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FEATHERS, FURS AND FRINGES
A SEMIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF POWWOW REGALIA

by

MICHELE KERISIT

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

April 1989

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ABSTRACT

This thesis puts forward a semiological analysis of male and female dancing regalia worn during competitive summer powwows held in Ontario in 1987. Powwows, as Native cultural events, are considered here as modern and popular social gatherings that draw on past cultural practices to promote a contemporary Indian identity. Based on observations collected during fieldwork, my interpretation relies on a structuralist reading of differences and analogies observed in the composition of powwow regalia and in their distribution along categories of dancers. But, instead of assuming that these signifying processes are reflections of cognitive constructs, I take them as historically produced through political and gendered practices that give them their emotional and aesthetic appeal. As systems of representation of self, they are enmeshed in a dramaturgy of seduction where signs of masculinity and femininity express and generate practices defining the relative position of men and women. At the same time, the gendered system of signification on which the regalia are built is intertwined with meanings that emerged in the first thirty years of this century in contact with non-native audiences and that have since been gradually reworked.

In order to suggest an interpretation of some of the ornaments worn by contemporary dancers, I document the nineteenth century meanings of three components of dancing regalia in the cultural practices of Plains and Woodlands peoples, respectively feathers, furs and shells. I then confront each conclusion with the contemporary use of these ornaments in order to establish changes in their signification. My research led me to establish two major semantic fields, that of hunting (and warfare) and that of production (and reproduction). Each semantic field generates metaphors for the dramaturgy of seduction and for a historical narrative that runs through the contemporary cultural practices of powwow participants.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since World War II, Indian Communities in Canada and North America have seen the spectacular development of the Powwow. In the contemporary acceptance of the term, a powwow is a secular celebration featuring the performance of Indian songs and dances by Native participants clad in elaborate outfits called powwow regalia. Besides these activities which formally structure the course of a powwow, the event also features a number of festive occasions like communal meals taken by participants, dancers, musicians and powwow organizers. Around the "powwow ground" (i.e the circle devoted to dances and music), arts and craft booths offer their wares to participants and spectators of the dancing performances. Religious ceremonies are often held in the morning, or at sun down. Baseball games and canoe races frequently precede afternoons and evenings devoted to dance and music. The Powwow represents a time of enjoyment, of laughter and of "feeling good". It is also a time of intense social interaction, when "urban Indians" visit their home reserves, when the festive mood of the day is prolonged during the balmy summer nights, in the camping site adjacent to the "powwow ground", especially among youth.

The Powwow is thus a very complex social phenomenon that is not amenable to a single approach. This thesis does not pretend to give a comprehensive account of the festival. Rather, its purpose is to understand, through one of the cultural and aesthetic forms observed during the festive event, namely the powwow regalia, the discursive practices that contribute to the dynamics of contemporary native culture.

The study I undertook in the summer of 1987 by attending three powwows held in Ontario stemmed from two preoccupations. First, I was interested in understanding how Native peoples of Canada harness their culture(s) to their political struggles towards self-determination. Manifestations of this close link between demands for and demonstrations

of cultural empowerment and contemporary political struggles were everywhere, from the Pipe Ceremony at the beginning of the March 1987 Constitutional Conference of Prime Ministers to the troubles brewing in the relationship between the Glenbow Museum and Native organizations for the exhibition of Native Arts (The Spirit Sings), planned for the Calgary Winter Olympics.

Secondly, I was particularly interested in the role played by gender relations and representations in this process or, more precisely, I wanted to understand how they were "organically" embedded in it. This thesis adopts the view that gender relations are not an "addendum" to any anthropological inquiry but are constitutive of the research itself.

Powwows seemed to be an ideal place to pursue these questions. Although not political events per se, they are permeated with political claims and statements on the specificity of the situation of Native peoples in Canada. They also provide a space for one of the most visible gendered aesthetic practice, dancing and one of its characteristics studied here, the outfits worn by male and female dancers.

1. Powwows and Politics.

Powwows are immensely popular and draw large crowds from every corner of the continent. The anthropological literature points unanimously to the importance of the "powwow movement" in the constitution of a Native political consciousness. According to Dyck (1979: 91-92), while fostering the political leadership of peoples involved in their organisation, powwows are

"an autonomous achievement which summons a larger community to celebrate the value and excellence of Indianness in a manner that is both individually rewarding and collectively uncontroversial. Powwow is an expressive activity which presents Indianness as an end in itself".

Frideres (1983: 251) suggests that the popularity of powwows has to be understood in the light of the contemporary aboriginal revitalization movement in Canada, movement that "attempts to promote a wide ranging return to Native social and cultural values". The organization of powwows in circuits, followed by thousands of native participants every

summer, fosters relationships between peoples who were previously isolated under the constraints of Canadian policies. This network promotes a solidarity that has far reaching political consequences (Frideres, 1983; Corrigan, 1970; Dyck, 1979).

Powwows are thus to be understood as part of what Tanner (1983: 2) has called the "Politics of Indianness" which he defines as "the form of politics that native people have adopted both as a strategy of survival and in response to a restrictive legal and administrative system and about the political process involved in introducing major changes". After centuries of dependency and "institutionalized tutelage" (Tanner, 1983: 31), Native peoples have developed a "strategy" that emphasizes their difference as Indians and legitimizes their political struggles. One of these strategies has been to redefine the history of Indian-white relations through a reinterpretation of past cultural practices. This "discourse on Tradition" is particularly visible in the powwow which promotes values that are considered "traditionally" Indian. Powwows, in this sense, are modern cultural events that draw on past cultural practices to promote a contemporary ethnic identity.

This discourse on "Tradition" is accessible through speeches held during the powwow itself and in leaflets distributed to advertise the event. For instance, the 1987 Odawa powwow was presented in the following manner:

"Tribal Memory tells us that the land now known as Ottawa was designated as neutral ground and was the site of many inter-tribal gatherings where friends and traditional enemies came together in peaceful co-existence. This was a time of trading, sharing and renewal".

One of the tasks of the student of powwow is thus to understand former meanings and to see how they are (and were gradually) re-interpreted, re-used, re-invented. There is no doubt that many aesthetic forms used in the contemporary powwow are related to Indian War Dance Societies of the Nineteenth Century (Powers, 1970) as well as Medicine Societies (Young, 1981). Yet, they certainly do not convey the same meanings, being lived in a world that has redefined the function of the warrior and/or of religious practices.

2. The Question of Gender.

This thesis argues that political meanings that are embedded in the aesthetic codes and conventions displayed during the celebration are, at the same time, gendered meanings. In other words, Native participants in a powwow create or recreate cultural forms to empower themselves, but they do so as native men and as native women. Among the aesthetic forms, powwow regalia are the place where the link between gender and political meanings is the most visible. Signs of Indianness are also signs of femininity and masculinity.

Dancers' outfits are thus considered as "forms" where processes of meaning production occur, as systems of signification. This thesis will thus use the tools provided by semiology to interpret these processes. By doing so, it presupposes that powwow regalia are cultural constructs that have an "objectivity", a shape, a determinacy that can be deciphered in the diversity of their appearances. Their meanings are mediated by rules and conventions that govern the use of materials in their composition, their disposition on the body of their wearer and the overall principle that structures the different categories of dancers.

These meanings that emerge from the different codes that are used in their fabrication, are not, however, "reflections" of a collective, unified, conscious intention to signify the "Indianness" of men and women that wear them. To do this would silence a critical feature observed during my enquiry: the obvious emotional commitment surrounding the construction and the donning of the regalia, the pleasure felt by the participants that contribute to the popularity of the event.

For Noel Dyck (1979: 90), who raises the question of the popularity of the powwow, an understanding of this phenomenon can be reached by giving serious consideration to the aesthetic features of the event and by placing the powwow in its "broad social, economic and political context". Dyck does not explore the first part of his program but explains that, for him, powwows generate "a good feeling" because they sharply contrast with the oppression experienced by Native peoples on reservations and in an urban environment.

They create a fellowship among participants and a collective self-esteem which departs from life on reservations, rife with factionalism and individual bickering

This thesis argues that the appeal of powwow regalia is one of the aesthetic forms that account for the popularity of the event. This position does not deny that the powwow has to be examined in the light of the broader social context in which it is held. But by choosing the powwow regalia as "point of entry" into the relationship between cultural and political practices, I intend to examine how political meanings are incorporated in the always gendered subjectivity of the dancers through aesthetic codes. Powwow regalia are not political statements or speeches: they engage the body of dancers in a dialogue with others, they speak of the ways dancers relate to their body, feel about what it is to be a man or a woman, they engage their wearer in a practice that I called seduction. They are points of intersection between the public display of a political discourse on Indianness and concrete cultural practices that give life to aesthetic forms. powwow regalia are "objective forms" that are inhabited "subjectively" (Johnson 1986: 282).

Signs of masculinity and femininity, which I take as culturally specific, produce a gendered discourse on what it is to be an Indian man and an Indian woman. The "language of desire" (Chevalier, forthcoming: 11), which is built on signs of femininity and masculinity and which is at the basis of the act of seduction, is laden with pleasure, emotions and expectations. I will thus argue that the dynamics of the constitution of an Indian identity during the powwow has to be read in the light of the efficiency, the emotional weight of powwow regalia, which is a gendered aesthetic form.

A reading of signs of masculinity and femininity present in powwow regalia constitutes the basis on which this research is built. My research question could thus be formulated in the following manner: "What are the gendered meanings produced in the aesthetic code of powwow regalia and how do they relate to the political and ideological struggles of native peoples in Canada?"

3. Presentation of the thesis.

The analysis of self decoration entail many difficulties. Most peoples do not attribute meanings to their dress, except to say that it is "beautiful" or that it is "practical". They also invoke "tradition" (it has been worn by others before) and are aware that clothing can function as social discriminant. Yet this thesis argues that there is more to clothing than meets the eye. But how can we go beyond peoples explanations? For :

"in moving beyond peoples' own explanations of their act we necessarily make some notional assertions about the nature of human beings and society" (Sillitoe 1988: 300).

The study of self-decoration is thus rife with problems that are at the heart of the anthropological enterprise: how do we have access to meanings that are very rarely put into words and that are produced in a context that is not necessarily the researcher's? For this reason, it has appeared necessary to devote a chapter of this thesis to describe the context, ethnographic and historical, in which powwow regalia are worn (Chapter 2). Secondly, because theoretical assumptions are always made by the observer of cultural forms, a third chapter will examine and explain the theoretical and methodological tools used in my interpretation of powwow regalia. The question of the constitution of a discourse on Indianness will be examined initially, for it pervades all powwow aesthetic practices. I will then define the methodology used to decipher the meanings of powwow regalia, namely a structuralist semiological approach. Lastly, because powwow regalia are not cognitive constructs but are laden with emotion and affect, I intend to unravel what is meant by "seduction". I will see the ramification of such a concept in a gendered reading of powwow regalia, by unravelling what is conceptualized here by "signs of femininity" and "signs of masculinity".

The following two chapters (chapters 4 and 5) present a semiological analysis of powwow regalia and are, for this reason, the core of the study I undertook. The first of these chapters bears on the signification of feather ornaments, which are both the most

spectacular and the most controversial of the signs of Indianness. Indeed, feathers have become the universal iconographic signifier of the "Indian". There is no representation of native peoples that does not contain the shape or silhouette of at least one feather, generally worn attached to the hair of an "Indian man". The feather as signifier is a marker of Indianness and of manhood. Yet, as shall be seen, the signifying practices surrounding the use of feathers cannot be reduced to stereotyping. Distinctions have to be made between the different kinds of feathers that are used in the powwow regalia of men and women as well as their distribution on the body of the wearer. The historical nature of the constitution of an "Indian" identity lead me to document the meanings of feather ornaments in the parent cultures of powwow participants and their transformation through time. A part of this chapter will thus be devoted to former meanings that have associated feathers with masculinity. A second part will attempt to determine the processes that lead to the constitution of the feather ornaments as they are worn today and will attempt to understand how they are part of a system of signification opposing and relating women's regalia to that of men.

Chapter 5 will focus on other components of the powwow regalia, furs and shells, worn by both men and women. The same principles that guided my study of feather ornaments will be used to understand how specific furs are associated with masculinity, whereas others are worn by women. The structuring principles of men's outfits and women's outfits will also allow a reading of the contemporary meanings of self-decoration. Whereas, in the case of feather ornaments, the meaning of feathers is often explicit and commented upon by some dancers, especially in the case of the eagle feather, the usage of furs and shells is not the subject of lengthy explanations. It seems that the meanings of furs that were formerly linked to religious and hunting practices has been "forgotten". Yet my analysis will attempt to show how men and women could have reworked former meanings in a different context.

As can be seen, the semiological analysis that I undertook does not account for all the ornaments worn by dancers. I did not take into consideration some of the objects that are carried by the dancers (weapons and fans), mocassins and the most common of male headdresses, the roach. Neither did I focus on a domain that could constitute the subject of an entire thesis, namely beads. The complexity of the latter, combined with the question that would arise from the analysis of their colors and the patterns of beadwork, prevented any deep foray into the matter.

A last chapter (chapter 6) will summarize the findings of the preceding analyses. But semiological readings command that we do not foreclose a research, unless we lose the playfulness and constant shifts that are the characteristics of our ability to signify, whether we dress or write a thesis. An assessment of what was accomplished^{ed} and propositions for further research will thus constitute the very last remarks of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

Competitive Summer Powwows in Ontario.

At the beginning of Chapter 1, following Noel Dyck's definition, I suggested that powwows were "secular dancing celebrations held in Indian Communities in many parts of Canada and the United States" (Dyck, 1979: 78). This broad definition of powwows does not, however, account for the many forms taken by this cultural event. The following chapter presents a description of the powwows I have attended in Ontario, powwows that are not necessarily similar to celebrations held in Western Canada or in the United States. This description is also intended to give the reader a general framework of reference for the following analysis of powwow regalia. It attempts to give, as briefly and as accurately as possible, the ethnographic and historical backgrounds of the event, with a focus on the place of powwow regalia, both in the course of the powwow and in its history.

1. Spatial Settings.

There are, broadly speaking, two kinds of powwows: the competitive powwow, held outdoors during summer week ends, in which dancers and singers receive prizes for the quality of their performances and the "Traditional" powwow which rejects the competitive aspect of the first in favor of activities devoted to education (Elders conferences, story telling or workshops) and which can be held in winter. Whereas summer competitive powwows attract large crowds of peoples from surrounding communities as well as from distant places, Traditional powwows tend to be much less publicised and to draw their audience from a smaller geographic area. The three powwows I attended belong to the first "genre", they are competitive summer powwows. They are the Odawa Powwow held in Ottawa, the Grand River's 'Champion of Champions' Powwow on the Six Nations Indian Reserve, near Ohsweken, and the Wikwimikong Powwow on Manitoulin Island.

The celebration is organized around a few spatial arrangements that show a great regularity all over the North American continent (Young 1981; Rynkiewicz, 1980; Corrigan, 1970). Summer competitive powwows take place in the open air and during weekends. Participants dance in a "ring", the Powwow Ground that circles around a drum "arbour" (or drum "pit") where groups of singers and drums are gathered. This circle, delimited by a railing has, on its periphery, a platform where the Master of Ceremonies (or Emcee) announces and explains the course of the powwow; on this platform also sit different powwow organisers. It is from there that speeches by elders, give-away announcements and opening prayers are delivered. Dancers always enter the "powwow ground" from an opening in the railing at the east of the circle. Alcohol and drugs are explicitly forbidden within this circle.

Around the powwow ground, bleachers are usually put up for the spectators. Adjacent to this circle, or around it, booths are selling crafts and food to participants and visitors. In the immediate vicinity of the powwow ground a place is reserved for the communal meals taken by dancers, singers, organizers and elders participating in the powwow. This setting is part of a broader locale, including the camping grounds where people pitch their tents for the night, and the parking lot for day visitors. Outside the powwow field, especially at night, the surrounding community is filled with visitors attending the performances during the day or the evening.

This spatial disposition is in itself very significant. As Young (1981: 3) notes in her doctoral dissertation on the Tulsa powwow in Oklahoma, the powwow ground is the inner circle of a number of concentric circles which, described "from the center outwards" are "concentric circles of lessening attentiveness, the people in each circle facing and focusing the attention inward". In a word, the roughly circular spatial organization seem to converge towards a center constituted by the drum arbour, and even the circle of the drum (1). This disposition divides the space in two different manners.

On the one hand, it blurs the distinction between what is "secular" and what is "sacred". The stronger marker of the ceremonial character of the inner circle is the absolute prohibition, within its limits, of alcohol and drugs which "debase" the body, is a bringer of death and endangers social relations. On the other hand, the circle of the powwow ground draws a boundary between spectators and performers. This division raises important issues for a study of powwows. If there is a separation between spectators and dancers, musicians, organisers who are in the circle, does this mean that the people who are in the inner circle are "actors" in a theatrical sense? Although it is possible to see powwows in the light of western performing arts, which usually distinguishes sharply between audience and performers, the powwows I attended do not show this sharp distinction. Performers and spectators both participate in the dancing sessions, called "Intertribal" dances. In fact the success of a powwow is often measured by the degree of participation of the public, as Dyck noted (1979: 88). A further distinction, however, has to be made within the "outer circle" of spectators: although nothing prevents non-native spectators from joining in the dances, they rarely do so (2). In that respect, the setting of the powwow puts into a concrete form the function of powwows as expression of ethnic identity. In Ontario, ethnic affiliation and recognition potentially brings all native peoples within the circle while non-native peoples stay at the periphery.

2. Chronology of a Powwow.

The course of a powwow is formally organized around the competition between dancers. Although many participants arrive in the community on the Friday night, the powwow itself begins with the registration of dancers around noon on the Saturday and ends with the proclamation of prizes on Sunday late afternoon. The prizes at the powwows I have attended, ranged from \$400 to \$800, which is not an insignificant incentive to participate in powwows, although "gamemanship and acute competition, especially among dancers, are strongly discouraged" (Dyck 1979: 94).

A powwow week-end in Ontario is divided into dancing sessions. On the first day, the performance starts around 1:00 p.m. and goes on until "dinner time" around 5:00 p.m. Dancers and spectators are invited to come back around 7:00 p.m, when dancing resumes for the evening, until the emcee declares the session over. On the Sunday, dancing resumes at 1:00 p.m and finishes earlier after the prizes have been given to the dancers. The Wikwimikong powwow which always takes place on the first week-end of August lasted three days but follows the same pattern as the two others.

The Saturday noon dancing session, which marks the official opening of the Powwow, starts with a few words by the Powwow Committee President, a presentation of the powwow by the Emcee and a prayer by an Elder. The beginning of each dancing session is opened by the ceremonial entry of dancers on the powwow ground, Grand Entry. Preceded by a number of veteran flag bearers, the dancers circle the ground four times until the flags are finally set up around the Drum arbour. Each dancing session ends with the same procession when the flags are removed from the ground, except in the evening when the flags have to be taken away before sun set. These dancing sessions propose three kinds of dances: intertribals in which everybody can participate whether he or she is dressed in powwow regalia. "show dances" (Snake Dance, Crow Dance, Round Dance) that are usually performed by dancers dressed in their regalia and dances that are only performed by dancers who have registered in the competition. It should be noted that dancers are judged in all three kinds of dances. The Emcee announces which one will count for the competition.

Dancing sessions are punctuated by ceremonies and speeches which give the dancers the time to rest. Speeches are usually pronounced by respected elders who are invited to say a few words. Some of these elders come from other communities and are well known figures in native cultural circles in Ontario. The most attended ceremony of a powwow, however, is the "give-away", which honors a participant of the powwow. It has been described by Corrigan for powwows in western Canada:

"The procedure of donations is simple: an honour song is sung and the donor and his kinsmen dance very briefly. The donor then stands at the front of the tent by the master of ceremonies who calls out the donees. Each donee steps up to the donor as his or her name is called, shakes his hand, receives his gift and returns to his place in the audience" (1970: 263).

Ontario give-aways follow the same procedure, except that the ceremony generally starts with a short speech honoring the donor and that honor songs take place once the gifts have been distributed. The donees generally do not go back to their seats, but stand in line at the side of the donor.

These give-aways can take a long time, depending on the number of peoples to whom gifts are offered in honor of the chosen person. For this reason, Emcees are anxious to cut down the number of give-aways, for they are responsible for respecting the time frame of the powwow. This creates a certain amount of discontent among some peoples who think that give-aways are part of the "traditional" character of powwows and should be encouraged. The role of the emcee is capital to keep a balance between the great popularity of give-aways and the progress of the powwow towards its "denouement".

