenia Owens-Adair, Some of her Life Experiences (Portland, 1921), p. 234; Genealogical Material, vol. II, p. 73, vol. III, p. 12. Rosaltha had been born 22 July 1841 and the other two children were Sarah (b. 11 April 1838) and Elizabeth (b. 4 January 1840); see Elizabeth Vaughn Landis MS, Trask File, Tillamook County Pioneer Museum (n.d., n.p.).

in Oregon ahead of his detractors.[73] Shortly after the group reached Oregon City and after what must have been an unusual courtship, Elbridge Trask married Hannah Abel on October 20, 1842. The new Trask family wintered in Oregon City with the Perrys in a hastily constructed house.[74]

In the spring of 1843 Trask moved his family to Clatsop Plains, along with the Perrys, the Thomas Owens family, Henry Hunt, Ben Wood, and N. A. Eberman, the latter three being interested in constructing a sawmill on the Plains.[75] Trask hired on to help build the mill, and two years later he was involved in the construction of a grist mill on Ohanna Creek along with Perry, Owens, and Calvin Tibbetts, a former Wyeth man who had come overland in 1832.[76] During 1844, Trask engaged himself to work on a county road along the crest of the dunes bordering Clatsop Plains on the west.[77] By 1846 Trask had been hired by the Hudson's Bay Company to till up some lands for planting, but as Alexander Lattie noted in his journal

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[73]F. G. Young, ed., Journal of Medorem Crawford (Eugene, 1897), p. 16; see also Elijah White, Ten Years in Oregon: Travels and Adventures of Doctor E. White and Lady West of the Rocky Mountains (Ithaca, N. Y., 1848), pp. 145-68, particularly, pp. 162-4.

[74]Genealogical Material, vol. II, p. 73; Owens-Adair, p. 234; Landis MS. Reportedly the two families built the first frame house in the town, using Perry's millwright skills.

[75]"Solomon H. Smith," Transactions of the 15th Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association for 1887 (Portland, 1887), pp. 88-9; Jo Tuthill, "Elbridge Trask," The Mountain Man and the Fur Trade of the Far West, ed. Leroy Hafen (Glendale, 1972), p. 377; Owens-Adair, p. 234.

[76]Phillip H. Overmeyer, "Members of the First Wyeth Expedition," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXXVI (1935), p. 101; Emma Gene Miller, Clatsop County, Oregon: A History, (Portland, 1958), p. 142.

[77]E. Ruth Rockwood, ed., "Letters of Charles Stevens (1854)," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII (1937), p. 81; Leslie M. Scott, "First Taxpayers in Oregon, 1844," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXXI (1930), p. 24.

he met with considerable difficulty. On March 19th Lattie wrote that Trask "unluckily broke his Plow which was by the by rather a weak one being country made." Two weeks later Trask was still at it, but Lattie noted he was "unable /to succeed/ from the ground being so foul and Plow being so weak and bad." To add to his troubles, in the interim his ox developed a deep sore above one hoof which hampered its effectiveness.[78]

By 1848 Trask joined forces with Perry, Tibbetts, and Owens again, but this time the men built a schooner rather than a mill. With Robert McEwan as part owner and captain, the men loaded the ship with produce from Clatsop Plains, butter, bacon, eggs, and potatoes, mostly potatoes. They sold both cargo and schooner in Sacramento in July 1849 and returned to the Plains aboard the Forrest. Tibbetts died of cholera on the return trip.[79]

Trask accompanied Nathan Dougherty and family to Tillamook Bay in the spring of 1852 on Captain Menes' brig Quadratus, one year after the

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[78] Thomas Vaughn, ed., "Alexander Lattie's Fort George Journal, 1846," Oregon Historical Quarterly, LXIV (1963), pp. 214, 218, 219.

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Trask worked on his farm for the next eleven years until his death in 1863. As one of the early settlers of the area, he was involved in the beginnings of government for Tillamook. Following the organization of the region as a county in December 1853, Trask was elected Justice of the Peace, and he served a short period as County Commissioner.[82] But Trask was not much of a political soul: he had passed up the opportunity to participate in the fateful meeting at Champoeg in May, 1843, although his friends Tibbetts and Russell both attended; he avoided politics

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Trask exhibited a curiosity about nature, but he could hardly have been called a philosopher or intellectual. When Osborne Russell experienced his religious enlightenment in the mountains in 1841, Trask was indifferent to his attempts at discussion of Christian principles and would not listen to the subject.[83] On the other hand, however, Trask spent an entire day and part of a night watching a geyser in the Yellowstone River region, timing the eruptions. He was fascinated by the regularity of the spring's movements.[84]

The Clatsop Plains in 1848 was a small but expanding outgrowth away from the main body of white settlement in the Willamette Valley. The Methodists had established a mission on the Plains in 1840 under the supervision of Reverend John H. Frost. Accompanying Frost to the area were Solomon H. Smith and Calvin Tibbetts, both former Wyeth men.[85] Settlers trickled onto the Plains following Smith and Tibbetts, and by 1848 there were between forty and fifty families settled into farming behind the rolling dunes.[86] Yet the limits of Clatsop Plains farming were

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In addition to markets for staples, California provided a growing demand for lumber. Early in 1845, Hunt's mill sent 50,000 feet of timber to California aboard the Chenamus. A second mill was built at the south end of the Plains, and by 1848 large quantities of lumber were departing from Astoria.[89] The California gold rush accelerated this demand.

By the late 1840's, however, as the white settlement was expanding, the Clatsop Indian tribe was failing rapidly, its culture and heritage supplanted by white civilization. Part of a larger group of Indians called Chinook, the Clatsops had occupied lands on the south bank of the Columbia River at its mouth, extending east to Tongue Point and south along the Pacific Ocean to Tillamook Head. Part of the greater Northwest Indian culture, the Clatsops shared many of the characteristics of the natives all along the Northwest Coast, from the Salish farther south to the Tlingit in the far north.

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The Clatsops relied heavily on salmon and other marine life as a food source, supplementing their diet with roots and berries in season and occasionally an elk or other animal. They lived in plank lodges, usually with several families in each. The material culture of the Clatsops reflected the abundance of timber in the area, and the cedar tree was used as variously and ingeniously by them as the buffalo on the open plains. Much of their travel was by canoe on the rivers and sea, although they did not customarily build the very large canoes that were more common to the north.[90]

The population of the Clatsops prior to the arrival of the white man is open to speculation. Estimates of between 200 and 300 Clatsops in 1780 are generally accepted.[91] A severe epidemic of smallpox swept the coast in the 1780's, but the population was evidently back to normal strength by the time Lewis and Clark estimated the Clatsops to number 200.[92] In 1825 an official of the Hudson's Bay Company reported a Clatsop population of 190, including free and slave.[93]

By the late 1840's, significant changes had taken place among the Clatsops. In 1851 Robert Shortess reported to Indian Agent Anson Dart

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that there were only 80 Clatsops, virtually all of whom were crowded into a single village on Point Adams, while previously they had occupied six widespread villages.[94] Of the 80, only 54 were full blooded Clatsop. The causes for the loss of population are both obvious and subtle. A serious epidemic, called the 'cold sick' by the natives, swept through the region in the early 1830's. Dr. John McLoughlin of the Hudson's Bay Company estimated that three fourths of the Indians around Ft. Vancouver died at the time.[95] So devastating was the disease that Hall J. Kelley claimed that at the mouth of the Columbia in 1834 one "heard little more than the sight and cries of the misery in the perishing remnants of the Clotsop (sic) and Chenook tribes."[96] Adding to the problem, smallpox returned in 1836, and the natives continued to treat the various fevers with a form of hydrotherapy, consisting of time in a sweat lodge followed by a rush into the icy waters, a practice which only proved to aggravate the illness.[97] Herbert C. Taylor, Jr., estimated that between 1790 and 1832, 7/8 to 19/20

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The Northwest Indians were constantly warring among themselves, even well before the advent of the whites; but wars were often settled in pre-battle negotiation sessions, or at least after the fall of a minimal number of men.[99] After trade opened with whites, however, the numbers lost in battle increased greatly due to the availability of more effective weapons to replace spears and bows. Rev. Frost reported that on several occasions he could hear the peppering of gunfire all day long.[100]

More subtle forces helped to precipitate the drastic decline in the Clatsop population, however, forces which eroded the Indians social and cultural structures. The twenty years of sea trade up until 1810 began modifying the social structure of the coastal Indians as wealth among them increased. Those who adapted most quickly to the new trade arrangements gained in relation to the others in the society, thus altering the traditional social patterns.[101] As bands of Indians jostled for position vis-á-vis the white traders, war activity increased somewhat for the higher stakes. Contact with sailors prompted an increase in marital

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Relying on information from James Birnie, Richard Brinsley Hinds noted in his journal that the "prosperity of Europeans had struck deeply at the root of the customs" of the coastal Indians.[104] The Indians turned away from their traditional products of the land and utilized trade goods instead: blankets replaced skins and cedar bark mats; iron tools replaced stone and wooden implements; traditional clothing gave way to the pants and shirts of the white man; the skills of basketry fell into disuse. Birnie noticed that the custom of carving images of men and animals declined.[105] Even in such a simple matter as canoe design, the old practices were modified by the use of sails.[106]

Furthermore, when the Hudson's Bay Company, and later other traders, moved the base of trade operations inland to Ft. Vancouver, the Chinooks

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Certainly, over the span of the half century following the entry of Captain Robert Gray into the Columbia River, the local Indians fell more and more under the power and authority of the whites. Duncan McDougall achieved great control by frightening the natives in 1812 with the claim that he held the smallpox disease contained in a small vial, threatening to release it if aggravated.[107] Many of the early traders took native wives, mostly from the native aristocracy, which often generated influence for the whites within the bands beyond the normal trading relationships.[108] By 1851, 18 of the 80 remaining Clatsops were half-bloods, almost 25%. One complication arising out of the mixed marriages was the insistence by the whites that the heads of the offspring not be flattened, as was the custom among the free-born natives. Such a demand went directly counter to the native cultural mores, and it inevitably led to cultural and psychological confusion among the natives.

