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**"A WEIRD AND WANING RACE":
REPRESENTATIONS OF NATIVE PEOPLE IN THE WORKS OF
DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT**

by

Lisa Salem, B.A.

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in Canadian Studies**

Carleton University

OTTAWA, Ontario

March 15, 1993

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**"A Weird and Waning Race": Representations of
Native People in the Works of Duncan Campbell Scott"**

**submitted by Lisa Salem, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts**

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Thesis Supervisor

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**Director
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April 1993

ABSTRACT

During the period in which he occupied the position of Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, administering the government's policy of civilization and assimilation, Duncan Campbell Scott also enjoyed a successful career as a poet. His work includes several poems which have become known collectively as the "Indian Poems." Through these poems, Duncan Campbell Scott found imaginative expression for his complex personal beliefs and feelings regarding Native people. This dissertation will examine the writings of Duncan Campbell Scott, including several of the "Indian Poems," four short stories and a selection of his non-fiction material, as a means toward gaining insight into the ideologies which informed these works.

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INTRODUCTION: "THE CLAIMS OF LIFE AND THE CLAIMS OF ART"

In a paper presented at the Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium which was held in April, 1979, at the University of Ottawa, Robert L. McDougall remarked that, in the life of Duncan Campbell Scott, "the Indian question is indeed a fascinating area where the claims of life and the claims of art are as neatly juxtaposed as one could wish."¹ The question of Duncan Campbell Scott's attitude toward Native people has recently become the focus of much speculation.

Duncan Campbell Scott, born in Ottawa in 1862, was the son of a Methodist clergyman. He joined the Department of Indian Affairs as a copy clerk at the age of seventeen, and remained with the department until his retirement in 1931, eventually attaining the post of Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. During the period in which he worked within the Department of Indian Affairs, assisting in the administration of a federal policy of civilization and assimilation, Scott produced several volumes of poetry. These include a number of poems which have become known collectively as his "Indian poems." Through these poems, Duncan Campbell Scott found imaginative expression for an ideology which, throughout his career within the Department of Indian Affairs, informed his administration of a government policy of systematic assimilation.

Over the last two decades, a number of critical appraisals of Scott's "Indian poems" have appeared, yet few have attempted to examine the ideology which underlies both the poetry and the

¹ Robert L. McDougall, "D. C. Scott: A Trace of Documents and a Touch of Life," *The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium*, ed. K.P. Stich (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980), 140.

administrative career of Duncan Campbell Scott.² The majority of critics who have addressed Scott's "Indian poems" in the past have instead concerned themselves with the apparent contradiction between Scott's treatment of Native people in his poetry, and his advocacy of assimilation in his official capacity as the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. Writers such as A.J.M. Smith, Stanley Dragland, Melvin Dagg, Gerald Lynch, and Robert L. McDougall have suggested that Scott held one set of ideals for what McDougall refers to as his "inner life," which was expressed in his poetry, and a very different set of ideals for his "outer life" as an administrator of federal Indian policy. As Stanley Dragland has remarked, "hindsight or no it is hard to reconcile the official Scott with the poet we know from the Indian poems."³

Depending on the individual writer, Scott emerges from such appraisals as either a racist hypocrite or, as Melvin Dagg maintains, a sensitive civil servant who was able to justify the assimilationist policies of his department only by sublimating his private feelings, which then surfaced in his poetry and short

² Notable exceptions include L.P. Weis's "D.C. Scott's View of History and the Indians," *Canadian Literature* no. 111 (winter 1986): 27-40, and "Chapter Nine: The Bureaucrat's Indian" in Daniel Francis's *The Imaginary Indian* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 196-218. E. Palmer Patterson's "The Poet and the Indian: Indian Themes in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott and John Collier," *Ontario History* LIX, 2 (June 1967): 69-78, although written more than twenty years ago, also addresses this issue.

³ Stanley Louis Dragland, *Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism*, ed. S.L. Dragland (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1974), 180.

fiction.⁴ It is generally agreed that Duncan Campbell Scott's administrative writing is characterized by what Gerald Lynch has termed a "colonist's/conqueror's stance,"⁵ while his poetry reveals sympathy and compassion for the Native peoples. As Dagg wrote in 1974, "If anything, we should expect these two distinctly different types of writing to reveal different, not similar, aspects of a single man."⁶ However, an extensive examination of Scott's writing, undertaken for this thesis, reveals a much greater consistency than previously thought to exist.

The policy which Duncan Campbell Scott, as the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in Canada, inherited and administered from 1913 until 1932, was based on the idea that the Native peoples possessed an essentially "savage" nature and therefore needed to be guided into civilization by the representatives of the British Empire. As Scott wrote in 1931, the goal of federal Indian policy was that "the Government will in time reach the end of its responsibility as the Indians progress into civilization and finally disappear as a separate and distinct people, not by race extinction but by gradual assimilation with their fellow-citizens."⁷

⁴ Melvin H. Dagg, "Scott and the Indians," *Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism*, 181-90.

⁵ Gerald Lynch, "An Endless Flow: D. C. Scott's Indian Poems," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1982): 29.

⁶ Dagg, 181.

⁷ Scott, *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1931), 27.

In his professional capacity, Scott considered himself to be responsible for urging the Native peoples toward "civilization" and ensuring that they did not return to "savage" ways. As a poet, although he often expressed sympathy and compassion toward his individual Native characters, Scott also expressed the view that the North American Native peoples as a collective cultural group had enjoyed an age of savage glory and vitality which was fixed firmly in the past. To Scott, Native culture was obsolete, and the Native peoples' only hope for survival was to relinquish their culture, customs and traditions in order to merge with the general population.

At the Duncan Campbell Scott symposium, Robert McDougall suggested that, although Scott's life contained "no surprises: no fabric of fiction such as Grove created for others about his own life; no Kate Waddell hiding in the wings; no Agatha Christie disappearance," his art continues to reveal a great deal. "If Kate Waddell is not hiding in the wings," suggested McDougall, "perhaps the Indians are."⁸ This critical analysis does not in any way intend to dismiss the writings of Duncan Campbell Scott as merely the expressions of a racist mind; rather it is meant to provide insight into the ideological context in which these works were created. It is important that future readers of Scott's work understand more fully his attitude toward the Native people who figured so prominently in both his "outer" life at the Department

⁸ McDougall, "A Trace of Documents and a Touch of Life," 135.

of Indian Affairs and his more private "inner" life as expressed in his poetry and short fiction.

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**CHAPTER ONE: "MEN IN THEIR NATIVE WILDOESS AND RUDENESS" - IDEAS OF
"THE INDIAN" IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES**

1.1 Definitions of "Savagery"

In Jacques Cartier's account of his first voyage of 1534, he described his initial encounter with the Micmac of the Gaspé Basin:

This people may well be called savage; for they are the sorriest folk there can be in the world, and the whole lot of them had not anything above the value of five sous...¹⁰

Like the Spanish explorers who preceded him, Cartier's perceptions of the "New World" and its inhabitants were informed by the values and conventions of his own society. Similarly, the British newcomers measured the peoples they encountered against those qualities which they valued most highly in themselves. In her epistolary novel, *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), Frances Moore Brooke captured the prevailing attitude of the eighteenth century British settlers toward the Native peoples of North America. Brooke's Colonel Rivers perceives the people of Quebec to be "deprived by their extreme ignorance...of all the conveniences, as well as elegant refinements of polished life,"¹¹ and thus judges them vastly inferior to the British.

⁹ For the purposes of this dissertation, the term "Indian" will refer, not to the cultural identity of aboriginal peoples, but to the image created and controlled by the European imagination.

¹⁰ Jacques Cartier, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, ed. and trans. H.P. Biggar (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1924), 60.

¹¹ Frances Moore Brooke, "The History of Emily Montague," *The Colonial Century*, ed. A.J.M. Smith (Agincourt, Ontario: Tecumseh Press, 1986), 17.

The generalized image of the Indian as the antithesis of "civilized" humanity also provided a means by which to condemn the values of the dominant society. The Indian's perceived lack of civilized traits, essential to the images of the savage aggressor and the godless heathen, also formed the basis for the image of the "Noble Savage," who embodies the natural virtues which have been lost or forgotten by "civilized" man. The nobility of man in his natural state is exemplified by the figure of Skenandow, the title figure of Adam Kidd's "The Huron Chief" (1830).¹² In this poem, Adam Kidd depicts the Huron as "pure emblems of another world, inhabiting an earthly paradise which he likens to "Milton's bower." The Huron, as represented by Kidd, possess a natural virtue which is a direct result of a life lived according to "nature's plan," free from the rules and conventions of a corrupt civilization. Skenandow, the "noble Indian sage," represents the nobility of the natural man in contrast to "Europe's pomp" and the corrupt values of white society:

...the Huron has a soul
Untainted by the coward's deed -
And bravery beyond control,
When summoned forth in time of need.

By the time that Duncan Campbell Scott began his career as a poet in the late nineteenth century, a set of ideas about Native peoples had long been firmly established in the collective imagination of his society. The term "civilization" was applied exclusively to those of European descent, and was associated with

¹² Adam Kidd, *The Huron Chief* (1830; London, Ontario: Canadian Poetry Press, 1987).

the values of progress, rational order, technological supremacy and Christian monotheism. For the European settlers in the "New World," these values had been essential to the success of the colonialist project. As George Grant wrote in 1968, "the very intractability, immensity and extremes of the new land required that its meeting with mastering Europeans be a battle of subjugation."¹³ The first settlers had accepted as their duty the creation of an ordered society through the conquering and subduing of the natural chaos of the land, of which the Native peoples were considered a manifestation.

Roy Harvey Pearce, in his book *The Savages of America* (1953), which was revised and republished as *Savagism and Civilization* in 1988, examined the American attitude towards Native peoples in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and determined that this relationship had at its root the basic idea that the Native peoples were the antithesis of civilized humanity:

The simplest way to describe the Indian was to say that he was uncivilized. The simplest way to evaluate him would be to say that his virtues and vices, his bravery and cruelty were products of his being uncivilized.¹⁴

In Noah Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), the term "savage" is defined as referring to "a human being in his native state of rudeness, one who is untaught, uncivilized

¹³ George Grant, "In Defence of North America," *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1969), 17.

¹⁴. Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind*, Revised ed. of *The Savages of America* (1953; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 104.

or without cultivation of mind or manners," and "savagism" is defined as "the state of rude uncivilized men; the state of men in their native wildness and rudeness."¹⁵ In his *Dictionary of the English Language* (6th ed., 1785), Samuel Johnson defined "savage" as "a man untaught and uncivilized," and "civilizer" as "he that reclaims others from a wild and savage life; he that teaches the rules and customs of civility."¹⁶ Similarly, É. Littré's *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* (1885) gives the following definition of "sauvage":

Il se dit des hommes qui vivent en petites sociétés, dans des huttes, et qui, n'ayant ni agriculture proprement dite ni troupeaux, ne s'entretiennent guère que du produit de la chasse. Le penchant pour la chasse ou la guerre nous est commun avec les animaux: l'homme sauvage ne sait que combattre et chasser.¹⁷

Since the arrival of the first Europeans to North America, Native peoples were identified as "savage," and were thus associated with a set of values which was directly opposed to those required for the creation of a rational, ordered society in the midst of a vast and untamed land.

The idea of the savage or "wild man" as the antithesis of civilized humanity had existed in the minds of Europeans since the Middle Ages. As described by Richard Bernheimer in his book *Wild*

¹⁵ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. 2 (1828; New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970).

¹⁶ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 6th ed. (London, 1785).

¹⁷ É. Littré, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française*, vol. 4 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1885).

Men in the Middle Ages (1952), the "wild man" was "a literary and artistic figure whose imaginary character is proved by its appearance: it is a hairy man curiously compounded of human and animal traits, without, however, sinking to the level of an ape."¹⁸ Bernheimer, in this study of the image of the savage in medieval culture, examines the implications of the term "wildness":

The word implied everything that eluded Christian norms and the established framework of Christian society, referring to what was uncanny, unruly, raw, unpredictable, foreign, uncultured, and uncultivated. It included the unfamiliar as well as the unintelligible. Just as the wilderness is the background against which medieval society is delineated, so wildness in the widest sense is the background of God's lucid order of creation.¹⁹

In order for the European idea of civilization to triumph, it was necessary for wildness to yield to order and for the "wild man" to give way to "civilized man." Thus, the history of North American settlement assumes the significance of a creation myth. In this narrative, the aboriginal inhabitants of the land, perceived as an element of the wild nature which must be subdued, existed only as an obstacle to the creation of order from chaos which was understood to be the task of "civilized man."

The idea that North America had been an empty, untamed wilderness persisted into the twentieth century. As late as 1941 Stephen Leacock wrote, in *Canada: The Foundations of its Future*, that after the Norse voyages had ended:

¹⁸ Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 1.

¹⁹ Bernheimer, 20.

the continent remained, as it had been for uncounted centuries, empty. We think of prehistoric North America as inhabited by the Indians, and have based on this a sort of recognition of ownership on their part. But this attitude is hardly warranted. The Indians were too few to count. Their use of the resources of the continent was scarcely more than that by crows and wolves, their development of it nothing.²⁰

During Leacock's time, it was a common opinion that, prior to the arrival of Christopher Columbus, "the continent was, in truth, one vast silence, broken only by the roar of the waterfall or the cry of the beasts and birds of the forest."²¹ Recent studies have rejected this image as inaccurate. As Ronald Wright writes in *Stolen Continents* (1992):

It is impossible to say exactly how many people were living in what are now the United States and Canada in 1492. But it's clear that the old guess of around one million is absurdly low - a guess cherished for so long because it reinforced the myth of the empty land and hid the enormity of native America's depopulation. Good modern estimates range between 7 and 18 million.²²

However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although the Native peoples were known to have existed prior to the arrival of white settlers, their way of life did not meet the established criteria for "civilized" societies, and thus they were

²⁰ Stephen Leacock, *Canada: The Foundations of its Future* (Montreal: Private publication, 1941), 19.

²¹ Stephen Leacock, *The Dawn of Canadian History: A Chronicle of Aboriginal Canada* (1915; Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1920), 44.

²² Ronald Wright, *Stolen Continents: The "New World" Through Indian Eyes Since 1492* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1992), 123. For a discussion of these figures, see Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 32, and Henry F. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 42.

regarded as having had no more importance than "the beasts and birds of the forest." This was not a new tendency; as Olive Patricia Dickason argues in *The Myth of the Savage* (1984), the Renaissance Europeans had considered "the capacity of Amerindians to orient themselves in the wilderness [to be] an innate instinct, the same as that possessed by animals."²³ Conversely, "civilized" societies were governed by reason, rather than instinct. As Dickason states:

the word "civilized" is usually applied to societies possessing a state structure and an advanced technology; the general presumption is that their members must therefore have attained a relatively high degree of refinement in their manner of living.²⁴

The idea that a society's external organization is a key element in determining its development was common in the social sciences during the period from 1750 to 1800. Ronald L. Meek, in *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (1976), outlined the "four stages theory" of social development which emerged in the 1750s in France and Scotland. According to Meek, "the essential idea embodied in the theory is that societies undergo development through successive stages based on different modes of subsistence."²⁵

This theory, which continued to echo in Canada until the early twentieth century, defined four distinct stages through which all societies develop: a savage stage based upon hunting; a barbaric

²³ Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), 91.

²⁴ Dickason, xi.

²⁵ Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 6.

stage based upon herding; an agricultural stage; and a commercial stage. According to the theory a society's transition from savagery to civilization occurred at the agricultural stage, and thus the Native peoples, who depended upon hunting for their subsistence, were identified as existing in the first stage and were thereby deemed inferior to those who had "progressed" to the fourth stage.

In *The Dawn of Canadian History* (1915), Leacock wrote of the time prior to the arrival of Europeans to North America, and commented upon "the primitive existence" of the "great red race which inhabited what is now Canada":

The harvest provided by nature and the products of the chase were their sole sources of supply, and in their search for this food so casually offered they moved to and fro in the depths of the forest or roved endlessly upon the plains.²⁶

He credits the Native peoples with "one great advance... the bark canoe," but states that "in nearly all other respects the Indians of Canada had not emerged even from savagery to that stage half way to civilization which is called barbarism."²⁷ Although the Iroquois and Algonquins, by virtue of having "built Long Houses of wood and made stockade forts" are considered by Leacock's standards to have been the most advanced of the North American Native peoples, he continues to label them as "savages" for the reason that "not even these tribes, who represented the furthest advance

²⁶ Leacock, *The Dawn of Canadian History*, 26-7.

²⁷ Leacock, *The Dawn of Canadian History*, 27.

toward civilization among the savages of North America, made settlements in the real sense."²⁸

The level of civilization of a particular society was determined on the basis of the external structure of that society. When the first Europeans arrived in North America, their preconceived ideas about civilization and savagery, coupled with a drive to create a civilization which mirrored the structures and values of Europe, led them to identify the Native peoples as "savage" based upon their manner of life and means of subsistence. This perception persisted through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; North Americans of European descent continued to evaluate Native peoples by the standards of European civilization and to determine, on the basis of these standards, that they were inherently inferior.