Each session is separated by a "time-off" when people go back to their camping sites to have communal meals and to sleep (very little). From what could be observed powwow nights are opportunities for partying. The mornings are occupied by visiting friends and relatives, by preparations for the dancing sessions or the opening of the powwow to visitors in the case of merchants.

It could thus be said that the course of powwows is based on a "narrative form", with repetitions and rhythms, with an overture and a finale, whether at the level of a dancing session or at the level of a weekend. But the organizing principle on which this narrative is based lies in the delicate equilibrium between "time out" and "time in" the powwow ground, between a time when peoples wear their dancing outfits and time when they go back to "civilian" clothes. This puts the role of dancing regalia at the center of attention and enhances their importance in the course of a powwow.

3. Dancing Regalia.

In order for the course of the powwow to properly proceed, dancers are organized in competing categories defined by gender, by age and by dance types with distinctive powwow regalia. Prizes are won according to the category one belongs to. For instance, in what is called the Traditional category, defined by a dignified choreography and by dancing regalia that are briefly described below, distinctions will be made between adult men, women, teenagers and children. This category will be distinguished from the Fancy category where the subdivisions by gender and age are the same. Powwow programs usually indicate the categories of dancing competitors. The number of dancing participants usually determine the number of categories. In the large powwows in the West further distinctions according to age are made, for example between Women's Traditional and Ladies' Traditional (40 and over). In the Ontario powwows, which are not as large, the categories are more rigid for adult and teenage dancers of both sexes than for children. As more lengthy descriptions of their outfits will be provided in Chapter 4 and 5, I will summarize the characteristics of each category and refer the reader to corresponding illustrations.

a) Male Traditional Dancers (illus.1) wear, over a basic garment consisting of shorts and a T-shirt or a shirt, a profusion of ornaments which are highly individualized in shape but most generally consist of undyed eagle feathers worn in headdresses and bustles (large semi-circular feather ornaments), otter fur worn as turban and necklaces or bandoliers. Beadwork are worn as belts, bandoliers, arm bands. Shells (or bone imitations) are worn as breastplates and pendants. Leggings attached to the belt are made of buckskin and decorated at knee and ankle level with bands of bells. Beaded mocassins complete the outfit.

b) Male Fancy Dancers (illus.2) wear, over their bare chest, elaborately beaded "harnesses" that match their large beaded belts. Fixed at the nape and at the belt in the lower back, are bustles made of brightly dyed "hackle" feathers, ornamented by down feathers called

"fluffies". They also wear beaded aprons over gym shorts and their legs are decorated with white angora fur anklets (called "goats") attached by a band of bells below the knee. Their mocassins are also heavily beaded. The headdress usually consists of a roach surmounted by two eagle feathers.

c) Grass Dancers (illus.3), who are exclusively male dancers, wear an outfit made of long multicolor wool yarns that cover the whole body and swirl during the rapid steps of their dances. They rarely wear a headdress, and when they do it is a simple roach to which sometimes are fixed "springers" (i.e antennae-like projections decorated at the top with a downy feather). Grass dancers wear plain, unbeaded mocassins or even running shoes. Simple but spectacular, this outfit is the most recent "creation" of the "powwow culture", although one could, as with the others, trace its origins in aesthetic forms that evolved from the Northern Plains of the Nineteenth Century.

d) Female Traditional Dancers' regalia (illus.4) are characterized by great variations in their composition and a wide range of choices offered to women who choose to wear this regalia. A type of dress is made of buckskin ornamented with beadwork at the yoke. The buckskin is white or smoked. Over the dress a large breastplate made of hairpipe shells is usually worn. Mocassins are usually beaded with care and the pattern of the beadwork matches the large belt and the beaded designs of the dress. Hair is ornamented with barettes and headbands and sometimes a feather or two. Long marten and mink pelts prolong their braids. Female Traditional Dancers can also wear cloth dress of solid color made of wool or stroud. These are often decorated with ribbon applique, shells and elk teeth. Both kinds of dresses would not be complete without large fringed shawls that are worn folded on one of the arms.

e) Female Fancy Dancers (illus.5) wear bright cloth dress of usually shiny material. Their most spectacular characteristic is an embroidered fringed shawl wrapped around the shoulders and that swirls during their rapid footsteps. Mocassins are brightly "beaded" sometimes with sequins. Their hair ornaments are very similar to the Traditional female

dancers' although the fur ornaments prolonging their braids are often longer, reaching down to knee level.

f) Jingle Dress Dancers are exclusively women (illus.6). They wear solid color dresses, decorated with conical metal jinglers disposed in a V shape on the blouse and on the skirt. Hair ornaments are similar to those described above except that Jingle Dress Dancers never wear furs. Mocassins are generally made of plain skin and lack beadwork. Although this outfit seems to be growing in popularity, my research into the history of the costume shows that nothing is known of its origin .

These categories of dancers not only structure the organization of the competition but are also "used" to establish a hierarchy between participants. Men come before women during Grand Entry, signalling the beginning of dancing sessions. At the top of the hierarchy are male Traditional Dancers who perform some of the rituals during the dance and always lead the "show Dances". Following them during the opening ceremony are the Grass Dancers and the male Fancy Dancers. Later come the Traditional female Dancers, then the Jingle Dress Dancers followed by female Fancy Dancers. At the bottom of the hierarchy are girl's Fancy dancers, young girls not yet in their teens. One of the questions asked in this research will thus constantly refer to the ranking of categories, which as may be seen are determined by 1) gender (men come first, women after) 2) composition of the dancing regalia and dancing styles (Traditional come first, Fancy last) 3) age (which cross-cuts the first two). The relations and oppositions between these three variables at work during contemporary powwows are, in my opinion, crucial to understand the meaning of powwow regalia.

This hierarchical organization relies on a strict structuration of categories by genders. Women dancers never wear men's outfits. In fact a quick glance at dancers outfits shows that the greatest distance is constantly maintained between genders. Yet, the organisation by categories sometimes creates echoes between some of the women's and some of the men's outfits. For instance, whereas female Fancy Dancers' regalia do not resemble, at all, male

Fancy Dancers', the fact that their category comes under the same appellation seems to indicate that they parallel each other in some way. It is these gendered oppositions, echoes and parallels between categories that structure the set of aesthetic practices observable in dancing regalia.

Although it is possible to see some tribal regalia (Iroquois headdress and shirt), the majority of male and female dancers wears outfits that are inspired by Plains clothing style. This influence of Plains imagery has usually been explained by the historical development of powwows to which we now turn.

4. The History of Powwows

The general history of powwows is an immense task which has not been undertaken so far in an extensive way. Except for Thiel's paper published in "Powwow Trail" in 1982, most of the research has focused on some of the aesthetic features of the event that they situate historically in the American context (Powers, 1966; 1970; Howard, 1960; Hewitt, 1987a; Hatton, 1986). Others focus on specific powwows held in the United States (Kurath, 1957; Young, 1981; Fowler, 1987). Nothing has been undertaken concerning a systematic history of Canadian powwows. The following historical sketch thus aims at pointing at the main crucial periods that marked the emergence of the powwow, crucial periods that would need much more extensive research, especially in Canada. Students of powwows (Hatton, 1986; Young, 1981) generally divide the history of the powwow into three eras.

4.1. Origins of Powwows. Pre-reservation era and early reservation era (1840-1890).

It is generally assumed that the contemporary powwow has its roots in the Grass Dance of the Hethuska Society of the Omaha and Ponca who synthesized elements of "a complex of shamanistic societies distributed among the Arikara, Hidatsa, Iowa, Pawnee and Sioux" in the first decades of the Nineteenth Century (Hatton 1986: 199). Among these, the Pawnee Iruska is considered as the most influential in the composition of the regalia (Wissler, 1916) and in the musical style (Hatton, 1986; Murie, 1914: 629). Confronted

with migrations, epidemics and the pressure of the American colonisation of the West, the sodality, exclusively composed of men, attempted to "stimulate an heroic spirit among the people and to keep alive the memory of valorous and historic acts" (Fletcher and Laflesche 1911: 459). Besides the specific roles attributed to its participants, the Omaha or Grass Dance was characterized by the donning of a "crow belt", a large feather ornament worn at the back as a war honor decoration by a limited number of dancers. All dancers also wore the "roach", a crest of stiff animal hair that was also considered a war honor (Wissler, 1916: 832).

Very rapidly, the Omaha Dance was adopted by the Teton Sioux who became "ardent practioners" of this men's society (Hatton 1986: 199; Howard, 1951: 82-85). From there on, the Omaha or Grass Dance spread on the Northern Plains, reaching the Blackfeet in the late 1870 and the Blood in 1889. The role of the Sioux in the diffusion of the Grass Dance in the Northern Plains was paralleled by the Commanche and Kiowa on the Southern Plains (McAllester, 1949: 13; Hatton 1986: 199). This diffusion, which occurred at a time when Plains Tribes were coerced into reservations and lead their last military fights with the American State has had many consequences in the imagery of "Indian Dances": it popularized a kind of stereotypic Sioux dancing outfit among peoples who, previously, had worn specific tribal regalia.

The participation of women in the Dance varied from tribe to tribe. In the Northern Plains they usually assisted the men in singing, but did not dance, although when the ceremony's function as a strictly men's society declined in the 1890s, women were allowed to participate as officers (and thus to dance) (Hatton. 1986). Other social dances that allowed the participation of women were added to the Grass Dance itself: "Round Dances" and "Forty-niners" where men and women danced together. The participation of women and the diffusion of the Dance seems to be accompanied by major changes in the structure and function of the Grass Dance. These changes were fostered by the internal dynamics in the system of exchange of dancing paraphernalia and songs within the Grass Dance circuit

and by the participation of Native male dancers in shows organized for white settlers in the West, especially in Oklahoma (Young, 1981: 173-179; 239-241).

4.2 Early reservation era (1890-1930).

At the turn of the Century, when the "Indian threat" was over, and the Plains and Woodland Tribes were restricted to reservations, the romantic image of the Plains Indian was in demand in the world of popular non-native American culture (Berkhofer, 1979: 95). Even more instrumental in the changes of the warrior/dancer's outfit was the influence of Wild West shows.

In 1883, the first Wild West show, the Buffalo Bill and Doc Carver Wild West show started its operation (Young, 1981:174), diffusing the "Pan-Plains" image of the warrior which was itself a reworking of the Sioux outfit. It travelled all over North America for thirty years, merging with other Wild West shows of the time. The popularity of these spectacles, often coupled with rodeo shows in the American West were in great demand among settlers.

The establishment of rodeos and "Indian Days" in the West was also crucial for the growth and development of powwows. It seems, for example, that rodeos that offered cash prizes for winning cowboys "must have encouraged Indian dancers' interests in cash prizes for their wild west show activity, dancing" (Young, 1981: 244). The repression of "Indian Dances" in the U.S, since the episode of the Ghost Dance of the 1870s, had also driven Native ceremonial practices underground, accelerating the process of desacralization of at least, the type of Plains outfit which was prevalent during this period. Bruce Cox's article (1989: 21) on the participation of Indians in Western Canada pageants, shows and stampede, demonstrates how the coercive policies of Indian Affairs, combined with a demand by the White population for Indian Dances, gave an "all too rare opportunity for the Prairie Indians to get their own back against the Department". This participation of mainly Plains Indians in shows had a considerable influence on the outfits of dancers.

Hatton (1986: 202) characterizes this period as "the common practice period as the dance practiced at this time was the Sioux Grass Dance".

The turning point in the changing appearance of dancers' outfit was the demand by the public and the non-native organisers of spectacular, "exotic" dances which would hold the show. Most of the men involved in these shows were young men for whom participation in Fairs and Shows was poor consolation for the traditional roles of warriors and hunters their elders had fulfilled (Radin, 1920:24-25). The competitive atmosphere which surrounded the dancers' performance may have induced a different attitude towards dancing which was not anymore a dance "for oneself" but a "theatrical performance" where posture, brilliant outfits and choreography became of utmost importance (Thiel, 1982b). As Indian dancers were put under the gaze of a white audience, settlers and tourists, the nature of the outfits worn by men changed radically in the 1920s. This new style was particularly developed in the former "Indian Territory" now called Oklahoma where young men invented the "Fancy Dancer outfit" characterized by a profusion of brightly dyed feathers and beaded ornaments (Young, 1981: 275).

At the close of the period, a movement towards broad regional differentiations was taking place. A new style of dancing and singing was developed in a network of Dakota reservations (Howard 1960: 18). This new "northern style" was characterized by a slower, more dignified choreography and, generally speaking, the return to "natural", undyed ornaments deemed as "traditional", with a point of disdain for the "southern Oklahoma style" usually displayed by younger men. Thus, by the end of the 1920s, the broad categories of male "traditional" and "fancy" dancers were basically in place. In the following years, the development of photography and post cards for the tourist industry added to the stereotyping process and popularized, for instance, the use of feather bonnets as markers of Indian chiefs. Feathers became the iconographic symbol par excellence of the American Native.

This period of change, which is crucial in the emergence of powwows was followed by a period of recession corresponding to the general economic and social difficulties felt in the western world (Hatton, 1986: 202). It is only after world War II that powwows re-emerged as the main social gatherings of the American Plains.

4.3. The contemporary powwow (1950-1987).

There is a dearth of research on the recent history of powwows, especially in Canada. The most extensive ethnohistorical studies usually concern American Powwows and focus, undoubtedly for good reasons, on specific powwows. Gertrude Kurath (1957, 1966) has conducted research on social Indian Dances in Michigan in the fifties. Gloria Young's doctoral dissertation (1981) deals with the recent history of the Tulsa Powwow in Oklahoma. Loretta Fowler (1987) also analysed the recent history of powwows on the Fort Belknap reservation in Northern Montana.

It is thus very difficult to have a general overview of the recent history of powwows and of powwow regalia, especially in Canada. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that this history is characterised by an increasing popularity of the movement. The availability of means of transportation is a crucial factor in the constitution of the contemporary Powwow trail and greatly influenced the diffusion of aesthetic practices as well as ideas at the beginning of that period.

In the 1940s and 1950s, powwows were used as "home-coming ceremonies" for native soldiers and increased the participation of veterans in the ceremonial aspect of powwows. At the time, however, it seems that little was done to escape the "stereotype" of the Indian decked in feather and buckskin. Photographs show that most powwow outfits of the time were an impoverished version of the "Traditional" costume of the pre-war era. Male outfits were still bought already made from Indian shops (Blundell, 1985: 62; Howard, 1955: 218). Gertrude Kurath (1957: 181) deplored the lack of tribal authenticity in the choreography and appearance of Wisconsin Chippewa dancers.

The 1960s with the emergence of the American Indian Movement, was a time of radical critique of the stereotypes that marred the non-native perception of "the Indian". The former theatrical, staged dances were more or less abandoned in favor of the participation of all in the dance. This political movement which culminated with the occupation of Wounded Knee revived old ceremonies that had more or less disappeared with the death of the elders that had known the life of the pre-reservation or early reservation era. On the other hand, a new generation of Indians, well versed in the anthropological literature of the end of the nineteenth century and in the history of their tribes undertook the revival of old customs and inserted them in a new context (Fowler, 1987).

This may have fostered the research, by dancers, of a more "authentic" approach to dancing and clothing. Older native participants met during fieldwork have noted a greater "quality" in the outfits of dancers of the past twenty years. Greater care is given to personal ornaments in opposition to the wide spread habit of buying already made costumes in Indian shops. One sign of this diversification of the powwow outfit is, for example, the abandonment of the "war bonnet" by powwow participants, at least in Ontario powwows. Furthermore, the distinction between "southern" and "northern" styles of male powwow regalia was reworked through a recent reformulation of the northern style. The Grass Dancer's outfit appears to have separated two elements of the former Northern style. Leaving the wearing of feathers to the "Traditional Dancer", contemporary Grass Dancers adopted a style developed on the Dakota Sioux reservations since the beginning of the century. By extending the use of fringed shirts and leggings, they create their contemporary long-fringed regalia. This development is very recent and has not yet been studied.

The presence of women in competition dancing also has not been researched although a recent study by Hatton (1986) focuses on the participation of women in powwow musical styles. As we have mentioned earlier, women could participate to a certain extent in powwow dancing since the 1900s. But it seems that it is after the Second World War that women competition dancing was accepted as part of the course of a powwow. This

intervention of women on the scene of competition dancing was accompanied by a gradual definition of the categories in which they participated (and therefore their outfits). These categories were aligned on the categories already defined for men ("Traditional" and "Fancy"). A third category, the "Jingle Dress Dancer's" category, of which very little is known, emerged at that time, at least in the eastern parts of the "powwow circuit". As for the Grass Dancer's, this women's outfit has never been the object of research.

4.4. Ontario Powwows

Ontario competitive summer Powwows are a very recent phenomenon if we consider the slow development of Indian gatherings in Western Canada. The Wikwimikong Powwow was the first competitive powwow held in Ontario. One of the founders of the powwow, Mrs Yvonne McCrae from Wikwimikong, told me that this powwow on Manitoulin Island was an "offshoot" of Albertan powwows (see also Blundell, 1985: 54). When the first powwow was held in "Wiki", a western Drum and some dancers came to participate in the event. A relative living in Alberta had seen how things were done there, for "in the West, they are much more traditional than here". Yet, this new form of performance was used to replace an old pageant that took place during "Indian Days" in the reserve and in neighboring towns on the northern shores of Lake Huron. Regina Flannery (1940: 2) mentions that one of her informants for her study of "Spanish River Indians" (on the North shore of Lake Huron) "enjoyed donning costume and participating at various cities in Ontario, to which the Indians are invited". Furthermore, Vennum (1982: 104) asserts that aesthetic forms and conventions of the contemporary powwow in the Woodlands area (especially the wearing of the bustle) can be traced to an offshoot of the Grass Dance of the Plains called the Drum Dance or Dream Dance which developed in the late 1800s.

The Odawa powwow, founded in 1976, is, according to Mrs McCrae and her niece, Alison Odjig, the product of a concerted effort by Native peoples, living in Ottawa and employed in the Civil Service, to create an event that would foster communication in the

Native community in Ottawa. It is organized by the Odawa Native Friendship Center. Because it is held in the Federal Capital, it also aims at including in its program other aboriginal cultural features. In 1987, Inuit throat singing and games were the "specials" of the event. In previous years, it featured Navaho dancing, Tea Dancers from the Northwest Territories and even South American Native dancers. However, the influence and presence of many veteran powwow organizers from Wikwimikong make it very similar to the "Wiki" Powwow.

Among the three powwows I attended, the Six Nations Powwow at Ohsweken is the most recent and is similar, in its organization to the other two. However, because it is located near the major urban centers of South Eastern Ontario it seems to draw larger crowds of spectators. As we shall see later, its inception was controversial in the community.

5. Conclusions

What, then, are the conclusions that can be drawn from this rapid survey of the history of the powwow?

a) **Diversity.** A comprehensive study of powwows would certainly yield information on the differences between Western Canadian powwows and those held in Eastern Canada, which are of a much more recent origin. A distinction could certainly be drawn between urban and rural powwows, held on reservations, although both distinctions have to be understood in the light of powwow circuits.

Conversations with powwow organizers and dancers as well as anthropological studies of powwows published since the beginning of the fifties show that powwows were and are constantly changing, that, although they have a certain amount of common traits, they differ according to their location, the year and the number of participants. Dancing regalia worn by dancers follow trends in fashion; the meanings of certain features of powwows are constantly reinterpreted by the participants. Any study of powwows has thus to reckon with the changes and fluctuation of powwows all over North America according to location

and time. A powwow held in 1963 in Oklahoma did not necessarily resemble a powwow held in 1987 in Ontario, although they may have had common features.

Because of these fluctuations and changes in the character of powwows, the study that I undertook in the summer of 1987 by attending powwows in Ontario bears the marks of its geographical boundaries and of its historical setting: this thesis focuses on Ontario competitive summer powwows, and the regalia that were worn by dancers during these events. The examination of photographs taken during powwows in western Canada and published in the *Native Press* has convinced me, however, that despite individual variations the basic structure of powwow regalia is very constant and allows for generalizations.

b) the **"Powwow Culture"**. Powwows cannot be seen as totally "imported" cultural manifestations nor can they be considered as authentic to any particular region. In a study of contemporary powwow music, James Powers (1980) points to the professionalisation of Drums that are invited to powwows, sometimes from a thousand miles away from the community where the powwow takes place. In the Ottawa powwow of 1987, the invited drum was from Tewa, Iowa. Some of the participants in the Six Nations Powwow came from as far as Albuquerque, New Mexico.