Perhaps the most devastating influence of white civilization on the native society arrived in the form of liquor. Although sailors had given natives access to alcohol occasionally, the real introduction of liquor

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Many persons, both native and immigrant, sought to limit the distribution of liquor. Rev. Frost attempted unsuccessfully to prevent the sale of alcohol from a ship in 1842, blaming the ship's trade for the death of at least one native. The incident prompted a Clatsop to advise Frost, "Your people are very bad, friend."[111] Later in 1847, a major furor arose over the possession and sale of liquor by a certain George T. Geer. The settlers were upset with Geer because he sold alcohol to the natives, and they narrowly averted an outbreak of violence in their

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Nearly every observer of the scene on Clatsop Plains in the late 1840's noticed the poor condition of the natives and almost unanimously blamed the corrupting influence of white civilization for that condition. Overton Johnson wrote that the mingling of white men with the Indians tended "to degrade, sink, and destroy" the latter. Wyndham Robertson, Jr., wrote of the Clatsops that "their inexhaustible resources have been taken from them, their bows unstrung, and from 'lords of the soil,' they have sunk to the degradation of slaves." Rev. John Frost lamented in 1843 that none might live "to tell the sad tale of their decline."[114]

Evidence that the natives had all but given up on their cultural survival can be found in the brief notations in Richard Brinsley Hinds' journal concerning the large numbers of abortions and infanticides among the natives.[115] Between November, 1841, and February, 1842, Rev. Frost

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In 1848, Solomon H. Smith stood squarely between the clashing cultures of the whites and the natives. A member of Wyeth's first expedition to the Northwest, Smith had remained at Ft. Vancouver, where he was engaged to teach school for two years. While at Ft. Vancouver he had met and married Celiast, daughter of the Clatsop chief Coboway.[117] He then moved onto French Prairie where he pursued a variety of occupations, and in 1840 he accompanied Rev. John Frost to Clatsop Plains and settled on Neahcoxie Creek at the south end of the Plains. The Smiths later moved to a claim near Skipanon Creek, where they raised six children of their own, as well as a Tibbetts boy and a Hawaiian slave girl named Jessie Bill, whom Celiast purchased from a sailor. Rev. Frost noted in his journal that the Smiths "enjoy religion," and indeed they had been married by Jason Lee. Some chroniclers have claimed that the Smiths moved to Clatsop Plains because of a missionary zeal on the part of Celiast, while others state

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Rev. John Frost, on the other hand, shared a decidedly uncomplimentary view of the Indians with many of his fellow men of the cloth.

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[118] Pipes, p. 58; Dobbs, p. 33; Powers, p. 132; "Solomon H. Smith," p. 84.

[119] Pipes, pp. 71-3.

[120] Oregon Spectator, July 22, 1847.

[121] Fred Lockley, "Reminiscences of James E. R. Harrell," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXIV (1923), p. 189. See also Vaughn, "Settlement," p. 5; Vaughn was to deliver Indian Jim to "Salmon" Smith.

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Throughout his journal, Frost draws a dismal picture of the Clatsops as "stupid," "superstitious," and, worst of all, ignorant of God. Frost held no respect for the native religious beliefs and practices, and he heaped scorn on the Clatsops for having "no idea of a future state." He even complained that their language was too defective to express divine concepts at all.[122] He ignored or dismissed the large body of folk tales which explained the ideas of an all powerful god, a devil, the land of the dead, as well as events in nature. The mind of a nineteenth century missionary seldom reserved a place within for understanding of another way of life.[123] Yet while Frost rejected Clatsop beliefs, especially in the field of medicine, as ignorant superstition, he was able to comment in all seriousness on the prominence of the Indians' "bump of avariciousness" due to the custom of head-flattening.[124]

Don Berry mined the historical Clatsop Plains of 1848 for the basic elements of Trask. The background from which Elbridge Trask, along with Charlie Kehwa and Wakila, emerges in the novel is painstakingly drawn from the historical records of the time and place, yet Berry manages to set all the facts down in an informal and relaxed manner. As one reviewer wrote, Berry presents "history glancingly told" in his novels.[125] The Indian

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[122]Pipes, pp. 56, 60, 236, 359-60.

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characters appear as human beings unencumbered by the stilting stereotypes so often strangling the roles of Indians in other fiction. Charley Kehwa is a shrewd and intelligent man who understands both the native culture of his own heritage and that of the 'Boston men' as well. He represents the spiritual power of the native culture while being fully aware of the physical power of the white society. It is of little matter ultimately that he embodies the integrity of the Indians, however, for he is trapped, as were all natives, by the circumstances of his times. He could not escape the fact that he was a Clatsop and doomed, even though he could understand the situation. On the other hand, Wakila is caught in the decline of his culture without any understanding of the events which doom him. He believes that he can recover his strength, and the strength of the Clatsop band, through physical exertion and traditional direction. By chopping wood for Trask, he hopes to work off the hangover caused by the white man's liquor, unaware that he is too late to save himself. He is the product of the clash of cultures and the disintegrating Clatsop environment. "He has a choice...and no choice at all. Two worlds, and he can't have either of them. He knows too much of us to find pride in his own people anymore, and not enough to become a white man" (p. 62). Disease, death, and disrespect were all visited upon the Indians by white civilization and what remained of their culture was insufficient to sustain their life, whether, like Charley Kehwa, they realized it, or, like Wakila, did not. The two are historically plausible if not specifically historical.

One of the most intriguing and important aspects of Charley Kehwa is the sympathy and understanding with which Berry draws the character

characters appear as human beings unencumbered by the stifling stereotypes so often strangling the roles of Indians in other fiction. Charley Kehna is a shrewd and intelligent man who understands both the native culture of his own heritage and that of the 'Boston men' as well. He represents the spiritual power of the native culture while being fully aware of the physical power of the white society. It is of little matter ultimately that he embodies the integrity of the Indians, however, for he is trapped, as were all natives, by the circumstances of his times. He could not escape the fact that he was a Clatsop and doomed, even though he could understand the situation. On the other hand, Wakila is caught in the decline of his culture without any understanding of the events which doom him. He believes that he can recover his strength, and the strength of the Clatsop band, through physical exertion and traditional direction. By chopping wood for Trask, he hopes to work off the hangover caused by the white man's liquor, unaware that he is too late to save himself. He is the product of the clash of cultures and the disintegrating Clatsop environment. "He has a choice...and no choice at all. Two worlds, and he can't have either of them. He knows too much of us to find pride in his own people anymore, and not enough to become a white man" (p. 62). Disease, death, and disrespect were all visited upon the Indians by white civilization and what remained of their culture was insufficient to sustain their life, whether, like Charley Kehna, they realized it, or, like Wakila, did not. The two are historically plausible if not specifically historical.

One of the most intriguing and important aspects of Charley Kehna is the sympathy and understanding with which Berry draws the character

of the tamanawis man. The mystical union of man and his environment was a basic tenet of spiritual belief among the Northwest Indians, and as such it is an important heritage of the Northwest. Yet for those descendants of the European culture, the spiritual vision is a difficult, if not impossible, concept to grasp. Berry claims that one must usually go beyond the limits of one's own culture and language in order to express the spiritual experience. Because European culture does not for the most part allow for the visionary experience--except in religious ecstasy--Berry says the symbology for dealing with the experience is not present in European culture.[126] The role of Charley Kehwa becomes more important, because it is the vehicle through which Berry and the reader must come to grips with and accept the mystical union of man and surroundings so essential to the Indian culture.

The tamanawis man or shaman of the Northwest Indians was a person charged with remarkable responsibilities. With him rested the proper performance of the various rituals, especially those pertaining to the return of the salmon, upon which the natives depended so heavily. The shaman also performed as a medicine man, caring for the ill in body or soul. Additionally, he (in some rare cases: she) was looked to for guidance as a fortune teller of sorts. He was thought to have the ability to communicate with the spirits, either through dreams or meditations.

The tamanawis man receives his powers through a vision on the Searching, although, like other youths prior to initiation into manhood, he usually learns much about the profession before embarking on the Searching.

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[126] Love, "Interview."