1.2 19th Century Science and the Idea of "Savagery"

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the myth of Anglo-Saxon superiority had been transformed into racial doctrine in both Europe and North America. Scientists were able to provide "an abundance of 'proofs' by which English and American Anglo-Saxons could explain their power, progress, governmental stability, and freedom,"²⁹ and thereby justify the colonial oppression of

²⁸ Leacock, *The Dawn of Canadian History*, 26.

²⁹ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 43.

those races perceived as being inferior. As Reginald Horsman writes in *Race and Manifest Destiny* (1981):

Whatever the specific methods used - and works on race ranged from impressionistic studies based on cultural differences to those of supposed exact scientific measurement - there was in the first half of the nineteenth century a sharp increase in the number of racial theorists who were prepared to defend inherent, unchangeable differences between races.³⁰

With the publication of Carolus Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae* in 1735, European science had become involved with the development of systems of classification for all living species, including human beings. Linnaeus's work included the classification of humankind into five sub-species of the single species "Homo sapiens."³¹ The later editions of this work include descriptions of these sub-groups which contain references to social and cultural traits, as well as to physical characteristics. For example, "Homo sapiens Americanus" was described as being "persevering, content, free" and "governed by custom."³² In contrast, "white Europeans exhibited an easygoing, active, ingenious nature, wore tailored clothing, and were governed by laws."³³ Thus, there was a very fine line between scientific studies of racial differences and observations of

³⁰ Horsman, 44.

³¹ Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (1978; New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 40.

³² Carl von Linné, *Systema naturae per regna tria naturae* (10th ed., Holmiae: Laurentie Salvie, 1758), vol.1, p.21. Qtd. in Berkhofer, 40.

³³ Berkhofer, 40.

cultural behaviours; the terms "race" and "culture" were becoming interchangeable.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the expansion of European empires resulted in increased contact between the Europeans and the indigenous peoples of different lands, the need for ideological justifications for European conquest corresponded with developments in the scientific community. Scientists began to develop more rigorous classifications of humankind, including the measurement of facial angles and cranium sizes, in order to provide scientific proof of innate differences between the races.

Craniology, the study of the shape of the skull and size of the brain, had its beginnings in the work of the German scientist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach who in 1781 attempted to improve upon Linnaeus' system by introducing the method of classifying human beings by the shape of the skull.³⁴ In the first half of the nineteenth century, craniology became popular in the United States, where it was used as "proof" of the inherent inferiority of African-Americans as a justification for slavery. This scientific practice provided support for existing ideas about races:

From the measurement of several hundred skulls, the leader of the American School, Samuel George Morton, and his disciples concluded that the skulls of various races ranged in size from a mean of 92 cubic inches for the modern Caucasian races to 79 cubic inches for the

³⁴ David R. Hughes and Evelyn Kallen, *The Anatomy of Racism: Canadian Dimensions* (Montreal: Harvest House Ltd., 1974), 6. See also "Chapter Three: Measuring Head: Paul Broca and the Heyday of Craniology" in Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 1981).

American races and 75 cubic inches for the Hottentots and Australian bushmen.³⁵

Morton, an American scientist and physician, produced three major works on the subject of comparative measurements of human skulls. The first of these, *Crania Americana* (1839), is described by Stephen Jay Gould as "primarily a treatise on the inferior quality of Indian intellect."³⁶ Morton concluded that "the benevolent mind may regret the inaptitude of the Indian for civilization... The structure of his mind appears to be different from that of the white man, nor can the two harmonize in the social relations except on the most limited scale."³⁷ The data which resulted from such craniological comparisons was accepted as the proof of the innate superiority of the "Caucasian" race over all other races, and was used to rationalize American policy toward both African-Americans and North American Native peoples.

During the late 1820s, an American physician named Charles Caldwell examined skulls which had been found in the western states, as well as the heads of various groups of Native peoples, and concluded that the North American Native peoples possessed "savage" blood, and therefore belonged to an inferior race which was unfit for participation in the "civilized" world:

...when the wolf, the buffalo and the panther shall have been completely domesticated, like the dog, the cow, and

³⁵ Berkhofer, 58.

³⁶ Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 57.

³⁷ Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana* (Philadelphia: John Pennington, 1839), 82. Qtd. in Gould, 56-7.

the household cat, then, and not before, may we expect to see the full-blooded Indian civilized, like the white man.³⁸

Dr. Caldwell believed that the sole hope for the Native peoples lay in intermarriage, as any "advances among Indians...had been among half-breeds and the more white blood, the more civilization."³⁹ Although there was some concern that intermarriage with Native peoples would lead to the degeneration of the "superior" race, many supported the idea that it would have positive effects. It was commonly believed that an intermingling of the blood was "the only sufficient scheme to civilize the Indians."⁴⁰

Similarly, the American scientist Josiah C. Nott, a contemporary of Dr. Caldwell, used phrenological data to reach his conclusions about the "Indian race":

Intelligence, activity, ambition, progression, high anatomical development, characterize some races; stupidity, indolence, immobility, savagism, low anatomical development characterize others. Lofty civilization, in all cases, has been achieved solely by the "Caucasian" group... the Barbarous tribes of America have remained in utter darkness for thousands of years.⁴¹

According to theories of biological inheritance, white-skinned peoples were inherently superior to all other peoples and thus their domination was not only justified, but inevitable. Such ideas

³⁸ Dr. Charles Caldwell, qtd. in Horsman, 118.

³⁹ Horsman, 118.

⁴⁰ Dr. Charles Caldwell, qtd. in Horsman, 118.

⁴¹ Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind; Or, Ethnological Researches Based Upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures and Crania of Races* (6th ed., Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1854), 461.

were popularized in 1859, with the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. A culture's potential for survival and success in the modern era was believed to be inextricably linked to characteristics which were inherent in the genetic composition of their race. It was believed that an "inferior" race was doomed to remain inferior as long as the blood of that race remained pure and unmixed, and that the characteristics which determined the inferiority of a race could be altered "only genetically, or by intermarriage."⁴² As Bruce Trigger writes in his book *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic" Age Reconsidered* (1985):

Hence nature itself decreed that Indians must give way to a superior order of human beings. Europeans thus believed that they were biologically justified in their efforts to subjugate and replace native people.⁴³

In Canada, the science of anthropology developed more slowly than in England or the United States. Until the 1850s there were no journals devoted to the publication of scientific studies, and until 1887 there were no professional anthropologists.⁴⁴ At a time when American evolutionary anthropology was concerned with racial classification and the idea of superior and inferior races, the three internationally recognized amateur anthropologists in Canada rejected the theories of biological evolution and innate racial difference. These three scholars, Daniel Wilson (1816-1892),

⁴² Southern Quarterly Review 5 (Jan. 1844), qtd. in Horsman, 146.

⁴³ Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 15.

⁴⁴ Trigger, 39.

William Dawson (1820-1899), and Horatio Hale (1817-1896), rejected the current trends in American physical anthropology in favour of the belief that "primitive" peoples possessed the same inherent intellectual abilities as "civilized" peoples, but had not yet had the opportunity to develop them:

Each in his way was committed to a view of an undivided humanity that antedated the development of a close link between evolutionary anthropology and scientific racism. The old-fashionedness of their views about human nature led all three to reject what modern anthropologists regard as some of the most abhorrent views of nineteenth-century anthropologists.⁴⁵

While Wilson, Dawson and Hale were internationally recognized, a missionary named John McLean (1851-1928) was more influential within Canada.⁴⁶ Although he too believed that the Native peoples possessed certain admirable qualities, he was firm in his conviction that they were culturally inferior to peoples of European descent:

he did not hesitate to brand native peoples and their cultures as primitive and inferior to Europeans. He looked forward to the complete emancipation of their bodies, minds, and souls from their barbaric past, and believed this could be done only by having them adopt White customs and religion...White Canadians had still to discover how they could best educate them and accept that it would take a long time to complete the process.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Trigger, 42.

⁴⁶ Trigger, 47.

⁴⁷ Trigger, 43.

Maclean joined Wilson in the anticipation of a time when education and intermarriage would result in a homogenous Canada with no racial, cultural or linguistic distinctions.⁴⁸

Although Canadian anthropologists did not join their American counterparts in either the frenzy for racial classification or the belief that Native peoples were innately inferior to Europeans, it was commonly accepted among amateur anthropologists in Canada that the Native peoples could not be considered equal to peoples of European descent until they had adopted "European" customs, religion and values, thus completing the transition from savagery to civilization.

1.3 The Image of "the Indian" in Nineteenth-Century Canadian Poetry

The nineteenth century in Canada was an age of expansion, progress, and a growing confidence in the future of the nation. The epigraph to *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889), a volume of Canadian poetry edited by William Douw Lighthall, is a testament to this feeling of promise: "All the future lies before us/ Glorious in that sunset land."⁴⁹ This "glorious" future was thought to be dependent upon technological progress and the mastery and control of nature by "civilized man." In the narrative of progress, the Indian was a remnant of man's pre-civilized state, and was thus

⁴⁸ Trigger, 47.

⁴⁹ William Douw Lighthall, ed., *Songs of the Great Dominion* (London, 1889). The lines are taken from Frederick George Scott's poem "In Memoriam "

considered to be a casualty of, rather than a participant in, the inevitable march of human progress. Whether portrayed as demonic and threatening, or noble and admirable, Native peoples were represented in the English-Canadian poetry of the nineteenth century by an image which was established in opposition to that of the civilized man whose reason, restraint and technological might would enable him to forge a bright future for the nation.

In an 1824 letter to his brother Henry, the poet Oliver Goldsmith stated his purpose for writing his long poem, "The Rising Village" (1825):

In "The Rising Village" I have humbly endeavoured to describe the sufferings which the early settlers experienced, the difficulties which they surmounted, the rise and progress of a young country, and the prospects which promise happiness to its future possessors.⁵⁰

This poem was written as a tribute to the first settlers of Acadia, and as a reminder of the conquest and control of nature which was deemed necessary for the continuing progress of civilized humanity.

In his poem, Goldsmith created a landscape in which untamed nature always contains the potential for violence. The deceptively peaceful silence of the recently cleared land is broken by "hideous yells" which "announce the murd'rous band, / Whose bloody footsteps desolate the land." Goldsmith's Indians do not seem human, nor do they possess the potential for civilized life. Rather, they represent the essence of natural savagery and are placed in the same category as the "savage beasts" which terrorize the settlers.

⁵⁰ Oliver Goldsmith, "To Henry Goldsmith Esq.," 31 March 1824, *The Rising Village*, ed. Gerald Lynch (1825; London, Ontario: Canadian Poetry Press, 1989), 4.

and the "winter's dreary terrors" which make the continued progress of civilization seem impossible.

To Goldsmith, the settlement of Acadia exemplified the importance of human control of nature. Driven by the desire to recreate the structure and organization of their homeland, Goldsmith's settlers transformed the landscape through the imposition of order, creating a society in which "arts may flourish, and fair science shine." The first step in this creation depended upon the cultivation of "the desert land" and, as the "savage tribes" were perceived as a manifestation of the savage landscape, the "wand'ring Indian turns another way" once order has been achieved, disappearing into the dark past of a civilized "New World."

Another popular poetic image of Native peoples in the nineteenth century was that of the "Noble Savage" who, although possessing qualities which were respected or desired by the white observers, remained defined in opposition to the values of civilization. The Indian hero, while ennobled by his savage virtues, was prevented by his lack of civilized qualities from achieving true heroic status. His animal-like instinct and uncontrollable passion combined with his stoicism to make him a great warrior, but his inability to achieve rational thought signified his inferiority to Europeans and made his death inevitable.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Shawnee war chief Tecumseh became the subject of a large amount of Canadian

writing. Due to his alliance with the British in the War of 1812, Tecumseh provided nineteenth century poets with a sense of a romantic national past as well as a means by which to criticize American values. In the preface to his poem "Tecumseh; or, the Warrior of the West" (1828), John Richardson stated that his intention was "to preserve the memory of one of the noblest and most gallant spirits that ever tenanted the breast of man."⁵¹ In this poem, the figure of Tecumseh first appears as a hero of mythic proportions:

...that towering warrior who reclines
His godlike form against the craggy steep,
And like some spirit of the mountain shines
Pre-eminent, above the rolling deep
A monument of strength...

However, Richardson's Tecumseh is essentially savage, and is bound by his savagery. His strength is that of uncontrollable nature, untempered by the forces of civilization. Tecumseh, driven only by "vengeful hate," allies himself, and thus the raw power of nature, with the British to avenge the loss of his native lands:

'Twas then that, like a mighty avalanche,
His arm, gigantic with his wrath kept pace,
And, rear'd on high, like some vast towering branch
Of a tall pine, dealt vengeance for a race.

Although Richardson showed admiration for Tecumseh as a leader of his people, he qualified Tecumseh's heroism by revealing it to be of an instinctual and savage nature. His Tecumseh is admirable for being "terrible in warlike rage," yet he is "less bright in wisdom." To Richardson, Tecumseh's value as a national hero lies in

⁵¹ John Richardson, *Tecumseh; or, The Warrior of the West* (London, 1828), v.

his ferocity in battle; in tactical matters he is undeniably inferior to the British officers. Richardson portrayed Tecumseh as a vengeful creature of instinct who is at the mercy of "the passions of his warlike soul" and, in his blind desire to "crush his foe, or perish on the plain," is utterly incapable of rational thought.

Tecumseh's inability to control his passions is considered a product of his uncivilized condition, and although it serves him well in battle, it also proves to be his downfall. At the battle at Moraviantown, Tecumseh, "drunk with human gore" rushes to crush Colonel Johnson's skull with his tomahawk and is himself killed. Thus, the animal-like ferocity which is his "glory" in battle is also his "shame."

In the English-Canadian poetry of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Native peoples appeared as the representatives of the state of non-civilization. Whether the individual poet chose to accentuate the vices or the virtues which accompany this state, he or she was forced to confront the decline of aboriginal cultures since the arrival of the whites. Although the supposed disappearance of Native peoples and their culture was lamented with a sense of romantic nostalgia, it was often accepted as the inevitable replacement of a primitive culture with a more highly developed one. Much of the Canadian poetry of this period reflects the popular belief that the aboriginal peoples were destined to disappear. Charles Mair supports this belief in his "Pauline Johnson: An Appreciation" (1913):

They had to yield; but, before quitting the stage, they left behind them an abiding memory, and an undying tradition... Their closeness to nature, their picturesque life in the past, their mythical religion, social system and fateful history have begot one of the wide world's "legends", an ideal not wholly imaginary...⁵²

The Indian thus became a symbol of the "childhood" of the country, a representative of a simpler time which was fondly remembered yet understood to be irretrievable. In his poem "Change on the Ottawa" (1887), George Martin associated the Native peoples with an image of an idyllic past, in order to criticize the values of progress and technological mastery. Martin, using the character of an Algonquin chief, described the effects of technological progress on the land which borders the Ottawa River. As the chief surveys the land prior to its development, before the "white man's axe his hunting-grounds had marred,"⁵³ Martin emphasizes the beauty and tranquility of the unspoiled natural landscape:

All else was silence, save the muffled sound
Of partridge drumming on the fallen tree...
Such was the scene - no white man's chimney nigh,
And joy sat, plumed, in the young warrior's eye.

For Martin's chief, uncorrupted nature is evidence of the existence of "the Great Spirit" and is the source of all joy.

When the chief returns to "his boyhood haunt," he is dismayed to find it altered by technology:

He sees a city there: - the blazing forge,
The mason's hammer on the shaping stone,

⁵² Charles Mair, "Pauline Johnson: An Appreciation," *The Moccasin Maker*, by Pauline E. Johnson (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913), 12.

⁵³ George Martin, "Change on the Ottawa," *Songs of the Great Dominion*, 38.

Great wheels along the stream revolving large,
And swift machinery's whirr and clank and groan.

Martin links the figure of the chief to the unspoiled natural landscape of the past, in order to draw attention to the damage that is being wrought by man in his drive to conquer nature. If the Indian is the personification of nature, then it follows that the manipulation of nature in the name of progress and improvement must "strike, like whetted knives, the red man's soul." For Martin, the disappearance of the aboriginal peoples is a tragic yet inevitable consequence of "the reckless tread/ Of human progress." The destruction of nature signifies the destruction of the Algonquin chief's childhood memories, as well as the loss of an imagined past age in which humanity existed in harmony with nature:

Friend of my youth, my 'Wa-Wa Height' adieu!⁵⁴
No more shall I revisit thee, no more
Gaze from thy summit on the upper blue,
And listen to the rapid's pleasing roar.

The Indian, as the antithesis of civilized man, is prevented from participating in the march of human progress, and is therefore relegated to the realm of "dusky memories" and is able to exist only as a romantic figure from the past:

...on *his* race no morn,
No noon of happiness shall ever beam;
They fade as from our waking fades a dream.