This large geographic diffusion of what has been called the "powwow culture" and the complex ensembles of events that lead to the birth of the "powwow movement" has had major impact on both the research that has been conducted on powwows and on the attitudes of Native peoples towards them.

Most of the anthropological research that has been conducted raises the question of the geographical diffusion of powwows with a quest for the origins of the movement. Howard (1955) defined the "powwow movement" as a Pan-Indian phenomenon, born in Oklahoma, which blurred the tribal distinctions formerly present in the ancestors of powwow dances (the War Dance and the Grass dance) and in the distinctive dancing regalia of each tribe. The standardization of costumes and music stemming from Oklahoma inter-tribal gatherings of the 1930s, signalled, according to Howard, the last stage of the

acculturation of native peoples "just prior to complete assimilation" in the dominant society (id: 220). On the other hand, as we mentioned in the introductory chapter, powwows have been interpreted as part of the revitalization movement of native cultures which fosters a positive identity in native communities, urban or rural (Lurie, 1971; Frideres, 1980; Dyck, 1979).

Anthropologists were also aware of broad regional differences, especially between Southern U.S powwows (of Oklahoma) and Northern powwows on different Sioux reservations. By comparing features in the "Pan-Indian powwows of Oklahoma and the "Pan-Tetons" Northern powwows, Powers (1970) brought to light the fact that tribal variations existed within powwows. A study by Jack Campisi (1975) of powwows in the New York metropolitan area showed that they were the locus of "ethnic boundaries maintenance" for the Iroquois. Finally, a recent study (1987) by Fowler shows that powwows are part of the process of differentiations between tribal groups, age groups and political groups in the political dynamics of the Fort Belknap Reservation. When reading the literature on powwows, one has thus to take into account the date of the research, for it seems that, following the evolution of powwows themselves and the theoretical fashions (3) of the time, different kinds of explanations will be offered. Contemporary epistemological approaches in history and anthropology, which emphasizes disruptions, fractures and power relations in the social world, are responsible for the new theoretical steps illustrated by Fowler' work. This last type of research is also much more in keeping with a native political agenda, which stresses the diversity of tribal situations and criticize the dominant society for "lumping" them together.

c) **Contradictions.** Although it is now possible to have a somewhat clearer idea of the process which ended in the establishment of competitive pow wows, the fact that it is a recent phenomenon in many part of North America raises the question of its authenticity, especially for powwow participants. In fact, powwows suffer a certain amount of disrepute among some Native peoples who, nevertheless, continue to attend them, albeit as

spectators. Discussions are held about the genuine Indian character of competitive behaviours generated by competition dancing. Competition brings inequality and the cash prizes introduce an unhealthy element of greed in what should be a feast for pleasure (Wind Speaker, June 1987).

According to one of the founders of the Six Nations Powwow, there was a lot of resistance on the part of many members of the Reserve to establish a powwow at Ohsweken. Many peoples objected that the competitive nature of the powwow and the "intertribal" nature of the celebration itself ran contrary to the traditions of the Iroquois which stressed equality and tribal specificity. For one of the founders of the Six Nations Powwow, who is also a well known Powwow Dancer, the question was decided on the ground that, as many people from the Six Nations participated in other reserves' powwows and sometimes received the prizes, the Six Nations had to do the same to return in kind, if not more. Organising a powwow was thus seen to be an act of reciprocity that conformed with former Iroquois traditions.

Other discussions bear upon the non-tribal appearance of dancers' regalia and their composite origin. In a word, competing interpretations of what a powwow should be is present in the native approach to powwows and are part of the powwow itself.

These contradictions are generally dealt with in different manners. Recent years have seen the emergence of a different form of powwow called the "Traditional Powwow" where there is no competition between dancers, thus responding to the criticism of commercialism and un-authenticity. This debate lead to the distinction that we described earlier.

Another way to deal with these contradictions and the uneasiness they generate has been to integrate what is seen as cultural traditions in the course of the powwow itself, either in its presentation to the outside world (through the emcee's announcements, the participation of elders, in pamphlets publicizing the event) or in the different ceremonies and events that punctuate the weekend (give-aways, retrieval of eagle feathers, religious

ceremonies). This perspective on powwows, which is the most wide-spread, tries to emphasize the "traditional" character of certain features of the powwows while insisting on the fact that powwows are not "religious" in nature but are simple "social" gatherings where "people feel good together".

The position taken in this thesis is that, far from being a place where every participant agrees on meanings displayed during the festival, the powwow, and its aesthetic forms, are on the contrary, a place of constant questioning and reinterpretation. Whether it is expressed through the uneasiness felt in front of the "stagey" character of some of the powwow features, whether it is because powwows are seen as not true to specific tribal traditions, powwows are the focus of intense debates on what tradition and history are. This question, however, should not be considered as an invitation to see powwows either as totally irrelevant for the study of native cultures or as "one of the final stages of progressive acculturation, just prior to complete assimilation" (Howard 1955: 220). The fact that the meanings of performances, rituals and aesthetic practices are constantly questioned is constitutive of the powwow itself as of any other cultural event.

To see Traditional Dancers' regalia in the light of a pristine tradition (generally fixed in the narrow span of the "ethnographic present" (1840-1880 for North American Indians) is certainly to miss the point. It will be shown that it has been reworked according to new aesthetic conventions which emerged in the 1920s. However, the male Traditional Dancer's regalia also builds upon historically constructed meanings present in former regalia. The position taken in this thesis, which will be developed in the following chapter, is that powwow regalia are to be understood in the context of general discursive practices concerning the role of Tradition in the cultural and political spheres. Furthermore, the historical dimension of the production of gendered meanings, which structure the aesthetic practices present in the regalia, also implies that gender differences be examined in the light of historical changes in gender relations. It is to this doubly articulated theoretical framework which we now turn.

NOTES

(1) This circular disposition is very often mentioned by powwow participants who draw parallels between the natural cycles of the human body and of the seasons to "explain" it (Le Droit June 1, 1987). Hoffman (1896: 161) reports that the founder of the Drum Dance, which is one of the ceremonial forms on which powwows have been patterned (Young, 1981: 151), a Sioux woman, was told by the spirit: "See the sky how it is round?... Go then and make a circle on the ground just like the round sky. Call that holy ground".

(2) The presence of non-native peoples on the bleachers (and around the craft booths) indicates that powwows can be regarded as belonging to the tourist (and economic) development of the communities in which they take place. This important component of the powwow can provide a point of entry into the "powwow culture".

(3) By "theoretical fashion" of the time I mean that studies of powwows follow the major anthropological and sociological paradigms of the time of the research. The 1950s, dominated by functionalism formulated the situation of North American Indians in terms of assimilation and/or acculturation. The concept of "ethnic boundaries" can also be considered as a major theoretical approach, conceptualized by F. Barth (1969). However, the resilience of aboriginal cultural and social forms prompted another approach, that illustrated by Fowler (1987) which is described below.

CHAPTER 3

Toward a Theoretical Approach of Powwow Regalia.

As was suggested in the introductory chapter, this study of Powwow fineries is informed by a number of theoretical assumptions made by the observer. The next pages aim at unravelling the different methodological and theoretical tools used in the semiological analysis proposed in chapters 4 and 5 and at specifying the difficulties of a study of self-decoration.

A first difficulty arises from the concept of "signification" as applied to self-decoration. Indeed, to don specific forms of adornment or of clothing does not mean that the wearer is aware of the meaning of his or her choice. For instance, although western men will generally be able to articulate the social function of the tie they knot around their neck (it places them in a social group, it defines them as "men", it is a "traditional" thing to do, etc...), they would be much at pain to "explain" why the tie has the shape it has and is placed around the neck, why it is made of specific material (generally in contrast to the rest of the garment). Understanding the signification of clothes thus implies a two-tiered approach. One is to understand how they function as more or less conscious social markers in the general social context in which they are used. The other is to look into what the elements featured in the object itself signify, why some of them are valued above others and how they are organized within the ensemble of ornaments displayed at a particular time.

This task requires the student of clothes to move beyond people's explanations about their acts and to extract from the multiplicity of practices marked by individual choices and intents, the regularities that can account for the specific aesthetic practices of a group of peoples. These regularities constitute an unspoken ordinance, a code. But moving beyond what is said by wearers of adornments also means that we make assertions about the nature

of human beings and society (Sillitoe, 1986: 300). The view I will advance in this chapter is that self-decoration belongs to the domain of what can be loosely called "body language". The relationship between self-decoration and the body inscribes the former in an economy of desires (the desire to be loved, admired, 'impress') that involves the psychological formation of human beings. This view demands that the observer clearly defines the position she takes in this area, especially on the role of sexual formation of human beings in their social milieux.

The following pages cannot answer the epistemological issue raised here. They simply aim at articulating as specifically as possible the different variables on which will rest the analysis of powwow regalia in chapter 4 and 5. A first part will attempt to give the social context in which powwow regalia are worn. The more specific notions of cultural identity and of "Tradition" will be examined, for these questions pervade all aesthetic practices during the event. The second part will bear on the tools and theoretical approach adopted to decipher the language of powwow regalia. Finally, I intend to clarify my approach of the difficult domain of bodily ornaments that bear upon the question of bodily representation.

1. The discourse of Tradition.

As was pointed at in Chapter 2, the meanings that emerge from the aesthetic practices during the powwow are constantly re-worked by the participants who interpret their actions in the light of what they call Tradition. Therefore, the study of powwow regalia confronts us with the relation that Native men and women have with their past, and leads us to interrogate their discourse on "Tradition".

Except for Valda Blundell (1985) who sees in powwows a place where "meanings" are generated and redefined as a negotiation of images and significations between the dominant and native cultures and takes the actual display of costumes and dances as a system of significations where meanings are negotiated, most studies of powwows aim at stating the conditions of equilibrium among the actors of the social scene at the time of the research.

The literature on the subject generally deals with the function of the powwow as an integrating force within the domain of native politics and economy (Dyck 1979, 1982; Lurie 1971; Campisi 1975) or as a mediatory event between native society and white society (Dewhirst 1976; Corrigan 1970; Young 1981). The descriptions given by these authors focus on the chronology of events, the spatial setting of the powwow itself, the social and tribal distribution of the people participating in the celebration or in the organization of the powwow.

A few studies have been conducted on the origins of specific powwows, the most extensive ones being G. Young's doctoral dissertation (1981) on the Tulsa Powwow in Oklahoma and Fowler's analysis (1987) of the different powwows taking place on the Belknap Reservation in Northern Montana. Studying an urban powwow, G. Young (1981: 393) sees in the Tulsa Powwow an event which, at the same time, asserts the ethnic identity of urbanized native peoples and moves "Indian people and Indian culture in the United States from the isolation of tribalism to full societal participation" in the United States. Fowler's analysis, on the other hand, focuses on the dynamics of political conflicts within the Belknap reservation in order to understand the role played by the different powwows held on the reservation.

Through a careful ethnohistorical analysis, she traces the emergence of the contemporary powwow in the context of generational gaps between elders and the younger generation of educated Gros-Ventres and the struggle of the latter to assume political leadership positions (1987: 185-184). This conflict was enhanced by tribal rivalries between Gros-Ventres and their Assiniboines neighbors, especially in the eyes of the elders (175) and by the split within the young generation between the "militant youths" (i.e. young native peoples close to the politics of A.I.M. and educated in urban centers outside Montana)) and the "education clique" (i.e. the generation educated on Montana campuses which assumed power in the 1970s). For Fowler, thus, one cannot see in powwows the

locus of one consensual identity-building phenomenon but, rather, a process through which different social groups come to terms with each other.

It should be noted, though, that Fowler's study, which takes into account "symbols of identity" during powwows (but not the powwow regalia), with many good reasons, deals with a specific cultural and political milieu (Montana, Gros-Ventres, Assiniboine, United States). Although the premises of an analysis of ethnic and cultural identity based on negotiating processes and conflicts are of utmost theoretical importance, Canadian powwows have not been analysed in these terms.

A framework for the study of contemporary native cultural practices in Canada has been suggested by Usher (1982) although not directly concerning powwows but subarctic and arctic regions. For Usher, current state policies concerning native cultural life have to be analysed in the context of a capitalist and ideologically dominant definition of the word "culture", definition which dissociates culture from mode of production. For him, the dominant definition of culture as "the material and artistic expression of ethnicity" accompanied by vague notions of "tradition and heritage" (4) masks the real relations of domination between the dominant capitalistic "southern" society and the native population of the North.

Bouchard and La Rusic (1981) point at the use of the rhetoric of multiculturalism and cultural ethnicity in government programs. The alienating nature of a such discourse which equates native cultural events with immigrant cultural manifestations silences the specificity of native claims for sovereignty. These struggles over the definition of "culture" are echoed by Native organisations that are caught in a double-bind between an approach that stresses the importance of the material base of their culture and the increasing encroachment of "the overarching societal project of industrialization" promoting a definition of culture as "heritage", detached from its material base (Usher 1982: 11). In the North, which is the focus of Usher's paper, this double bind could be alleviated by a radically different

approach that stresses the importance of an adapted "traditional" mode of production that would generate and keep a culture that has not yet "disappeared".

There is no doubt that powwows also belong to the on-going debate, grounded in a very real material situation, whereby native peoples have to define their claims to sovereignty by a discourse that legitimates their cultural "heritage". In a very real sense, as shown in numerous court cases, native peoples have had to demonstrate the continuity of their traditions since pre-contact times, responding to the dominant legal system (*lex loci, lex in memoriam*). Given the "encapsulation" of the political structures of native communities, given their economic instability, one of the strategies of native people to retain their distinctiveness (which is a question of community survival) has been to emphasize the ideological component of their relationship with the dominant white society, especially in southern Ontario. As Tanner (1983: 31) puts it

"Outside the more isolated northern areas, where Indians are still predominantly following a hunting way of life, the integrity of a distinct Indian value system is now in some doubt, but a major gap with the majority society is nevertheless evident".

This gap is very often formulated in ideological terms implying a different reading of the past, and an appeal to the government and the public to fulfill their moral responsibilities (Tanner, id: 33). For these reasons they have to enter in what Schwimmer (1972) calls "symbolic competition" and turn their "defeats" into a source of victory.

"For all these reasons, Indians must spend what is, even for politicians, an extraordinary amount of their energy in creating, discussing and communicating a distinct Indian reality, both to each other as well as to non-Indians. This activity can be called "ideological production" (Tanner, 1983: 34-35).

In other words powwows, as cultural celebrations of the "Indian difference", belongs to the wider movement that attempts to provide a cultural grounding for the legitimation of political, economic and cultural rights of aboriginal peoples in Canada. For this a discourse on "collective identity" is held which at the same time unites the group which defines itself as Native and separate it from other groups. This attempt at legitimization cuts across all

native activity and the journalist of *Le Droit* was quite correct when she concluded an article by saying that while the festival was taking place, "three young amerindian lawyers came together to prepare a declaration on the Meech Lake accord" (*Le Droit*, June 1st, 1987). Yet, as we mentioned earlier, this discourse on what it is to be an Indian is far from being consensual. It is permeated by contradictions that stem from different readings of the past. How can we account for both the general movement toward the ideological creation of an "Indianness" and the tensions that pervade it?

One of the ways to approach the question of identity would be to unravel the notion, put forward by Raymond Williams (1980) of a "selective tradition" (1). Speaking about the concept of incorporation, in a Gramscian framework of reference, Raymond Williams emphasizes the role of "selective tradition" as "oppositional forms" to hegemony. Selective tradition is

"that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as the tradition, the significant past. But always the selectivity is the point; the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded" (R. Williams, 1980: 39).

This "selective tradition" is itself articulated within the "effective dominant culture" (id: 40) which, in turn, can accommodate different "oppositional forms". Indeed, for R. Williams, there exists "alternative meanings and values... even some alternative senses of the world", which he calls "residual" and "emergent". By "residual forms" within a culture, he means that

"some experiences, meanings and values, which cannot be verified or cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue - cultural as well as social - of some previous social formation" (id: 40).

For Williams, the "residual forms" that constitute the "selective tradition" are "the results of earlier social formations, in which certain real meanings and values were generated" and which seem to have some significance because "they represent areas of human experience,

aspirations, achievements, which the dominant culture under-values or opposes, or even cannot recognise" (id: 42).

The concepts of "selective tradition" and of "residual forms" can be very useful to analyse the building of the "collective identity" called Indian. What is extolled in the process of identity building, if we analyse it from Williams' perspective, is the fact that former social values and meanings are both historically located and selected. In this case, for instance, values like generosity (in give-away), respect for the natural environment and courage (military and physical prowess) would be part of the contemporary native "culture", whereas other values, which may have existed in the past, are excluded or diluted. One has thus to understand the process of selection not only in terms of what is chosen as meaningful but also in terms of what is not selected.

By enhancing or rejecting the importance of specific events or cultural practices, a group then constitutes a corpus of "things past" which is given a special temporal status that is manipulated by social groups and individuals. This corpus is constantly modified, reworked and reproduced according to the present. Different residual forms are used by different groups, according to the dominance of specific groups in the collectivity that attempts to present itself as a cohesive group. In other words the discourse on and of tradition is constantly moving and contested, as Loretta Fowler shows in her study on Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana (1987). The necessity to ground any analysis of meanings in the historical consciousness of the group and in its position in regard of the dominant society of a particular time seems to me of capital importance. An account of signifying contemporary practices at work during powwows, like contemporary powwow regalia, must be linked not only to past signifying practices but also be read as a negotiation of this past. A distinction between "traditional" (which represents the contemporary aesthetic forms interpreted as handed down through time) and "historical" (which refers to written or visual ethnographic records of past performances) will be made.

This distinction, of course, does not preclude a convergence between the "historical" and the "traditional". On the contrary, the apparent convergence of the two ~~is~~ to be seen as significant in the building of a coherent native "identity", the historian and the historical subject being in a very real way participant in the same political and cultural process. The importance of history in the signifying system of powwow regalia has thus determined in a great measure my reading of powwow regalia. I have attempted to read, in the text they constitute, these ideological processes through which they become significant. This is why my analysis will largely be grounded in a comparison between former dancing regalia and their contemporary form for it allows to see what has been selected and what has been reworked or "forgotten" in the contemporary signifying system they constitute.

In the elaboration of the Discourse on Tradition, however, one has to note that the past is also denied as being past. Former signifying practices are lived as "authentically" present and "transform History into Nature" (Barthes, 1973 (1957): 141). The discourse on Tradition which "makes it possible to rethink the dispersion of history in the form of the same" (Foucault, 1974: 21) is the reinvestment of history into a form (an ensemble of specific forms) that enables the culture bearer "to isolate the new against a background of permanence" (id) and to value, according to the group's position in relation to others, either permanence or novelty. As such, Tradition belongs to the realm of semiosis.

I would then suggest that signs of the identity of any group cannot be understood as a given, a place where specific meanings can be made explicit because they exist "beforehand", but as a matrix of and for social meanings. Indianness cannot be defined as a fixed number of features that can be posited unproblematically. Rather it generates meanings by playing on a certain number of signifiers. This play on signifiers is momentarily fixed in codes according 1) to their own structural configuration 2) to the values and power they confer to their users at a specific point in history. To speak about "Indianness" or native identity thus consists in analyzing the semiosis at work in social reproduction (continuity and transformation through time), in physical reproduction (spatial

occupancy, demography, genetic reproduction). In a way, instead of analyzing the discrepancy between the "real Indian" (on the reserve) and the "represented Indian" (in the powwow) as a given which, in itself, may be intrinsic to the contemporary "Indian culture", most interpretations of contemporary powwows tend to suggest a "rationalization" (no doubt part of the powwow itself) which conflates or entirely separates the two by seeing powwows as cultural integrative events. This denies the conflictual approach to powwows within the native population, uneasiness which may be part and parcel of the problem of ethnic "identity", and even of any identity. It also silences the importance of the specific cultural forms which are used to signify this identity and which are at the heart of the popularity of powwows.

2. Semiology of self-decoration

The position taken in this research is that semiology provides the methodological and theoretical tools needed to understand the gendered cultural and aesthetic practices observable in Powwow dancing regalia. In his "Cours de Linguistique Generale", Saussure defines semiology as "une science qui etudierait les signes au sein de la vie sociale". This definition, which is very wide, raises the question of the nature of the relationship between "signs" and "social life", which is at the base of anthropological inquiry. Following Barthes (1973), I will define semiology as the study of meanings that have acquired a "significant" social value through the interplay of "forms" which can be words, objects, images. It concerns itself with socio-cultural, observable signs and attempts to search the "hidden logic" of social signifying systems. This presupposes that before the meaning of observable signs is understood, in a given society, "forms" that typify a particular socio-cultural practice have been apprehended as constituting a "signifying system".