Most tamanawis men were following in the footsteps of a father or close relative.[127] The powers of the shaman were considerable, for he was believed to be able to summon a variety of spirits or spirit helpers, either to harm or to heal. Disease was often considered to be the result of a lost soul, whether stolen by a spirit or just gone astray. The shaman would summon his spirit helpers through songs, chants, and dances, and in some cases the shaman would himself travel to the land of the spirits to seek the lost soul. To do so the shaman would lie next to the ill--or sometimes dead--Indian and search by meditation and trance, dramatizing the journey of a spirit canoe.[128]

The equipment of the shaman consisted of a variety of herbal medicines, rattles, masks, and carved boards or sticks representing their spirit helpers.[129] The belief in the powers of the shaman was absolute. Rev. John Frost ridiculed the natives' beliefs in the curative ability of the medicine men on Clatsop Plains, as they presented bits of hair and shells as the causes of illnesses.[130] Yet there was no doubt on the part of the natives. One historian has claimed that a shaman could become so powerful that he could make a person fall dead by grabbing that person's

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[127] Franz Boas, "Traditions of the Tillamook Indians," Journal of American Folklore, XI (1898), pp. 23-38; Hubert Howe Bancroft, Native Races of the Pacific States (New York, 1874), vol. I, p. 246; Drucker, pp. 158-61.

[128] Drucker, p. 160; Cox, vol. I, pp. 158-9.

[129] Thomas W. Newman, "Tillamook Prehistory and its Relation to the Northwest Coast Culture Area," Unpublished dissertation, University of Oregon (1959), p. 86; Drucker, plates # 29, 30, 31.

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soul from the air around his body. Hubert Howe Bancroft is a bit more conservative, stating only that "Some observors believe that mesmeric influences are exerted."[131] Yet psychic powers are not really understood today, and the effects of placebos in modern medical and psychological research certainly indicate that the possibilities of the powers of suggestion and psychic medicine are not entirely without foundation. This power is established for Charley with the incident in the Nehalem village, when Charley changes the hostility of his hosts into fear merely by producing his tamanawis wand and threatening the men (pp. 175-179). Belief in the powers of that symbol created an unwillingness to test those powers.

In the character of Charley Kehwa, Don Berry has gathered the wisdom and the vitality of the Northwest coastal spiritual experience, the experience he hoped to transfer to European cultural terms in <u>Trask</u>. As Wakila described him, "Charley Kehwa could become any of the things in the world, so said the people. This was Charley's greatness, that he understood and was one with all the powers: the wind and the seas and mountains and spirits and the minds of men"(p. 63). Earlier in the novel, Berry, through Solomon Smith, likens the power of the tamanawis to what he would call a 'hunch'; but later, Charley says that it is an understanding of how the world operates, of how the pieces fit together, of what man's role is in the whole world view (pp. 67, 98). In simple, yet somehow profound, terms Berry has distilled the essence of the Northwest coastal Indians' spiritual experience, and it is not so very alien to western

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[131] Bancroft, <u>Native Races</u>, vol. I, p. 246; Samuel A. Clarke, <u>Pioneer Days of Oregon History</u> (Portland, 1905), vol. I, pp. 111-2.

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culture after all. It is certainly a part of the literary tradition, in fact all artistic tradition, of western civilization. More important, it is a key to the Western experience, the experience of man alone in nature, seeking and exploring.

As Trask moves down the coast from Clatsop Plains toward the land on the Killamooks, guided by Charley and assisted by Wakila, Don Berry follows the account of a similar trip in 1841 by Rev. John Frost, accompanied by Solomon Smith, a Clatsop youth named Wakilkil, and a sailor named Lewis Taylor.[132] Frost hoped to find a route into the Willamette Valley by which he could bring cattle to Clatsop Plains, the route up the Columbia and Willamette Rivers being costly and time consuming. The trip down the coast was arduous, as the men had to cut their way through thick brush and brambles up to twelve feet high. In addition to the rough conditions, Frost had had difficulty in obtaining a guide, partly because few wanted to undertake such a journey, and partly because of enmity between the Clatsop chief Kotata and the Killamook tyee Kilchis. Frost finally was able to hire a Killamook who happened to be on Clatsop Plains, but he deserted them shortly.

Frost's description of the trip is vivid. The group travelled by the old Indian trail, for that was the path Wakilkil remembered from a trip he had made as a boy.

> The trail...lies along the side of the mountain /Neahkahnie/ which rises abruptly out of the ocean, and which is as steep as the roof of a house along where the path passes; the path was not much wider than a mans two hands, the soil being composed of gravel like unto broken slate stone, and at some places very stoney. And below the path, the decent,(sic)

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> in many places, was very nearly perpendicular, and loosing itself into the depth of the Ocean below, whose angry waves keep up one continual roar.[133]

Frost at one point expressed concern lest they lose Machera, Solomon Smith's packhorse, over the edge "into the foaming billows which rolled beneath our feet."[134] On the return trip, Taylor did slip over a precipice, but not into the ocean, and he had to be rescued.

At one point the group came to a step up of about four feet where they thought the horse would have great difficulty. The horse hesitated a bit then reared up on its hind legs, threatening to topple over onto Frost and Taylor, then it heaved itself up the step safely, emitting a loud snort. Berry reproduced the incident almost verbatim in Trask, so taken was he by the horse's effort (p. 124). In fact Berry borrows heavily from Frost's journal for the actual descriptions of the trip, for he uses the roof metaphor, a trail width of "two hands," and methods employed to clear a trail through the dense brush.

Once over the difficulty of Neahkahnie, Frost's group experienced no further troubles. They were hospitably received by several Indians of the Nehalem band of Killamooks, being served fresh venison and steamed crabs. Berry borrowed the description of the steaming process almost word for word (p. 130).

In December, 1852, and in March, 1853, Warren Vaughn made trips down the rugged coast between Clatsop Plains and Tillamook Bay. Although he

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[135]Vaughn, "Settlement," pp. 9, 10, 11. See also Cox, vol. I, p. 73, for another anecdote concerning the necessity of drowning the fleas by soaking clothing in the river.

[136]See also Samuel Dicken, Pioneer Trails of the Oregon Coast (Portland, 1971), p. 19.

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[138]Ibid., pp. 15-6.

[139]One of the few errors of fact in Trask occurs when Roode recites what is known of Murderer's Harbor (p. 73). He correctly states Captain Gray entered the Bay on August 14, 1788, but he goes on to say that Gray reported the entrance closed by a sandbar on July 5, 1788. Captain John Meares so reported, not Gray. See T. C. Elliot, "John Meares Approach to Oregon," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXIX (1928), p. 285.

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The Killamook Indians[141] were clustered in several bands along the streams emptying into what is now called Tillamook Bay. Prior to 1854 the area was variously referred to as Quicksand Bay, Murderer's Harbor, and Killamook Bay.[142] The Killamooks were a branch of the Salish speaking Indians of the Northwest, separated from their linguistic brethren by the intrusion of the Chinooks down the Columbia River.[143] They shared most of their cultural traits with the Chinooks and Clatsops to the north, more so than other Salish groups. Certainly part of the reason for this lies in the large amount of trading that was carried on between the two groups, for most all accounts, from the journals of Lewis and Clark on, mention

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[140]Lewis and Clark also reported the shelter; see Thwaites, vol. III, pp. 323-4.

[141]The name 'Killamook' had numerous variations of spelling due to the difficulty in transforming the gutteral sounds of the native language into written words. The early contacts with the Indians were by people untrained in linguistic symbology, and a profusion of spellings resulted. Herbert C. Taylor, Jr., lists 52 variations culled from journals in "Anthropological Investigation," p. 61; Harvey W. Scott, History of the Oregon Country (Cambridge, 1924), vol. II, p. 310, lists several Taylor missed.

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[143]Newman, p. 95; Scott, vol. II, p. 249; Haruo Aoki, "Salishan Indian languages," Idaho Yesterdays, 12, 1(Spring 1968), p. 9; J. Nielson Barry, "The Indians of Oregon: Geographic Distribution of Linguistic Families," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXVIII (1927), pp. 49-61.

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Many, if not most, of the chroniclers of conditions on the Northwest coast prior to settlement ascribe a certain ferocity to the Killamooks, an attitude which plays a major role in the dramatic workings of Trask. The origins of this ferocity in all probability stem from the incident in which Lopeus of Captain Robert Gray's crew was killed in a scuffle over possession of a sword. Gray named the bay "Murderer's Harbor" as a result, and the 'hard reputation' of the Killamooks was born.[146] Patrick Gass, with the Lewis and Clark expedition, called the Killamooks a "ferocious nation," prompted by an alleged attempted murder of a white concerning a blanket.[147] Yet Clark had a friendly and uneventful visit with the Killamooks when he travelled to their bay to purchase whale blubber. He was able to gain enough information from them to map out their

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lands and estimate their numbers.[148] In 1824 David Douglas journeyed through their territory safely, and found them quietly digging roots.[149] One of the survivors of the Jedediah Smith party massacred on the Umpqua in July 1828, Arthur Black, was escorted overland by the Killamooks to Fort Vancouver without untoward incident.[150] Yet four years later, Dr. John McLoughlin sent Michel LaFramboise to the Killamooks with instructions to avenge the murder of two Hudson's Bay trappers.[151] Although Ross Cox branded the Killamooks as "the most roguish" of the local Indians, both Warren Vaughn and John Frost were treated with considerable hospitality. In fact, Frost noted in his journal that "if they had been disposed to be hostile, they had the best opportunity in the world to cut us off. But they had no such intention, and probably no such thought."[152] In addition Killamook ferocity is implied in the fact that the chiefs of the Killamooks and Clatsops were bitter enemies, according to Wakilkil in Frost's journal. Yet on their return from the Willamette Valley, Frost and Smith met Kotata, the Clatsop tyee who was such an "inveterate" enemy of Kilchis, on a trading mission at Barview, in Tillamook Bay.[153] Finally,

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[148]Thwaites, vol. III, pp. 325-6.