The image of the Indian in Canada in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was established in opposition to the image of the civilized man who, through the technological mastery of a vast

⁵⁴ In a footnote, Martin explains that "Wa-Wa" refers to "the Wild Goose."

wilderness, was able to forge a new nation in the midst of a savage and chaotic landscape. In 1906, Duncan Campbell Scott wrote that "In the early days the Indians were a real menace to the colonization of Canada."⁵⁵ In the dominant discourse of the age, Native peoples were associated with the natural landscape, and therefore could not exist in a civilization which thrived upon the exploitation of nature. As they were not considered able to participate in a progressive civilized society, Native peoples were regarded exclusively in terms of an imagined age of savage glory and vitality which had preceded the arrival of Europeans to North America. When considered in terms of the present, they were regarded as remnants of a dead or dying age, whose disappearance, although lamented, was inevitable. This image of the Indian as the non-civilized or "savage" man, which was rooted in European imperialist ideology and supported by anthropological studies in both Europe and North America, continued to exist throughout the early years of the twentieth century, surfacing in a significant amount of the art and literature of the period.

⁵⁵ Duncan Campbell Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," (1906) *The Circle of Affection* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1947), 109.

**CHAPTER TWO: "BUT NOW THEIR VAUNTED PROWESS ALL IS GONE" - THE
DICHOTOMY OF PAST AND PRESENT IN THE WRITINGS OF DUNCAN CAMPBELL
SCOTT**

2.1 "The time for change was upon them"

In 1906, after serving as one of three commissioners assigned to travel to northern Ontario and Quebec in order to negotiate the James Bay Treaty, Duncan Campbell Scott wrote an account of his experiences for publication in the December issue of *Scribner's Magazine*. In this essay, entitled "The Last of the Indian Treaties," Scott distinguished between Native life in the present and in the early days of Canada's colonization, identifying an "Indian nature" which had once been "full of force and heat," but which he observed to have become "like a fire that is smouldering and dying away in ashes."⁵⁶ In his opinion, prior to the implementation of a government policy to "civilize" the Native peoples,

[the Indian nature] was ready to break out at any moment in savage dances, in wild and desperate orgies in which ancient superstitions were involved with European ideas but dimly understood and intensified by cunning imaginations inflamed with rum.⁵⁷

"The Last of the Indian Treaties," republished in *The Circle of Affection* in 1947, begins with an account of the development of relations between Native peoples and the government-appointed

⁵⁶ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 110.

⁵⁷ Duncan Campbell Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 110.

officers who were assigned to negotiate with them. According to Scott, the treaties which were made between Native peoples and the colonial governments were largely responsible for the development of Canada as an ordered, progressive society:

The policy, where we can see its outcome, has not been ineffectual, and where in 1790 stood clustered the wigwams and rude shelters of Brant's people now stretch the opulent fields of the township of Tuscarora; and all down the valley of the Grand River there is no visible line of demarcation between the farms tilled by the ancient allies in foray and ambush who have become confederates throughout a peaceful year in seed-time and harvest.⁵⁸

According to this idea of progress, the Native peoples are identified as a part of the nation's past; in order for Canada to progress into prosperity, the "wigwams and rude shelters" of the Indian must yield to the "farms" and "opulent fields" which signify civilization.

The image of the Indian as the savage antithesis of "civilized man" is at the root of Canada's federal Indian policy. In his essay "Indian Affairs, 1763-1841," Duncan Campbell Scott describes the change in administrative policy which began to develop after 1830, when "the civilization of the Indian became the ideal":

The Indian officers were no longer to be solely purveyors of presents or almoners of the crown grants; they were to be transformed into the executants of a humane and progressive plan for the civilization of the aborigines.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 110.

⁵⁹ Scott, "Indian Affairs, 1763-1841," *Canada and its Provinces* vol. 4, ed. Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook and Co., 1914), 695.

⁶⁰ Scott, "Indian Affairs, 1763-1841," 724.

By 1860, when the responsibility for Indian affairs was transferred to the colonial governments, the basic principles of Canada's Indian policy had already been developed. Although the reservation system had been accepted as a temporary solution, designed to offer protection to the Native peoples pending their adaptation to the ways of civilization, the ultimate goal was the total assimilation of Native peoples into colonial society.

When Duncan Campbell Scott accepted the position of Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in 1913, he inherited a policy which was not fundamentally different from the pre-Confederation project of "ameliorating the condition of the Indians, promoting their religious improvement and education, and eventually relieving [the] government from the expenditure of the Indian department."⁶¹ This basic policy had been shaped in pre-Confederation years on the basis of principles which became firmly established as part of the dominant discourse of the nineteenth century. It was unlikely that the policy itself would undergo fundamental alterations until the basic principles of "savagery," "civilization" and "progress" which supported it had begun to change.

Duncan Campbell Scott did not question these principles. Having been raised on the nineteenth-century theories of racial hierarchy and social evolution, he held the opinion that Native

⁶¹ Scott, "Indian Affairs, 1840-1867," *Canada and its Provinces* vol. 5, ed. Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook and Co., 1914), 333.

peoples belonged to a race which was in the process of evolving from a state of savagery to one of civilization:

Although it is realized that [Native peoples'] condition still leaves much to be desired, it should be remembered that the true standard by which to judge a people undergoing evolution is, not the height they have reached, but the distance they have advanced.⁶²

Scott believed that it was in the best interest of Native peoples to relinquish their beliefs, customs and ways of living, and to adopt the "progressive" ways of "white" society. In his opinion, the days of a vital Native culture had passed, and his official view as the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs was that "the happiest future for the Indian race is absorption into the general population, and this is the object of the policy of our government."⁶³

According to Duncan Campbell Scott, the Native peoples could not have a meaningful existence in the present. He believed that Native languages, religions, values and traditions had become obsolete, and had ceased to have meaning except when seen as part of an exciting and romantic chapter in Canada's history. Throughout much of his poetry and short fiction, Scott uses the idea of the Indian, without directly involving Native characters in the action, to invoke images of a lost age of savagery which had since been replaced by civilization.

⁶² Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended 31 March 1926, 11.

⁶³ Scott, "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912," *Canada and its Provinces* vol. 7, ed. Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook and Co., 1914), 623.

The poems "Watkwenies" in *Labour and the Angel* (1898) and "The Forsaken" in *New World Lyrics and Ballads* (1905) illustrate the division which Scott imposes between the past vitality and what he believed to be the present degradation of Native culture. In "Watkwenies"⁶⁴, Scott contrasts the defeated passivity of a contemporary Native woman with images of a past age of savage glory in which the same woman had been an active participant. In the first stanza, Watkwenies, whose name Scott translates as "The Woman who Conquers," is a strong and valiant woman who lives according to her nation's code of vengeance:

Vengeance was once her nation's lore and law:
When the tired sentry stooped above the rill,
Her long knife flashed, and hissed, and drank its fill;

Watkwenies is depicted as having been cunning and ruthless in war; rather than confront her foe face-to-face, she has surprised a sentry weakened by fatigue and thirst, and has slain him while he was bending to drink from the rill. As he lies dying in the pool, her victory is announced: "shrill/ Sprang through the dreaming hamlet on the hill,/ The war-cry of the triumphant Iroquois."

The flashing, hissing knife, the "wild hand, pale as death and weak as straw" of the dying sentry clutching in desperate agony at a ripple in the water, and the shrill war-cry ringing through the air are images which are reminiscent of the romantic adventure novels such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) or John Richardson's *Wacousta* (1832). These novels depend

⁶⁴ Scott, *Labour and the Angel* (Boston: Copeland and Day, 1898), 15.

upon the image of the Indian as a savage warrior for much of their appeal. The war-cry in particular evokes the idea of savagery. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, James Fenimore Cooper describes Major Heyward's reaction to the cries of the Iroquois:

...there had arisen such a tumult of yells and cries, as served to drive the swift currents of his own blood, back from its bounding course into the fountains of his heart. It seemed, for near a minute, as if the demons of hell had possessed themselves of the air about them, and were venting their savage humours in barbarous sounds."⁶⁵

In the novels of Cooper and Richardson, the "devilish sounds" of Indian war-cries echo through the landscape as a reminder of the ever-present savage threat to the protagonists. Similarly, in the first stanza of "Watkwenies," the war-cry of the Iroquois rings through the land, disrupting the peace of the "dreaming hamlet on the hill."

The first stanza of Scott's "Watkwenies" provides a portrait of a conquering warrior-woman whose murder of a weakened sentry is presented not as a reprehensible act but as a heroic one in the context of the law of vengeance by which she and those of her nation live their lives. In the second stanza, however, her name has become ironic. Her bravery and dignity have vanished with the "war-whoops of her perished day," and only her "valiant name:" The Woman who Conquers - recalls the vitality of the past.

⁶⁵ James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826; New York: Penguin, 1986), 66.

⁶⁶ John Richardson, *Wacousta, or The Prophecy* (1832; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1967), 25.

In the second stanza, Scott no longer uses language to evoke romantic images of an age of savage glory, but instead chooses his words to emphasize the idea that it is not only Watkwenies's prime which has past, but that of Native culture itself. The days of fierce battles and triumphant war-cries are gone, and Watkwenies has become a useless relic of a once-vibrant past; she is not merely "wrinkled," but "wrinkled like an apple kept till May." Scott portrays her as passive and defeated; in contrast with her actions in the first stanza, her only action in the present tense is to "weigh the interest money in her palm," silently accepting payment for the lands that have been taken from her.

Scott's imaginative response to the situation of Native peoples finds frequent expression in the figure of the "dying Indian." His Native characters are at their most noble and sympathetic when they are stoically accepting death after having participated fully in a vital and savage past. In the first section of "The Forsaken" (1905),¹ a Chippewa woman remains "valiant" and "unshaken" in spite of harrowing circumstances, unselfishly baiting a fishhook with her own flesh to ensure the survival of her son. This is an image of the sort of savage heroism which Scott associated with the past. The action in Part I of the poem occurs far from civilization, "in the heart of the north-land, / Far from the Fort," where the unnamed Chippewa woman attempts to catch fish to feed her sick baby:

¹ Scott, *New World Lyrics and Ballads* (Toronto: Morang and Co., Ltd., 1905), 15.

Frozen and hungry,
 She fished through the ice
 With a line of the twisted
 Bark of the cedar,
 And a rabbit-bone hook
 Polished and barbed;

Although the woman "fished with the bare hook/ All through the wild day," she "caught nothing." Finally, in desperation, "She took of her own flesh,/ Baited the fish-hook" and "drew in a grey-trout."

Lee B. Meckler, in the article "Rabbit-Skin Robes and Mink Traps: Indian and European in 'The Forsaken'," suggests an implicit Christian symbolism in this exchange of the woman's flesh for the life of her son.⁶ As Meckler points out, if this is true, the Christianity is certainly that of Duncan Campbell Scott himself and not of the Chippewa woman; Scott gives no indication in either Part I or Part II that the woman's sacrifice was made in a Christian spirit. Rather, it seems more likely that Scott chose this particular action in order to mythologize the Indian woman, to convince readers, through the vague allusion to a powerful myth of their own, of the selflessness and noble heroism of her sacrifice.

Toward the end of Part I, Scott repeats the words "valiant, unshaken" in order to emphasize the stoicism of this woman who bravely "faced the long distance" from the lake, whose surface "streamed with the hissing/ Of millions of iceflakes,/ Hurlled by the wind," to the safety of the Fort. She single-mindedly makes the journey from the wilderness, "Wolf-haunted and lonely," to the

⁶ Lee B. Meckler, "Rabbit-Skin Robes and Mink-Traps: Indian and European in 'The Forsaken'," *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews* no.1 (Fall/Winter 1977): 63.

Fort, where she "saw the wood-smoke/ Hang soft in the spruces," and where the howl of wolves was replaced by the yelp of the trappers' domesticated huskies. Once she has returned to the comfort of the fort, the oasis of European civilization in the midst of the harsh conditions of the Canadian north, "she had rest."

Susan Beckmann, in her essay "A Note on Duncan Campbell Scott's 'The Forsaken'" (1974), comments that, in the first section of "The Forsaken," Scott "manages to preserve the atmosphere of an Indian world by paying close attention to authenticity in such details as the 'rabbit-bone hook' and the 'lacings/ Of the warm *tikanagan*'." Through the use of these images, Scott creates a landscape which is far removed from civilization. The human drama of the Chippewa woman is rendered more poignant and compelling due to the savage conditions in which the action occurs.

In Part II of the poem, Scott shows the reader the same woman, but "years and years after,/ When she was old and withered." In contrast to the short lines of Part I, with their simple and unsophisticated words, the lines of Part II are longer and more complex, and Scott's choice of words reveals the changes which Native culture has undergone since the time of Part I. While his choice of words such as "*tikanagan*" or "rabbit-bone hook" in the first section helped to create "the atmosphere of an Indian world," the woman's "kerchief" and "shawl," and the "kettles" and "mink-traps" of her grandchildren in Part II reflect the cultural changes

' Susan Beckmann, "A Note on Duncan Campbell Scott's 'The Forsaken'," *Humanities Association Review* XXV (Winter, 1974): 35.

which have occurred since her youth. The fact that her grandchildren possess "kettles" and "mink-traps" as well as "birchbark" and "rabbit-skin robes" is an example of the incursion of European culture and objects into the traditional Native ways of life.

In the second part of this poem, the woman has been abandoned by her son and left to die "because she was old and useless." She has resigned herself to her fate, and calmly awaits her death, "without pain, or dread, or even a moment of longing." Once again, Scott repeats the words "valiant, unshaken," emphasizing her stoic acceptance of her fate. Susan Beckmann traces the literary sources of this poem to Samuel Hearne's *Journey from the Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795) and William Wordsworth's "The Complaint (of a Forsaken Indian Woman)" (1798), in which a sick woman is left alone by her people to die:

When I was well, I wished to live,
For clothes, for warmth, for food, and fire;
But they to me no joy can give,
No pleasure now, and no desire.
Then here contented will I lie!
Alone, I cannot fear to die.⁷⁰

Hearne, in his account of his northern voyage, described the abandonment of the aged and infirm by their families:

One of the Indian's wives, who for some time had been in a consumption, had for a few days past become so weak as to be incapable of travelling... Whether she had been given over by the doctors, or that it was for want of friends among them, I cannot tell, but certain it is, that no expedients were taken for her recovery; so that

⁷⁰ William Wordsworth, "The Complaint (of a Forsaken Indian Woman)," *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. William Knight (Edinburgh: William Patterson, 1882), 241.

without much ceremony, she was left unassisted, to perish above ground.⁷¹

Although Hearne suggested that "a custom apparently so unnatural is perhaps not to be found among any other of the human race," he did reveal a sensitivity to the context within which this custom is practiced:

... if properly considered, however, it may with justice be ascribed to necessity and self-preservation, rather than to the want of humanity and social feeling, which ought to be the characteristic of men, as the noblest part of the creation. Necessity, added to national custom, contributes principally to make scenes of this kind less shocking to those people, that they must appear to the more civilized part of mankind.⁷²

In Scott's "The Forsaken," the Chippewa woman, grown "old and useless," accepts that her days of heroic intensity have passed, and with a patience equivalent to that of Wordsworth's "forsaken Indian woman," awaits the snowfall that will provide her body with a shroud. As she dies, buried beneath the snow, she finally attains peace: "Then was born a silence deeper than silence, / Then she had rest." Through the image of the Chippewa woman who calmly welcomes death in the knowledge that her life is no longer meaningful or useful, Scott provides an analogy to his theory of the "waning" of Native culture.

In this poem, Scott reveals a belief in the necessity of cultural change and progress. The older generation must inevitably yield to the younger, who, like the grandchildren of the Chippewa

⁷¹ Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean, In the Years 1769, 1770, 1771, and 1772* (1911; New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 218-19.

⁷² Hearne, 219.

woman, have incorporated European technology, customs and morals into their lives. As Lee B. Meckler suggests, the younger generation's accomplishment of the traditional act of abandoning the aged is tainted by a sense of Christian guilt at having done what, according to Christian morality, is a reprehensible thing. This guilt, Meckler claims, is made evident by the word "slunk" in Part II of the poem:⁷³

There one night they camped, and on the morrow...
 Launched their canoes and slunk away through the islands,
 Left her alone forever,
 Without a word of farewell,
 Because she was old and useless,
 Like a paddle broken and warped,
 Or a pole that was splintered.

Scott's belief in the inevitability of the death of Native culture is evident in his introduction to Amelia Paget's *People of the Plains* (1909). He refers to Paget as a "cordial advocate"⁷⁴ of the Native peoples, and draws attention to her "tone of championship for all Indians," and her "idealistic tendency which places everything in a high and favourable aspect."⁷⁵ Paget, he implies, portrays the Native peoples in an unconditionally romantic and sentimental way:

If there were hardship and squalor, starvation, inhumanity and superstition in this aboriginal life, judged by European standards, here it is not evident, all

⁷³ Meckler, 61.

⁷⁴ Scott, Introduction, *People of the Plains*, by Amelia Paget (Toronto: Briggs, 1909), 14.