Within the spatio-temporal confines of the powwow, a complex system of significations is produced in relation with what happens or happened "outside" of this system but is also

determined by the different cultural native forms that define this particular event. The "semiology of signification", represented by semiologists such as Barthes, postulates that all sociocultural phenomena function as signs which by virtue of their relations with each other make sense of the continuous flow of social practices. The task of a semiologist is to decipher the systems of signs which construct the signifying practices of the society under scrutiny. In this respect, this thesis comes within the scope of an anthropological framework which sees cultural practices as "readable", i.e. uses the model of the text to decipher meanings in social action. The rules and conventions (or codes) that regulate the systems of signs are taken as allowing us to get insight into the social relations that the social scientist wants to disclose and dis-cover. The semiological analyses that will be presented in Chapter 4 and 5 are thus interpretations of systems of signification displayed in powwow regalia, interpretations that put the "reader" in the text. It is therefore also necessary to disclose the different "ways of reading" the text that will be used by the reader.

One of the problems encountered in such an enterprise is to define the operation of these systems and the discrete signifying units that constitute them, in order to see how they are combined and separated, find a direction and "make sense" in the web of social life. A first theoretical stand has to be taken regarding the methodological tools that enables the observer to unravel the codes, the specific forms that make up the powwow regalia. The following pages aim at stating the methodology adopted in order to "read" the text constituted by powwow regalia and the perspective taken to understand how they "make sense".

2.1. Reading Powwow Regalia

My reading of powwow regalia will greatly rely on the method developed by structuralism in Linguistics and applied in Anthropology by Levi-Strauss (1974: 45-46). A reminder of the methodology and theoretical assumptions of structuralism will enable me to specify how I intend to use it.

A classical Saussurian analysis of signifying systems distinguishes between the observable, "concrete" phenomenological side of the sign (the "signifier") and its other side, its non-observable, non-tangible side ("the signified"). A sign is the "associative total" of signifier and signified. Although a sign may refer to something or somebody (called the referent), it does not draw its meaning from the latter's presence but from its relation to other signs with which it forms a system and enters in a relation of mutual dependence. Meanings thus emerge from the play of difference within a closed system of signs and from an infrastructure which is unconscious, "implicit". The task of the structuralist is to bring to light these "unconscious" systems by unpacking the system in which each sign is embedded, thereby revealing the code.

Structuralism postulates that the student of language has to dissociate two dimensions at work in languages and signifying systems, i.e. the diachronic dimension, which is the "actually-spoken dimension", the historical, existential dimension of our capacity to speak and signify (la parole), and the synchronic dimension, the "abstract linguistic system which preexists any individual use of it" (Silverman 1983: 11), (la langue). Only by dissociating these two dimensions can a signifying system, like a language, become the object of inquiry. A "classical" Saussurian structuralism focuses on the non-changeable, non-experiential dimension of language (la langue) and can thus be called "the science of states of the linguistic system".

Constructed in reaction to classical philology, which tried to understand language through its history (word formation, evolution of signification in a linear time-frame), linguistic structuralism "dissolves" the human speaking subject into the web of chains of significations: only counts the here and now of the speaker. What s/he "means" is refracted in the multiple ways in which units of significations (semes) are arranged. Language is thus "reduced" to its structure.

By rejecting the primacy of the subject in language, structuralism challenged all previous philosophical assumptions of the primacy of consciousness in the creation of meaning.

There is no "god", no "human nature", no transcendental human presence which gives meaning to our acts, myths or language, only a play on differences, analogies and similarities between signs (Coward and Ellis, 1977). This understanding of saussurian linguistics has been fundamental to most contemporary works based on a theory of signification.

Levi-Strauss applied the linguistic structuralism of the school of Prague, developed in particular by Jakobson (1963) to the study of kinship, myth and totemism. Levi-Strauss's aim is to discover, under the diversity of data collected by anthropologists in so-called primitive cultures, the hidden logic of culture and society:

"The customs of a people as a whole are always marked by a style: they form systems. I am convinced that these systems do not exist in unlimited numbers, and that human societies, like individuals - in their games, their dreams or their fantasies - never create in an absolute sense, but limit themselves to choosing certain combinations from an ideal repertoire which it would be possible to reconstitute" (Levi-Strauss, 1955: 153).

The systems that define the "style" of a people rely on a combinative logic which through its operation brings order to the universe by defining units of signification ("mythemes" or kinship terms, or "gustemes"), by rearranging them as a "bricoleur" would do of the disparate assortment of objects he has collected (Levi-Strauss, 1962: 30-36). Summarising the principles of Levi-Strauss's structural analysis, James Fox (1975: 100) describes it as "the theoretical modelling of the possible combinations and permutations of some defined sets of oppositions". These logical operations are, for Levi-Strauss, the measure of the proper distance between objects and peoples, plants and animals, the yardstick by which the contradictions in nature and in human life are evaluated. A symbolic system thus functions as a superstructure that produces order in the flow of the "unstructured" experiential world of events. Totemism, for instance, establishes a resemblance between a system of differences observed between animal species and a system of differences between clans. Totemism can thus be called a "language" or "code" that provides the lens for viewing the organization of societies in clans (Levi-Strauss, 1963: 77-78).

This insight of structuralism will be used in order to bring to light the intricate system of significations of powwow regalia. For instance, the eagle feather, which is a key sign in contemporary powwow regalia, will be analysed in the web of oppositions and analogies provided by the ensemble of signs present in powwow regalia. This feather belongs to the class of feathers and as such is opposed to fur, beads, shells and objects made of cloth. Yet, within its own category it is opposed to other kinds of feathers ("hackle feathers"), or no feather at all. At the same time, it belongs to a system of significations opposing the head and the lower part of the body which itself parallels a distinction made between different types of eagle feathers. These basic oppositions and combinations, determined empirically, allow the receivers of the message to perceive the signification of the dancer's outfit and help the observer to understand the cultural encoding of the eagle feather. They were highly heuristic and form the foundation of what was found in this research.

Because the making of powwow regalia relies heavily on animal fur, skins and feathers, a reading of the ornaments will consist in establishing the differential relations that exist among the animals that constitute the zoological code. Objects which are not of animal origin i.e. made of cloth also enter in a system of oppositions with "natural" objects like furs and feathers. These zoological and "textile" codes, which can only be determined by empirical observation, are the base on which the interpretation of powwow outfits is built. The zoological code constituted by the oppositions and analogies between animals species as observed by the culture bearers in the natural world constitute a language for gendered differences as they constituted a language for clanic societies.

For Levi-Strauss, the combinations allowed by "the ideal repertoire" of units of significations that constitute these codes are governed by "the mind" which uses, as operating logical tools, binary oppositions, metaphors and metonymyms, transformations and substitutions. Thus, Levi-Strauss, instead of seeking a grounding for meaning in the process by which codes are incorporated in the subjectivity of the culture-bearer, posits the

existence of a generalised human capacity for generating structures which he calls "the mind":

"And if it is now asked to what final meaning these mutually significative meanings are referring to -since in the last resort and in their totality they must refer to something- the only reply to emerge from this study is that myths signify the mind that evolves them by making use of the world of which it is itself a part. Thus there is simultaneous production of myths themselves, by the mind that generates them and by the myths, of an image of the world which is already inherent in the structure of the mind (1969: 341).

So behind the empirical richness of the "phenomenon" (which belongs to the world of diachronicity, history and constitutes an "event"), exists a pre-existing human mind which the student of myths aims to dis-cover. It is easy to see why structuralism has been accused of "mentalism", one of the earlier criticisms addressed to his structural approach. These criticisms have been summarized by Geertz (1973: 345) when he says that it is "cerebral" and does not account for "affect, history or function".

The scope of this thesis does not allow a full account of all the criticisms addressed to Levi-Strauss. It has been the task of what has been called "post-structuralism" to develop positions on these epistemological problems. A theoretical approach will be developed in the following pages, one that takes into account the main issues raised by poststructuralism.

Without discarding the methodological tools offered by a structuralist approach, contemporary semiology attempts to rethink the relation between subjectivity (which a classical philosophical approach places in the "consciousness" of the speaker as the source of meanings) and the material, sociologically structured world in which we live. Instead of placing our capacity to produce and understand meanings in a Levi-Straussian cognitive system, assuming an innate, genetically determined capability of the human brain (Coward and Ellis 1977), poststructuralism argues that our subjectivity is socially produced through contradictory forces. These "forces" can be the unconscious psychic constructions

elaborated in the family (as psychoanalysis has shown) and/or the contradictions produced by the mode of production and social relations of production which generate "a whole range of discursive practices - economic, social and political - the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power" (Weedon, 1987: 21). Codes cannot be viewed as separated from the web of "positionalities" that locate the user of the code, i.e. the producer of signs (a painter, a dancer, a musician but also a cook and a writer of romances) within a specific moment of history, in a specific ethnic group and in a gendered position which are the product of his/her personal history and the history of the group s/he belongs to.

"By its very nature, artistic practice is indeed doubly articulated: through the inclusion of a signifying economy within an "objective" ideological functioning; and through the production of meaning through its subject, in terms of (and liable to the constraints of) concrete social contradictions. In other words, a (subjective) signifying economy becomes an artistic signifying practice only to the extent that it is articulated through the struggles of a given age" (Kristeva, 1980: 232)

Signifying aesthetic systems, which are governed by codes, rules and conventions are the loci where larger society-wide struggles for defining authoritative meanings are worked through. This is why, in the weft of the text produced during powwows, one can see a native conception on their position in the Canadian society. At the same time, however, powwow regalia are not exclusively signs of a political agenda. Powwow regalia are signifying systems that procure a pleasure, both for the wearer and for the spectator. They are signs of and for the body. As aesthetic forms, they procure a "pleasure" for the spectator and the dancer.

Powwow outfits engage the body and its mode of signification, clothing it. They engage "our fundamental irrationality: the extent to which will or agency is constantly subverted by desire, and the extent to which we behave and experience ourselves in ways that are often contradictory" (Henriques et al. 1984: 205). Besides telling something about the political economy and the relations of power in which dancers and spectators are involved, powwow regalia are also telling something about the irrationality of our desires to be loved, looked at and admired by others.

In this thesis, I argue that the affective, emotional aspect observable in the donning of powwow regalia by dancers, male or female, is based on the erotic appeal of the outfits. I would argue that far from being two separate "dimensions" of the same phenomenon, ideological production and emotional appeal in aesthetic forms such as powwow regalia are closely intertwined and that it is from the conjunction between affect and ideology that they draw their popularity and their vitality as cultural practices (2). Powwow regalia and self-decoration are aesthetic practices that are not political statements, as such. They bring into play the way peoples represent themselves to others (and to themselves), and it is through a language that has its source in the body of dancers that the ideological constructs (especially the discourse of Tradition) are mediated. This thesis argues that the process through which meanings are "incorporated" and produced in powwow regalia lies in the act of seduction whereby dancers, male or female, relate to each other, to themselves and to the spectators.

Because the notion of seduction (and its relation to gender and sexuality) is a complex one, the following pages will attempt to circumscribe the notion of seduction and indicate how it will be used in the analysis of powwow ornaments.

2.2. A Question of Seduction

To put on a garment, as small as a thin belt on a naked body, transforms the body into a signifying body. For example, it has separated its top half from its lower half, it has "mapped" the body, creating once more a play on differences and analogies that constitute a system. A body "makes sense" only when it is constituted as a signifying system constituted by the ensemble of clothes that it is possible to wear at a particular time and in a particular society. Wearing an assemblage of objects, ornaments, jewels means that one's natural body is transformed or rather translated into a cultural, social body. As such bodily ornaments will communicate status and prestige within the confines of one's society, or will signify difference from a foreign group (Strathern and Strathern, 1971).

Cutting across this social inscription of the body, clothing is the locus where gender differences and similarities are produced, encompassing, relaying or rewriting biological

differences between the sexes. Bodily ornaments give insight into how gender and sex are articulated within the parameters of a particular society for they translate physiological and biological givens (especially genital sexuality) into culturally accepted and ruled behaviours. As such, clothing can be read as something which entrenches, conceals or distorts functional and hierarchical differences between the sexes, differences which are of ideological nature.(3)

The manner in which we dress or undress our body has long interested social anthropologists who all point to the ritual function of self-decoration. Mary Douglas (1966) has shown, for instance, that threats to social boundaries can produce a concern with corporal boundaries. Studies of clothing and body ornaments are understood as communicating world views and religious practices that reflect the cosmologies of the adorned (Turner, 1971; Seeger, 1975). Bodily ornaments then become, in the true sense of the word, "cosmetics", reflecting the order of the world. Levi-Strauss (1955:169) has shown how Caduveo tattoo patterns are symbolic echoes of social structures that are perceived as incomplete. Goffman (1956) shows that the manner in which we dress establishes multitudinous degrees of distances between interacting individuals. He notes that across different cultures these distances will be communicated by different segmentations of the body, segmentations that are ceremonially or ritually enacted.

Powwow regalia constitute a dramaturgy, magnified by the festive occasion. They are "theatrical", spectacular and seductive. This dramaturgy of self-presentation is certainly used as a demarcation between "Indians" and non-Indians. But this thesis argues that this social dramaturgy is enmeshed in a gendered practice, which I call seduction.

Strathern and Strathern (1971: 172), in their study of Hageners' festive decoration, in New Guinea, show that "dark and light elements are linked to the opposition between men and women". However they also show that

"Without making their decorations exactly like women's, men can incorporate into their costumes elements that stand for the values which are in other contexts associated with females; and women can do the same in relation to males".

They explain that these "free-floating" values, expressed in self-decorations, allow the Hageners to make "part-oppositions and equations between the sexes" (id). The anthropologists do not elaborate on the reasons why such an exchange of signs of femininity and signs of masculinity takes place, for they see self-decoration as making statements about social values (clan-prestige and solidarity and individual wealth and well-being), cross-cut by gendered practices. In other words, their analysis subordinates gendered signifying practices and their dramaturgy to social values at large. This thesis argues that signs of femininity and masculinity and their exchange are intertwined with "social" values and that it is precisely because they are intertwined that they mean something to the person who decorates her or himself. Furthermore, I see the exchange of signs in self-decoration, described by Strathern and Strathern, in the context of Hagen decorations, as the basis of seduction whereby men and women "incorporate" gendered political values through a "language of desire" (Chevalier, forthcoming: 11).

At the most simple level, seduction is an attempt to attract the attention of the other onto one's body through a system of signs that establish oneself as the object of desire of the other. Alone in front of the mirror, the beautifully adorned sees herself or himself through the eyes of the other to whom his or her fineries are addressed. Seduction takes place only when the other's desire is recognized. Seduction thus consists in marking oneself as being different from the other but also in signifying this difference in relation to the other.

When we speak of seduction between men and women, to seduce is to signify through bodily ornaments one's sexual "difference" as man or woman. In this case, a rhetoric of magnification, of euphemism or even parody will be employed to signify difference. Female ornaments will signify femininity through a code that extols "womanhood", and vice-versa.

In order to seduce, however, one has to signify that one wishes to be "reunited" with the other. As Chevalier (forthcoming: 11) pointed out, concessions have to be made by each

gender to signify its desire of the other. To adorn oneself (as is the case for powwow regalia) is to attempt to seduce the other by simulating the imaginary combination of the self with the other, literally a promise of marriage. The dress code of a man will thus contain signs of femininity which, combined with the signs of his masculinity, anticipate the union he longs for. The dress code of a woman will contain signs of masculinity which signify her longing for him. At the same time, these signs of masculinity, written on the female body, become "the man's most valuable possessions" for they signify her desire of his desire. Thus if we take seduction as a "language of desire (of the other's desire)", seduction becomes

"a wordly 'play of passion' that combines two operations: i.e a code that distinguishes one gender from another (keeping the two minimally apart) combined with signs of erotic mediation bordering on losses of sexual identity - signs of self-denial that contravene the code of sexual distance" (Chevalier, id: 11)

At the core of sexual encounters between men and women, clothing, body adornments and gestures are loaded with this process. The moment of seduction, this "transsubstantiation of sexuality into signs" (Baudrillard, 1979: 27), through which men and women translate their natural beings (biological men and women) into their (always) cultural being (clothed and adorned), is a play on significations carried out through a tension between men and women inscribed onto the body. Unresolved metaphor for the dialectics of nature and culture, written on human bodies! This is why sign systems that simulate animal behaviours and appearances are so powerful in the workings of seduction. Animals belong to the world of "nature" and at the same time, one can observe their highly ritualised sexual behaviour, especially among birds. Their behaviour which is grounded in the reproduction or protection of the species can, for the observer, be taken as a metaphor for seduction, in an analogical fashion. This is why in order to seduce, men and women have often adopted and parodied the animals' rituals that they observed in nature. Animals, however, also enter in other cultural practices, religious, economic and political. It is in the

intertwining of these different cultural practices that the unity of the gendered human being is signified.

To seduce means that one's "strategy of appearances" (Baudrillard 1979: 20) obeys a series of codes (a language) that the other understands, though not consciously. Seduction, therefore, is a process through which desires of the other are signified and produced through material forms specific to a culture and to a history. In the case of the use of ornaments taken from the world of animals, the student of self-decoration has thus to decipher how an animal was or is perceived by the wearers of the ornament. Gendered relations are thus encoded in a series of signs that arrest meanings within the system they constitute.

3. Signs of femininity and signs of masculinity.

Seduction, through an exchange of signs of femininity and signs of masculinity, is a "language of desire" that on the one hand differentiates between the sexes and on the other mediates between them. But how can we define these "signs of femininity" and "signs of masculinity"? Are they universal signs that would stem from a "natural" symbolism linking physiological and biological givens on which would be constructed sexual differences and mediation? Do we have to make way for a more culturally specific reading of these signs where femininity or masculinity are to be analysed within the inner logic and structural relations of the whole gamut of cultural symbols in a given society?

For the past twenty years feminist criticism has wrestled with these questions which T. de Lauretis (1987: 5), following Gayle Rubin (1975) calls "the sex-gender system", i.e the "conceptual and rigid (structural) opposition of two biological sexes" on which are predicated socially constructed representations of individuals in terms of particular social relations (De Lauretis, 1987: 5), especially relations of patriarchy (the material and ideological domination of men as a group over women as a group). I think that it is possible to establish three broad "schools" of thought within feminism that attempted to

unravel the articulation between sex and gender (4). One, deeply influenced by a marxist reading of ideological formation, defines the construction of gender differences as "determined" by the relative position of men and women in the division of labor. A first framework investigated the dichotomy between "private" and "public" domains and argued that the association of women with the latter, rooted in "the nurturant capacities of women" explains male and female roles in society (Rosaldo, 1974: 24). Others like Leacock, (1978, 1980) question this division between private and public in non capitalist societies such as pre-contact North American aboriginal societies. Sex, as a biological given, is not "transhistorical" but constructed through historically specific ways (Jaggar, 1983: 128). Patriarchy, which is then a set of historically specific relations, cannot be regarded as universal. Concerned mostly by the ideological and material oppression of women in the context of patriarchal societies, socialist-feminism does not leave much room for the erotic and sexual playfulness that also characterizes sexual relations and participate in the elaboration of gender constructs.

A second feminist framework attempts to understand the sex/gender system in the light of the psycho-social formation of the gendered subject, within a psychoanalytical framework. This is not to say that it has neglected the socially specific configuration of the social relations in which the human subject is raised (Mitchell 1975; Chodorow, 1978; Hartssock, 1983). Sexuality and representations of gender would be entirely determined by the system of signification elaborated during the first years of the subject's formation. The most recent feminist psychoanalytical framework has applied Lacan's approach to "desire". For Lacan, the desire to be desired by the other is grounded in the Imaginary order, whereby the baby experiences the first division between itself and its mother, the irremediable loss of his mother's body and the "recognition" of itself as the object of its mother's desire. This first system of signification dominated by bodily drives is later, through the threat of castration and the resolution of the oedipal complex, reworked and

repressed by the Law of the Father, which is the symbolic order, the order of "conscious language" and of judgment (Mitchell and Rose, 1982).

For a psychoanalytical approach, the seducer is thus a tragic persona that constantly re-enacts the moment of the loss of the (m)other and the split of castration. It also implies that desires and their repression is constitutive of language and inserts what was previously thought as belonging to a substratum of the human ego (the unconscious) is already, always within the boundaries of modes of signification. If we suppose that this is the case, women are totally enmeshed in a symbolic order defined by the masculine fear of castration (Rose, 1982: 47-51). There is no escape from a phallic, patriarchal "economy of desires", except by claiming a radical difference of women, either through their organic and erotic differences (Irigaray, 1977) or/and their better access to a non-phallic mode of signification (Cixous, 1986). Signs of femininity are totally inscribed in an "hommo-sexual" economy of desires (Irigaray in De Lauretis, 1987: 17). Could this approach, which has been very successfully used to deconstruct the major ways women's body are represented and constructed in the western world be adopted to understand the way powwow regalia become meaningful?