[149]David Douglas, "Sketch of a Journey to the Northwestern Parts of the Continent of North America during the Years 1824, -25, -26, -27," Oregon Historical Quarterly, V (1904), pp. 94-5.

[150]Maurice S. Sullivan, The Travels of Jedediah Smith (Santa Ana, 1934), p. 108; Rich, p. 272.

[151]Burt Brown Barker, Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin Written at Ft. Vancouver, 1829-1832 (Portland, 1948), pp. 268-9. LaFramboise killed six Killamooks and retrieved the horses of the trappers; pp. 271-2.

[152]Cox, vol. I, p. 302; Vaughn, p. 12; Pipes, pp. 247, 255.

[153]Pipes, pp. 240, 351.

lands and estimate their numbers.[148] In 1824 David Douglas journeyed through their territory safely, and found them quietly digging roots.[149] One of the survivors of the Jedediah Smith party massacred on the Umpqua in July 1828, Arthur Black, was escorted overland by the Killamooks to Fort Vancouver without untoward incident.[150] Yet four years later, Dr. John McLoughlin sent Michel LaFramboise to the Killamooks with instructions to avenge the murder of two Hudson's Bay trappers.[151] Although Ross Cox branded the Killamooks as "the most roguish" of the local Indians, both Warren Vaughn and John Frost were treated with considerable hospitality. In fact, Frost noted in his journal that "if they had been disposed to be hostile, they had the best opportunity in the world to cut us off. But they had no such intention, and probably no such thought."[152] In addition Killamook ferocity is implied in the fact that the chiefs of the Killamooks and Clatsops were bitter enemies, according to Wakilkil in Frost's journal. Yet on their return from the Willamette Valley, Frost and Smith met Kotata, the Clatsop _tyee_ who was such an "inveterate" enemy of Kilchis, on a trading mission at Bayview, in Tillamook Bay.[153] Finally,

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[148] Thwaites, vol. III, pp. 325-6.

[149] David Douglas, "Sketch of a Journey to the Northwestern Parts of the Continent of North America during the Years 1824, -25, -26, -27," _Oregon Historical Quarterly_, V (1904), pp. 94-5.

[150] Maurice S. Sullivan, _The Travels of Jedediah Smith_ (Santa Ana, 1934), p. 108; Rich, p. 272.

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Joe Champion, the first white settler in the Tillamook Bay area, noted that "the Indians seemed pleased with the prospect of having the whites to settle among them (Poor Fools)."[154] Thus, the vaunted hostility and ferocity of the Killamooks must be somewhat tempered. Most examples of violent behavior seemed to stem from misunderstandings, and such eruptions were not unusual among the Clatsops, traditionally considered to be a much more peaceful band of natives. Examples of amicable relations with the Killamooks are as prevalent as the more dramatic ones. Although playing up the ferocious nature of the Killamooks in such scenes as the potlatch at the Nehalem village, the capture of Trask by the Killamooks and Illga, the fear of Wakila, the reluctance of most Clatsops to guide Trask to Murderer's Harbor, and even the use of the name Murderer's Harbor rather than the more common reference of Killamook Bay, Berry does point out that the problem between the Clatsops and Killamooks depends pretty much on the personalities involved (p. 18). Berry's soft disclaimer does little to diminish the overall impression of danger as Trask, Charley, and Wakila proceed toward the Killamook land, and such a view is probably not inconsistent with the way the Clatsops generally viewed the Killamook territory, for they seldom went there themselves, concentrating instead on the Columbia River trade. George Gibbs noticed that travellers in the Northwest were "told by every successive band that just beyond them the Indians were very bad; any worse than the last never being reached, but, like an ignis fatuus, keeping a little ahead."[155]

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Like the other Indians in the Northwest, the Killamooks did not necessarily recognize a single chief, at least not one who would hold sway over all band members in all circumstances. Although farther north, groups conceived of chiefs mainly in terms of lineage and to some degree in terms of wealth, the social structure became less rigid as one progresses southward through the linguistic groupings; in Northwestern California, the emphasis for selection of chiefs was heavily on individual ability.[156] In addition, the Coast Salish, to which group the Killamooks belonged, carried a cultural heritage of a looser social structure than the Interior Salish.[157] Generally speaking, then, among the Killamooks, and to some extent the Clatsops as well, the chiefs were chosen on the basis of ability and usefulness more than heredity. As Samuel Parker noted on his tour of the Oregon country in the 1830s, the chief's "only power is influence, and this is in proportion to their wisdom, benevolence, and courage."[158]

Thus, as Charley Kehwa explains to Trask, a tyee does not necessarily speak for all people in the village or band; he gives guidance, but his authority is respected only as long as he retains their respect personally (pp. 220-1). As a result of such a social practice, the rivalry between Kilchis and Illga postulated by Berry is theoretically possible, but was it indeed a fact?

Kilchis was a formidable presence among the coastal Indians: a

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[156] Drucker, pp. 108-128.

[157] Ibid., p. 204.

[158] Parker, p. 250; see also Bancroft, Native Races, vol. I, p. 240.

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man with a mysterious past and strong leadership abilities. Warren Vaughn described Kilchis as "a large man, with African features, his hair was curly, had rather a high forehead, a flat nose, thick lips, and a long chin, when sober-minded he had a sort of scowl on his face, but when pleased his face was smiles all over."[159] At another time Vaughn estimated his weight at two hundred and twenty-five pounds, and concerning his character he noted:

> The Indians used to say that in battle he was one of the bravest of the brave, owing to his great strength and agility. He was a terror to his enemies, to his friends he was sedate and courteous--to his captives and slaves he was humane. As a chief, the Indians learned to respect and obey him. He was exact in his demands and wanted nothing but justice.[160]

Rev. Frost met Kilchis while passing back through the Tillamook Bay area on his way to Clatsop Plains with his cattle in 1841. Although Kilchis "had been represented to us as a fierce, warlike chieftain," he generously assisted them with canoe transportation, after settling a personal conflict with one of Frost's Clatsop men. Frost added that Kilchis "fulfilled his engagement to the letter."[161]

The origins of Kilchis remain obscure and speculative. He is generally thought to be the descendant of a shipwreck survivor, whether from the famous beeswax ship or a mysterious Neahkahnie treasure ship. One early resident of Tillamook Bay claimed that Kilchis was descended from Lopeus, of Captain Gray's crew, who had not died in the 1788 attack but

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[159] Vaughn, "Settlement," p. 15.

[160] Warren H. Vaughn, "Diary," MS in Tillamook County Pioneer Museum (n.d., n.p.). This diary is essentially the same as the typed MS "Early Settlement of Tillamook County, 1851-1858" in University of Oregon Library, but there are several differences in the text, including the above description of Kilchis.

[161] Pipes, p. 349.

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had escaped, married, and sired the great black tyee. Ellen Center, daughter of Kilchis, maintained that her father had no Negroid blood, rather he was a dark-skinned Killamook (of rather large physique, evidently).[162]

Don Berry leaves the legends of Kilchis basically intact; to some extent he heightens the speculation a bit, however, by tendering the suggestion, through the person of a Nehalem shaman, that perhaps Kilchis is a spirit in the form of a man (pp. 21, 189, 241, 275). Berry goes so far as to compare Kilchis to the all-powerful spirit Neahkahnie, tying together the challenge of the mountain (spirit) and the man, the mystery of the mountain and the man, the integrity of the mountain and the man (pp. 21, 238).

Berry assigns great wisdom to the tyee, as well as an understanding of the inevitability of the settlement of white men in the Bay. Although Joe Champion recorded that the Indians "seemed pleased" to have the whites settle among them, two daughters of Illga expressed the situation somewhat differently. As they told an interviewer in the 1930s:

> Although Chief Kilchis was always a true friend to the white settlers, he told his people at the time of Champion's arrival that he did not like to see the white man come to Tillamook because wherever he went he took all the land, but that there was nothing they could do about it, so it was best not to hurt their feelings.[163]

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[162] Vaughn, "Settlement" p. 15; Samuel A. Clarke, Pioneer Days of Oregon History (Portland, 1905), vol. I, pp. 156-61; Letter of Lucy Doughty to Oregonian, June 26, 1930; Letter of Ellen Center to Oregonian, August 5, 1930. Drucker, p. 26, cites the fact that Clatsops and Killamooks were only about 162-165 cm tall. This indicates how large Kilchis was in comparison if he were at least six feet tall (182-183 cm).