⁷⁵ Scott, *People of the Plains*, 13.

things are judged by the Indian idea of happiness, and the sophistication of the westerner disappears.⁷⁶

He does not criticize her for her idealistic portrayal of Native life, and he does admit that "there is no reason why the arrogance of our so-called civilization should everywhere prevail,"⁷⁷ yet he feels compelled to add, while discussing Native life during the fur trade, that "the time for change was upon them."⁷⁸ Although Scott concedes that Paget's picture of Native life is "not complete in every detail," he anticipates a time "when the ancient manners and customs of the Crees and Saulteaux have changed and become either a matter of conjecture or of vague recollection," and in which her book will survive as "a faithful record of many old things that have passed away."⁷⁹

The identification of Native peoples with the land was a common theme in Canadian literature during the nineteenth century. In 1838, the second series of Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *The Clockmaker* contained a sketch entitled "Canadian Politics," in which Haliburton, through the character of the squire, gave the following argument for the retention of Indian place-names:

I must enter my protest against that American custom of changing the old and appropriate names of places for the new and inappropriate ones of Europe. Scissiboo is the Indian name of this long and beautiful river, and signifies the great deep, and should have been retained, not merely because it was its proper name, but on account

⁷⁶ Scott, *People of the Plains*, 13-14.

⁷⁷ Scott, *People of the Plains*, 14.

⁷⁸ Scott, *People of the Plains*, 12.

⁷⁹ Scott, *People of the Plains*, 14-15.

of its antiquity, its legends, and, above all, because the river had a name, which the minor streams of the province have not. A country, in my opinion, is robbed of half its charms when its streams, like those of Nova Scotia, have no other names than those of the proprietors of the lands through which they pass and change them as often as the soil changes owners.⁸⁰

Haliburton's squire argues that the use of the original names gave the places which they denoted a sense of history, and lent a hint of exotic wildness to the landscape.

In the poem "Indian Place Names" (1905), published in *New World Lyrics and Ballads*⁸¹, Duncan Campbell Scott makes a similar pronouncement as he writes of the death of Native culture:

The race has waned and left but tales of ghosts
That hover in the air like fading smoke
About the lodges.

Although the "race has waned," the Indians have not completely disappeared from the land, but survive as "ghosts" in the memories of the living. It is not the Native peoples themselves, but the image of the "Noble Savage" which Scott has pronounced dead. However, in his opinion, this image alone is what distinguishes Native peoples from Canadians of European descent. In mourning the death of Native culture, Scott is mourning the death of the image of savage perfection:

... gone are the dusky folk
That once were cunning with the thong and snare
And mighty with the paddle and the bow;

⁸⁰ Thomas Chandler Haliburton, "Canadian Politics," *Sam Slick the Clockmaker: His Sayings and Doings* (Toronto: Musson Book Company, Ltd., 1936), 229.

⁸¹ Scott, *New World Lyrics and Ballads*, 36.

Scott provides a list of various feats of skill which had been accomplished by the Indians of the past. He describes them as skilled fishermen who "lured the silver salmon from his lair," and expert hunters who "drove the buffalo in trampling hosts." But, Scott states in this poem, these days are firmly in the past and "now their vaunted prowess all is gone...like a moose-track in the April snow." The image of the disappearing moose-track is similar to that of "the apple kept till May" in "Watkwenies"; both suggest that the Native peoples have outlived the days of their prime. In Scott's eyes, the waning of the "Indian race" is as inevitable as the withering of the apple and the melting of snow.

While mourning the death of Native culture, Scott takes comfort in the fact that "all the land is murmurous with the call/ Of their wild names that haunt the lovely glens." In the final fourteen lines of the poem, Scott lists several places, extending from the St. Lawrence River to the Pacific Ocean, which are known by their "wild" Indian names:

Toronto triumphs; Winnipeg flows free,
And clangs the iron height where gaunt Quebec
Lies like a lion in a lily bed,
And Restigouche takes the whelmed sound of sea,
Meductic falls, and flutes the Mirimichi;

Also included in the list are Kiskisink, Manitowapah, Waymoucheeching, Manowan, Mistassini, Wayagamac, Kamouraska, Metapedia, and Metlakahtla. By listing these place-names, Scott acknowledges the Native peoples' symbolic tie to the land yet, as he believed Native cultures to be obsolete, he did not recognize Native peoples' rights to claim their own land in the present. This

belief is evident in his attitude toward the treaty-making process, which can be seen in his written accounts of the negotiations for Treaty Number Nine, also known as the James Bay Treaty, which took place during the summers of 1905 and 1906.

2.2 "Travelling with a Poet" - James Bay and afterwards

The documented evidence of the Treaty Number Nine negotiations include the official accounts which were submitted by commissioners Scott, Samuel Stewart and Daniel G. MacMartin to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, on November 6, 1905 and October 5, 1906, as well as the journal kept by Scott during the trips, and the essay "The Last of the Indian Treaties" which was published in *Scribner's Magazine* in December, 1906. In these accounts, it is evident that Scott employs his own standards of "civilization" in judging the Native peoples with whom he was sent to negotiate, while urging them to surrender the title to their land.

In 1899, Duncan Campbell Scott and J.A. Macrae had travelled, as officers of the Department of Indian Affairs, to the headwaters of Moose River to pay Robinson Treaty annuities to several Ojibwa bands. They were visited by a group of Ojibwa and Cree people from the Missinaibi Lake band and adjoining bands who were concerned about the protection of the rights of those Native people living between James Bay and the Great Lakes whose rights were not protected under the Robinson Treaties. The construction of the Canadian Pacific Railroad had resulted in great difficulties in the lives of these people. The influx of miners, prospectors and

surveyors into their territory was interfering with their livelihood and they sought protection from the government against such interference."²

Duncan Campbell Scott, who was at this time the chief clerk and accountant for the department, and Frank Pedley, then Deputy Superintendent General, recognized the potential for wealth in the James Bay region of northern Ontario.⁸³ Aware that arrangements could not be made before the question of aboriginal title was settled, Scott began working on a budget for Treaty Number Nine. He suggested that the province of Ontario would pay for the annuities and the surveying of reserves, while the federal office would assume the cost of schools and of the treaty itself. After some hesitation, the province of Ontario accepted these responsibilities, in return for a guarantee that "no site suitable for the development of waterpower exceeding 500 horse power shall be included within the boundaries of any reserve."⁸⁴

According to the treaty, the designated bands agreed to abandon their proprietary claims to their territory in exchange for "reserves for each band...not to exceed in all one square mile for each family of five," to be chosen by the treaty commissioners. An expropriation clause was included in order to exclude lands of potential value. In addition, "with a view to show the satisfaction

⁸² Canada. *The James Bay Treaty* (1931; Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1964), 3.

⁸³ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 111.

⁸⁴ "Agreement Between the Dominion of Canada and the Province of Ontario," 3 July 1905, *The James Bay Treaty*, 27.

of His Majesty with the behaviour and good conduct of His Indians,"⁸⁵ a "present" of eight dollars would be given to each Native person, to be followed by a four dollar annuity, which was one dollar less than that provided for in Treaty Number Three. Unlike Treaty Number Three, which was also known as the Northwest Angle Treaty, there would be no provisions made for the distribution of ammunition, farm implements or carpentry tools.

As the chief accountant for the Department of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott was closely involved in the process of drawing up not only the budget but the terms for the James Bay Treaty. In "The Last of the Indian Treaties," Scott clearly states his approval of the government's treaty policy in general:

Yet there was at the heart of these puerile negotiations, this control that seemed to be founded on debauchery and licence, this alliance that was based on a childish system of presents, a principle that has been carried on without cessation and with increased vigilance to the present day - the principle of the sacredness of treaty promises... The treaty policy so well established when the confederation of the provinces of British North America took place has since been continued and nearly all civilized Canada is covered with these Indian treaties and surrenders.⁸⁶

Nowhere in his official writings or his poetry does Scott imply that "aboriginal title" could constitute a legitimate claim for land.

On July 3, 1905, commissioners Duncan Campbell Scott and Samuel Stewart, accompanied by Daniel McMartin, the commissioner for Ontario, departed for Osnaburgh by canoe. James Morrison, in a

⁸⁵ *The James Bay Treaty*, 20.

⁸⁶ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 110.

research report of the James Bay Treaty, describes a photograph of "Commissioner Scott on the portage trail, looking like a fastidious beekeeper in pith helmet and mosquito net."⁷⁷ During the 1905 expedition, the commissioners visited Osnaburgh, Fort Hope, Marten Falls, English River, Fort Albany, Moose Factory and New Post. The 1906 expedition took them to Abitibi, Matchewan, Mattagami, Flying Post and Chapleau. The commissioners were accompanied by a physician and two Dominion police constables. The latter, James Parkinson and J.L. Vanasse, proved to be quite useful, in Scott's opinion, for intimidating the Native people and establishing a sense of the superiority of the Dominion representatives: "The glory of their uniforms and the wholesome fear of the white man's law which they inspired spread down the river in advance and reached James Bay before the commission."⁷⁸ Thus, Scott's party presented themselves to the Native communities, not as friendly ambassadors of a fellow nation, but as representatives of a superior civilization who possessed the power to both offer protection and enforce obedience.

Rather than fair negotiations between equal nations, the meetings with the Native people appear to have been viewed by Scott and his fellow commissioners as opportunities to spread a message of paternalism. Robert Laurence, who had been an apprentice clerk

⁷⁷ James Morrison, *Treaty Research Report: Treaty Nine (1905-06): The James Bay Treaty* (Treaties and Historical Research Centre, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1986), 34.

⁷⁸ Morrison, 111-2.

at the Mattagami post during the 1906 treaty expedition, remembers the arrival of the commissioners:

It was certainly, to my way, a one-sided agreement, you see... And the poor Indians - they came in there with the big canoes, flags flying, and Mounted Police, and all this kind of stuff, and made a great thing about the Great White Father and how they were going to look after them and protect them."⁸⁹

For Duncan Campbell Scott, paternalism was not merely government policy, but was rooted in a strong personal belief that the Native peoples were a race which was undergoing a lengthy and painful period of transition, and therefore needed the protection of the government to ease them into civilization. In "The Last of the Indian Treaties," he writes:

...any forecast of Indian civilization which looks for final results in one generation or two is doomed to disappointment. Final results may be attained, say, in four centuries by the merging of the Indian race with the whites, and all these four things - treaties, teachers, missionaries and traders - with whatever benefits or injuries they bring in their train, aid in making an end."⁹⁰

Scott saw the Native people of the James Bay region as simple individuals "whose transactions had been heretofore limited to computation with sticks and skins," and he concluded that they were incapable of understanding the issues involved in the signing of a treaty. Therefore, he believed, "the simpler facts had to be stated and the parental idea developed that the King is the great father

⁸⁹ Robert Laurence, qtd. in Morrison, 52.

⁹⁰ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 121-22.

of the Indians, watchful over their interests, and ever compassionate."

Duncan Campbell Scott appears to have taken his "parental" role quite seriously, concerning himself less with the Native people's understanding of the terms of the treaty than with the evidence of the adoption of "civilized" values by particular bands. For example, he notes that at Osnaburgh, "the civilizing work of the Church Missionary Society was noticeable"¹ and at Fort Albany "the celebration of mass was well attended on Sunday."² In his essay "The Last of the Indian Treaties" (1906), Scott is quick to praise those bands who appear to have adopted the Victorian values of cleanliness and godliness, and is pleased to note "the effect of education and of contact with a few of the better elements of our civilization."³

Although he writes favourably of individual bands, there is a strong note of condescension in his descriptions. He judges the Native people by the standards of Victorian society, and even when he finds them worthy of praise, they always fall short of the ideal:

Never in the history of the region had there been such an attempt at personal cleanliness as at Osnaburgh that day, and at the other posts, upon like occasions. To be sure the cleansing extended to only three or four square

¹ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 121.

² *The James Bay Treaty*, 5.

³ *The James Bay Treaty*, 8.

⁴ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 121.

inches of arm surface, but it was revolutionary in its tendencies."

Scott's adoption of a paternalistic stance toward the Native people precluded fair negotiations. He assumed that they were incapable of understanding the terms of the treaty, and concluded that "there was no basis for argument,"⁷⁷ choosing instead, in his dealings with them, to emphasize the fact that they would be protected, while omitting many of the details of the text of the treaty. Although the text of the treaty clearly states that the bands involved had ceded "all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever" to the territory in question, Robert Laurence recalls that Duncan Campbell Scott informed the people that they would be able to hunt over their lands "just the same" as before the agreement: "If there was any clause in the treaty that was put in there against that, the Indians didn't understand it... they didn't understand half of what was going on anyway."⁷⁸

By accentuating the paternalistic relationship between the Crown and the Native people, while assuring them "that they were not expected to give up their hunting grounds... but that they were to be good subjects of the King, their great father, whose messengers we were,"⁷⁹ Scott and the other commissioners were seriously misleading the Native people as to the exact nature of

⁷⁷ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 117-18.

⁷⁸ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 115.

⁷⁹ Robert Laurence, as qtd. in Morrison, 52.

⁸⁰ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 115.

the agreement. To Duncan Campbell Scott, who believed that it was in the best interest of Native people to accept the ways of the "progressive" white society and merge with the general population, the agreement represented an essential step toward the civilization and eventual assimilation of the Native peoples.

In the essay "Travelling with a Poet," (1952)⁹⁹ Pelham Edgar, a friend of Scott's who was appointed secretary to the 1906 expedition to northern Ontario, writes of the experience of travelling with Duncan Campbell Scott. It is interesting that Edgar chose, in the title of the essay, to emphasize Scott's poetic nature, despite the fact that he was travelling in his official capacity as an officer of the Department of Indian Affairs. The following reminiscence is dated Friday, June 1, 1906:

Duncan and I sit side by side in the big bark canoe, and we gloat over things - cloud effects, peeps of vistas through the islands as they shift past us, and lights and shadows on the water... We have the *Oxford Book of Poetry* always handy, and when I paddle Duncan often reads. Then I take a mild respite, and make myself comfortable with a pull at a pipe and a short peep at a book. A hard life, is it not?¹⁰⁰

During the expedition, Scott devoted much of his time to reading and composing poetry. Later that day, Edgar writes, "Duncan caught a poem as we were going through Island Lake and is still reeling it in."¹⁰¹ During the trip of 1906, Scott wrote a number of poems which were published in the volume *Via Borealis* (1906),

⁹⁹ Pelham Edgar, "Travelling with a Poet," *Across My Path*, ed. Northrop Frye (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1952), 58-74.

¹⁰⁰ Edgar, "Travelling with a Poet," 59-60.

¹⁰¹ Edgar, 60.

including the poem "Spring on Mattagami."¹⁰² This poem, in particular, reveals Scott's tendency to mythologize the northern landscape:

Far in the east the rain-clouds sweep and harry,
Down the long haggard hills, formless and low,
Far in the west the shell-tints meet and marry,
Piled grey and tender blue and roseate snow;
East - like a fiend, the bolt-breasted, streaming
Storm strikes the world with lightning and with hail;
West - like the thought of a seraph that is dreaming,
Venus leads the young moon down the vale.

Native characters are absent from this poem, except for the two guides, "Potàn the wise" and "the cunning Silver Lightning", who are little more than part of the scenery, existing on the periphery of the poet's vision. The northern landscape is important to the protagonist, but only because it provides him with the opportunity for reflection and meditation in solitude, inspiring him to dream of a distant love:

If she could be here where all the world is eager
For dear love with the primal Eden sway,
Where the blood is fire and no pulse is thin or meagre,
All the heart of all the world beats one way!
There is the land of fraud and fame and fashion,
Joy is but a gaud and withers in an hour,
Here is the land of quintessential passion,
Where in a wild throb Spring wells up with power.

As Stanley Dragland writes, in "Duncan Campbell Scott's 'Spring on Mattagami' and Some Contexts," a paper presented at the 1979 Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium, Scott's experience in the north was in many ways "the archetypal Canadian experience of

¹⁰² Scott, *Via Borealis* (Toronto: William Tyrell and Co., 1906), 1-7.

culture and civilization uneasily meeting primitive environment."¹⁰³ Dragland compares the poem to Meredith's "Love in the Valley" and suggests that "Spring on Mattagami" owes more to the English Victorian literary tradition than to the north itself. If one were to judge by this and the other poems¹⁰⁴ written during the James Bay Treaty expeditions, Duncan Campbell Scott appears to have been as much influenced by the *Oxford Book of Poetry* as by his experiences in the north.

Pelham Edgar identifies "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris," written in 1915 and published one year later in *Lundy's Lane and Other Poems* (1916),¹⁰⁵ as one of the poems which had been inspired by the memory of the treaty expeditions. In 1905, after viewing a one-man exhibition by Edmund Morris which included portraits of Chief Poundmaker, Big Bear, and Crowfoot, Duncan Campbell Scott had written to the artist, suggesting that he travel among the Native peoples of northwestern Canada, in order to paint their

¹⁰³ Stanley Dragland, "Duncan Campbell Scott's 'Spring on Mattagami' and Some Contexts," *The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium*, 56.