In my opinion, a third feminist framework that sees signs of femininity and of masculinity as constituted by various discursive practices comes closer to observations made in the analyses of powwow regalia (Henriques, 1984; De Lauretis 1987). Without discarding the psychoanalytical framework described above, they propose to replace "Lacan's emphasis on a universal and timeless symbolic order by an emphasis on discursive relations, viewed in their historical specificity" (Henriques et al., 1984: 217). This last feminist framework, influenced by Foucault's theory on sexuality (1980) which sees sexuality as being constructed through the various discursive practices of the nineteenth century, reformulates relations of desire in the context of power/knowledge relations in the society at large. In this case, power is not seen only as a "negative", oppressive force in the social construction of reality but also

"what motivates (and not necessarily in a conscious and rational manner) individual's "investments" in discursive positions" (De Lauretis, 1987: 16).

Signs of femininity and of masculinity are founded in the formation of sexual subject but also provides a place for each en-gendered subject where he/she can exercise some influence in regard to his/her relative situation. "Technologies" of gender that represent gender (in which I would place self-decoration) are thus of great importance to understand gender and the relations of power that are constructed through it.

Signs of masculinity and femininity are to be seen as "complex metaphors for ambivalence about human action in, on and as part of the natural world" (Flax, 1987), metaphors which are historically and socially constructed. In other words, the perceptions of differences between the biological sexes are culturally shaped and have to be related to other cultural constructs pertaining one's position within the social and natural world (Ortner and Whitehead, 1981: 2-3). Signs of femininity and masculinity are not to be seen as super-imposed on a presumed pre-existent subject or as stemming from a female or male "nature". They are constitutive of the way the human subject desires, as well as of the ways he/she exercises his/her power.

"Signs of femininity" and "signs of masculinity" will be taken as constituting a language, a gendered code that allows each gendered individual to take position, consciously or unconsciously, in the discursive gendered practices of his/her time within the relations of gender and within the social relations at large. Such an approach avoids dissociating the language of power and the language of desire in the text constituted by powwow regalia (from Latin rex: king; literally, insignia of royalty). I do think, indeed, that the word used by male and female dancers for their outfit, word that they use in preference to "outfit" and certainly to "costume", has not been chosen haphazardly. It signifies the empowerment felt by their wearer both as Indians and as men and women in the context of a discourse on gender to which we now turn.

4. North American Indian gender concepts.

Recent studies in the domain of gender relations among Native peoples in Canada have generally been conducted in the framework of a feminism greatly influenced by marxism. E. Leacock (1978; 1980) who revisited the Jesuits Diaries of the seventeenth Century in Canada, concluded that the colonization of Canada and the introduction of a form of market economy through the fur trade created a disequilibrium in the relationships between genders who went from an "egalitarian" mode due to the absence of dichotomy between private and public modes of production to hierarchized gender relations. Men became the brokers between the domestic mode of production and the new colonizing forces and appropriated the labour of Native women. This shift in power was enhanced by the introduction of a new patriarchal ideology through the christianization of native populations.

Ethnohistorical research has been conducted into the important role played by women in the historical economic life of various tribes (Grumet, 1980; Rothenberg, 1980, 1976; Albers and Medicine 1983). Most studies note that "white society's dominance over Indian people in the last several hundred years has resulted in the subversion of the active and integral socio-economic role that Indian women once played in their societies" (Van Kirk 1987: 387). In Canada, this decline in what Van Kirk calls the "relative equality" (id) of Native women culminated in The Indian Act of 1869 (Jamieson 1978) that deprived women of their authority, legal and otherwise over their children. From 1869 until the abrogation of article 12(1)(b) which defined as Indian a child born of an Indian father irrespective of the mother, and denied a native woman married to a white man the right to pass her rights onto her children, the life of Indian women were enmeshed in the state apparatus that defined their identity.

This imposition of western patriarchal values and law (patrilineal descent) upon populations where "sexual domination was not elaborate, therefore neither were its mystiques" (Whitehead 1983: 105), lead to the gradual reinforcement of men's power in

the over-all political economy of Native communities. This legal definition of an Indian woman was preceded by the efforts of missionaries who sought to give "new modes of expression, meaning and moral sanction" to "the sexual and emotional relations between men and women" (Anderson 1988: 574). In other words, all studies on the relations between native men and women show that women enjoyed a relative amount of power, freedom and equality that was changed, through time, by the diverse instruments of colonization.

Most studies of the representation of gender differences are ethnohistorical studies that take the division of labor as the base on which were constructed gender relations and therefore the symbolic system that encoded gendered differences (Whitehead, 1981; Albers and Medicine, 1983). For them, to see the apparent prestige of 19th century Plains warriors as oppressing women is to see the gender relation with the stereotypic eyes of Euro-Americans. The prestige encountered by males in warfare and hunting was counterbalanced by the prestige of women as producers of durable goods (and thus their importance in the circuit of exchange which generated prestige) (Whitehead 1981). In other words, the division of labor between men and women (both in production and reproduction) did not imply the empowerment of men at the expense of women, as it did and does in the western world. Rather it was founded on the notion of a complementarity between the sexes (5), complementarity that was shattered by the conquest. Signs of femininity and signs of masculinity of the nineteenth century would thus have to be searched in the signs of prestige that accrued to one or the other sex, through a very strict division of labor. For Whitehead (1983: 96)

"sexuality, heterosexually typed though it may have been in the native mind, fell outside the realm of what was publicly and officially important about the roles of the two sexes. Sexual object choice was very much the trailing rather than the leading edge of gender definition".

The contemporary native discourse on gender emphasizes the complementarity of roles between the sexes and the importance of women in the survival of Native peoples. For

many native women, the struggle lead by euro-american feminists do not concern them for they have never experienced the oppression lived by white women (Bataille and Sands, 1984: 129; Russel, 1984). Their roles as mothers gives them an ascendancy that is not recognized in the non-native dominant society. According to Paula Allen Gunn (1986: 255), "maternity was a concept that went far beyond the simple biological sense of the word. It was the prepotent power, the basic right to control and distribute goods, because it was the primary means of producing them...Among some modern American Indians this principle is still accepted". Furthermore for native women "to concern themselves with women's rights" prior to "Indian rights" could be construed as the subordination of tribal or Indian rights in favor of individual rights" (Bonney 1976: 247). Yet contemporary surveys (White, 1985) in Canada show that Native women, materially, are not better off than their non-native sisters in domains of family violence, economic exploitation and sexual oppression. Beatrice Medicine (1986: 68) argues that the "revamping" of "symbolic and mythic structures" that "reflected duality and complementarity in economic and social roles" often "served as a convenient sign that sexual equality is the normative aspect in contemporary Lakota life". In many ways, then, the gendered discourse which focuses on "women's power" can be seen as a "residual value" (Williams, 1980) in the context of a selective tradition. But it alienates women, for it glosses over the specific difficulties that arise from the material situation of native women. How then can we explain the "incorporation" by women of such an apparently oppressive discourse?

An answer to this question could be based on the preceding remarks on the nature of signs of femininity and of masculinity displayed in powwow regalia. By reading these signs as gender constructs that allow for a language of desire and as a place where a relative power can be exercised by women and men within the contradictions of their social life, we can see how they are instrumental in the constitution of an "Indianness" that is also a "gendered" Indianness. Seduction cannot therefore be viewed as separated from the web of positionalities that the gendered subject occupies in his or her society.

NOTES

(1) I prefer Raymond Williams expression of "selective tradition" to Hobsbawn's term (1983): "invented tradition". Although they describe the same phenomenon, "selective tradition" places men and women as creators of their history whereas Hobsbawn's appellation seems to make them the victims of their phantasies.

(2) This does not mean that I would generalize this view to all aesthetic forms. Powwow regalia, because they are bodily ornaments call, in my opinion, for such an interpretation which cannot be necessarily extended to other aesthetic forms such as music or painting. The sociology of Art developed in cultural studies by authors such as Janet Wolff (1983: 85-104) or Johnson (1986: 307) raises the question of the nature of "aesthetic pleasure and gratification" (Wolff, 1983: 90, in general. Given the wide range of theoretical issues raised by the nature of aesthetic pleasure, it is impossible, within the scope of this thesis, to discuss all the difficulties that this question entails.

(3) The study of dress codes might thus consist in analysing how these gendered ideological constructs are signified on the body of men and women. Many studies have been conducted along those lines (Beauvoir 1971: 345; Brownmiller 1984). They are critical of the way patriarchal societies have restricted women's bodies. The bounded feet of Chinese women, the corsets of Victorian England, the high heels worn by contemporary western women are seen as "expressions" of male domination of the female body, which is certainly true. In that sense, the subdued or restrained appearance of female powwow regalia could be interpreted as a sign of the domination of Indian men, who are "allowed" to be showy and exuberant. Underlying such a view, however, is the notion that clothes are meant to be functional (protecting from rain and cold) or to correspond to the kinetics of the natural human body. The fascination exerted cross-culturally by bodily ornaments that mutilate or restrict movements is seen as "barbarian" or oppressive. Yet we all know this

apparent willingness to "entrap" ones body in a "costume" that imposes restrictions to very important physiological functions, for both men and for women.

(4) Discussions of the feminist approach to these questions have been extensively reviewed in Jaggar (1983), Barrett (1980: Chapter 1, 2 and 3) and recently in a paper dealing more specifically with the concept of patriarchy (Fox, 1988: 163-183).

(5) According to Whitehead (1981), the prestige acquired by men and women, albeit by different means, explains the institutionalization of a cross-gender system in most Plains tribes (the berdache and the "manly-hearted woman").

CHAPTER 4

Semiological Analysis of Feather Ornaments

In a popular song among the native peoples of North America, called "Here Come The Anthros", Floyd Westerman protests against anthropologists who, among other things, "study their feathered freaks // with funded money in their hand", funded money which is never given to "their disappearing feathered friend". In another style, E. Larocque, a Metis from Northeastern Alberta, fighting the pervasive cliches marring Canadian perception of the "Indians", entitled her book "Defeathering the Indian" (1975). Yet, during the celebrations which provide opportunities for non-native people to come in contact with native people on a large scale such as powwows, feathers, especially eagle feathers, are the most spectacular markers of Indianness. The contrast between the two attitudes, the rejection by some Indians of the use of feathers as markers of native identity and their constant use in dancing regalia and powwow ceremonies, is striking. One of the aims of these pages will be to analyse this apparent contradiction. They attempt to see how, by constructing their outfit as they do, native dancers construct a gendered system of significations which is at the same time a political discourse.

I shall thus examine carefully the distribution of feathers on powwow regalia, reveal the tension between different meanings conveyed by the different feather ornaments, account for the changes that occurred in the code constituted by the use of feathers, and see how these meanings enter into a changing gendered discourse on "Indians".

The use of feathers is attached to specific qualities of the feathers themselves (their role as mediators between earth and sky, their lightness and their strength, the beauty of their shape and the diversity of their colors). Feathers, however are also associated with the birds they come from. When studying the signifying system of feathers and the signifying practices of peoples using them, the behaviour of birds is of utmost importance. Crucial

among these behaviours is the reproductive behaviour of these birds and the way they are organized within the ecological system. This is why feathers, in my opinion can be considered as a starting point in an analysis of sexual meanings produced during powwows. As an old informant said to Alice Fletcher who was inquiring about an ancient ceremony of the Pawnee called the Hako at the center of which was a complex symbolism of birds

"We take up the hako in the spring when birds are mating, or in the summer when birds are nesting and caring for their young, or in the fall when the birds are flocking, but not in winter when all things are asleep" (Fletcher 1901: 23-24).

Despite the ambivalence of the contemporary native approach to feathers, one of the most explicit and central marker of "Indianness" is the use of feathers in the powwow outfits. I will thus start to decode and analyse the dancers' outfits by describing how the use of feathers structures the organisation of the outfits and how they enter into the distribution of categories of dancers. However the distribution of feathers and their meanings has been constantly reworked since the beginning of what is thought to be the original "powwow Dance", the Grass Dance. It is thus impossible to envisage the feather code in a strict synchronic way. In fact, the powwow costume is born from a historical process which re-interpreted the meaning of feathers.

As I have already mentioned in Chapter 3, the perspective taken on the constant shift and reworking of significations is one that presupposes that chains of significations are rearranged by an active subject defined by her/his positionality in the collective social practices of her/his time, determined by his/her position in the dominant society. Feathers can thus be read as a code in which positions of power (between the sexes and between Indians and the dominant society) are spelled out. This role of feathers, as markers of specific positions in the overall social and ideological make-up of contemporary Native cultures partly account for its stereotypic character.

In order to be effective, feathers have to be charged with emotions and seduce the imagination of their wearer and spectators. Aesthetic practices built around feathers become efficient because they speak of the dancer's desire to be desired. Feathers have an emotional, bodily appeal on which their value as markers of "Indianness" is built. For feathers are not only "markers", they also have shapes, colors and texture; they are "disposed" on the body in a fashion that makes use of the relations between its parts. In a word, feathers have an erotic appeal that makes use of sexual differences and ambiguities, that inscribes the body in the play of seduction. The second part of this chapter will thus attempt to see the shifts in the feather code that produce the symbolic appeal of feathers.

1. The Use of Feathers in the Dancer's Outfit

There are two ways to wear feathers in a powwow outfit: either as headdress or as components of a large semicircular ornament worn at the back. This large ornament is only used by two categories of male dancers and is called a "bustle".

1.1. Feathers as Headdress.

The black and white feather, taken from the tail of the immature Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) is the most common feather used as hair ornament. In the outfit of the male Traditional Dancer, it is tied either directly to the hair at the crown of the head or integrated into a much more elaborate headdress. In this latter case, which is by far the most frequent, two eagle feathers surmount the rest of the headdress. Dancers' head ornaments are usually very elaborate and individualized. However, it should be noted that, among these, the roach is the most popular. It consists of rows of porcupine quill, deer or moose tail hair sewn to the perimeter of a strip of leather in the shape of a loop. The stiff quills are flattened at their center by a "spreader" which gives the headdress a semicircular shape which stands up while its wearer is dancing. The base of the quills is often dyed red and the overall impression is of a crest similar to the erected crest of birds.

When wearing other headdresses, as an otter fur turban for example, the eagle feathers are placed in the same position, i.e, surmounting the turban which itself usually surrounds a short roach. Traditional Dancers can choose to wear a headdress exclusively made of eagle feathers, whose designs are inspired by the ingenuity and creativity of the dancer, especially in the shape of elaborate eye-shades. The third category of male dancers, the Grass Dancers, do not wear feathers although they sometimes use as headdress a "springer" which has its tip surmounted by down feathers of the fluffy type.

Women also use feathers in their headdress. They are either fixed to slides that maintain their hair in braids or they surmount the beaded headband that they often wear. The nature of the feather is sometimes difficult to determine. In any case, eagle feathers can be used. Another kind of feathers is also used. These are called "breath feathers" and are the white down feathers taken from the underside of the wings of birds, especially eagles. Because of their fluffy appearance they are often called "fluffies", or fluffs, especially when dyed. Very often, however, women will not wear feathers at all.

1.2. The Bustle of Contemporary Dancers

a) **The male Traditional Dancer's bustle** (illus.7)

The male Traditional Dancer's bustle consists today of a semi-circle of brown eagle feathers attached in the center to a rosette, a mirror or even the head/ upper body of an eagle or a wolf. Attached to a belt, it hangs from the lower back of the dancer. Underneath the wheel, are attached one or two rectangular pieces of cloth (the trailer) of a solid color (black, red, dark blue or green) to which are sewn feathers of predatory birds, especially eagle feathers. The wheel is usually surmounted by two "uprights" which are two "sticks", (originally the quill of a long eagle feather) (Howard, 1984: 149), pointing up (rarely sideways) from the center of the bustle. The tops of these uprights are decorated with hackle feathers, horse hair, bird claws (or imitations of bird claws made of dry wood), whereas the stem is often wrapped in fur or in cloth. The bustle of the Traditional Dancer is thus a very large ornament and is made in order to produce the maximum effect when the

dancer moves. Amos Key, the head dancer at the Ottawa Powwow, told me that his own bustle consisted of five eagle wings and tails, that it took him ten years to make, and that he modified it every year by adding feathers. He was quite proud of his bustle, not only because of the amount of care and time it took to make, but also because at the center of the bustle he had fastened a bald eagle upper body which, properly attached, bounced to the music and had quite a dramatic effect.

Although male Traditional Dancers' bustles seem very different from each other and obey the imagination and creativity of each individual dancer, there are three constant features for all of them:

- (1) they all have the same semi-circular shape.
- (2) they are made of eagle or hawk feathers, hence of predatory birds.
- (3) brightly dyed feathers or fluffies do not enter into their making.

The variations usually bear on the color of the cloth trailers, the presence or absence, which is quite rare, of the uprights and their decoration, and the composition of the center. Some bustles are quite "full", especially when the center consists of a rosette of feathers. Others are very "simple", when the quill of the feathers is apparent and the center consists of a plain circle of rawhide.

b) The male Fancy Dancer's bustle (illus. 8)

Despite many similarities the Fancy Dancer's bustle is quite different from that of the Traditional Dancer. It consists of a "wheel" and is held by a belt. But, instead of the single large ornament worn by the male Traditional Dancer, the Fancy Dancer wears two bustles, a smaller one at the neck, a larger one behind the waist. Both "wheels" follow the construction indicated earlier for the Traditional Dancer's costume: feathers are arranged in a semi-circle disposition around a beaded rosette, or around a central point; but this center is never decorated with an animal head as is the case in the Traditional outfit. More importantly, the feathers that are used are not eagle feathers but commercial turkey feathers stripped to the quill and decorated in rows of color by "fluffy" or "hackle" feathers dyed in

bright colors, giving it a very soft and brilliant appearance (illus. 2). The most common colors are orange, yellow and red but one can see combinations of blue, white and red, or orange, yellow and dark green. The two bustles are worn so that the bottom of the feathers of the neck bustle overlaps on the upper part of the feathers of the waist bustle.

1.3. General Structure of the Dancers' outfits

What then is the system of oppositions and similarities in these feather ornaments?

(1) Powwow Dancers wear three kinds of eagle feathers: the brown feather of the mature golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos), the black and white tail feather of the immature golden eagle and the feathers of the Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) (1). Brown eagle feathers are very often associated with brown hawk feathers. The distinction between the black and white feather of the eagle and the brown feathers of eagles and hawks roughly corresponds to their distribution on the body. Brown feathers are used in the construction of male Traditional Dancers' bustles. Black and white feathers are worn as headdress by most male dancers, except by Grass Dancers.

(2) Eagle feathers are distinguished from other kinds of feathers. Male Fancy Dancers wear bustles made of "hackle feathers", which are "the long shining feathers on the neck of the domestic cock, peacock, pigeon, etc" (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). Some goose feathers can also be used.

(3) Contrasting with the eagle feather and the hackle feather, down feathers, called "fluffies" or "breath feathers" are also used. These "fluffies" enter into the composition of the Fancy Dancer's bustle and are worn on the head by women dancers.

(4) A final opposition can be established between dancers wearing feathers in their bustles or as headdress and dancers who do not wear feathers at all, namely the Grass Dancers.

To sum up, feathers appear to be used in a systematic way. The feather code is organized along gender lines and it plays on the position of feathers on the body of Dancers. If we take feathers as markers of gender differentiation, we notice that women

wear feathers exclusively on the head, whereas male Traditional and Fancy Dancers wear them on the body as well (at lower-back and neck level). We also notice that women never wear hackle feathers, which is the prerogative of male Fancy Dancers. Although it is possible to see brown feathers worn as hair ornaments, especially when associated with black and white feathers, it appears that the black and white eagle feather is the favorite "head feather". It indicates that the nature of these feathers "maps" the body by discerning between head and back, distinguishing between "head feathers" and "bustle feathers".

Wearing feathers is not mandatory for any dancer except for the male Fancy Dancer. I have to note, however, that only very few male Traditional dancers do not wear a bustle and a very great majority wear head feathers. Women, quite often, do not wear feathers at all. Grass Dancers never wear feathers, except for the downy feathers at the tip of their "springer". In a sense, feathers thus establish boundaries between different groups of male dancers, whereas women categories are not organized according to the feather code.