[163] Marguerite Stasek, "Interview with Jane and Emma Adams," MS in Tillamook County Pioneer Museum, (n.d., n.p.).

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Warren Vaughn wrote that a stern Kilchis seemed pleased that he had come to Tillamook to settle the land, but such a reaction was not inconsistent with the attitude of Illga's daughters.[164] Don Berry chose to believe the Indian point of view rather than that of Vaughn or Champion (pp.267, 283).

Illga was a leader in Killamook society, but he did not exert nearly the influence of Kilchis. Illga's position seems to have been one associated with hereditary claims to leadership with his band of Killamooks, although such claims were weak among the Coast Salish, as pointed out before. He had far more contact with white society than did Kilchis, and he had been to Astoria on trading missions on occasion. He had married a Clatsop woman by the 1840s, and he later became a baptized Christian, taking on the name Adam and giving 'christian' names to his daughters and wife. Yet Illga definitely played a role subordinate to Kilchis in the affairs of the Killamooks. When Warren Vaughn needed a guide and canoeist to take him upriver from the Bay, Kilchis arranged for Illga, a skilled canim man, to perform the task.[165] Illga, or Tes-tes-no as he was also called,[166] later became the nominal chief after the death of Kilchis in 1870, but his authority was limited to matters which concerned Killamook

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[164] Vaughn, "Settlement," p. 15.

[165] Vaughn, "Settlement," p. 15; Stasek, "Interview."

[166] Don Berry uses the alternate spelling of Yes-yes-no, saying it shows an ambivalence of whites towards Illga. He undoubtedly bases this spelling on Vaughn, "Settlement," p. 36, but that clearly is a mistake in transcription. Vaughn uses the "T" variation on p. 15, and that spelling appears also in Lucy Doughty, untitled MS, Tillamook County Pioneer Museum (1938). Since she had known Illga, the "T" is probably correct.

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relations with the whites. His tenure was short-lived, however, for he was soon replaced, at the behest of the Killamooks, by a man who was educated enough to know how to read and write.[167] There is no record of hostility between Kilchis and Illga, nor, for that matter, between Illga and his own successor; the selection of leaders was a process of consent rather than intrigue, and all men had the right to speak on matters pertaining to the band at council.[168]

The land that Trask finds sets his eyes blazing, setting afire his determination to settle the Bay area (p. 228). The land up the rivers from the Bay was rich land; buried under a thick covering of ferns 8 to 10 feet tall was a broad, fertile flood plain. Most early settlers in the Willamette Valley avoided areas of fern, believing such surfaces to be too boggy for good agriculture. When Rev. Frost wrote later of his trip through Tillamook Bay, he claimed to have seen "no land, worth mentioning, that was fit for cultivation."[169] An article in the Oregon Spectator indicated that the best garden in the country was grown in a fern patch, however, and that ferns were a sign of deep rich earth.[170] In early summer of 1848 George Walling reported that he and a party of men had discovered fertile prairies in the country around "Kilamuke Bay," while they were exploring the coast south from the Columbia River. The men staked

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The land itself is an important element in Berry's writing and in the literature of the West in general. Trask's journey is initiated by an uneasiness with the land on Clatsop Plains. Unable to articulate the cause of his restlessness, Trask can only vaguely speak of the future growth of the area. He sees the Plains, and himself, as limited and blocked in. Berry conceives of man's grasping for land as an attempt at immortality and permanence. Men "can draw no clear line between themselves and the land they walk. They are as much the possessed as the possessors" (p. 224). For Berry the land is elemental to human existence. Coming to terms with it, as the Indians had, was (and is) a primary theme of the West. The only way to do so is "to live in a land, and walk it, and plant it, and harvest it and see it in storm and calm until you got the rhythm of it in your belly" (p. 4). The ultimate goal for a man is to find in the land

> his own image, the solid configuration of himself, worked in materials of better staying quality than bone and wood. If he listens to the river and hears the coursing of blood through his temples; if he looks at a mountain and sees the strength of his own arm; if he is lost in the forest as in the darkest wells of his own mind--then that land is his, and he has lost the faculty of choice concerning it. (p. 226)

The search for land, the search for that plot of earth that matches one's own soul, that is perhaps the strongest theme of western tradition. Trask is moved from the Clatsop Plains, not by any tangible force, but

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rather by a vague uneasiness about the land--it does not fit: he cannot feel the rhythm in his belly. Solomon Smith tells Trask that the restlessness "is in your own belly," thus Trask is not at home, at one, with the land (p. 21). George Roode sees in Trask the same restless need to move to new land, to move into the wild unopened territory, and he sees that need as a very individual matter (pp. 78-9). Each man must carve his own relationship with the land, much as a Northwest Indian must carve his spirit helper after the Searching.

While man's spirit is in the land, the land itself and the elements have their own spirits. Just as Kilchis assumes an affinity with the god Kahnie (pp. 21, 238), the mountain Neahkahnie is somewhat more than the place where Kahnie lives in spirit. The mountain takes on the personification of the spirit: Charley, Celiast, and even Smith are all reticent to relinquish the notion that the mountain may be the body of the god. For them it is more than just a mountain (pp. 22-3). As Charley explains to Trask, "This is our land, and these are our gods. The gods and the land are the same, and the people are part of both"(p. 97). Trask senses a personal victory in his battles with the land and the sea on the trip down the coast; he observes the struggle between the moon and storm clouds, feeling himself to be a part of it; while sitting warm and dry in his cabin, during a rain, he has "the notion of a minor skirmish won with an unnamed enemy" (p. 6). The land and the elements are not to be owned or battled as themselves, however, but to be encountered as spirits. The spiritual claim on the land bestows on man a claim to immortality. The environment as a major actor in the literature of the West, along with its personification, its animation, and its spiritual presence, is one of

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the most important cornerstones of western literature.

The culture of the Killamooks and the Clatsops, both material and ritual, were similar to one another, but because of widespread contact with the white man before being studied by trained cultural anthropologists, what is known of the cultures is somewhat limited. Early visitors were not necessarily good observers or recorders, but because of the similarity of most Northwest groups to one another, much can be inferred from studies of cultures farther north completed prior to significant white contact. With a few exceptions, Don Berry provides a competent and accurate picture of Northwest Indian life. Prior to white settlement, the natives generally were naked, although the women did at times wear woven bark skirts, while both men and women resorted to woven capes to ward off the rain. It was not unusual for them to be mostly naked even in the cold of winter.[172] Most all the coast Indians flattened the heads of the freeborn children, while slave-born children were usually not subjected to the process except under rare circumstances.[173] The term 'flathead' was not applied to those Indians of the coast who cradled the heads of their infants, however, rather it was applied by the coastal Indians to their linguistic relatives inland, whose heads were flat on top rather than sloping. On two occasions Berry calls the coastal Indians 'flatheads' which is a white, not an Indian, perception (pp. 97, 169). According

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[173] Ross, Catlin, plates 121, 123; see also photographs in American Heritage Book of Indians (New York, 1961), p. 292, and The Great Northwest (New York, 1973), p. 171.

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to William Clark the natives were

> low in statu/r/e reather diminutive, and illy shapen; poss/ess/ing thick broad flat feet, thick ankles, crooked legs wide mouths thick lips, nose moderately large, fleshey, wide at the extremity with large nostrils, black eyes and black coarse hair.[174]

The women usually had thick legs, swollen by poor circulation due to tight anklets of beads. The men had muscular upper bodies from the extensive canoe paddling.[175]

The languages of the Clatsops and the Killamooks were quite different from one another, the former of the Chinook linguistic group and the latter of the Salish; yet communication between the two was possible in the widely used trading language, 'Chinook jargon.' This was a combination of several languages, including after a while some English and French terms, based roughly on the Chinookian language because of that tribe's central role in coastal trading. The real Kilchis, however, was not conversant in the jargon, as Berry has him be.[176]

The Killamooks lived in large, multiple family lodges made of hewn planks up to several feet wide. The lodges were built low, but were dug

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[174] Thwaites, vol. IV, pp. 183-4.

[175] Thwaites, vol. III, pp. 241-2; Alexander Ross, Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River (London, 1849), pp. 88-93; Cox, vol. I, pp. 69, 303-4.

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to William Clark the natives were

> low in statu/r/e reather diminutive, and illy shapen; poss/ess/ing thick broad flat feet, thick ankles, crooked legs wide mouths thick lips, nose moderately large, fleshey, wide at the extremity with large nostrils, black eyes and black coarse hair.[174]

The women usually had thick legs, swollen by poor circulation due to tight anklets of beads. The men had muscular upper bodies from the extensive canoe paddling.[175]

The languages of the Clatsops and the Killamooks were quite different from one another, the former of the Chinook linguistic group and the latter of the Salish; yet communication between the two was possible in the widely used trading language, 'Chinook jargon.' This was a combination of several languages, including after a while some English and French terms, based roughly on the Chinookian language because of that tribe's central role in coastal trading. The real Kilchis, however, was not conversant in the jargon, as Berry has him be.[176]

The Killamooks lived in large, multiple family lodges made of hewn planks up to several feet wide. The lodges were built low, but were dug

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[174] Thwaites, vol. IV, pp. 183-4.