¹⁰⁴ These poems, which appear in *Via Borealis* (1906), are "An Impromptu", "The Half-Breed Girl", "Night Burial in the Forest", "Dream Voyageurs", "Song" and "Ecstasy". In addition, Pelham Edgar, in *Across My Path*, refers to "The Height of Land" and "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris" as "important work written later but emanating from moods and observations of this summer season." (p.60)

¹⁰⁵ Scott, "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris," *Lundy's Lane and Other Poems* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, 1916), 179-94.

portraits.¹⁰⁶ In 1906, Morris accompanied the James Bay Treaty expedition to northern Ontario for the purpose of capturing, with paint on canvas, the images of as many Indian chiefs as would agree to sit for him. The two men became good friends, and in this poem, which was written shortly after the death of Morris, Scott recalls a journey which the two friends made to the prairies.

Edmund Morris, who later became famous for his portraits of Native people, evidently shared Scott's fascination with their past. In *Edmund Morris, Frontier Artist* (1984), Jean S. McGill writes that "Edmund had inherited from his grandfather, William, and his father, Alexander, a sympathetic interest in the Indians of Canada."¹⁰⁷ McGill also quotes an entry from Morris's 1906 diary, in which he described the Woodland Indians as a "stalwart race carrying their heads high, of a rich colour like old copper and black straight hair cut short."¹⁰⁸ The beauty, stoicism and nobility which he saw in his subjects is evident in his portraits; a reviewer in the March 23, 1907 edition of the *Toronto Star* wrote that the Indians in Morris's portraits "all look as if modelled in terra cotta, carved out of mahogany."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Jean S. McGill, *Edmund Morris, Frontier Artist* (Toronto and Charlottetown: Dundurn Press, 1984), 61. See also "Chapter Nine: The Bureaucrat's Indian," in Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 196-218.

¹⁰⁷ McGill, 61.

¹⁰⁸ Edmund Morris, as qtd. in McGill, 64.

¹⁰⁹ Unidentified reviewer, qtd. in McGill, 71.

Duncan Campbell Scott wrote "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris" as a belated reply to the final letter which he had received from Morris:

Dear Morris - here is your letter -
 Can my answer reach you now?
 Fate has left me your debtor,
 You will remember how;
 For I went away to Nantucket,
 And you to the Isle of Orleans,
 And when I was dawdling and dreaming
 Over the ways and means
 Of answering, the power was denied me,
 Fate frowned and took her stand;
 I have your unanswered letter
 Here in my hand.

Through the writing of this poem, Scott was able to bid a final farewell to his friend, and to come to terms with Morris's death and his own mortality. Although Scott is writing primarily about his friendship with Edmund Morris, his reminiscences lead him to write about the deaths of Chief Crowfoot and Chief Akoose, both of whose portraits Morris had painted. Melvin H. Dagg, in his essay "Scott and the Indians," argues that Scott's treatment of these characters indicates a deep respect for the Native peoples and a rejection of the idea that they were destined to disappear:

If the essence of Scott's Indian poetry is "a facile acceptance of the Indian nation's doom," as both [Chipman] Hall and [Keichi] Hirano suggest, surely Scott would not have seen the death of Crowfoot and Akoose in the same context as the death of Edmund Morris, a man described by [E.K.] Brown as "an intimate of Scott's."¹¹⁰

Scott's acceptance of the inevitable demise of Native culture, while certainly not "facile," is nonetheless indisputable. There is

¹¹⁰ Melvin H. Dagg, "Scott and the Indians," *Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism*, 184.

evidence, as we have seen, in both his administrative writings and his poetry that he had accepted the idea that Native culture had become obsolete, and although his poetry reveals sympathy and compassion for Native peoples, he portrayed them as a people in transition, caught between the old, "savage" life and the new, "civilized" way of living.

The Native characters in "Lines in Memory of Edmund Morris" are classic examples of the "Noble Savage." Akoose, Crowfoot, and Sakimay, although admired by Scott for their past feats and glories, are depicted in old age; they are past their prime and their deaths are accepted as inevitable. Through the use of these figures, who represent the past vitality of Native culture, Scott is able to reach a philosophical acceptance of his friend's death. By comparing his friend's life and death to those of the noble chiefs Crowfoot and Akoose, Scott allows himself to accept the inescapable nature of human mortality and the inevitability of the death of Edmund Morris.

As he reminisces about his travels with Morris, Scott remembers how, at the site of Crowfoot's grave, Morris "marked the site of his tepee/ With a circle of stones," paying tribute to a man whom Scott and Morris would have considered to be the embodiment of the image of the noble and heroic Indian chief. It is interesting to note that Morris does not merely reflect upon the past feats of Crowfoot, but is compelled to mark the site with a visible and tangible reminder of the Indian hero, thus preserving

the image of the noble warrior in much the same way as Morris and Scott were preserving this image through portraiture and poetry.

Scott continues his reminiscences with the memory of "the weirdness" of an evening which the two friends spent at Qu'Appelle with a man to whom Scott refers as "old Sakimay." The old man entertains the visitors with tales of heroic conflict between the Cree and Blackfoot, as they sit in his wigwam amid the "keen, acrid smell,/ As the kinnikinick was burning":

He showed us his painted robe
Where in primitive pigments
He had drawn his feats and his forays,
And told us the legend
Of the man without a name,
The hated Blackfoot,
How he lured the warriors,
The young men, to the foray
And they never returned.

Scott represents Sakimay as a man trapped in time, whose life is only as important as the stories of heroic escapades with which he entertains his visitors, and whose culture has been reduced to exotic fragrances and remembered images of past "feats and forays" drawn in "primitive pigments."

In the next section of the poem, Scott recalls a portrait-sitting, in which Morris records the noble countenance of a "grave" Indian chief for posterity:

While grave Ne-Pah-Pee-Ness
Sat for his portrait there,
In his beaded coat and his bare
Head, with his mottled fan
Of hawk's feathers, A Man!

Here, Scott refers to Chief Nepahpenais (Night Bird) from the Qu'Appelle Valley.¹¹¹ Once again, as in Morris's monument to Crowfoot, and Sakimay's painted robe, past glories are commemorated in the present through art. Scott writes that "art grows and time lingers"; through Morris's portraits of noble Indian chiefs, the transitory is captured and made permanent. His portraits will keep the image of the grave and noble Indian chief alive in much the same way as Scott expected Paget's *People of the Plains* to become "a faithful record of many old things that have passed away."¹¹² When considered in light of Scott's belief that it was necessary for Native peoples to "progress" and assimilate into non-Native society, his use of the figures of Crowfoot and Akoose can be seen as examples of the past vitality of a culture which has become obsolete and can be brought into the present and preserved only through art, which alone possesses the power to transcend time.

Scott's reminiscences of his friendship with Morris lead him to the story of the death of Akoose, who in his youth had been "fleet of foot" and a skilled hunter:

...in his prime, a herd of antelope
 From sunrise, without rest, a hundred miles
 Drove through rank prairie, loping like a wolf,
 Tired them and slew them, ere the sun went down.

But Akoose's days of intense vitality and heroism have passed, and Scott depicts him as an old man, who had become "blind from the smoke/ Of tepees and the sharp snow light." His skill, vigour and

¹¹¹ McGill, 140.

¹¹² Scott, *People of the Plains*, 15.

dignity all belong to the long-ago days of his prime, and he has been reduced to an object of pity, "withered and spent," who can no longer move about freely but can only creep "in the warm sun along a rope/ Stretched for his guidance."

Before his death, Akoose summons his remaining energy and makes one final trip to the hunting-grounds of his youth:

He caught a pony on a quick return
Of prowess and, all his instincts cleared and quickened,
He mounted, sensed the north and bore away
To the Last Mountain Lake where in his youth
He shot the sand-hill-cranes with his flint arrows.
And for these hours in all the varied pomp
Of pagan fancy and free dreams of foray
And crude adventure, he ranged on entranced

For one last time, through imagination and "pagan fancy," Akoose is able to briefly recapture and relive the vitality and "crude adventure" of his lost youth. He is then prepared to die, and through death he finds peace:

There Akoose lay, silent amid the bracken,
Gathered at last with the Algonquin Chieftains.
Then the tenebrous sunset was blown out,
And all the smoky gold turned into cloud wrack.
Akoose slept forever amid the poplars,
Swathed by the wind from the far-off Red Deer
Where dinosaurs sleep, clamped in the rocky tombs.

By making a connection between Akoose and the dinosaurs, who disappeared after a period during which they roamed freely over the earth, Scott implies that the Native peoples must accept that their age has also passed. Akoose, no longer able to pursue his old way of life except in his "pagan fancy and free dreams of foray," nobly accepts the inevitability of his death. The death of Akoose does not inspire grief because it is timely; in Scott's eyes Akoose, like Native culture itself, had outlived the days of his

glory. In this poem, Scott uses this image to ease his own pain; through the story of the deaths of Akoose and Crowfoot which, after lives of heroic intensity evoke "not tears, but joy," Scott is able to resolve the grief which he feels upon his friend's death.

CHAPTER THREE: "VERILY, THE WHITE MAN'S WAYS WERE THE BEST": DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT'S VIEWS CONCERNING NATIVE CULTURE AND ASSIMILATION

3.1 "The original spirit has departed"

In Canada during the early twentieth century, it was commonly believed that, in order for Native people to survive as individuals, all things which made their culture unique and distinct from those of other Canadians had to be destroyed. As Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Scott considered himself to be responsible for urging the Native peoples toward "civilization" and ensuring that they did not revert to their "savage" or "pagan" ways. In a memoir written shortly after the death of Duncan Campbell Scott, E.K. Brown, who had been a close friend of Scott's, wrote that Scott's "conception of the national duty to the Indians was simple and sound."¹¹³ According to Brown, Scott believed in the goal of the government's policy, which was that "by education and encouragement the Indians were to cease being interesting exotic relics and practise trying to hold their own in a society which could not be bent in their direction."¹¹⁴

In 1914, the Indian Act was amended on Scott's recommendation. In a memo written May 5, 1919 to Arthur Meighen, who was then Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Scott outlined the details of the amendment:

¹¹³ E.K. Brown, "Memoir," *Selected Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1951), xxv.

¹¹⁴ Brown, "Memoir," xxvi.

Sub-section 2 of Section 149 of the Indian Act makes it illegal for an Indian to participate in any stampede in aboriginal costume outside his own reserve. The penalty, on summary conviction, is \$25.00 or imprisonment for a month, or to both penalty and imprisonment.¹¹⁵

In a letter to R.B. Bennett, the Member of Parliament for Calgary, in July, 1916, Scott explained the purpose of the amendment:

The purpose of the Amendment to the Act was to prevent the Indians from being exploited as a savage or semi savage race, when the whole administrative force of the Department is endeavouring to civilize them.¹¹⁶

Prior to the amendment, the potlach as well as certain dances practiced in the western provinces were forbidden under Section 149 (formerly Section 114), but Scott had not been satisfied with these restrictions. He felt that any gathering which contributed to keeping Native cultures alive counteracted his department's efforts to transform Native peoples into members of a progressive society. In 1921, Scott wrote to Commissioner W.M. Graham:

It has always been clear to me that the Indians must have some sort of recreation, and if our agents would endeavour to substitute reasonable amusements for this senseless drumming and dancing, it would be a great assistance.¹¹⁷

In 1931, Scott described the problems which the organization of events such as the Calgary Stampede caused for his department:

The department is confronted with serious problems in the slow process of weaning the Indian from his primitive state. For some of the obstacles to progress the public

¹¹⁵ Memo of D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, 5 May 1919. PAC PG10, vol. 3821, file 60,511-5.

¹¹⁶ Letter of D.C. Scott to R.B. Bennett, July 17, 1916. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3821, file 60,511-5.

¹¹⁷ Letter of D.C. Scott to W.M. Graham, 4 October 1921, PAC, RG10, vol. 3826, file 60,511-4A.

must be held responsible. In the minds of the promoters of fairs, stampedes and affairs of the kind, particularly in the western provinces, the Indian is regarded as an asset when decked out in feathers and war-paint, and exhibited for the entertainment of the curious. In this way the Indians are induced to leave their reserves for considerable periods, and generally at times of the year when they should be engaged with their agricultural duties."

Many bands wished to participate in events such as the Calgary Stampede, but due to the 1914 amendment were forbidden to do so. In a memo to Arthur Meighen, dated May 5, 1919, Scott explained his reasons for forbidding Native people to attend the Stampede in traditional dress:

Harvesting will likely have begun about the date of the meeting of the stampede or shortly after it. We have found from experience that the Indians who attended these celebrations would not settle down to work after they returned to their reserves."

It was Scott's hope that "if they are not to go in costume and take part in exhibition dances and processions, the temptation to leave the reserve will be considerably weakened."

Scott believed that, apart from encouraging "savage" custom and behaviour, any pageants, dances or gatherings which involved the participation of Native people in traditional costume interfered with the Native peoples' agricultural pursuits, which the Department considered to be an important element of the civilization process. In a letter of July 28, 1931 to Thomas G.

" Scott, *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*, 25.

" Memo of D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, 5 May 1919. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3821, file 60,511-5.

" Memo of D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, 5 May 1919. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3821, file 60,511-5.

Murphy, the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Scott expressed an opinion that the Indians who insisted upon participating in such cultural events were "squandering their time and rendering nugatory our policy of making them self sufficient through farming operations."¹⁴¹

It was Scott's opinion that Native peoples would survive only if they were to relinquish their culture, customs and traditions in order to merge with the general population. By outlawing important elements of Native culture, Scott hoped that Native peoples would turn away from what he perceived to be the past and join the present by pursuing farming and a "civilized" way of life. In a letter to Chief Sampson of the Hobbema Reserve in Alberta, dated July 9, 1925, he wrote: "It is only by looking after your farming and cattle industry that you will be able to advance."¹⁴² The goal of federal Indian policy was to transform the Native peoples of western Canada into self-sufficient farmers, and any activity which interfered with farming operations was regarded as a hindrance to the efforts of the department to civilize the Native peoples.

In a letter to E.K. Brown in 1941, Scott stated his opinion regarding Native religious traditions:

One can hardly be sympathetic with the contemporary Sun dance or Potlatch when one knows that the original spirit

¹⁴¹ Memo of D.C. Scott to Thomas G. Murphy, 28 July 1931. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3821, file 60,511-5.

¹⁴² Letter of D.C. Scott to Chief Sampson of the Hobbema Reserve, Alberta, 9 July 1925. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3821, file 60,511-5.

has departed and that they are largely the opportunities for debauchery by low white men."

Believing that all aspects of Native culture belonged to the past, Duncan Campbell Scott viewed Native religions, traditions and customs as meaningless and irrelevant rituals which had persisted from an earlier age of "savage" glory and served only as a form of entertainment for "low white men."

The goal of federal Indian policy was to lead the Native people from 'wardship' to economic and social self-sufficiency. The encouragement of agricultural activities was viewed by the federal government as the most effective means to achieving self-sufficiency among the Native peoples of western Canada, in spite of the fact that, since the turn of the century, government policy had restricted Native farmers' use of modern farming techniques, and inhibited the sale of their produce on the open market.¹⁴⁴ Duncan Campbell Scott believed the government's policy to be extremely effective, and attributed what he perceived as its success to himself and his department. He wrote of the western bands: "The department has made these Indians self-supporting in two generations; a remarkable transition."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Letter of D.C. Scott to E.K. Brown, 2 July 1941. Robert L. McDougall, *The Poet and the Critic*, 26.

¹⁴⁵ See Sarah Carter, "Two Acres and a Cow: 'Peasant' Farming for the Indians of the Northwest, 1889-97," *The Canadian Historical Review* LXX, 1 (March 1989), 27-52. Also see her book *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).

¹⁴⁶ Scott, *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*, 10.

In his capacity as Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott concerned himself with improving the existing policy in order to render it more effective in achieving the assimilation of Native peoples into the general population. As a poet, while he expressed a great deal of compassion for the Native peoples and eloquently mourned the passing of their culture, he also revealed the belief, consistent with the policy which he administered, that the death of Native culture was inevitable. For Scott, as we have seen, all that is unique about Native culture was embodied by the romantic image of the noble, stoic warrior. This image appealed to Scott's poetic sensibility, but he was certain that it had no place in the modern, "progressive" world of the twentieth century. Therefore, he believed, it was in the best interests of the Native peoples themselves to relinquish their culture and assimilate themselves into the general population. As E.K. Brown wrote in his memoir to Scott:

The poet in him and the civil servant agreed in believing that the future of the Indians, if it were not to be extinction or degradation, depended on their being brought more and more nearly to the status of the white population.¹²⁶

3.2 "A Scene at Lake Manitou" (1923)

An examination of the poetry and short fiction which Duncan Campbell Scott produced after his extensive journeys as a commissioner for Treaty Nine reveals that, although he often expresses compassion, respect and admiration for individual

¹²⁶ Brown, "Memoir," xxv-xxvi.

characters, Scott retained the opinion that, Native culture having lost its relevance, the Native people must collectively relinquish their traditions and accept the customs, religion and values of the dominant society in order to survive.