Women dancers wear shawls instead, and the way they wear them marks their position in the dancing categories in which they compete. Female Fancy Dancers wear a large, bright, fringed shawl, wrapped around their shoulders and decorated with ribbon applique or embroidery (illus 5). Traditional Women Dancers wear a woolen shawl, also fringed, but folded on their right arm (illus 4). Jingle Dress Dancers never wear shawls. In fact, the shawls of women are the structural opposites of the bustles of male Traditional and Fancy Dancers. Similarly, the absence of shawls and of feathers (in bustles and as head-feathers) characterizes the two categories of dancers which constitute the third term of the system on which are built the categories, the male Grass Dancer and the female Jingle Dress Dancer. The former wear regalia made of long yarns of wool that are reminiscent of the long fringes of the female Fancy and Traditional shawls. The Jingle Dress Dancers, who decorate their dress with "tin cones made from snuff-can lids or beer-can bottoms" (Rynkiewich, 1980: 90), wear ornaments that are only found in the three male outfits, namely bells.

I will then, for the time being, propose that dancers are organized along gender lines around a limited number of signifiers, which are feathers, shawls and bells. The following table summarizes these findings:

Table.1. Distribution of ornaments in male and female outfits:

	Male	Female
"Traditional"	Eagle Feather bustle	Folded shawl (fringed)
"Fancy"	Hackle Feather bustle	"Open" shawl (fringed)
"Grass"	Wool yarn	
Jingle Dress		bells

The nature and distribution of feathers in the male regalia establishes a hierarchy among male dancers. In many dances as well as in the opening ceremonies, male Traditional Dancers always come first, followed by Grass Dancers, then by Fancy Dancers. Women are organized in the same manner. Female Traditional dancers are followed by Jingle Dress Dancers then by Fancy Dancers. This ranking establishes (with other components) the primacy of the (male) Dancers who can wear eagle feathers as bustles. This analysis will therefore attempt to understand why and how the "bustle of eagle feathers" has become such a central component of the signifying economy of the dancers' regalia. But in order to do so, the symbolic values of feathers has to be placed in a historical perspective. The play on sexual differentiation, marked in the code feather by the "bustle feather", is not a simple one. Its rules have changed in the past century and are indicative of a redistribution of meanings along gender lines. It is to these former meanings that we now turn.

2. The Meaning of Feathers in the Nineteenth Century

The use of feathers in the Nineteenth century Plains and Woodlands costume implied a complex symbology of feathers that relied on a system of resemblances and differences

between birds.. The eagle feather, which was worn on the head and in the Omaha bustles since the 1800s was accompanied by crow and hawk feathers. Warriors in the Woodlands often wore pendants in the shape of small birds, which were thought to represent the Bee Marten or Kingfisher (Densmore, 1913: 78). War bundles in the Plains contained birds such as swallows and hawks which stood for the warriors' fierceness (Fletcher and Laflesche, 1911:). Among the Iroquois, a type of warrior's headdress, apart from the more well known Gus-to-weh made of eagle and owl feathers, could be made of the feathers of the gobbler (Gabor 1983: 4-6). Turkey feathers were also used in decorations as well as the feathers of Prairie chicken and other gallinaceous birds (Koch, 1977: 7).

All these feathers, according to the time and place entered in a code that the following pages will analyse. In order to do that I will use ethnographic evidence of the material culture of the Nineteenth Century Plains and Woodlands peoples, the myths which accounted for the symbolic function of these birds and the rituals in which they were primary motifs. Because of the centrality of the eagle in former apparels, a first decoding of the meaning of eagles will be suggested, especially the opposition between black and white feathers and the monochromatic brown feathers. Gradually, by examining its relation with the other birds, a more complete account of the encoding of feathers will be given.

2.1. The Eagle of Plains and Woodlands Tribes in the 19th Century.

Broadly speaking, eagle feathers entered into two different sets of practices among Plains and Woodlands tribes in the Nineteenth Century. Eagle feathers were bestowed as war honour decorations to warriors who had been valorous on the battle field. In this case, elaborate ceremonies would mark the acquisition of eagle feathers or headdresses made of eagle feathers by the warrior. The honored warrior would recount his deeds in public and was threatened by sure death if what he claimed as his exploits were not true. Black and white eagle feathers were particularly sought after for their role in military heraldry. An elaborate symbolism of notching and coloring the feathers, different for each tribe, encoded

the specifics of the war exploits (Fletcher and Laflesche, 1911 for the Omaha; Densmore, 1913 and Mac Gee, 1898 for the Chippewa; Mallery, 1893 for the Dakota).

Besides war honor decorations, eagle feathers were also used in the complex set of ceremonies surrounding the ritual use of pipes, in the Calumet Dance (North and Eastern Plains, Central Woodlands and Iroquois) (Fenton, 1953) and its parent ceremony called the Hako (Pawnee) or Wa'wan (Omaha) (Brasser, 1976: 26; Fletcher, 1900-1901: 279). Feathered pipe stems, decorated with eagle feathers were used as ritual objects in peace parleys. In order to understand the symbolic function of the eagle these two areas of cultural practices will be examined.

a) The Black and White Eagle of War Honor Decorations

As mentioned earlier, the black and white feather of the eagle was the reward of the successful warrior who had counted coup on his enemies. These feathers were the tail feathers of the immature golden eagle. Related to these feathers was the image of the Bald Eagle, whose head is white and the rest of the plumage dark brown, nearly black. In her study of Chippewa customs at the end of the last century, Densmore explicitly links this last species of eagles to war:

"The Chippewa recognize two varieties of eagle. The bald eagle (wabicuc'kwe) is considered a war bird because of its high and rapid flight and the beauty of its feathers which are black and white, firm and lustrous. This species of eagle is very rare in Chippewa country, and when seen is hard to capture" (1929: 83).

Densmore does not specifically link the choice of the bald eagle with the immature golden eagle but her mention of the two colors of its plumage is in keeping with the usage of the black and white feathers of the immature golden eagle in warriors' headdress of the Plains and Woodlands.

The first question that is raised, when one examines the feather code of Nineteenth century regalia and ritual practice, bears on the reasons why this "black and white eagle has been "chosen" to signify the warrior's prestige.

b) the predator

The Eagle, Bald or Golden, is a predatory bird, a bird that can kill to obtain its food and feeds on flesh. To wear eagle feathers either in a headdress or in a bustle, as was done in the Nineteenth Century and as it is done today, is to emphasize the role of men as soldier or/and hunter. The bustle, worn in place of wings (some bustles, called "butterfly bustles" have this wing-like appearance) and of tail transformed the dancer into an eagle. Wearing the tail, wings and talons of the bird of prey gave the dancer a predatory image that symbolised the warrior. The eagle also uses its ability in flight to hunt efficiently. It uses its perched and soaring position to swoop down on its quarry which then can be larger than the predator. This movement, from higher up to the ground surprises the prey in a way reminiscent of the warfare techniques used in the Plains and Woodlands. Warriors, indeed, surprised their enemies, rather than conducting a frontal attack.

Yet nothing indicates, in Densmore's text and in the behaviour of the Bald Eagle, which is the "war bird" par excellence, that it is particularly ferocious, especially compared with other predatory birds. Densmore stresses three qualities in the bird that do not pertain directly to warfare: the nature of its flight, the color and beauty of its plumage, its scarcity and the difficulty of its capture. Furthermore, many observers of the bird have noticed 1) that the bulk of their food consists of fish (and also water fowl) not of mammals, 2) that they are not at all aggressive in their defense of their nest (Bent calls it "an arrant coward", 1937: 331). To understand the signifying system that makes the eagle the bird of war confronts us to many paradoxes. In fact, it is not because of its predatory nature that the bird becomes the symbol of the warrior's achievement. Rather it is because, possessing the ability to be a fierce predator, it gives the impression of keeping its killer's nature in check. To understand the specificity of the Bald Eagle and the reasons why it was valued over other predatory birds, one has to look into the three qualities reported by Densmore and to see it in relation to other predatory birds.

c) "A High and Rapid Flight"

In her comment about the Bald eagle, Densmore emphasizes the ability of the eagle to fly very high and very rapidly. To this, one could also add that eagles are usually seen perched on very high trees and they nest on the edges of high cliffs. The eagle is thus the bird of the upper reaches of the sky. This position of the eagle is of utmost significance in the cosmography of the Eastern Plains and Woodlands which divided the world into five strata: the "heavens", the sky, the earth, the water and the underwater world (Radin, 1923: 186). By its position in this sacred cosmography, in the upper reaches of the sky (although not the heavens) the eagle was seen as the bird that carried the will of the Creator and announced it. The eagle is the "sky" spirit which provides a connection between men and the powers above. Because of its downward rush followed, when necessary, by its lofty soaring flight it embodied the ideal carrier of men's prayers to the powers above. Their feathers "symbolically facilitate the transmission of prayers to the supernatural world above" (Fowler, 1987: 173).

Among the Omaha as well as among the Ojibwa and Iroquois, the eagle was likened to the mythical "bird" called the Thunderbird. This Thunderbird, often depicted with the beak of the eagle, with spread wings from which falls hail and with eyes from which lightning come in zigzag lines was the enemy of the creatures that lived under water, chief of which was the horned serpent. Portrayed as the mythical Thunderbird, the eagle occupied the highest position in the cosmology of Plains and Woodlands tribes of the 19th century. According to Fletcher and Laflesche (1911: 402) the Thunder, "with its destructive lightning and deafening roar was regarded as the manifestation of the war phase of the mysterious Wakon'da".

Agility in flight and connection with Thunder are qualities that the Eagle shared with other birds, such as falcon, hawks, swallows and even smaller birds such as the kingbird. Despite their non-predatory nature, the two last birds were also considered as birds of war. In an Omaha war bundle, deposited in the Peabody Museum in 1884, Fletcher and

Laflesche found, beside a falcon and swallow-tail hawk, six swallows. These birds, which have a very swift and agile flight and which "fly before the coming storm" were regarded as heralds of the Thunder God of war (1911: 404). Densmore reports that Chippewa warriors wore pendants made in the shape of small birds such as the Kingbird or Bee Marten (Tyrannus carolinensis) "always prompt to perceive the approach of the enemy" and which "does not fear to attack even hawks, owls and eagles" (1913: 78).

One should also consider the Woodpecker in the category of war birds. Audubon, during his travels along the lower Mississippi River, noticed that warriors often used the scalp of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker as ornaments in their war-dress" (1831: 343, quoted in O'Shea et al.: 245). On the Hako pipe stem, the woodpecker's "mandibule is turned back over its red crest" so that "it may not get angry and warlike" (id: 174). This bird was also linked to thunder storms because of the shrill cries it emits at its approach (Brasser 1976: 27).

What are the characteristics that establish a difference between the eagle and these other birds and indicate the superiority of the eagle as a war bird? The first difference resides in the difference in fierceness of attacks displayed by eagles and the other birds. It has been noted that hawks will often try to rob each other when hunting and some species are fiercely territorial. Kingbirds can invade the eagle's territory and lead dashing attack on predatory birds, especially eagles (Bent 1937: 347). In the origin legend of the Hako ceremony of the Pawnee, the woodpecker in competition with the turkey lost its bid to become the protector of mankind, although it was able to protect its offspring by concealing them "in the heart of the tall oak". It lost in favor of the mature brown golden eagle which is not "quarrelsome" (Fletcher 1900-1901: 173). The red crest of the woodpecker, which raises when angry" (id: 21) was the sign of this irrepressible anger and aggressiveness that threatened in the last instance the otherwise protective nature of the bird. In fact, it seems that the warbirds (hawk, kingbirds, woodpecker) manifested an aggressive instinct close to foolishness, for it could bring their own destruction.

On the contrary, the Bald Eagle, when its nest is attacked by the smaller birds such as the kingbird, shows a "dignified indifference" (Bent, 1937: 346) and drives away its attackers without much fuss (id: 347). The eagle's feather as supreme award of the warrior, signified that were kept at bay the disintegrating possibilities of aggressive warfare, revenge, blood feud and "particularly the quarrels and schemes of ambitious men". It meant the curtailment of a man's ability to exercise revenge and maintained tribal control over warfare (Fletcher and Laflesche, 1911: 403). I would suggest, however, that the restriction of aggressive drives, signified by the opposition between eagles and other warbirds, is also visible in the second reason, given by Densmore, of the choice of the Black and White eagle as symbol of the warrior.

d) "Its feathers which are black and white, firm and lustrous"

As mentioned earlier it is difficult to pinpoint the precise symbolism of colors, for it changed according to times and tribes. However, it is worth noticing that the black and white eagle feather of aboriginal military heraldry in the Nineteenth century came from the immature Golden Eagle which becomes a full adult (able to reproduce) only when around four or more years old. The plumage of the Golden eagle thus indicates that a distinction has to be made between mature and immature eagle. In the Hako ceremony of the Pawnee, from which emerged the ritual usage of the pipe in the Calumet Ceremony of other tribes (Fenton, 1953: 2), two distinct "feather stems" were used. On one of the pipes

"the feathers of the white or male eagle are hung upon the stem painted green to symbolise the earth, the female principle" (Fletcher, 1900-1901: 280-281).

On the other the feathers of

"the brown or female eagle are hung upon the stem painted blue to symbolise heavens, the male principle" (id).

Both feathers belong to the Golden Eagle, but the "white eagle" of the Pawnee is the "young brown eagle". "These are the feathers worn by the warriors, the bird is the war

eagle, the fighter, the defender, the protector" (id: 288). On the other stem are tied "the fan-like appendage of ten mottled feathers from the mature brown eagle" (id: 289) "representing the female, the mother, the nestmaker" (id: 280). By combining, on the pipe stems, the masculine and feminine principles, the symbolism expressed "with unmistakable clearness the original instigating desire for children" (id: 281).

To use the black and white eagle feather of the immature eagle was in fact to dissociate male from female eagles and this separation of genders was encoded in the type of feathers used, not in the observation of a natural difference between the female and the male eagles. In the encoding of the eagle, a further distinction has thus to be made between the "nesting" eagle and the "war eagle" which was signified by the sexual maturity of the birds. The Bald eagle, with its black and white plumage which it acquires with age has kept the "differing quality" that makes the immature eagle the mark of male prestige.

This absence of sexual maturity in the Eagle of war paralleled many beliefs concerning the proper sexual conduct of warriors before going to war, especially the taboo placed on sexual relations before a war party (Fletcher and Laflesche, 1911: 408). It is also in keeping with the sexual prohibitions imposed during the eagle hunt. Hidatsa eagle hunters "avoided women, husbands kept away from their wives; for if they slept with their wives they knew harm would come to them" (Wilson, 1928: 168). In a sense, whether defensive or aggressive, warfare demanded that the warrior forego, relinquish his role as reproducer during the time devoted to killing. Wearing the black and white feather of the immature golden eagle signified the success of this renunciation and was the prerequisite for more "wordly" success, among them sexual successes. Black-hawk, an aged Hidatsa, recounted to Wilson the reasons why he was placing "two fine eagle feathers in his scalp lock" while the writer was taking his photograph.

"If young man not go in war party, everybody say 'you, bad young man'. Why you not defend your tribe? Girls not look at him. Nobody invite him to feast. But if he go out in war party, strike many enemies, win honor marks, wear war eagle feathers in hair, then everybody say 'That good young man'. When he go to feast, everyone make him welcome; if he speaks in council, everybody listen; when he

goes through village, all girls smile on him and he marry anyone he wants"
(Wilson, 1928: 109).

Men were caught in the following contradiction: by engaging in warfare and demonstrating the qualities of a predator and of a killer, they denied the greatest achievement of a human life: to give life. Black and white feathers suggested the proper mediation between men's roles as killers and men's roles as fathers. To be able to wear the feather was to be able to show that this contradiction between life and death was successfully resolved through a morale of asceticism and sacrifice encoded in the feather. The anagogic meaning of the eagle is signified by the difficulty of its capture as mentioned by Densmore. But the mediation is also encoded in sexual terms in as much as it stressed the curtailment of the reproductive might of the father in a feather that denies it. A further mediation between male and female was thus necessary to mark the prestige of the warrior, a mediation that would tilt the balance of power in favor of men-warrior. This was done in the oppositions that were established between the turkey and the eagle and the appropriation, in male terms, of the power to give life, a symbology to which we now turn.

2.2. The Eagle and the Turkey

We have little evidence of the way turkey and other gallinaceous birds were used in the ornaments worn by Native American men in the 1800s. Koch (1977: 7), in his study of Plains Indian outfits asserts that

"Turkeys and Prairie Chickens furnished an abundance of plumage for decorative purposes".

An Iroquois headdress, the Wen-na-so-ton, was made of turkey feathers, more exactly of gobbler feathers (Gabor 1988: 4). Pheasant feathers, which only appeared in North America in abundance after 1860 also became a favorite decorative feather at the turn of the century. What is certain is that around 1920 the use of turkey and hackle feathers, usually from the rooster, were systematically used in a new outfit worn by men, called the "Fancy" or "Feather" costume of Oklahoma. A small number of myths, especially the founding

myth of the Hako (Fletcher, 1900-1901), allows us to understand the place of the turkey and other Gallinaceous birds in the symbology of the time.

In a myth told by the "Ku'rahus", the man in charge of preparing the sacred pipes of the Pawnee Hako Ceremony and of organizing it, it was not the brown eagle (i.e the mature golden eagle, the "female eagle") that was formerly used in the decoration of the sacred pipe. It was the Turkey. But Turkey lost its power because of a dispute with Woodpecker, "which resulted in the supplanting of the turkey by the brown eagle" (Fletcher, 1900-1901: 173). This dispute originated in the fact that both birds desired to be the protectors of the children of mankind. Turkey put forward that he was the most "productive" bird:

"In my division of life there is great power of productiveness. I have more tail feathers than any other bird and I have more eggs. Wherever I go my young cover the ground" (Fletcher, 1900-1901: 173)

To this the woodpecker replied that it was more able to protect mankind because, despite the great number of its offspring, Turkey was unable to protect them, for it built its nest "on the ground" so that the eggs were "in constant danger of being devoured by serpents" and when hatched, they became "prey to the wolves, the foxes, the weasels" (id). On the contrary, the woodpecker protects its offspring by nesting in "the heart of the tall oak".

Therefore, it had fewer eggs but they hatched in security and

"the birds live till they die of old age... The woodpecker prevailed and the turkey was deposed: for, although the turkey had more children they did not live; they were killed. Then the brown eagle was put in the turkey's place, because it was not quarrelsome, but gentle, and cared for its young, and was strong to protect them from harm" (id: 173).

Characterized by numerous offspring, the turkey is unable to care for them. Yet the woodpecker does not become the "protector" of mankind, it is the mature golden eagle. The "quarrelsome" nature of the woodpecker had prevented it, whereas the mature golden eagle, which is not "quarrelsome", was the most apt to fulfill this function. In the founding myth of the Hako, the golden eagle is literally chosen as the mediator between the

woodpecker and the turkey for she embodies reproduction without the extremes of aggressiveness displayed by the woodpecker and of neglect displayed by the turkey.

The translation of the myth provided by Alice Fletcher indicates that both birds, the woodpecker and the turkey are male (they call each other "brother" in Fletcher's text). Yet, it is not the male "white" eagle (the immature Golden eagle) that is chosen as mediator, it is the brown female eagle. Let us then examine how this play on the sexual ascription of the partners in the myth and the place of each bird in the natural world help us understand the structure of the feather code in the 19th Century.

a) The Good Mother and the Bad Fathers

The image of the female eagle is characterized in this preceding myth by strength and gentleness. It is understood in the text that she does not have numerous offspring. On the contrary, the male turkey has many eggs and his young "cover the ground". This opposition is based on the well-known fertility of the turkey (and of most gallinaceous birds) compared to the very low reproductive rate of eagles, Golden or Bald. Whereas "the normal set for the wild turkey numbers from 8 to 15 eggs" (Bent 1932: 331), "the usual set of golden eagle's eggs is two" and full sets of one are common" (Bent, 1937: 299). The nest the female eagle build with her mate is a huge, extremely well built eyrie, sometimes four to five feet wide, on cliffs and tall trees. The turkey's nest is built on the ground and consists of "a few withered leaves" placed in "a hollow scooped out" always hidden from view (Audubon, quoted in Bent 1932: 330). The young golden eagle matures slowly and does not acquire its full adult plumage before it is at least four years old (Bent 1937: 303). They stay in the vicinity of the nest for a long time after they have left the eyrie. On the contrary, turkey chickens grow very fast and by the first winter their plumage starts to differentiate, ready to display for courtship in the following spring.