[175] Thwaites, vol. III, pp. 241-2; Alexander Ross, Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River (London, 1849), pp. 88-93; Cox, vol. I, pp. 69, 303-4.

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out inside to give ample standing room. In addition, the digging provided a bench which ran the circumference of the lodge, which was used for sitting and sleeping. All manner of goods, equipment, and foodstuffs "hung, lay, or stood in endless variety and confusion."[177] Berry's descriptions of the Nehalem and Killamook lodges are vivid and accurate, except he describes the walls as consisting of "cedar planks stuck vertically in the ground" (p. 165). Only in the Northern California groups did the Indians have vertical plank walls. The Killamooks used horizontal planking.[178]

Generally the customs and rituals in Trask are true to what is known of the practices of the Killamooks and Clatsops and what can be inferred from groups in the North. Some of the native customs have been adapted by Berry to serve his own purposes, yet such adaptations do not do great violence to the historical practice.

The potlatch had various forms among the different peoples in the Northwest and there are more interpretations of its meaning and significance than there are forms of it.[179] The potlatch could substitute for warfare activity as rivals vied to outdo one another by bestowing gifts on each other. It was a method for increasing one's status within the band by demonstrating one's ability to distribute wealth. On occasion a person would destroy property to show a contempt for wealth or to demonstrate an ability to afford to destroy wealth. A potlatch could be used to show esteem for another by giving gifts to recognize another's importance

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[177] Gibbs, p. 174.

[178] Newman, p. 84.

[179] See Tom McFeat, ed., Indians of the North Pacific Coast (Seattle, 1967), essays by Franz Boas, Helen Codere, H. G. Barnett, and Philip Drucker, pp. 72-107.

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and status. There is some dispute whether the actual giving or the subsequent receiving validated a person's status. Some natives used the potlatch in rivalry, others in friendship. The competitive potlatch was found more in the North, but not necessarily only in the North. Normally the potlatch occurred under formal conditions for specific occasions, rather than as an impromptu affair, as happens in Trask, but too little is verifiable concerning the potlatching of the Indians of the lower Northwest to state that Berry's conjectures are not valid.

Mourning for the dead was limited to the wife or mother of the deceased, and was not normally a male function. The women would have the duty of wailing for the dead for a set period, and they would have their hair cut off just above the ears and a small bunch above each ear tied into a 'widow string'.[180] Charley and Trask cut off their forelocks. The name of the dead person is not mentioned for a long time, and the deceased is referred to as "him-who-died" or "he-who-is-dead."[181] Those who died were placed in canoes with their worldly possessions, which in turn were set on raised platforms with the head of the deceased to the west. Lewis and Clark noted that the Killamooks placed the bodies in oblong plank boxes inside the canoes and rested the canoes on the ground rather than on a platform.[182] When a person first died, or was dying, he would be placed in a lodge while the shaman attempted to bring his spirit back from the land

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[180]Gibbs, p. 211; Pipes, p. 62.

[181]Gibbs, p. 210.

[182]Bancroft, Native Races, vol. I, p. 246; Gibbs, p. 201; Thwaites, vol. III, p. 323.

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of the dead.[183] The band would perform a spirit dance, pounding carved poles with deer hoof rattles against the boards at the ridge of the roof. The dance would sometimes continue for days while the shaman worked to recover the spirit.[184] This practice is counter to the claim that Berry makes that the fear of the dead was so intense that the Indians would not allow a body to remain long in a lodge. Such was not the case, unless the death occurred at or during the salmon runs; in that case, the dead--or dying in some instances--were quickly buried, for not to do so would interrupt or foreclose a salmon run. Such action stemmed from concern for their staple crop, not from fear of the dead. There was a taboo against disturbing the burial canoes and their contents, but this is different from a fear of the dead themselves.[185] Berry evidently misinterpreted spawning time fear, either accidently or purposefully, in his effort to show the power of Trask's spirit helper in that he was able to have no fear of the dead. The Killamooks set great store in the power to travel to the spirit land and return, such as Kilchis does for Trask, but not necessarily in the ability to touch or tolerate a dead person.[186]

The concept of a personal guardian spirit was a basic principle of Northwest Coast religion. In order to gain the favor of a spirit helper,

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[183]Drucker, p. 160.

[184]Drucker, p. 103; Vaughn, "Settlement," pp. 11-2; Franz Boas, "Notes on the Tillamook Indians," University of California Publications in American Archeology and Ethnology, XX (1923), pp. 13-16.

[185]Elizabeth D. Jacobs, compiler, Nehalem Tillamook Tales (Eugene, 1959), pp. 182-3. The tale of "Two Boys Rob the Dead" tells of two boys who have been told that their faces will become twisted if they disturb the dead in their canoes.

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a youth would embark on a solitary journey into the woods, on which he "cleansed himself of taints offensive to supernatural beings by fasting, bathing in icy pools, scrubbing away the clinging aura of human sensuality with harsh flesh-mortifying bundles of twigs."[187] While on the Searching the youth would seek a vision of his spirit helper: a salmon for a would-be fisherman, a beaver for a canoe maker, a snake or serpent for a tamanawis man. There was not necessarily any requirement that the searcher go any certain distance away from the village. The boys would build rock piles while on the Searching and there are remains of those piles fairly close to the village sites of the Killamooks on the Bay.[188]

Berry draws the Searching of Trask with particular intensity, which brings to life the power of the ritual and shows a depth of understanding of the Indian view of life. Trask's existence is reduced to its very essence, to the depths of his soul, as he endures the trial. His survival hangs on the tiny spark of fire, the barest minimum of life. The Searching enables Berry to strip away Trask's ties to his white culture, reduce him to near non-existence, then allow him to grow in spiritual and physical power, to become strong through an understanding of himself, his limits, and his place in the world. For Berry, that is the purpose of art: to seek out truth and meaning beneath the sensory experience in order to determine "what man's place in the universal process is."[189]

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[187] Drucker, p. 158; Jacobs, "Raven and Ice," pp. 15-9.

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IV. USE AND ABUSE OF HISTORY

The power of _Trask_ as a novel derives from the clarity of expression with which Don Berry captures the spiritual experience of the Searching. From the ethos of the medicine man Charley Kehwa and the mountain man Elbridge Trask, Berry distills a syncretistic experience; and he does so in a way understandable to a culture that not only does not embrace such an experience but also does not have the everyday mechanics to comprehend the experience. Except within the confines of religious ecstasy, the white European culture does not allow for a spiritual experience, while other cultures, Asian, African, and Native American, accept such an experience as an integral part of the life process. _Trask_ succeeds in translating that experience into terms that are acknowledged and accepted in western culture. In fact, Berry uses the themes and traditions of the American West, demonstrating that, whether recognized or not, the potential for a spiritual experience lies at the heart of the New World.

The translation of the mystical union with the environment into terms of the West depends on a firm factual foundation. Unless Berry provides an accurate setting for his novel, the believability--and thus the success--of his message will be lost. If the characters, the confrontations, and the settings are not drawn from the historical record, then the plausibility of the novel suffers, and the possibility of a convincing spiritual experience vanishes.

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are not inconsistent with those settings. Wakila and Charley Kehwa are coined from the Clatsop society as it was, and as it was portrayed, in 1848, although they are on opposite sides of the coin. Wakila is evidently based on the Clatsop youth Wakilkil who accompanied Rev. John Frost and Solomon Smith in 1841. Because so little is known of the historical character, however, Berry had a free hand in shaping Wakila, at least free within the confines of the Clatsop society at the time. As the most fictional character, Charley Kehwa relies not on a historical person but on the cultural integrity of the Clatsop way of life prior to white contact and settlement. In serving a very symbolic role, Charley is the repository of the wisdom and logic of the Northwest cultural system. At the same time, he is a fully developed and human character, a rarity for an Indian in American literature.

Kilchis and Illga are based on actual persons, which provides more of a problem. In order to create drama and further the plot, Berry has simplified the historical characters into caricatures. Kilchis becomes more than a powerful _tyee_ for Berry; he takes on an aura of wisdom and power that emanates to those around him; people are immediately in awe of him. Yet Frost and Champion did not experience such a feeling when they met him. Their characterizations showed a more simple and naive nature for him. He was one of the "Poor Fools" of Champion's account, and he was no more powerful in the mind of Frost than Kotata of the Clatsops. On the other hand, Kilchis did allow a peaceful settlement in his country and worked to avoid conflicts between whites and the Killamooks. The mechanism of the accommodation may be conjectural on Berry's part, but an accommodation did take place.

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The role of Illga has also been altered from what is known about his historical character. Regardless of whether Illga had hereditary claims as _tyee_, there is no evidence to indicate any friction between Kilchis and him; in fact, there is no reason to suppose that the two could not have complemented each other's position. Northwest society certainly allowed for a variety of leadership roles. On the other hand, human nature being what it is, the two men could have been at odds. It is clear, however, that he was not considered to be evil incarnate, as Berry's simplified portrayal might have one believe.