Scott, believing Native culture belonged to the past, viewed Native religions, traditions and customs as rituals which had persisted from an earlier, "savage" age, but which were no longer relevant. This attitude is evident in the poem "A Scene at Lake Manitou," which was written in 1923 but not published until 1935, when it appeared in the volume *The Green Cloister*.¹²⁷ The central character is a Native woman who, like many of Scott's Native characters, is torn between two cultures and two belief systems. The Widow Frederick, "whose Indian name means Stormy Sky," is watching over her dying son Matanack, who has been "slain by the foe that had slain his father," presumably a disease which had been introduced into the community by the white traders. As Matanack lies near death, his mother recalls the times which she and her son had spent together, learning the skills required for a life of hunting and trapping:

She had taught him how and where
To lay the rabbit snare,
And how to set
Under the ice, the net,
The habits of shy wild things
Of the forest and marsh;

To her son's "inherited store" of innate knowledge, Stormy Sky "had added all her lore" in order to provide her son with the necessary

¹²⁷ Scott, *The Green Cloister* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1935), 48-53.

expertise for their way of life. As the setting of this poem is "a cluster of canvas tents" on "the rocky point" above a fur trading post, these skills would be put to use, not for procuring sustenance, but for trading.

Thus, Stormy Sky is caught between two worlds, using traditional hunting and trapping methods in order to purchase European-made goods from the fur-traders. She is also caught between two systems of belief. As Stormy Sky watches over her son, her mind turns to "thoughts of Nanabojou/ And the powerful Manitou/ That lived in the lake." However, these thoughts are "mingled with thoughts of Jesus/ Who raised a man from the dead,/ So Father Pacifique said." Inspired by the teachings of the local priest, she turns in desperation to Christianity in the hope of receiving a similar miracle:

She had prayed to their Jesus,
She had called on Mary His mother
To save him, to keep him forever!

Stormy Sky's belief in the story of Jesus's resurrection of Lazarus leads her to believe in the possibility for physical resurrection through the use of the holy water and the scapular:

The Holy Water and the Scapular!
She had used all the Holy Water
Father Pacifique had given her;
He had worn his Scapular
Always, and for months had worn hers too;

After her prayers prove to be in vain, she reaches the conclusion that "There was nothing more to be done/ That Christians could do."

Stormy Sky, filled with despair after her prayers to Jesus and Mary had been left unanswered, turns to her Native religion,

calling upon "the Powers of the Earth and the Air,/ The Powers of the Water" to save her son from death. She offers "all her treasured possessions," the manufactured symbols of white civilization which had been purchased from the traders, to "the Manitou/ That lived in the lake," hoping that the life of her son would be spared in return for her relinquishment of these objects. Scott depicts this act as a reversion to pagan frenzy:

The children heard her scream,
The trader and the loafing Indians
Saw her rush into the tent and bring out her blankets
And throw them into the lake,
Screaming demented screams,
Dragging her treasures into the light,
Scattering them far on the water.

While Scott presents Stormy Sky's prayers to Jesus as harmless, albeit futile, her appeal to the Manitou is described as an irrational and reckless destruction of her most valued possessions. Even "the loafing Indians" are astonished by her atavistic behaviour and, assuming that she is hysterical with grief, they attempt to subdue her:

First of them all her gramophone,
She hurled like a stone;
And they caught her and held her
Just as she swung aloft the next of her treasures
Her little hand-sewing-machine.
They threw her down on the rock
And five men held her until,
Not conquered by them,
But subdued by her will
She lay still.

The woman's actions are once again "all in vain"; her son's death is inevitable, and neither prayers to Jesus nor offerings to the Manitou can save him. After the death of Matanack, Stormy Sky regains her composure, in a manner reminiscent of the abandoned

woman in "The Forsaken," who "smoothed her dark locks under her kerchief" and "composed her shawl in state":

She put up her hair that had fallen over her eyes,
And with movements, weary and listless,
Tidied her dress.

Duncan Campbell Scott showed the greatest admiration for Native people when they were behaving with the nobility and stoicism which he associated with a heroic Indian past. The character of Stormy Sky embodies this stoicism when she accepts the death of Matanack, finding comfort in a blending of elements from her Native religion with her understanding of Christian concepts:

He had gone to his father
To hunt in the Spirit Land
And to be with Jesus and Mary.

Her brief reversion to her traditional form of prayer is depicted as nothing more than an act of temporary insanity, an irrational frenzy inspired by grief and despair.

Through the encouragement of intermarriage, education and agricultural pursuits, Scott, as the chief administrator of the Department of Indian Affairs, foresaw a day when Native peoples would relinquish their customs and traditions. As he stated in 1921, "Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department."¹² A Christian himself, Scott believed that conversion was an integral part of the assimilation process, but acknowledged that the

¹² Scott, Hearings Testimony, 1921-1922, PAC, PG 10, vol. 6810, file 473, vol. 12.

transition would not be immediate and, although beneficial to the race in general, would be difficult for many individuals. In "A Scene at Lake Manitou," neither Christian prayer nor offerings to the Manitou are able to save Stormy Sky's son, and neither can offer her comfort after his death. Christian concepts are still too foreign to her to offer a solution, and the rituals of her Native religion are portrayed as a regression to a primitive form of worship. After his death, she is able to find solace only in a vision which combines both Christian and Native religious imagery.

3.3 "Powassan's Drum" (1925)

In Duncan Campbell Scott's James Bay Diary, the entry for July 6, 1905 mentions a "long argument with the medicine man" which was motivated by the complaints of the local Indian agent that the medicine man had been conducting a spirit dance. The argument led to an encounter between Scott and "Powassan the head medicine man" during which Scott reminded Powassan that such rituals were forbidden under federal legislation and "warned the Indians not to dance."¹²⁹ In "Powassan's Drum," written in the winter of 1925 and published in 1926 in *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*, Scott addressed this subject poetically.¹³⁰ In this poem, Scott created the character of Powassan, a powerful medicine man who, through his

¹²⁹ Scott, "James Bay Diary," 6 July 1905. PAC, RG 10, vol. 1028.

¹³⁰ Scott, *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1926), 59-63.

rhythmic drumming, is able to penetrate the physical universe and induce a trancelike, hypnotic state:

Throb-throb-throb-throb;-
Is this throbbing a sound
Or an ache in the air?
Pervasive as light,
Measured and inevitable,
It seems to float from no distance,
But to live in the listening world-
Throb-throb-throb-throb-throbbing
The sound of Powassan's Drum.

Although Scott defended his official stance by stating that "the original spirit has departed"¹³¹ from Native religious customs, he appears to contradict this statement in "Powassan's Drum" by acknowledging the immense power possessed by the medicine man. However, although Scott's official reasons for supporting severe restrictions upon Native cultural practices are not evident in this poem, "Powassan's Drum" does reveal that Scott regarded the continuation of these practices as a threat to the necessary civilization and assimilation of Native peoples.

The power with which Scott invested the character of Powassan has been the subject of a great deal of speculation by his critics. Gerald Lynch has stated that Scott's "respect for [Indian] culture is evident in the powerfully incantatory rhythms of 'Powassan's Drum'."¹³² John Masefield, in the foreword to the English edition of *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*, noted that "the incantation

¹³¹ D.C. Scott to E.K. Brown, 2 July 1941. Robert L. McDougall, *The Poet and the Critic*, 26.

¹³² Lynch, 54.

in the poem makes one see what the magician invoked."¹³³ Scott's Powassan, who stands in opposition to Christianity and rational thought, is certainly depicted as a formidable opponent. Through his ceaseless drumming he is able to alter the perception of the physical world, making it seem "lost and shallow," and to draw all living beings into his power:

The live things in the world
Hear it and are silent.
They hide silent and charmed
As if guarding a secret;

However, although Powassan is certainly a powerful figure, his power presents a negative force, fueled by pure hatred and superstition. As E. Palmer Patterson has stated in "The Poet and the Indian: Indian Themes in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott and John Collier," which appeared in *Ontario History* in the summer of 1967, Scott's depiction of the medicine man "calls attention to the malevolent and occult aspect which the poet attributes to the Indian."¹³⁴ Powassan himself is described as a savage figure who, "wizened with fasting," "fierce with thirst," "parched with anger" and "famished with hatred," crouches in his "dwarf wigwam" and conjures a monstrous creation inspired by his obsessive hatred. Scott's medicine man offers only blind hatred and superstition to his people; his vision excludes love and reason.

¹³³ John Masefield, Foreword, *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* (1926; London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1927).

¹³⁴ E. Palmer Patterson, "The Poet and the Indian: Indian Themes in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott and John Collier," *Ontario History* LIX, 2 (June 1967): 72.

The medicine man's threat lies in his ability to create an alternate reality. Powassan beats upon his drum "in memory of hated things dead/ Or in menace of hated things to come," and his drumming summons the dark forces of the universe, as a cloud covers the sun and "an infusion of bitter darkness/ Stains the sweet water of twilight." Powassan's incantations culminate in the appearance of a headless Indian:

Then from the reeds stealing,
 A shadow noiseless,
 A canoe moves noiseless as sleep,
 Noiseless as the trance of deep sleep
 And an Indian still as a statue
 Moulded out of deep sleep,
 Headless, still as a headless statue
 Moulded out of deep sleep,
 Sits modelled in full power

In this passage, Scott introduces the apparition of the headless Indian, repeating the word "sleep" four times to emphasize the fact that this figure has arisen, like a nightmare, from the sleep of the rational, conscious mind.

The Indian's body, from which the head has been severed, is "haughty in manful power," embodying instinct and passion separated from the rational mind. Although the figure of the Indian does possess a "manful power," it is also described as being "headless and impotent in power," because its power, and that of Powassan, is unfocused, lacking reason to give it direction. The headless Indian is "the translation into sight" of the medicine man's "viewless hate." Powassan's hatred, Scott is suggesting, is "viewless" because it lacks a rational focus, and therefore his magic succeeds

only in creating the illusion of power in the "impotent" figure of the headless Indian.

The vision conjured by Powassan is a noble Indian figure, reminiscent of past Indian glory:

The Indian fixed like bronze
Trails his severed head
Through the dead water
Holding it by the hair,
By the plaits of hair,
Wound with sweet grass and tags of silver.

His hair is decorated in a traditional fashion with sweet grass and silver tags. The Indian is described as being "fixed like bronze," invoking the image of a stoic Indian brave. This description, coupled with the previous likening of the figure to a "statue," suggests that the figure is locked in the past, unyielding as the times change around it.

As the Indian's canoe drifts through the water, the disembodied head looks up past its rightful place upon the shoulders of the body to connect with the clouds of the storm which had been gathering power throughout Powassan's incantations:

The face looks through the water
Up to its throne on the shoulders of power,
Unquenched eyes burning in the water,
Piercing beyond the shoulders of power
Up to the fingers of the storm cloud.

The universe is unable to offer a rational response to the medicine man's vision:

The sun could not answer.
The tense sky burst and went dark
And could not answer.

But, as Scott writes, "the storm answers." The medicine man's vision, arising from pure anger and hatred and separated from

rational thought, can only result in chaos and destruction. The violent, apocalyptic storm at the end of the poem represents the world's reaction to Powassan's magic:

Uprises the storm
And crushes the dark world;
At the core of the rushing fury
Bursting hail, tangled lightning
Wind in a wild vortex
Lives the triumphant throb-throb-throb-throb-
Throbbing of Powassan's Drum.

Duncan Campbell Scott was acutely aware of the anger which many Native people felt at the intrusion of the federal government into their lives. Almost immediately following his appointment to the position of Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in 1913, Scott had been confronted by Native political organizations, such as the Council of the Tribes and the League of Indians of Canada, who encouraged cultural revitalization as a means of gaining power and control of their own affairs. In the 1920s, the Confederacy of the Six Nations campaign for sovereignty, which was referred to by Scott as that "so-called status claim,"¹³⁵ caused Scott a great deal of consternation. Scott strongly opposed the activities of such organizations, which he regarded as subversive, and detrimental to the government's goal of assimilation. Although he acknowledged the Native peoples' resistance to the assimilationist policies of the government, Scott clearly believed that adaptation to a changing world, and not a return to

¹³⁵ Memo of D.C. Scott to Arthur Merghen, 3 May 1920, PAC, RG10, vol. 2285, file 57,169-1A2.

traditional beliefs and customs, was the answer to the difficulties experienced by the Native peoples.

3.4 "Charcoal" (1904; 1947)

In 1896, Charcoal, a Native man from the Blood Reserve in Alberta, was accused of the murder of his wife's lover and, after an extensive manhunt, was eventually captured and hanged for his crime. Charcoal's story is told by Hugh Dempsey in a non-fictional work entitled *Charcoal's World*.¹⁴ Duncan Campbell Scott's short story "Charcoal," which was first published in 1904 in *Canadian Magazine* under the title "Star-Blanket," and later republished in 1947 in the collection *The Circle of Affection*, is Scott's imaginative interpretation of this incident.¹⁵ "Charcoal," as Stanley Dragland notes in his introduction to *In the Village of Viger and Other Stories* (1973), is Scott's "only story about 'pure' Indians." Leon Slonim, in his essay, "The Source of Duncan Campbell Scott's 'Charcoal'," writes:

The real Charcoal had indeed (in October 1896) murdered the Indian who was his wife's lover; he had, moreover, wounded a white farm instructor and shot to death (almost exactly as is described in Scott's story) a Mounted

¹⁴ Hugh Dempsey, *Charcoal's World* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978).

¹⁵ Scott, *The Circle of Affection, and Other Pieces in Prose and Verse* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1947), 212-22.

¹⁶ Stanley Louis Dragland, Introduction, *In the Village of Viger and Other Stories*, by Duncan Campbell Scott, ed. Malcolm Ross (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 15.

Policeman. For these crimes the real Charcoal had been tried and, in March 1897, executed."

Characteristically, Scott portrays the title character as an individual caught in a transitional stage between Native and white cultures and unable to attain peace in either world.

Scott describes Charcoal as "a mild, big fellow" (p.216) who possesses an "infantine curiosity" (p.213) and a desire to conform to the ways of white society:

Charcoal wanted to be what his agent called "a good Indian". He wanted to have a new cooking stove, and a looking-glass. He already had cattle on loan, and was one of the best workers in the hay-fields (p.212).

In contrast to Charcoal is the character of Bad young man, who is lazy, unreliable and follows his own rules, paying no heed to the Indian agent. Bad-young-man "never did a stroke of work" (p.212), and often "ranged off the reserve into Montana or Kootenay securing permits [and making] trouble wherever he came" (p.212).

Conversely, Charcoal accepts the "white man's ways," and his belief in the superiority of these ways is reinforced by the rewards which he is given for his obedience:

More and more evident were the results of his toil and his obedience to his agent and his instructor. He began to see clearly that what they had told him was the truth. He could trace every dollar of the twenty five he had paid for the medicine-pole-bag to some good stroke of work he had done in the hay-fields. He did not know it, but the agent had asked the Department for lumber to build him a new house, and his chief ambitions were forming solidly in the future. Verily, the white man's ways were the best (p.213).

" Leon Slonim, "The Source of D.C. Scott's 'Charcoal'," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 4 (Winter 1979): 161.

Although Scott himself was in favour of assimilation, this story reveals an awareness of the inner conflict which accompanies the transition to a new way of life. Charcoal is attracted to the benefits of conforming to "the white man's ways," yet he is unable to escape his heritage and is irresistably drawn to "the old way" of his ancestors, which Scott characterizes as irrational, violent and vengeful.

Charcoal, angered by his wife's relationship with Bad-young-man, visits his paternal grandfather to ask his advice. Leon Slonim suggests that this character, who does not appear in the documented evidence of Charcoal's trial, was invented by Scott as a means of emphasizing the differences between the "old way" and the "white man's way."¹⁴ The old man, who "had been a mighty warrior in his day," but who could now "only remember the time of his prowess which had gone by" (p.214), represents an age of savagery; he tells Charcoal stories of his youth, when life was lived violently and according to a code of vengeance which has become unacceptable in "civilized" society:

That night when he smelt Charcoal's tobacco, his tongue was loosened, and he told many a story of violent deed and desperate death; of how he had killed Crees as if they were coyotes; of how he had shot and scalped whitemen who now seemed to own the prairies, and he had scalps to prove his valour (p.214).

The old man's stories of a violent and savage past incite Charcoal to abandon his attempts at being a "good Indian," and inspire what Scott terms a brief "lapse to paganism":

¹⁴ Slonim, 163.

Charcoal was convinced that the old way was a good way, and he went out into the moonlight, unhobbled one of his ponies and rode away furiously, yelling every little while at the moon (p.214).

The next morning, once his anger had subsided, Charcoal's brief regression to savagery was forgotten, and he once again "found himself wanting to be a 'good Indian'" (p.214). However, later that day, while riding to his camp, he shoots Bad-young-man and kills him, marking the beginning of his regression to savagery. He then returns to his grandfather's tepee, where the old man instructs him to kill a white man, in keeping with the "old ways":

After Charcoal had heard what his grandfather had to say, he declared that the old way was the best, that he had done well, and he went out and made his "mark" to kill a white man (p.215).