It is significant that, whereas eagles are paired for life, turkeys have a totally different organisation for raising the young. The gobbler, once the mating has occurred, does not help in raising the chicks, it "does not even know the location of the nest" (Bent, 1932:

332). In fact, the gobbler is only seen with its harem of hens during mating season. Once her eggs are laid, the turkey hen "shuns him [the gobbler]..."lest he might break the eggs to prolong his sexual enjoyment" (id: 330). The sexual drives of the gobbler, combined with its spectacular display during mating ritual, made him a danger to his own offspring.

The behaviour of the female eagle concerning the protection of her nest is very different from the female turkey's. Whereas the Kura'hu's myth insisted on the protective nature of the Eagle toward her offspring and the careless way the male turkey protected its nest, any observation of the nesting behaviour of the birds shows that, in nature, the female turkey is much more protective of her young than the eagle. The incubating eagle is easily frightened from the nest and "she usually flies away in silence and disappears entirely or remains at a distance" (Bent 1937: 299). On the contrary, the (female) turkey "will not leave her eggs, when near hatching, under any circumstance, while life remains" (Audubon, quoted in Bent 1932: 332). To make of the female eagle the paragon of motherly virtue is, to say the least, paradoxical, when compared to the female turkey. This paradox, which will be dealt with in the following pages, cannot be understood without taking into account the symbolic value of the white male eagle, with which it forms a pair.

b) the Good Father and the Absent Mother

I would suggest that the mediation operated by the female eagle indicates the appropriation by the "good father" of the reproductive power of the turkey hen. The elimination from the myth's narrative of the bird that could embody ultimate motherly virtues (as the hen does in other parts of the world) is indicative of the degree of mediation between male and female in a feather code that places the eagle feather at the center of its ritual or as the ultimate reward for warriors. What distinguishes the female eagle from the female turkey is not so much the number of their offspring or their behaviour in the nurturing process than the fact that the female eagle is also a predatory bird, i.e participates in the nature of the male eagle. The low reproductive rate of the female eagle is well in keeping with what we said of the black and white eagle of war. One of Wilson's

informants on ritual eagle hunting among the Hidatsa noted that it was impossible to distinguish the sex of eagles when they were not nesting (Wilson, 1928: 212). By making the female eagle the mediator between the gobbler and the woodpecker, the Kura'hu's myth tilts the mediation between reproduction and warfare in favor of a bird characterized by a complementarity of the sexes that subsumes the motherly qualities (of the turkey hen) under the "manly" courage of the (male) eagle.

In the Dream Dance (Barrett, 1911; Densmore, 1913) or Drum Dance of Woodland Indians performed at the end of last century, the feathers of the brown eagle were used to make one of the "ancestors" of the contemporary Traditional bustle (Vennum 1982: 105; Salzer 1962: 63). The ceremony "concerned peace between peoples who have been at enmity" (Densmore, 1913: 142). Summarizing different ceremonies described in the anthropological literature, Vennum gives the symbolic meaning of this ritual act:

"When consecrating the food, the belt man is considered to be representing the Great Spirit, but in feeding certain of the participants he is said also to represent an eagle (or Thunderbird) and those fed to be the bird's young" (1982: 108).

The belt that is passed on is said to be a privilege of the warrior (Densmore, 1913: 68). Yet, its ritual use shows its meaning to be that of the nurturing bird. The eagle is not only the bird of prey, "associated with war and with the destructive powers of the Thunder", it is also the nurturer which takes under its wings the life of its "children" as the brown female eagle does in the Hako Ceremony of the Pawnee. Unfortunately it is impossible to know at this stage of the research if the mature golden eagle of the Drum Dance ceremonial bustle is female or not. However, given the fact that both brown feathers and white and black eagle feathers were used in the same ceremony, it may be possible to conclude that the dichotomy between the two species of eagle was implicitly recognised in the ceremonial practice. In any case, the choice of the nesting, nurturing eagle as a warrior's ornament, indicates that men appropriated for themselves the role of the "good" nurturing mother, and claimed, as rewards for their courage as warriors, the most valuable power of women: their

role as mothers. Doing so they also dismissed the bird which displays the most "motherly" attitude, the turkey-hen who has the crucial role in the continuity of the species.

This representation of the reproductive process by a bird that is not obviously a "mother" like the turkey-hen is also present in one of the offshoots of the Calumet Dance (itself a modification of the Pawnee Hako), the Eagle Dance of the Iroquois. In this ceremonial dance the two distinct principles that govern the economy of the eagle code are unified in a mythical single species of eagle, the Dew Eagle. In this ritual described by Fenton (1953: 75)

"The ritual is addressed to a species of eagles that wheel in flight high in the heavens amid clouds. The Seneca call them variously the cloud-dwellers, they-of-the vapors, or the Dew Eagles. They have the power of restoring life to wilting things".

Furthermore, according to Keppler (1941: 24-39), Iroquois would burn tobacco "to the harvest mask in a drought, imploring it to intercede with the Spirit of Thunder, the Bringer of Rain, or the Sky Eagle, which could let water fall from his feathers in life-giving dew" (Rutsch, 1973: 27). The Dew Eagle of the Iroquois is thus one of the manifestations of the mythical figure of the Thunderbird and its ability to give life. The imagery used to signify the fertility of this mythical eagle is unmistakably masculine.

By subsuming the female power to give life the masculine imagery of the Dew Eagle, or by appropriating the qualities of the good eagle mother in a warrior's ornament, the code of feathers enhances the masculine mediation between life and death. This, however, should not be seen as the sign of male dominance over women. In a way, the victory of the eagle over the turkey is the victory of a world view that emphasizes cooperation and complementarity between men and women. Only the empirical evidence of the position of power of men and women in the social life of peoples can determine in which direction the mediation operated by the eagle tilts the balance.

c) The Gobbler

This does not mean that the gobbler is devoid of any power. In a brochure published by Irocrafts on the Iroquois Costume, the author, at the end of his description of a former Cayuga and Seneca headdress, points to the fact that "turkey feathers are not just imitations of eagle feathers... Many of these tribes (Eastern and Southern Woodlands) used the gobbling call of the Tom turkey as a war cry" (Gabor 1988: 5). The polygynous behaviour of gobblers and roosters is well known as well as the ranking of males in the reproductive process. This competition between male birds provokes fierce combats which can lead to death and allows the strongest gobblers to keep a "harem" of hens during breeding time.

The ritual mating display of the male bird is characterised by the expansion of his body plumage, the erection and spreading of the fan-shaped tail, the swelling of the naked head ornament and rattling of the wing quills. In another bird, the Prairie chicken, which has a very similar behaviour, the display is accompanied by a "drumming sound" created by the rapid movement of its wing quills (Muller-Using, 1975: 466). The mating display of eagles, on the contrary, is very subdued, and consists in flight games (Bent, 1937).

Whereas the turkey hen comes to her "favorite" cock after his display, the nuptial play among the eagles is carried out by both the male and the female. This difference in the sexual rituals of the two birds places the two birds, the gobbler and the male eagle, at the opposite end of a spectrum of seductive behaviour.

It was by using the "technique" of the gobbler to seduce the hen, that turkeys were hunted in the 19th century. While the eagle hunter, as Levi-Strauss (1962: 68) has shown, simulates the position of the prey, and is an adult male who obeys very strict sexual taboos, the wild turkey was hunted in another manner. John Hunter describes the capture of wild turkeys in 1824 in the following manner:

"Having prepared from the skin an apt resemblance of the living bird, they follow the turkey trails and haunts till they discover a flock, when they secrete themselves behind a log in such a manner as to elude discovery, partially displaying their decoy and imitate the gobbling noise of the cock... This species of hunting, with fishing, is more practiced by the boys than the older Indians, who seldom, in fact, undertake them, unless direly pressed by hunger" (Hunter, 1824, quoted by Bent, 1932: 337)

Whereas in the case of the turkey, the hunter becomes powerful through his power of seduction of the female, the hunter of eagles becomes powerful by giving up his apparent power. In both cases, turkey and eagle speak of masculine sexual display. Yet this is done in an opposite movement, one by overwhelmingly displaying his sexual might, to the point of possible failure, the other by understating this power, which guarantees its success.

It is now possible to see the gendered code built on oppositions between eagles and turkeys. At one end of the spectrum, the eagle, with its carnivorous and predatory habits displays a warrior's attributes. At the other end the gobbler, which can also be combative, is the "bad warrior" that threatens the cohesion of the group. But these characteristics are cross-cut by the gendered ascription of each of the birds. The "good warrior" shows great restraint in the seduction of the female and his attitude is not governed by matters of sex but by a proper fatherly attitude as defender and protector. In the case of the "bad warrior", the gobblers' reproductive might is offset by its sexual drives that lead him to neglect and even endanger its offspring. The principle that seems to govern the relation between eagles could be likened to cooperation with little differentiation between the sexes and a social organisation in pairs. The principle governing the relation between turkey and gobbler could be called seduction with a high level of sexual differentiation and a social organisation emphasizing sexually defined groupings and collaboration.

The sexual behaviour of the two birds is organised around two opposite principles: cooperation or seduction. The choice of the black and white eagle feather, which signified military conquest and exploit, tilts the mediation in favor of the male heroic figure of the warrior, the conqueror who keeps his desires in check. The gobbler, on the contrary, which has no control over a reproductive process that, in the end, depletes him of his strength, allows the female of the species to have "the upper hand" over her progeny. By excluding the female turkey and her specific power, we thus have a structure in which the

power resides in the male and female eagle whose feathers were chosen to signify prestige and power for men. The eagle feather subsumes sexual conquest under military conquest.

The eagle and the turkey (and other gallinaceous birds) were not the only birds to enter men's apparel in the 1800s. In fact, on one of the ornaments that was used at the time as a war honor decoration, the crow figured prominently. The crow belt was worn by Pawnee and Omaha men in the ceremonial dances of their warrior societies called the *Iruska* (Pawnee) and the *Hethushka* (Omaha) (Wissler, 1916). This particular bustle is the prototype of contemporary bustles, the Traditional and the Fancy bustles that we described earlier. What were then the links between the various birds already mentioned and the crow?

2.3. The Crow, the Eagle and the Turkey.

According to Fletcher and Laflesche (1911: 441), the "crow belt" or simply the "crow" was the highest war honor decoration awarded to Omaha and Ponca warriors in the mid 1800s. This is how Fletcher and Laflesche describe it:

" This was worn at the back, fastened by a belt around the waist; it was made with two long pendants of dressed skin painted red or green, which fell over the legs to the heels. On the skin were fastened rows of eagle feathers arranged to hang freely so as to flutter with the movements of the wearer. An entire eagle skin, with head, beak, and tail , formed the middle ornament; from this rose two arrow shafts tipped with hair dyed red. On the right hip was the tail of a wolf; on the left the entire skin of a crow" (1911: 442)

Although Fletcher and Laflesche do not specify the kind of eagle feather that is used in the making of the belt, the photograph accompanying the text (illus.9) shows that it is mostly the black and white tail feathers of the golden eagle that is sewn on the "trailers". In contradistinction to the contemporary bustle, there was no "wheel" of feathers hanging from the waist of the warrior and the eagle was not the only bird entering into the composition of the belt. In fact it seems that the crow and the wolf were as important in the meaning of the belt as the eagle.

Data concerning the meaning of the crow at the end of the last century among peoples who made the "crow belt" the center of one of their most popular dances (the Grass Dance) come from two sources. Mooney's work on the Ghost Dance (1896) allows us to relocate the bird in its cosmological and mythological context. It is, however, the detailed description given by Fletcher and Laflesche of the Hethushka Ceremony of the Omaha and Ponca warriors, which took place until the 1850s, that provide the most detailed account of the crow symbolism in the context of the bustle.

Fletcher and Laflesche reported the meaning of the 1850s "crow belt" in the following manner:

"The "crow" decoration is said to symbolise a battlefield after the conflict is over. The fluttering feathers on the pendants represented the dropping of feathers from the birds fighting over the dead bodies. Sometimes the wearer of the "crow" added to the realism by painting white spots on his back to represent the droppings of the birds as they hovered over the bodies of the slain. The two arrow shafts had a double significance: they represented the stark bodies and also the fatal arrows standing in a lifeless enemy" (1911: 441).

In the "crow belt" of the Omaha, the eagle was

'associated with war and with the destructive powers of the Thunder and the attendant storms. The wolf and the crow were not only connected with carnage but they had a mythical relation to the office of "soldiers", the designation given to certain men on the annual tribal hunt, who acted as marshals and kept the people and the hunters in order during the surround of the herd" (1911: 442).

a) the Crow as "Soldier"

Three main themes are thus associated with the feathers of the belt. In the first, eagles are said to be the birds of war which I analysed earlier. In the second, crows and other birds are fighting over the remains of slain warriors. Images of decomposition and death are prevalent (dead bodies, bird droppings, stark bodies). Crows are viewed as part of the battle field as scavengers, i.e as creatures that come after the hunt, after the conquest done by others.

The third theme, of which the crow and the wolf are the main mythical figures, concerns hunting, and the role of sodalities in policing the camp and organizing the

collective hunt, which were the prerogative of men organised in societies of warriors (Wissler, 1916; Klein, 1983). In the first and second themes, that of carnage during war, the crow and the eagle embody "external warfare", one as "enjoying" the spoils of war, the other as supervisor of war. In the third theme, the crow and the wolf symbolize the prevention of internal warfare, of struggle within a community of interrelated peoples. In this particular case, the crow enhances collective life and is the warrant of its growth and welfare through the works of a group of men. There is no doubt that, in the case of the Omaha bustle, the crow is a male crow and is taken as warrior and hunter.

A closer look at the position of the crow in the general code of feathers could, however, show that its presence on a warrior's decoration is less a matter of its masculine attributes than its position as mediator between the eagle and the turkey.

b) The Crow between the Turkey and the Eagle

What is striking in all observations related to the crow, whether drawn from the observation of crows in nature or from ritual accounts, is the position of the crow in regard with the eagle and the turkey. In fact a systematic comparison between the three birds shows that the crow belongs to both worlds, that of the eagle and that of the turkey. The crow eats flesh and grain, the crow lives in flocks but also in monogamous pairs during nesting season. The crow walks and runs like the turkey but is also capable of soaring high like the eagle.

The sexual behaviour of the crow has characteristics found in the turkey's behaviour: a rather high reproductive rate, and a high level of competition between males. At the same time, female and male crows are difficult to distinguish as for the eagle; the male crow participates in the raising of the offspring; the male, because it is highly territorial, defends the nest in a way apparently similar to the eagle, who stands watching the surrounding territory of the nest. The crow thus seems to stand as the mediator between the eagle and the turkey. Wearing crow feathers could thus be seen as a way to reconcile men's desires

for military prestige and sexual conquest. It is, in my opinion, in the third "facet" of the crow that this reconciliation takes place, namely in the feasting crow.

c) The Feasting Crow

Following their analysis of the "crow belt" of the Omaha, Fletcher and Laflesche continue their ethnographic report with a ritual account "secured in 1896 from an old Ponca Chief" which relates the male crow to "the hunter as provider of food and to the warrior as the protector of the peoples". The ritual songs that accompany the ritual, however, indicate that the crow is not seen as the "hunter" in the process of finding or killing game" but rather as the hunter feasting after the hunt is over. Male crows are said to gather in great flocks and to feed "on the buffalo lying dead". They are addressed in the following manner:

"Verily, what is yours you eat and the food gives you new life"
 "Verily Like to this do I desire for my children..."
 "Verily, I would make them to rejoice..." (1911: 445)

The main characteristics of the crow when compared with the eagle or the turkey is thus its place in the hunting process. In another story told to Fletcher and Laflesche (1911: 446), the crows had promised a warrior

"to go in search of [the] enemy. They say that they want to feast on human flesh... The crow and the wolf were to direct the people in finding enemies and game and thee people were to make sure of killing so that the wolf and the crow could feast on the flesh left on the field of battle or in the chase".

The crow as scavenger is the feasting crow who "consumes" the product of the hunt (the dead buffalo) or the war (corpses) which has been conducted by someone else. The crow speaks of the possibility of satisfaction, of pleasure in a world where feasting can take place. The feast held after the victory of a war party was also the place where exchanges between women and men took place. Women were given the crops of war (scalps) as they were given the crop of the hunt. As symbolic bird of the Ghost Dance, worn by men and women alike, it announced the coming of a time when, once the white conquerors would have disappeared in a great flood or earthquake, the dead would be resurrected and game

would, once again, be plentiful (Mooney 1896: 232). After times of scarcity and hardship due to the conquest, it was the promise of a feast, joining all the celebrants in the long-awaited victory.

Between the Eagle which proclaimed a moral imperative of heroic renunciation, and the Gobbler which warned against the disruptive effects of the pursuit of earthly pleasures, the crow-belt signified that the warrior could, at last, obtain the rewards of his life of hardship. It is only after military conquest that the soldier was entitled to other conquests: "All girls smile on him and he marry anyone", as Black-Hawk said.

2.4. Conclusions

Thus far we have attempted to describe the general code of feathers that were used for decorative purposes by men in the nineteenth Century. As can be seen, the contradictions of men's life were encoded in the feathers that were worn: how to be at the same time a warrior (and draw one's prestige from it) and a giver of life. It would be possible to imagine that, before the nineteenth century, feathers entered into a symbolism much more indicative of "man's relationship with the spirit of nature" (Brasser, 1987: 115) in a cosmology that emphasized the complementarity of opposites. Our description of the feather code, however, shows that in the nineteenth century Plains, an interpretation of feathers in terms of military heraldry (Brasser, 1987: 115) was prevalent.

A code that attributes greater value to the eagle feather privileges the status of men as soldiers and emphasizes a morale of conquest through the renunciation of one's desire for earthly pleasures. The crow of the Omaha bustle, even if it can be seen as the mediator between sexual and military conquest, is also the soldier, responsible for policing the hunt. The war-birds feathers warned against the seduction and abuses of war. The gallinaceous birds feathers cautioned against the pleasures and power of the seducer who is in danger of being overwhelmed by his sexual desires. The crow's feather expressed the glory of the feast where both poles of social life were reconciled in male terms.

This corresponds with what is known of the changes that were occurring in gender relations at the time of the conquest of the Plains by European traders and soldiers. In the Hako Ceremony, which is the most ancient of the ceremonies considered here, we have seen that the symbolism of the Eagle emphasized the complementarity of the sexes without giving precedence to one over the other. However, the exclusive (or near exclusive) use of black and white feathers in the mid-1800s indicates a dominance of the role of warriors in the life of a people, or at least a struggle over positions of power.

Patricia Albers notes that the Omaha Grass Dance, which was spreading to many Plains tribes at the time, could be seen as a "means of mobilising support and advancing the interests of warriors over other institutional groups and leaders" (in Thiel, 1982c: 14). As we said earlier the status of many native women declined with the introduction of trade in the West, as well as with the increasing amount of warfare caused by increasingly scarce resources (Medicine 1983; Leacock 1980; Van Kirk 1987). Klein (1983), in his study of the role of sodalities in the mid-1800s, shows that soldier societies became prominent in the regulation of collective economic and political strategies of Plains tribes, "heightened and institutionalised male-bonding" (id: 162) and "raised the already rising position of men vis-a-vis women" (id: 164). The eagle feather was thus reinterpreted and used as insignia of men-warriors and as ranking indicators within a society defined in male terms.

By the 1890s, the social structure of the Plains tribes societies, had been greatly disrupted by the often violent intervention of white society and the conquest of the west. Men, who had once been warriors, were now trapped on reservations. The different dances that formerly created a cohesive bond among warriors were prohibited. The religious dances were repressed. The only possible social framework for aesthetic expression was defined by the dominant non-native society, during rodeos and fairs and pageants in Canada, during Independence Day and Christmas and New Year celebrations in the United States. The use of feathers in Plains clothing changed drastically during that period. The

following pages will attempt to see the changes in the code of feathers and how it produced a new set of aesthetic practices that are observable during contemporary powwows.

3. Changes in the Composition of Feather Ornaments

3.1. The Sioux Bustle

By 1900, major changes were observable in the feather ornaments worn by male Sioux dancers who were central in the diffusion of the Grass Dance (Fletcher 1892: 142; Hatton, 1986; Wissler, 1916: 866). Although it seems that the crow was a central figure of pre-reservation bustles of the Siouan speaking peoples (Hewitt, 1987a: 6; Lewis and Clarke, in Laubin, 1977: 435-37, Catlin, 1973: Plate 287, 289), it had disappeared from any "bustle" at the beginning of the reservation era. In 1896, Mooney observed Arapaho and Cheyenne "social" dances in which the belt figured prominently. Despite the fact that the dance was called the "crow Dance" and was said to be "a direct inspiration from the other world where they saw it performed by crow spirits of departed friends" (Mooney, 1896: 901), the "crow dancers" wore a bustle made of "vary-colored feathers" without the crow skin.