The fictional Elbridge Trask presents a more important question. Berry stated in his comments in _Saturday Review_ that "Trask, as he appears in the book, must be considered fictional, although the background given him is factual, and the events of the story are certainly not inconsistent with his historical character."[190] Such a statement is open to discussion, a fact that Berry later acknowledges in an interview. The fictional Elbridge Trask in many ways does ring true to his historical counterpart. He is somewhat impetuous and impatient, confident in his physical prowess. He insists on undertaking the Searching, even under adverse conditions and without proper training and preparation. In so doing, he resembles the Trask who wanted to rush off to hunt buffalo without resting his horses, as reported by Osborne Russell. The fictional Trask displays a brooding fascination with the struggle between the rising moon and the storm clouds rushing from the west, a fascination reflective of the practical curiosity of the Trask who timed the spoutings of a geyser for a day and

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a night.

Yet there are points of divergence as well. In the novel, Trask appears aloof, alone, and brooding, while in fact he was very sociable and outgoing, always in the middle of social gatherings. Heightening the effect of his isolation and the individuality of his endeavor is Berry's depopulation of the Trask family. Although retaining Hannah, Berry erases the five children the couple had in 1848. (In a balanced manner he also eliminates the numerous Smith children, Illga's large family, and the four wives of Kilchis. It makes a cleaner story.) On perhaps the most crucial point of all, however, the character unfortunately goes astray. The real Trask would not have undertaken the trip on his own, for he seldom if ever took a leadership role and did not display the driven forcefulness that Berry ascribes to him. On the few occasions when he did assume any leadership, circumstances usually thrust the role upon him.

Osborne Russell described him as "a great, easy, good-natured fellow."[191] Bethenia Owens-Adair recalled that the Trask of her childhood on Clatsop Plains had "a big heart and good, generous nature." The gregarious Trask would meet most all the in-coming families on Clatsop Plains at Tansey Point of Skipanon and invite them down to his home or other suitable shelter.[192] Seemingly he was never too busy with his farm work to take time off to meet the newcomers, or to undertake something more interesting or enjoyable. Like many other former mountain men, Trask

[191] Russell, p. 96.

[192] Owens-Adair, p. 236.

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did not take easily to farming. Although never having received any special skills in carpentry, he seldom missed a chance to help build a mill. He did not seem to take a lead in the mill construction, however, rather he followed somebody else's initiative. Once in Tillamook Bay away from his brother-in-law and mountain friends, he did not join any mill projects, but instead settled into his farming.[193]

When Trask had trapped in the mountains, he had tended to follow the lead of Osborne Russell, although we really only have Russell's word for it. Yet that in itself is a good indication that Trask was not a leader: since no other journal, diary, or reminiscence mentions Trask, he must have played a rather subdued role. Part of his anonymity in the mountains can be explained by Russell's assessment of his wilderness skills, but Trask's later life demonstrates further his disinclination to assume the responsibility of leadership. Furthermore, Trask later showed a tendency to misjudge situations and to err in his assessments of the abilities of others. This latter pattern is not a dominant one in his life, but enough instances are recorded to make it a significant facet of his personality and to affect his "historical character."

Despite Trask's youth in the seafaring town of Beverly, Massachusetts, and his several years at sea as an able-bodied seaman, he did not serve as captain on the Skipanon when the Clatsop men sailed to California. Captain McEwan was brought into the operation for that role, although captains papers were easily obtainable with little formality at the

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[193]His brother-in-law William Perry did build another mill when he moved to Douglas County. Owens-Adair, p. 235.

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time.[194] According to Trask's son-in-law, Warren Vaughn, he did later take out papers, but in the interim he sailed a sloop owned by a Mr. Wilson of Salem for commercial purposes without them.[195] Thus captain's papers were not a stern necessity and, if desired, were easily obtainable. Yet Trask avoided the position in 1848-9.

An incident happened in August of 1846 in which Trask was unable to disarm a drunken man intent on shooting Alexander Lattie of the Hudson's Bay Company. John McClure, himself married to a Chinook woman, called Lattie's Clatsop wife a "damned whore" whereupon she cut him with a knife. McClure got his rifle from his cabin. Trask, who had been on a social visit to McClure with Hannah, attempted to take away the gun. He failed despite his size, and when the rifle discharged during the struggle, Trask and Hannah ran, nearly being hit with ensuing volleys. Trask's lack of success is noteworthy in light of the fact that the smaller Lattie returned, disarmed McClure, and pushed him over an embankment, despite a bullet wound in the arm.[196]

Trask was not the first farmer to leave Clatsop Plains, nor was he the first to see the difficulty of farming the area's sandy soil. Solomon Smith stopped farming and entered the retail business in Astoria in 1849, and William Perry moved his family to the greener pastures of Douglas

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[194] The story of Joseph Gale and the Star of Oregon is a case in point. See Horace S. Lyman, History of Oregon: The Growth of an American State (New York, 1903), vol. III, pp. 209-13.

[195] Vaughn, "Settlement," p. 76.

[196] Vaughn, "Lattie's Journal," p. 235; Ruby and Brown, pp. 203, 212-3.

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County in 1851.[197] It was not until 1852 that Trask reacted to the low quality of the soil, a quality that Rev. John H. Frost had noticed as early as 1841, and Rev. George H. Atkinson recognized immediately in 1848, noting in his diary that although potatoes grew in abundance, "the soil on Clatsop . . . renders the wheat crop poor."[198] Yet even when Trask left the Plains, he did so in the wake of another, this time Nathan Dougherty. Unlike Trask, Dougherty assumed a leadership role in the affairs of Tillamook Bay for some time to come.

One might assume that Trask himself had become somewhat of a leader when he was elected Justice of the Peace for Tillamook County in 1854. A closer examination of the election, however, does not necessarily bear out this assumption. Twenty-seven men of 33 legal voters cast ballots that June 5th and twelve of them were elected to office. Others received votes but did not win office. Trask himself won by only one vote.[199] By far the majority of the men in the Bay area were young bachelors, and it is therefore not really surprising that those men with families were looked upon as community leaders, both because of their more settled situations and because of their ages. Trask at thirty-nine was one of the elder statesmen, yet he was narrowly elected.[200] Trask did not take on an office at the next election: a fleeting leadership role at best.

For the first two years of settlement in Tillamook Bay, the settlers

[197] "Solomon H. Smith," p. 88; Owens-Adair, p. 235.

[198] Lee and Frost, p. 85; Rockwood, "Atkinson," p. 173.

[199] Vaughn, "Settlement," pp. 43-4.

[200] Ibid., pp. 43, 46; Census of 1854, Tillamook County Pioneer Museum.

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[199] Vaughn, "Settlement," pp. 43-4.

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were particularly dependent upon the sloop of Captain Menes for supplies. Trask was generally the man whom Menes contacted about his business in the Bay. In 1853 Trask ran the sloop down from Astoria to Tillamook for the captain, after which Menes took his boat to San Francisco to sell. He was to return to his home in the East, reorganize his affairs, and bring west a pre-fabricated steamboat for the coastal trade. He died before the project could be carried out, and it was to Trask that the sad news came. Trask owed his intermediary role in all probability less to any leadership he asserted than to the fact that both he and Captain Menes hailed from Beverly, Massachusetts.[201]

That Trask made misjudgements of character is well illustrated by several episodes. During an uneasy period of Indian/white relations in 1855-1856, Trask joined the semi-panic of the other settlers in the Bay and took refuge in a fort hastily constructed on a hill on his land. Yet the Tillamook Indians remained calm and peaceful, even consenting to turn over their firearms to the settlers in exchange for potatoes.[202]

In 1853 Trask entrusted a large quantity of supplies to three Nehalem Indians to take by canoe to Tillamook from Astoria. The Indians used part of their advance wages to buy a keg of whiskey and then proceeded to become

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drunk. They capsized the canoe on the Columbia River bar and lost Trask's entire cargo.[203]

Again, in 1858 Trask misjudged the character of the person he chose to captain the schooner he built with John and Nelson Higginbotham, the former being his son-in-law. On the maiden voyage of the Rosaltha to San Francisco, Captain Harris managed to trade poorly for the cargo and the final outfitting work that was done. The result was that the schooner was libeled and sold; Trask lost the value of the ship and cargo, without a penny in return.[204]

Still and all, Elbridge Trask was a likeable and generous man, a man who did his part in the community in a practical manner. He brought into the Bay area the first ox team and the second plow; he provided his tool shed and his few books for a school until more formal arrangements could be made; he donated wheat and tallow to the men who built the first ship in the Bay; and his house served as the post office for a time and was often the scene of get-togethers.[205]

From the foregoing emerges an Elbridge Trask quite different from the fictional character Berry creates. The real Trask was seldom, if ever, a leader, and the evidence appears sufficient to say that he would not have

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[203] Vaughn, "Settlement," pp. 31-2.

[204] Lewis and Dryden, p. 69; Vaughn, "Settlement," pp. 82-6. Vaughn credits Trask with a voyage to San Francisco before hiring Harris to take the schooner down, but Lewis and Dryden indicates Harris took the maiden voyage. Since the loss was due to contract work being done to finish the rigging, Lewis and Dryden's story is correct.

[205] Vaughn, "Settlement," pp. 30, 34, 51, 57; Fred Lockley, "Impressions and Observations of the Journal Man," Oregon Journal, Sept. 19, 1923, (Rhoda Johnson interview); Landis MS.