The act of killing his rival ultimately results in Charcoal's exile from both Native and white cultures. In order to "make his mark" he attempts to kill a white instructor, and he eventually does kill a policeman. Charcoal becomes a fugitive, running from the police and able to trust neither "the people of his own clan and totem, who had learned well the white man's treachery" (p.217) nor his own relatives, for "he knew that they would be bribed to hunt him down or lay a trap for him" (p.218). Scott uses Charcoal's actions as an example of the struggle of "civilization against savagery" (p.217). Although Charcoal had been attracted by the rewards of a civilized life, he finds himself unable to escape his cultural values, and is led to attempt to settle his conflict with his rival according to the "old tradition" of savagery. Now he must be dealt with by the forces of civilization:

No one could understand how Charcoal, who wanted to be a 'good' Indian, had done this thing... But, whatever reasons he had had, he was now to be caught and punished. It was once more civilization against savagery. Against this one Indian who had dared to follow the old tradition was arrayed all organized law (p.217).

After his betrayal by his brother-in-law, Wolf-plume, Charcoal accepts his impending execution as a form of revenge for the deaths of white men at the hands of his ancestors. Scott's notion of an ancient code of retribution is reminiscent of his poem "Watkwenies," in which "vengeance" is described as having once been both "lore and law" for the Native people:

He had thought of many things which he did not understand. He was to be killed in the white man's manner; to his mind it was only vengeance, death for deaths, which the warriors of his own race dealt to their foes in the old days, and in a braver fashion (p.221).

As a member of a society which is in the process of transition, Charcoal is caught between old and new worlds as he tries desperately to be a "good Indian" yet finds himself drawn toward "paganism." Charcoal longs to become the "good Indian" that the agent expects him to become, but, Scott suggests, he is prevented by both his heritage and his true nature from attaining his goal. Charcoal's reversion to savagery is depicted as immediate and natural, and he seems to retain none of the "civilized" values which he had held prior to his murder of Bad-young-man. Irrationally, Charcoal chooses to lead the police on "a long and merry chase" (p.217), rather than to escape by crossing the border. As the chase continues, he grows "more careless and more daring," displaying "an air of reckless contempt" for his pursuers. His inability to control his "savage" impulses results in his death,

which is the price he must pay for his reversion to the "old ways" of violence and revenge.

Charcoal's dilemma is the result of the changes which Scott, as Deputy Superintendent General, deemed necessary for the survival of Native peoples. Through his portrayal of Charcoal, Scott reveals sympathy and compassion for the plight of Native individuals who are unable to cope with the changes which are taking place within their society:

They had driven away the buffalo, and made the Indian sad with flour and beef, and had put his muscles into harness. He had only shot a bad Indian, and they rose upon him. His gun had shot a big policeman, and when they had taught his brother-in-law their own idea of fair dealing he was taken in sleep, and now there was to be an end. He did not know what Père Pauquette meant by his prayers, and the presentation of the little crucifix worn bright with many salutations. It was all involved in mystery (p.221).

Like Stormy Sky in the poem "A Scene at Lake Manitou," Charcoal possesses only a superficial understanding of Christianity; he listens to the priest's prayers and wears the crucifix, but the deeper meaning behind these things remains a "mystery" to him. In the moment before his death, Charcoal finally finds peace, attaining "the calm of a stoic" (p.222) as he breathes in the scents which emanate from the medicine-pole-bag, a remnant of the old ways and a symbol of former Indian power. As in "A Scene at Lake Manitou," relief from the internal dilemma caused by an individual's transition to a new way of life is found through a stoic acceptance of one's own death and, by extension, of the inevitable death of an old way of life which Scott viewed as archaic and obsolete.

3.5 Enfranchisement: "the happiest future for the Indian race"

Enfranchisement, involving the relinquishment of Indian status as defined in the Indian Act and the adoption of the privileges and responsibilities of full Canadian citizenship, was the ultimate goal of federal Indian policy. It was commonly believed that, as Native people became educated in the ways of the dominant society, they would choose to assume full citizenship status. As Duncan Campbell Scott wrote in 1931:

...there are communities of Indians who for the most part show little trace of their ancestry, either in their physiognomy, colour or habits of life. There is no reason why these groups should not take their place in the community and assume the responsibility of citizenship.¹⁴³

In order to become enfranchised, an applicant was required to demonstrate that he had both relinquished his traditional way of life and had become self-supporting. As Native people gained the franchise, their shares of reserve land would become individual freeholds, and thus all Native people would eventually be integrated into the general population and the reservation system would become obsolete.

According to Duncan Campbell Scott, enfranchisement "has been the whole purpose of Indian education and advancement since the earliest times."¹⁴⁴ In 1857, the legislature of the United Canadas had passed an "Act to encourage the gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in this Province". In 1869, an "Act for the gradual

¹⁴³ Scott, *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*, 26.

¹⁴⁴ Scott, *Hearings Testimony, 1921-1922*, PAC, RG 10, vol. 6810, file 473, vol. 12.

enfranchisement of Indians" was passed and, in 1876, a provision for enfranchisement was included in the first consolidated Indian Act.¹⁴³ However, in spite of these provisions, very few Native people chose to become full citizens. Scott reported that, in the years between Confederation and 1918, only 102 people had been enfranchised.¹⁴⁴

The reluctance of Native people to accept the franchise was interpreted as being due to the fact that many bands feared the loss of their reserve lands, and in 1918 Arthur Meighen, then Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, introduced an amendment to the Indian Act which was designed to resolve this problem. The amendment, which became section 122A, removed the provision which required a Native person to be in possession of land on a reserve in order to become enfranchised. Scott was in favour of the amendment:

Among the more progressive bands the lands are all occupied...There are Indians from such bands who...have demonstrated their ability to support themselves and to exercise the rights and privileges of enfranchised persons, and it was, therefore, considered undesirable that their enfranchisement should be longer obstructed.¹⁴⁵

Scott believed that enfranchisement was the only answer to what was perceived as "the Indian problem". Through the encouragement of

¹⁴³ John Leonard Taylor, *Canadian Indian Policy During the Interwar Years, 1918-1939* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1984), 143.

¹⁴⁴ Taylor, 143.

¹⁴⁵ *Canada Sessional Papers, 1919, No. 27, Report of the Deputy Superintendent General*, 21. Qtd. in Taylor, 145.

Native people to relinquish their Indian status in favour of full citizenship, the goal of federal Indian policy would be achieved.

In his opinion, there was no reason that such bands should remain under the protection of the government. However, he was extremely disappointed with the fact that, "while a considerable number have taken advantage of this opportunity, the majority cling to wardship."¹⁴⁶ He concluded that, although many Native people had become sufficiently "advanced" in their ways and attitudes to warrant full citizenship and its accompanying responsibilities, many refused the franchise because of an unwillingness to give up the protection afforded them under the Indian Act. He wrote in 1931:

This attitude is largely actuated by the exemption provided for Indians under the Act, such as freedom from taxation, and the protection of property, both real and personal on an Indian reserve from seizure for debt.¹⁴⁷

Although Scott acknowledged the reluctance of some Native people to accept the franchise, and professed an understanding of their desire to "continue in that state of tutelage" to which they had become accustomed, he felt that enfranchisement was a movement toward civilization, and he viewed those who did not support it as obstacles to the progress of their race. In 1918, Scott suggested that the franchise be offered to Native soldiers, as a means of demonstrating to other Native people that "their best interests lie in moving forward and supporting the Government rather than in

¹⁴⁶ Scott, *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*, 26.

¹⁴⁷ Scott, *The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*, 26.

lagging behind and being indifferent and hostile to the administration of their affairs."¹⁴⁸

John Leonard Taylor, in *Canadian Indian Policy During the Interwar Years* (1984), suggests that Duncan Campbell Scott "developed and initiated the idea of compulsory enfranchisement independently, although he became aware of draft legislation for a similar purpose that was before the U.S. House of Representatives at about the same time."¹⁴⁹ In his annual report for the year ending March 31, 1919, Scott proposed compulsory enfranchisement in cases where it was believed that "the continuance of wardship was no longer in the interests of the public or the Indians."¹⁵⁰ In 1920, Bill 14 was passed to amend the Indian Act to include Sections 107 to 111, empowering the Superintendent General to enfranchise any Native person over the age of twenty-one who was deemed fit for enfranchisement. The ensuing protests of Native peoples led to a series of hearings, at which Scott defended the position of the government:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone... But after one hundred years, after being in close contact with civilization it is enervating to the individual or to a band to continue in that state of tutelage, when he or they are able to take their position

¹⁴⁸ Letter of D.C. Scott to Arthur Meighen, 15 October 1918. PAC, RG 10, vol. 7484, file 25001, pt. 1.

¹⁴⁹ Taylor, 147.

¹⁵⁰ Qtd. in Taylor, 146.

as British citizens or Canadian citizens, to support themselves, and stand alone.¹⁵¹

The introduction of compulsory enfranchisement was a natural extension of Scott's position that "the happiest future for the Indian race is absorption into the general population."¹⁵² Federal Indian policy had developed with enfranchisement as its goal, and Scott believed that it was the duty of the department to encourage the Native peoples to fulfill this goal. He did not consider the introduction of the compulsory enfranchisement clause to represent undue interference on the part of the government, but rather he saw it as a necessary step toward the end of the "Indian problem." When Bill 14 was passed, Scott wrote, in a letter to W.A. Boys: "I am gratified that we have got some progressive legislation at last."¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Scott, Hearings Testimony, 1921-1922, PAC, RG 10, vol. 6810, file 473, vol. 12.

¹⁵² Scott, "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912," 622-23.

¹⁵³ Letter of D.C. Scott to W.A. Boys, 29 June 1920. PAC, RG 10, vol. 6809, file 470-2-3.

CHAPTER FOUR: "HER BLOOD IS MINGLED WITH HER ANCIENT FOES": DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT'S VIEWS CONCERNING RACE AND "MISCEGENATION"¹⁵⁴

4.1 "By education and intermarriage they had become civilized"

In one of a series of three articles which he wrote for Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty's *Canada and its Provinces*, Scott expressed the belief that "the great forces of intermarriage and education will finally overcome the lingering traces of native culture and tradition."¹⁵⁵ In Scott's imagination Native culture was already obsolete, existing in the present only as an innate "savage" quality which had been carried to the present generation through the blood of their ancestors. Scott expected that education alone would not be sufficient to "civilize" the Native peoples and that through intermarriage this "savage" blood would eventually be diluted into nonexistence and Native culture would disappear.

As has been discussed above, the supposed connection between physiological composition and mental, social and psychological characteristics was a central theme in nineteenth century studies of race.¹⁵⁶ Bruce Trigger writes that towards the latter half of the nineteenth century in both Europe and North America, "there was a growing preference for biologically based explanations of human behaviour." Trigger notes that "differences that had formerly been

¹⁵⁴ A version of this chapter will be appearing in *Studies in Canadian Literature*, no. 18.1 (Summer 1993).

¹⁵⁵ Scott, "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912," 623.

¹⁵⁶ see section 1.3.

interpreted as reversible adaptations to specific climates or as insignificant historical accidents now tended to be viewed as immutable racial characteristics."¹⁵⁷

Duncan Campbell Scott's writing reveals a belief in the hereditary nature of specific cultural qualities; in the essay "The Last of the Indian Treaties," Scott identified an attitude of "intense alertness" which nonetheless betrayed "no outward manifestation of the slightest interest" to be a trait common to all Native peoples:

Nothing else is so characteristic of the Indian, because this mental constitution is rooted in physical conditions. A rude patience has been developed through long ages of his contact with nature which respects him no more than it does the beaver.¹⁵⁸

Scott interprets qualities such as "rude patience" as permanently transmitted traits; through "long ages" such a characteristic is changed from a necessary tool for survival in a harsh and hostile environment into an inherited quality which defines the character of the race.

In his experience with Native peoples, Scott showed a tendency to attribute all observed characteristics to the blood of the race. Therefore, it is not surprising that he predicted that through several generations of intermarriage the qualities which prevented Native peoples from becoming "civilized" would eventually disappear and the "Indian" and "white" races would become indistinguishable

¹⁵⁷ Trigger, 15-16.

¹⁵⁸ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 114.

from one another. In 1914, Scott wrote of the Wyandottes of Anderdon:

In Ontario one band has fully worked out its problem and become merged in the white population. The Wyandottes of Anderdon, a band of Huron stock, were enfranchised in 1881. By education and intermarriage they had become civilized.¹⁵⁹

Scott observed that, for Native peoples, pain and conflict were the inevitable result of the contact between Native and non-Native cultures. In his role as Deputy Superintendent General, he considered it the duty of his department to ease the pain of contact. Because Scott believed in the necessity of the replacement of a "savage" culture with a "civilized" one, he was convinced that intermarriage was in the Native peoples' best interests. However, he felt that it would take several generations before the process of civilization could be considered complete.

4.2 "The Half-Breed Girl" (1906)

In his professional capacity, as we have seen, Scott considered himself to be responsible for urging the Native peoples toward "civilization" and ensuring that they did not return to "savage" ways. As a writer, although he often expressed sympathy for his Native characters, Scott revealed a belief that an individual's character was determined by his or her genetic heritage, and that an individual who possessed a significant amount of Native blood would be likely to exhibit "savage" behaviour. Scott's view of culture as an inherited quality is evident in his

¹⁵⁹ Scott, "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912," 695.

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poetry and short fiction, in which he consistently defines his characters by their blood.

The majority of the Native characters which appear in Scott's poetry are caught in the early stages of assimilation. Many of these characters are the products of intermarriage between Native women and white men, and are experiencing personal trauma due to the conflict between the two cultures. As E. Palmer Patterson noted in 1967:

The character of the Indian portrayed by Scott is a combination of stealth, wild passion, absence of compassion, and superstition. The half-caste in addition to this bears within him the conflict between these traits and the presumed civilization of his white nature.¹⁶⁰

Scott perceived individuals of mixed blood to be caught in a particularly difficult situation; in his opinion the coexistence of two different strains of blood in one body implied that an individual would feel equally strong yearnings toward two very different and seemingly contradictory cultures.

The poem "The Half-Breed Girl," which appears in *Via Borealis*,¹⁶¹ a collection of seven poems which was published in 1906, portrays a young girl in a state of psychological paralysis which is directly related to her mixed blood heritage. Although she lives a "savage life," the European half of her psyche has begun to make itself known, preventing her from achieving contentment in her accustomed way of life. As she "wakes in the stifling wigwam, /

¹⁶⁰ Patterson, 72.

¹⁶¹ Scott, *Via Borealis*, 12.

Where the air is heavy and wild," she is disturbed by feelings of restlessness and "undiscovered" dreams of a different sort of life:

The reek of rock-built cities
Where her fathers dwelt of yore,
The gleam of loch and shealing,
The mist on the moor

Here, Scott writes about culture as an innate quality which makes itself felt through the blood. Although Scott's "half-breed girl" has never seen the homeland of her white ancestors, and perhaps does not know of its existence, it is present in her blood and in her dreams, causing her to question her "savage" life:

Her heart is shaken with longing
For the strange, still years,
For what she knows and knows not,
For the wells of ancient tears.

However, Scott believed that the Native peoples needed contact with white society, as well as the benefits of a government-administered education in order to "develop the great natural intelligence of the race and to fit the Indian for civilized life in his own environment."¹ Thus the "half-breed girl" who, in spite of her European blood, continues to live a "savage" life, is unable to make the transition from savagery to civilization, and is torn apart by self-hatred:

She covers her face with her blanket,
Her fierce soul hates her breath,
As it cries with a sudden passion
For life or death.

¹ Scott, "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912," 616.

4.3 "At Gull Lake: August, 1810" (1934)

In the poem "At Gull Lake: August, 1810," which appeared in Scott's 1935 volume, *The Green Cloister*,¹⁶³ Scott's protagonist is, like the "half-breed girl" of the previous poem, a woman of mixed blood. This poem was written nearly three decades after "The Half-Breed Girl," yet Scott's views regarding the plight of mixed blood individuals remain unchanged. Keejigo, the protagonist of this poem, is restless and "troubled by fugitive visions." She is drawn to the white trader Nairne, perhaps because her father, "Launay/ the Normandy hunter" was also of white blood. Keejigo is, like the "half-breed girl," caught between two worlds and unable to find peace in either of them. As she sits in "the close dark of the teepee," she is haunted by "dreams of sounds unheard" and a vague longing for something other than the life to which she has become accustomed. When Nairne arrives, she feels an immediate attraction to him and senses that "now she had found her hero," the man who would take her away from her "savage" life.

However, Keejigo's husband, "Tabashaw Chief of the Saulteaux" is portrayed as a fierce and violent man, and Nairne, afraid of "the venom of Tabashaw," turns Keejigo away. When Tabashaw discovers Keejigo's longing for Nairne, he maims her in a fit of savage jealousy, and she is abandoned by her people and thrown over a bank "like a dead dog." Thus, Keejigo, with the blood of two races running through her veins, is unable to live in either world. Her longing for a life with the white trader, which Scott explains

¹⁶³ Scott, *The Green Cloister*, 54-8.

by revealing her possession of white blood, ultimately leads to her rejection by both the white and Native societies. For Keejigo, peace can be attained only in death, as her soul leaves her body and unites metaphorically with the moon:

She rose changing her dusky shade for the glow
Of the prairie lily, till free of all blemish of colour
She came to her zenith without a cloud or a star,
A lovely perfection, snow-pure in the heaven of midnight.

Although the word "she" in this stanza refers specifically to the moon, by a deliberate verbal ambiguity it can be understood to refer metaphorically to Keejigo who, "free of all blemish of colour," transcends the racial conflict which characterized her life and unites with nature, thereby attaining "a lovely perfection":

But Keejigo came no more to the camps of her people;
Only the midnight moon knew where she felt her way,
Only the leaves of autumn, the snows of winter
Knew where she lay.

In both "The Half-Breed Girl" and "At Gull Lake: August, 1810," Scott connects the traumatic experiences of his mixed-blood characters to the coexistence of two separate "strains" of blood inside one body. Thus, the protagonists of these poems are caught in a state of confusion, and are struggling to make sense of their lives while two firmly established sets of cultural characteristics flow simultaneously yet separately within their veins.

4.4 "Spirit River" (1923)

Duncan Campbell Scott was convinced that, until several generations of intermarriage had passed, individuals of mixed blood

would continue to feel the pull of two very different cultures. While the mixed-blood characters in "The Half-Breed Girl" and "At Gull Lake: August, 1810" experience an awakening of their white blood, and feel themselves drawn toward white society, the stories "Spirit River" and "Clute Boulay" reveal Scott's concern that mixed-blood individuals may feel compelled by their Native blood to revert to "savage" ways. In Scott's fiction, such reversion invariably results in tragic or near-tragic consequences.

The story "Spirit River," which appeared in the 1923 volume *The Witching of Elspie*,¹⁶⁴ takes place in "a little population of half-breed hunters and prospectors" (p.64), where the spirit of Father Dugas, the beloved white priest, intervenes at the last moment to prevent a tragedy from occurring. In this story, Scott once again creates characters who "in blood and instinct were half Indian" (p.67), in order to illustrate the tragic consequences of allowing one's passionate nature to overwhelm one's capacity for reason. The mixed-blood protagonist, Petit Bonhomme, is described as a man of nature and instinct:

The old man was as uncouth as a bear, almost without facial expression, with strange little tufts of grey hair scattered on his rough face...He was unlearned in any of the world's methods, but in his massive head there was stored a subtle lore that was part instinct and part acquirement, a knowledge of the wilderness that had made him a supreme hunter among a race of hunters (p.69).

Petit Bonhomme, untutored in the ways of the civilized world, is unable to control his own passions, and depends instead upon the

¹⁶⁴ Scott, *The Witching of Elspie* (1923) (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), 63-100.

old priest, Father Dugas, to calm his rages with his words of friendship: "Well, well, Petit Bonhomme, let us smoke a pipe of peace!" (p.80) Left to himself, Petit Bonhomme is like "a thunderstorm that did not know how to vent its power" (p.69). When he feels that he has been humiliated by the new priest Father Pascal, he allows his rage to build inside him, unable to express it in words. His anger leads him to direct his energy toward a plot of murder and revenge, rather than toward his annual ritual of building the fire whose "prophetic flames" (p.97) would signify the arrival of spring.

In the fictional community of Spirit River, the priest serves as a representative of civilization, and both Father Dugas and his successor Father Pascal are regarded with a great deal of awe and respect:

There was great, though rude, reverence in this little group of people... for the man who represented an authority which they did not comprehend fully but which they trusted and obeyed unquestioningly (p.67).

Scott portrays the new priest, Father Pascal, as an insensitive individual whose arrival brings unrest to Petit Bonhomme and the other inhabitants of Spirit River. However, his "charges" respect his position, and continue to regard him with reverence and to "defer to him with evident awe" (p.71).

When Amab Seriza, the son of Petit Bonhomme's former enemy, returns to Spirit River, Petit Bonhomme vows to kill him as a continuation of the feud between Petit Bonhomme and the elder Seriza. Scott's characterization of Petit Bonhomme as one "in whom revenge keeps warm a long time" (p.98), is consistent with the

accounts of historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which, as Bruce Trigger notes, Native peoples were "depicted as living in sleepless suspicion of their neighbours, and portrayed as being dark and sinister in their retaliations."¹⁶⁵ As Petit Bonhomme allows his desire for revenge to dominate him, "suddenly his strength seemed to rush back upon him from the fountains of youth and with it an access of savagery" (p.98). As Petit Bonhomme reverts to savagery, he becomes increasingly animal-like: "his hearing was the hearing of a lynx" and "all his instinct for sounds and scents were as keen as those of a hunting wolf" (p.98).

As Petit Bonhomme "prowled through the night" toward Seriza's house, consumed by the desire for revenge, "there was never an error in his footsteps" (p.99) and his blindness disappeared. As in other stories of Scott's, the enactment of a plot of revenge is shown to have a rejuvenating effect upon characters of mixed blood; Petit Bonhomme's decision to kill Seriza awakens the "savage" elements in his blood and he walks once more with "the light impulsive step of a youth" (p.98). Scott considered jealousy, passion, and the desire for revenge to be qualities which were inherent in the blood of Native peoples. Thus, when his characters succumb to such feelings, their submission is accompanied by a total reversion to savagery.

However, Petit Bonhomme's regression is prevented by a vision:

¹⁶⁵ Trigger, 35.

There had supervened between himself and Amab the shape of Father Dugas... What was he saying? Petit Bonhomme stood transfixed. Then understanding came to him. Father Dugas was feeling for his pipe. He was saying, "Well, well, Petit Bonhomme, come, let us smoke a pipe of peace!" (p.99-100)

Although Father Dugas has died, it is his memory which ultimately prevents Petit Bonhomme from committing murder. Petit Bonhomme, although unimpressed by Father Pascal, continues to defer to the memory of Father Dugas, and upon receiving a vision of the priest he immediately drops his gun and abandons his mission of revenge to build the fire which will show that spring has arrived. Even when consumed by his desire for the blood of his enemy, "Father Dugas's word was law for him" (p.100). The words of the white priest alone are able to lift Petit Bonhomme from his "savage" state.

4.5 "Clute Boulay" (1947)

As we have seen before, Scott held that, in addition to diluting the blood through miscegenation, the presence of a civilizing influence in the form of teachers or missionaries would keep "savage" behaviour under control, allow the "civilized" elements of a mixed blood heritage to prevail, and thus would prevent tragedies such as that which was averted in "Spirit River."

In the story "Clute Boulay," which was published in 1947 in *The Circle of Affection*,¹⁶⁶ tragedy is unavoidable. The title figure is a white man who has left his wife and children and has "taken to himself a savage, in the manner of ancient, natural

¹⁶⁶ Scott, *The Circle of Affection*, 19-30.

persons, a daughter of Chief Peau de Chat, of the Chippewas, 'Woman at War' was her name" (p.23). Many years pass, and Clute Boulay returns from his life in "the bosom of paganism" (p.24) to live with his full-blooded white family. This angers the mixed-blood children of Boulay and "Woman at War," especially Thomasine and Epinette, whose "heavy black hair, dark skin, and vivid black eyes, told that their Chippewa blood had triumphed" (p.19).

The children of Woman at War are "savages" in both appearance and spirit; they are "impulsive" and "defiant" (p.21), and are driven entirely by passion and instinct. As in his descriptions of Petit Bonhomme in "Spirit River," Scott emphasizes the wild, uncivilized nature of the children by comparing their behaviour and movements to those of animals; Ambise is compared to a bear, Laus to a panther, and "the wild Epinette" (p.24) to an eagle. The children are depicted as wild creatures whose "keen sense of smell" (p.20) and "primeval instinct for defence" (p.26) serve them well in their savage existence.

The Peau de Chat children are depicted as individuals whose rude and uncivilized lifestyle has allowed the savage qualities of their blood to triumph. The children abduct the unresisting Clute Boulay and bring him to their "rude shanty" (p.20), where they wait, "alert as a war party" (p.25) for someone to discover that Boulay is missing. In the meantime, Epinette "looked to his comfort in a rude way...gave him what he liked best of her primitive cookery" (p.25). Although these children possess both white and Native blood they, unlike the characters of Keejigo and the "half

breed girl," feel no longings for the civilized world but are content with their "rude", "wild" and "primitive" lifestyle. Having been raised in a non-civilized environment, they live by their passion and instinct, which have been allowed to thrive, free of the restraints of civilization.

When the Boulays discover that the Peau de Chats have stolen their father, a vicious brawl ensues. During the fighting, the instincts of the mixed-blood children emerge:

Down swooped Epinette like a young eagle, frightened Agatha by a yell, and clawing Athanase, who clung to her father, finally overcame her by a blow upon the mouth which sent her home bleeding (p.26).

Scott implies that the violence triggers an innate savage element in the blood of these mixed-blood children, and especially in that of Epinette, who "began to scream in a way to call for scalps and a general massacre" (p. 27):

Her success had a strange effect on Epinette; she ran straight out into the open space before the house swinging her rifle about like a column of flame fanned by inner currents of passion. Her eyes glowed with furious lustre (p. 27).

As the blood begins to flow, the young girl is transformed into a "vision of savage beauty" (p.28), momentarily startling her opponent. Soon afterwards, Epinette is fatally wounded, and her brother Laus, overcome by a desire to avenge his sister's death, rushes at her attacker. Laus, whom Scott describes as a "savage" (p.28), is killed by his opponent, and eventually Thomasine alone remains alive.

In this story, Scott links the behaviour of the Peau de Chats to those elements of their mixed-blood heritage which they have

received from their mother, Woman at War. Driven by a desire for revenge upon the Boulays, whom they blame for the loss of their father, they become "wild with rage" (p.25) and are consumed by passion and a thirst for the blood of their enemies. During the battle with the Boulays, these children seem to revert to a forgotten code of behaviour which has lain dormant in their blood. In his essay "The Last of the Indian Treaties," Scott wrote that "the Indian nature," before it was tamed by civilization, was once "full of force and heat" and was "ready to break out at any moment in savage dances, in wild and desperate orgies."¹⁶⁷ In "Clute Boulay" Scott suggests that this "Indian nature" had not been entirely overcome by civilization, but had been kept alive in the blood of Native and mixed-blood individuals.

4.6 "Tête-Jaune" (1947)

In the story "Tête-Jaune," also published in *The Circle of Affection*,¹⁶⁸ every action, thought and feeling of Bonhomme Laroche is attributed to either the Indian or French strain of his mixed-blood heritage:

Père Dugas, who knew his friend well, could usually depend on him for an even level of good-humour, but at times could not account for the strength of his passions except by referring to that ancient blood heritage (p. 39).

When Bonhomme acts with uninhibited passion, it is understood to be a direct result of his Native heritage. However, when he is stirred

¹⁶⁷ Scott, "The Last of the Indian Treaties," 110.

¹⁶⁸ Scott, *The Circle of Affection*, 36-48.

to "action that seemed quixotic," such as accepting Désiré, the child of his wife and an unidentified white man, into his family, Père Dugas attributes it to his "good old French blood" and remarks that "there's no Indian in you when that old strain comes out" (p.38).

The character of Désiré is similarly explained by his blood heritage. He is distinguished from the rest of "the black-haired, brown-skinned, dark-eyed dwellers" in his community, not only by his "shining appearance" (p.36) but by the qualities of "great strength, courage, and resource" (p.40) which he possesses by virtue of his predominantly white blood. Bonhomme, who typically "did not pay much attention to his children" (p.39), is enchanted by Desire and becomes devoted to the "shining" child.

Désiré is contrasted with his half-brother Laus, who possesses more Native blood and is therefore characterized by "dark cunning" and "sinister moods" (p.40). The two become rivals, yet it is apparent that they are not equally matched:

There had always been rivalry between them, and Désiré's mastery was as constant as the struggle. Physically, Laus had been conquered in boyhood. Désiré could match Laus' dark cunning with bright open-air confidence, his sinister moods with laughter (p.40).

In the character of Désiré, Scott sees the "incarnation of legend" (p.42). The child possesses "a physical beauty that to a civilized observer would have called up the typical Viking" (p.40), "and thus it is his fate to be seduced by the "world-old witchery of the serpent woman" (p.42), embodied by Laus's wife Veronique. When Laus returns to the village, accompanied by his Native wife, Désiré is

overcome with desire, and the two become lovers. Scott explains the attraction by referring to "the fascination of contrast" (p.42) which the young "Viking" inevitably must feel for the dark, mysterious "serpent woman." This attraction ultimately leads to the death of Désiré. Although Bonhomme attempts to put an end to the relationship, warning Désiré that "that girl's nothing but a bush fire" (p.42), Désiré does not heed the warning and falls prey to Laus' uncontrollable rage.

Although Désiré is killed, his blood survives through his own child, who at eight years old is "strongly built, with bright, determined face, and with a mass of fair hair falling over his forehead" (p.47). The qualities which determined Desire's superiority to the other "half-breeds and Indians" (p.36) have been passed to his son, thus signifying the possibility that these characteristics will survive and be passed to future generations within the community. In "Tête-Jaune," Scott has created the character of Désiré to represent the "desirable" qualities which he believed could only be introduced into a Native community through intermarriage, or "miscegenation."

CONCLUSION

In 1982, Gerald Lynch asked the following question: "Do the Indian poems reveal a *fixed* attitude on Scott's part?" Lynch argued:

Scott's understanding of and compassion for the Indians, and of what was being done to them in the process of assimilation, grew from poem to poem - was itself a process of sorts - a result no doubt of his lifelong exposure to Indians and their culture.¹⁶⁹

As an examination of Duncan Campbell Scott's later poetry and short fiction reveals, although he often expressed compassion, respect and admiration for individual characters, he retained the opinion that the Native people must relinquish their traditions and accept the customs, religion and values of the dominant society. His sympathy and compassion may have grown over the years, but his ideology certainly did not. At the end of his career, Scott remained convinced that Native culture was destined to disappear. In 1931, the year before his retirement, Scott wrote that "the Indians [must] progress into civilization and finally disappear as a separate and distinct people, not by race extinction but by gradual assimilation."¹⁷⁰

In a letter written in 1941 to E.K. Brown, Duncan Campbell Scott absolved himself of responsibility for his administration of government policy during his years as the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs:

¹⁶⁹ Lynch, 28.

¹⁷⁰ Scott, "The Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada," 27.

I had for about twenty years oversight of their development and I was never unsympathetic to aboriginal ideals, but there was a law which I did not originate and which I never tried to amend in the direction of severity.¹⁷¹

Although Scott was not directly responsible for the creation of the government's policy, he did possess the power to enforce regulations under the Indian Act. Scott's goal as an administrator was to render the existing system more effective in fulfilling the objectives of civilization and assimilation and, as we have seen, he did not hesitate to do so. Although he was less authoritarian than other Indian Affairs officials of the same period, Scott was responsible for legislation prohibiting the practice of certain dances and customs, and was a strong supporter of compulsory enfranchisement. As Scott believed that assimilation was, in his words, "the happiest future for the Indian race," we can assume that he did not believe such amendments to be "in the direction of severity."

Duncan Campbell Scott did not question the ideology which supported the government's policy concerning Native peoples. He believed that the days of a vital Native culture had passed. For Duncan Campbell Scott, who viewed Native culture as obsolete, "progress" meant the disappearance of a distinct Native culture, and the total absorption of Native peoples into the general population of Canada.

¹⁷¹ Letter of D.C. Scott to E.K. Brown, 2 July 1941. Robert L. McDougall, *The Poet and the Critic* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1983), 26.

This position is consistent with the views which he expressed in his later poetry and short fiction. The poem "At Gull Lake: 1810," while certainly a more subtle, complex and sophisticated poem than "The Half-Breed Girl" of 1906, is a variation upon the same theme: Keejigo, like the "half-breed girl," has the blood of two races flowing through her veins and, as a consequence, finds herself caught between two worlds and unable to find peace in either.

Duncan Campbell Scott's artistic representations of Native people, while certainly sympathetic, should be regarded as an artist's attempt to preserve for future generations all that he considered admirable about a people whom he assumed were destined to disappear. Armand Garnet Ruffo's "Poem for Duncan Campbell Scott," which appeared in the second volume of *Gatherings: The En'owkin Journal of First North American Peoples* (1991), provides a fitting comment on Duncan Campbell Scott and the "Indian question":

They say he asks too many questions but
doesn't wait to listen. Asks
much about yesterday, little about today
and acts as if he knows tomorrow.

Others don't like the way he's always busy writing
stuff in the notebook he carries. Him,
he calls it poetry
and says it will make us who are doomed
live forever.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ *Gatherings: The En'owkin Journal of First North American Peoples* vol. 2 (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1991), 173.

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