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initiated a coastal exploration. Berry's handling of the character Trask is an abuse of the historical character, for it alters the man in such a way as to create confusion not edification. Don Berry conceded in a 1974 interview that he had done a major revision of the historical Trask in his novel:

> As a person, he did not resemble the Trask in the book at all. The personal character of the Trask in the book for various reasons was developed as I was writing the book. He turned out quite different than the Elbridge Trask historically had been, and it was not for the purpose of painting an accurate portrait of a person that I did the book.[206]

While Berry may concede the dissimilarity of the two Trasks in the interview, he does not do so in the novel. In fact the opposite is true: Berry goes to great lengths to identify his Trask with the original through physical, chronological, and personal details. His size, his age, his New England background, his wife, his friends, his presence in Oregon, his mountain experiences; all of these tie the two characters together for the reader. Such a union would not cause a problem if in fact the two were the same character. But the fictional character does not form a logical, if conjectural, extension of the historical character. Had Berry created a similar independent character, severed from the factual one, he would not have altered the power of his novel. In his second novel, Moontrap, he creates two characters (Johnson Monday and Old Webb) who are no less believable in their roles than Trask, but they are not attached to any specific historical characters.

This problem of the use or abuse of historical characters in a work of fiction is a thorny one. On one hand, the author needs to try to hang

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his story on historical pegs, some of the best of which are historical characters; but on the other hand, the author must be careful not to distort the factual record of the historical character. All writers of historical fiction must come to grips with the problem. A. B. Guthrie maintains that an author should avoid the use of historical characters in the main body of the plot, for a writer will inevitably distort the character. Instead, Guthrie attempts to keep the historical characters on the sidelines and ascribe to them thoughts and words drawn only from their own diaries, letters, or publications.[207]

An example of such a technique is Guthrie's introduction of Osborne Russell into The Big Sky. Russell's thoughts and words are drawn almost verbatim from his Journal of a Trapper and thus give an accurate reflection of the man. To a lesser extent, Don Berry does the same for Joe Meek in Moontrap, drawing reported conversations from Frances Fuller Victor's River of the West. He does not limit himself to that, however, but goes on to engage Meek in thoughts and situations of his own fabrication. In Trask Berry uses some accounts virtually verbatim, but he ascribes the words to persons other than the original authors. For example, Solomon Smith describes the path around the face of Neahkahnie with the same terms John Frost used in his journal; Trask and Wakila stalk the wolf/skunk that Warren Vaughn encountered; and Trask recalls his days of hunger in the mountains by laying claim to the "hands in the anthill" story that originated with Joe Meek. Trask could just as easily have recalled that Meek

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[207]Guthrie, pp. 55-6; see also Thomas Griffith, "Playing with the Facts," Time, Sept. 19, 1977, and "Scandal as Entertainment," Time, Sept. 19, 1977.

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was the one who did it as claim the feat for himself. Historical fiction does not require that the novelist include the famous persons of the past, and there is not necessarily any loss of authenticity in excluding historical figures from the main plot and assigning them minor roles. On the other hand, inclusion of historical characters does not guarantee an accurate setting by any mean, to which too many 'historical' novels in the marketplace testify. Inclusion of historical figures does place a further burden on the author to guard against distortion. There must be a basis in fact for the actions and motivations assigned to historical characters, while fictional characters need only have a plausible basis in history. The use to which Berry puts Elbridge Trask distorts the historical record of a factual person.

Once past the manipulations of historical characters, Trask reflects an effective use of history, rather than an abuse of it. In factual and thematic content, Don Berry has used his sources well. The location of Clatsop villages and settlers' cabins, the geographical descriptions of Clatsop Plains, the Oregon coast, and Tillamook Bay not only reflect what is present today, but more important what was there in the late 1840s. Berry uses well the problem of soil infertility and stunted growth to provide a basis for Trask's journey down the coast. The Killamook villages, the descriptions of the natives, the material culture of the Indians, and the Chinook jargon are all faithful to the historical sources.

Historical trends and themes are put to use to provide a background for the story. The precarious Clatsop existence on the edge of the dominant white society, their loss of cultural integrity in the onslaught of white settlement provides Berry with a pathetic Wakila. At heart, Wakila

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has the potential to be a strong Indian, steeped in his Clatsop heritage, but because of historical circumstances, he cannot survive. His death draws Trask and Charley Kehwa together, and it opens the path for Trask to move into a spiritual union with and understanding of the world. That path eventually leads to Trask's Searching and Vision, as well as Charley's death. The Vanishing American is the key for Trask--and, with him, all white society--to come to terms with nature.

The Vanishing American and vanishing wilderness are signs that all is not well with the white society. The dying Clatsop band and the stagnating white settlement provide a base for Berry to examine the tensions between settlement and nature. Berry embarks a microcosm of Clatsop Plains, with all its historical dynamics, on a journey seeking a new location, a new beginning, a new understanding. Trask, the restless curious white; Wakila, the doomed Clatsop; Charley Kehwa, the repository of the integrity of Clatsop heritage; and Doctor McLoughlin, the nimble but aging packhorse, carrying on his back the supplies for a new settlement; all travelling over Neahkahnie, the body of Kahnie, chief spirit in coastal lore. The historical decline of the Clatsops culminates as Doctor slips, pulling Wakila to his death, just as the Hudson's Bay Company had brought the means for new settlement and in the process interrupted the traditional middleman role of the Clatsops and visited destruction on them. The disoriented Clatsop, grasping the reins of the packhorse, depending more and more on its baggage, cannot maintain his hold on the mountain in which is vested the spirit of Kahnie.

The choice of Neahkahnie for a central role springs from its historical setting in Indian lore and its mysterious past. Not only did the

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mountain represent the spirit Kahnie for the Indians, but it also was a focus of speculation for the settlers in the area. Early records are chock full of legends and stories of vast treasures buried on the mountain.[208] Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century treasure seekers have scoured the slopes of Neahkahnie looking for the chests of gold supposedly stored there by pirates or shipwrecked crews, driven in their search by puzzling inscriptions chiseled in the rock. Berry skillfully blends the Neahkahnie of the imagination with the reality of treacherous paths to provide a dramatic crossing into the land of the Killamooks, the land of the unknown, the landscape of the soul.

In a similar manner, Don Berry uses the mystery surrounding the origin of Kilchis to create a character who is somewhat larger than life. Whence came Kilchis? is still an open question, and his dominance of Killamook society as a black tyee is intriguing because of it.

Berry adds to the aura of mystery and danger by emphasizing the ferocity and isolation of the Killamooks. The success of Trask's and Charley's search is in real doubt as they approach the unknown quantity of the Killamook band. Berry chose the ominous 'Killamook' over the more neutral 'Tillamook' or more common 'Killamuck'. Most of the local accounts from the time used 'Killamuck' although all were in use. Berry evidently chose the ending for familiarity and the 'k' for effect.[209] Berry also brings

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Lopeus and Murderer's Harbor to bear on the ferocity and unpredictability of the Killamooks, all of which provides a suitably treacherous and unknown landscape over which Trask must accomplish his mission.

The character of Illga follows in many ways the Killamook man in the Nehalem legend of a shipwrecked sailor named Sandy.[210] The sailor is saved from the ocean waves by Ona, the object of the young Killamook's affections. Ona nurses Sandy to health and falls in love with him. Ravaged by jealousy and hatred, the Killamook, who is the brother of the Killamook chief, plots vengeance against Sandy, but is killed by his intended victim. The rage, the hatred, and the bitterness at being thwarted in his plans, provide Berry with a historical (of sorts) base for the devil incarnate Illga, who is likewise thwarted in his plans.

In addition to the Neahkahnie, Kilchis, and Nehalem legends, Berry draws on the tradition of insider/outsider in the Tillamook Bay area. The Killamooks were isolated from the other Indians along the Oregon coast both by language and by geography. Although some communication did take place with other Indians, the Killamooks generally stayed within the confines of the Bay. The settlers who came to the Bay carried on the tradition in their own way. Mail was sporadic for many years, relying on the travels of private individuals for delivery to and from Astoria. Roads were difficult and railroads late in being built. Even as late as the 1930s, persons were seen as insiders and outsiders.[211] Such a tradition provided Berry with a historical setting for exploration, discovery, and

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[210] Clarke, pp. 142-54.

[211] Ida M. Orcutt, Tillamook: Land of Many Waters (Portland, 1951), pp. 69-77.

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fulfillment. In Trask nature becomes the measure of inside/outside, the measure of spiritual rebirth.

What emerges from Trask is a hero that Leslie Fiedler has called the "Essential Westerner," a new man who is neither white nor red and who is created in the wilderness by encounter with the Indian mystique.[212] Trask moves inevitably toward the Indian world and takes his place not as a former mountain man, explorer, and harbinger of democratic settlement, but as the New Western hero who is aware of his role in history and of the costs of the progress he brings. The Vanishing American is no longer an obstacle but a vehicle through which the hero replaces the false progress of what Berry terms Roman road-building with the true progress of union with nature.

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[212] Fiedler, p. 118; Gurian, p. 136.

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