The Sioux bustle, although still called a "crow belt" (literally "crow skin tucked in") (Howard 1972: 6), did not include at all, in its composition, the crow or the wolf. Worn mostly by the Lakota, Crow and Cheyenne, it consisted of a rawhide base, two trailers covered with eagle feathers, a five feather tail unit, a fully circular "wheel" composed of stacked layers of feathers set in circles and a pair of uprights (Hewitt, 1987b: 5). These bustles were often worn in pairs, one at the lower back, the other at the neck.

A careful description of such a bustle is given by James Howard (1972: 2) who had the opportunity to acquire "a beautiful Teton Dakota (Sioux) dance costume" which had belonged to Fire Cloud, a leading dancer on the Lower Brule reservation shortly after the turn of the century (1900-1925). This bustle consisted of tail and trailers ornamented with black and white eagle feathers decorated at the base with "downy eagle breast feathers" (id :4). The wheel consisted of twelve concentric circles of feathers alternatively dyed orange

2

Microlith

and purple. Most circles were made of the dyed feathers of predatory birds: golden eagle wing feathers, hawk feathers, screech owl feathers. Added to them were one circle of goose feathers dyed in varied colors and one circle of turkey feathers dyed orange (id: 5). Each row was partially decorated with "fluffies" usually dyed red. A "neck bustle" duplicated the composition of the waist bustle.

The analogy with bustles worn by contemporary Fancy Dancers is striking in many ways: the duplication of the "crow belt" at shoulder level, the dyeing of the feathers in bright colors and the usage of "fluffies". Eagle feathers are used but dyed; goose feathers and turkey feathers are mixed with predatory birds' feathers.

These modifications indicate a major change in the perception of the Grass Dance bustles, beyond the fact that Dakota did not necessarily share the mythology of the Omaha (Howard, 1972: 6). We first notice that the feathers of eagles are mixed with other predatory birds and commercially acquired feathers. All distinction between birds has been blurred by the usage of bright if not gaudy colors, as if the origin of the feathers had to disappear under the brilliance of their appearance. The only feather left intact is the black and white feather of the immature eagle. The latter is used in a manner reminiscent of the original Omaha bustle. It is as if Fire Cloud's bustle had kept some of the insignia of former warriors while a direct reference to former symbolism had been suppressed.

There were two factors operating in the changes marked by Fire Cloud's bustle. First, the use of dyed feathers and of commercially traded feathers is symptomatic of the loss of the ceremonial character of the bustle at a time when the social fabric of historical Plains Societies was disrupted by the intervention of the American and Canadian Governments in the regulation of "Indian Dances" (Young, 1981: 204-219). The code of feathers that we described in the preceding pages was being reinterpreted in the light of these changes. The following pages will attempt to see the modification of this code and the effect it had on the gendered meanings observable in contemporary powwow regalia.

When he describes the "Crow Dance" which took place as an afternoon dance at Ghost Dance Gatherings among the Southern Arapaho and Cheyennes, Mooney (1896: 901) emphasized its "social" character and its fashionable aspect. This "fashionable" aspect, added to the age group he refers to (Crow dancers are all young), indicates a departure from a "traditional" approach when dancing was integrated in the ritual aspect of the occasion and included all males of a sodality or society. In that respect, the dancers are akin to Fancy dancers for whom performance, spectacle and individual competition are important factors and whose average age is twenty. The "varicolored" feather bustles worn by these "crow dancers" and described by Mooney (id: 901), is also reminiscent of the brightly colored bustles of male Fancy Dancers.

The Fancy Dancer, as such, became a specific category in the Ponca Fair and Powwow in Oklahoma in the 1920s. It was characterized by neck, waist and arm bustles and "a feather crest (nicknamed "zulu hat" by the critical Dakota) [which] replaced the roach headdress" (Thiel, 1982c: 7). The outfit itself can be traced to a few individuals who initiated a new "fashion" among the dancers. The use of brightly dyed turkey and chicken feathers was systematized (Powers, 1966:8; Koch, 1977; Thiel, 1982c: 11). Fluffies (brightly dyed downy feathers) were multiplied.

These modifications in the nature of the feathers used were accompanied by a reshaping of the former bustles. The two uprights sticking up from the bustle disappeared. "Trailers" were abandoned. The former full circle of feathers of the Sioux bustle became the half-circular, fan-shaped bustle that exists today. This reshaping of the ornament is much more reminiscent of the fan-shaped tail of turkeys, peacock and other gallinaceous birds than the wheel of the Sioux bustle or the "hanging bustle" of the Omaha or Woodlands, worn by the Sioux sodalities and the participants of the Dream Dance. Feather ornaments were multiplied. The upper arms and even the wrists of the dancer were decorated by small circular bustles the "radiating" effect of which is compounded by the use of mirrors (illus. 10).

These early "fancy" costumes were characterized by an overtly exaggerated use of feathers. The disappearance of eagle feathers from the headdress and from the bustles indicates a total desacralization of the dancer's outfit (hence the disapproval of conservative Dakota, who had kept the "traditional" costume). Patterned after the "Eagle dance" of the Algonquian and Pueblo dancers, the bright outfit of the Fancy Dancer was initially and intentionally a joke. Its inventors, a Ponca named Gus MacDonald and his friends, in fact, "acted like clowns" (Young, 1981: 275). They could be seen as the ironical counterparts of dancers who still wore the "old" bustle during performances organized for the enjoyment of white audiences, as in the numerous pageants and fairs that were taking place all over the United States. This Fancy costume was gradually distinguished from a "conservative" costume, worn mainly by the Northern Plains dancers.

However, irony and parody require, in order to be understood, a recognition of the underlying meanings. The Fancy outfit may have been a response to the demand of the non-native audience for Indian Dances. As one agent of Indian shows said, Indians participating in his show "taught that savagery has market value and is worth retaining" (Thiel, 1982: 19). The Dakota comparison between the new Fancy headdress of the 1920s and a "zulu hat" is telling. With the loss of their traditional roles as warriors and hunters that still dominated the imagery of their parent cultures, young men sought a different path to acquire prestige through theatrical performances (Wrone and Nelson 1973: 452; Radin 1920: 24-25). This meant that the effect produced on the spectator by the outfit (and the bustles) of the Fancy Dancer was defined in visual terms, responding to a white audience's gaze in demand for a "fetishized" image of the Indian (Albers, 1988: 136).

Many studies have focused on the importance of western ideology (Berkhofer, 1979; Pakes, 1985) in the processes that lead to the stereotyping of Indians and of the various developing technologies that popularized the feather-decked Indian (Stedman, 1982; Scherer, 1975; Albers, 1983). Albers contends that it is only when "Indians and their culture were fetishized" that "they became subject to the meanings and manipulating of alien

interests" especially those of "tourists searching for sentimental and vicarious links with the symbolic Indian (noble warrior, child of nature)" (1983: 147). This fascination of white audiences for Indian Dances and costumes is explained mostly in terms of a quest, by the dominant society, for an past untouched by the evils of "civilization" which contains both the threatening "savage look" and the more amiable exotic look of the Indian. Indian (male) dancers would have responded to this dominant ideology by playing on a certain number of signifiers that showed the contradictory nature of the stereotype and signalled their uncomfortable place in the dominant society (Blundell, 1985: 62). But the "romantic" discourse on Indians is not the only one that was held at the time.

In order to justify the organization of Indian dances, white promoters of pageants and fairs put forward the serious character of Indian exhibition dancing which were taken as "serious ethnological exhibition" (Young, 1981: 189). The romantic aesthetization of the past, the ethnographic ("scientific") quest for exotic customs and the political colonial discourse of Indian Agencies are all explicit (and sometimes contradictory) discursive practices that shaped the ways Indian male performers constructed their outfit in response to demands made by white audiences. But among these, there also is a discourse on the "morality" of the shows that troubled Indian agents at the turn of the century.

Concluding his forthcoming paper on prairie pageants in the Canadian West, Bruce Cox asserts: "the true significance of the prairie pageants is not only Indian defiance [against policies of DIA], but white complicity". One could wonder about the nature of this white "complicity". Among all the evils that were said to be caused by these first "powwows" by Indian Affairs officials of the time (they distracted Indians from their work and promoted meetings in which "old" religious customs were kept alive), the fact that Indians appeared decked in "war paints and feathers" worried Indian agents who feared for Canada's international image and for the morality of the spectators. One of the Indian Inspector reported that

"for some years past, almost every village town and city has persistently coaxed Indians to leave their homes and work to give exhibitions of old time customs, i.e. male Indians in almost nude attire, parading streets and other public places, giving so called war and other dances for the edification of wives and daughters of people who claimed to be civilized and refined" (Cox, forthcoming: 20).

In other words, the white public, at large, reacted positively to what was perceived as a display of "savages", to the dismay of Indian Agents and clergy responsible for the "moral" advancement of the new frontier. Yet, in the interstices of the moral condemnation, an implicit statement is made: the white spectators found a specular pleasure in the display of "male Indians in almost nude attire". This phenomenon was not confined to the Canadian West at the beginning of the century. It could certainly be argued that the popularity of "Indian shows" in the American west had, at least, the same underpinnings. One of the journalists reviewing an Oklahoma powwow calls the performers "bucks" who were "gaily dressed with feather and headgear" (Young 1981: 191). Pakes (1985: 8) quotes a similar "typical" comment that compares the "indian warrior dressed in all his finery" to "the peacock, the stag, and almost all animals where the male is lavishly decorated while the female is plain and unadorned".

To explain the settlers fascination for Indian shows in terms of the dominant ideology calls, therefore, for two different approaches, the second of which will be explored here. The first consists in analysing the "ways of seeing" developed in the non-native world towards Indians. This first approach which has been explored by Alloula (1986) for Algerian women shows that the act of colonization was not simply a coercive imposition of western ideological constructs upon the colonized but also resided in the "gaze" of the colonizer. The second is to analyse how "Indians" themselves responded to the "white gaze".

I would argue that it is the merging of former native symbolism and of new demands put to male Indian performers which produced the contemporary Feather costume. The parody of the former outfit, to be understood and to become a popular aesthetic form, had to be based on the knowledge of a former feather code that opposed the eagle to the turkey.

The Fancy Dancer's outfit undoubtedly marks a rupture in the historical continuity of dancers' regalia, but it also builds on the historically constructed meanings present in former regalia, playing on a feather code which strongly relied on the oppositions between the eagle and the turkey.

3.2 The case of the Fancy Dancer.

If the feathers of male gallinaceous birds are to be considered as encoding (male) sexual conquest in opposition to the eagle's morale of heroism (and military conquest), the popularity of the Fancy Dancer seems to indicate a shift from the pursuit of men's military glory to the pursuit of men's sexual prestige. Yet the Fancy bustle cannot be seen as the marker of a sexual male conquest which would have replaced the dominant image of the man-warrior. Many features of the Fancy Dancer's bustle have adopted characteristics that could be deemed "signs of femininity".

Fancy bustles are made of a considerable amount of "fluffy feathers" which are downy feathers of an unspecified origin. These fluffies decorate the semicircular base of rigid Turkey pointers which are nowadays replaced by wooden sticks. Fluffy feathers are also commonly found as head feathers for women, Traditional (in which case they are white) or Fancy. Their softness and their disposition in concentric semicircles curtail the brashness of the "hackles" and of their color. These "fluffies" which come from young birds or from the underside of the wings of older birds were called "breath feathers". The symbolism of these feathers may have been lost in the secular Fancy costume, but their role as decoration of the semicircular rigid base gives the Fancy Dancer, if not a feminine "touch", the appearance of a young fledgling bird.

By reversing the disposition of the "natural" turkey's tail (which points upward) and by eliminating the uprights (also called "horns"), the dancer also constructs his bustle in such a way that it denies any direct reference to the courting male bird. Bearing the marks of a glorified masculinity inasmuch as the rooster and the gobbler signify the courtship display of the male, the bustle of the Fancy Dancer curtails any reference to such an one-directional

identification. By doing so, the dancer combines (literally, "marries") in his outfit signs of his own masculinity with the markers of the other's sexual identity through socially constructed signs such as fluffies.

One could thus say that the Fancy Dancer outfit, which emerged from "exhibition Dancing" between 1900 and 1930, is a "feminization" of the former warrior's regalia. In terms of the dominant white society, it could signify the dis-empowerment of Indian men at the time. Yet, to restrict my interpretation to these mechanisms would not account for the dynamics of the process of meaning production within the powwow regalia and its popularity. Although present since the 1920s, the Fancy outfit became popular after the second World War, especially on the Northern Plains (Powers, 1966: 6). This popularity coincided with the gradual participation of women dancers in competitive powwows. The Fancy outfit evolved not only in relation to the demands and desires of the white audience but also in relation to all the dancing outfits of the powwow, especially to the women's regalia.

By appropriating signs of femininity, the Fancy Dancer enters into the play of seduction. To show others (women) his own desire of a union that is not yet realized, "materialised", that is called for but always deferred, the Fancy Dancer combines in his bustle and in his whole outfit signs of masculinity and signs of femininity. The fluffies are the sign of this "deference" that allow seduction to take place. But they also become the most cherished possessions of the seducer, inasmuch as they signify his success (Chevalier, forthcoming: 11). Hence their profusion.

The position of the bustles, at the back of the dancer, also contributes to the seductive effect of the Fancy Dancer outfit. To put something at the back means that one does not see the effect of what one wears except in the eyes of the other. To wear the bustle - an exclusively masculine ornament- at the back is to rely on the other's gaze which reflects the seductive effect produced by the ornament. It is one of the most common ways to show, to the other, one's desire to be desired while denying any control over the process. One could

discern, in the Fancy Dancers bustle, the narcissism of the actor-performer but also of the seducer. It is, in my opinion, due to the different levels at which this seduction takes place that the Fancy Dancer became the most popular dancer of powwows during the post-war period.

Because of this popularity of the Fancy Dancers as performers, women attempted to adopt the Fancy Dancer's outfit after the Second World war. Hatton (1986: 210) mentions the "intermittent occurrence" of the participation of women as male Dancers in powwows, drawing on his own observation as well as others' observations (Howard 1955: 217; 1965: 161). He concludes, however, that

"nothing in these references suggests a trend, scattered as they are through two decades over the entire Plains".

There thus seems to be an impossibility for women to wear the feather costume of male Fancy Dancers. For lack of historical knowledge of the female dancers' outfit it is difficult to assess how female categories of dancers emerged in the powwow. It seems, however, that the gradual participation of women in the dances of the early 1900s ended up in their participation in competition dancing, aligned on men's categories, with female Traditional and Fancy Dancers. This last category, whose outfit is a reworking of the former outfit of Eastern Plains farming tribes (Thiel 1982: 8), adopted a choreography similar to that of the male Fancy Dancers. Both male and female Fancy dancing is characterized by intricate and rapid foot steps, in contradistinction to the stately dance of female Traditional Dancers.

The Fancy women Dancer's dress is made of colorful and often shiny material compared to the buckskin or woolen dresses of Traditional female Dancers. Although Fancy female Dancers do not wear feathers, one could thus say that they are characterized, like the male Fancy Dancers, by an appearance that is highly theatrical.

The most distinctive trait of women Fancy Dancers is the embroidered shawl that wraps their shoulders and swirls with their rapid footsteps. This shawl (which in the Traditional female Dancers' category is worn folded on the right arm) is worn also in a fashion similar

to the bustle, i.e. at the back. Furthermore, the decorative patterns (embroidered, painted or applique) is often not the floral designs that one would expect. It very often consists of arrow-shaped, feather-shaped patterns or even in one example reported by Valda Blundell, the realistic depiction of arrows and a machine gun. Asked for the meaning of such a decoration, the woman answered that she wished to honor the men who were veterans, and in particular, her husband (Blundell, forthcoming: 14) (2). By doing so, she wears the distinct insignia of manhood not only in the meanings she attributed to the decoration but also in the distinct phallic shape of the objects depicted. By wearing men's "ornaments" on her shawl which is the sign of her femininity, the Fancy Women Dancer wears an outfit which is the exact structural reversal of the male Fancy Dancer's outfit and which produces the same seductive effect.

For women to adopt the male Fancy Dancer's outfit cannot thus "work", for the principle of seduction which relies on the appropriation and inscription on one's body of the signs of the other is destroyed by a mis-recognition of the "nature" of this body. Feathers are signs of the male body on which can be written the desire of the other. To wear them, a woman not only blurs the proper distance between the sexes but also is derisive of the serious play of seduction.

Does this mean, however, that the Traditional categories, male or female, lack any of this seductive quality seen in the Fancy outfits?

3.3. The case of the Traditional Dancer's bustle.

I would suggest that the "traditional" bustle made of eagle feathers was reworked in the light of the Fancy bustle, although a simpler interpretation would make it the direct heir of the Omaha or the Woodlands bustle described earlier. The Traditional Dancer's bustle marks the tension that exists between former meanings that were signified by the eagle feather and contemporary meanings that emerged in the "powwow culture".

The shape and appearance of bustles worn by male Traditional dancers are very individualized but their explicit meaning still refers to the symbolic eagle that we described

in the second part of this chapter. Yet, there is, in the making of the ornament, a deliberate accumulation of eagle feathers which verges on parody. Or, as one of the dancers said to me, he decorated his outfit and his bustle in order to make it "nearly ridiculous" while at the same time trying not to "go overboard". This parodic mood, often concealed under the seriousness of the eagle's imagery, is very similar to the parodic nature of the Fancy Dancer's when it emerged as a category in the Oklahoma Powwows of the 1920s.

The reshaping of the bustle shows the gradual adoption of features similar to the Fancy Dancer's bustle. The "wheel", which did not exist in the historical bustles, or was circular in the Sioux bustles of the 1900s, has become semicircular, in the Fancy fashion, adopting a shape similar to that of gallinaceous birds. In fact, explicit references are sometimes made to one species of bird that possesses an elaborate courtship display, similar in many ways to the turkey and rooster of the Fancy bustle: the Prairie Chicken. Its courtship display is characterized by the erection of long feather "ears" on each side of the neck, by the upright position of the tail which take the shape of a semicircular fan (Muller-Using, 1975: 466). The resemblance between the uprights of the "traditional" bustle and the "feather ears" of the male prairie chicken is striking.

It is difficult to find systematic evidence for this parallel, but in two instances, reference was made to this bird in the description of the Traditional Dancer's appearance. In a conversation about powwow dancing with the Head Dancer of the Odawa powwow, he pointed out that "western costumes were different; they looked like J.W.'s" (J.W. is a very popular traditional dancer who won all the powwows I went to), except for his headdress. His outfit was qualified as "awesome" (i.e. "it can be frightening"). But the dancer I was speaking to said that J.W. danced more like they did in the West, with energetic steps, a bit like a "chicken" ("stump, stump"). In western Canada, dances performed by Traditional Dancers are sometimes called "prairie-chicken dances".

Evoking the courtship display of the birds, the Traditional bustle has thus to be seen in the same manner as the Fancy Dancer's bustle. Yet, there are striking differences which have to be taken into account in order to perceive the importance of the ornament.

1) The uprights, which formerly were the stripped quills of eagle "pointers", are now enlarged and decorated with ornaments that are direct reference to men's sexual potency. Their tips are decorated with non dyed hackle feathers, with Bull tail's hair or horse hair, with claws or imitations of talons of predatory birds. Traditional bustles are never ornamented with "fluffies".

2) The meaning of eagle feathers, that are used in its construction, is commented upon by the Emcee, elders and dancers and the ceremonial aspects of the powwow confer to the feather a place that no other ornament possesses. It is to this meaning that we now turn.

3.4. The Eagle Feather in Contemporary Powwows.

The eagle feather (both brown, and black and white) is the focal point of two of the most solemn moments in the course of the powwow: the Ceremony of the Eagle Feather Retrieval, performed when a dancer has accidentally dropped an eagle feather from his regalia, and Grand Entry, when the powwow participants enter the powwow ground at the beginning of each "session". Brown and black and white feathers of the eagle are also used as rewards in "give-aways" when a member of the powwow participant wishes to honor other participants. During these three ceremonies, the meaning of eagle feathers is often commented on and explained by the Master of Ceremonies.

a) The Retrieval of the Eagle Feather

This ceremony consists of a dance performed around one or more eagle feathers fallen from the outfit of a male Traditional Dancer. This dance is carried out by four men, who are veterans, i.e. who have seen action during recent wars (from the Second World War to the Korean or Vietnam wars). The men who circle the feather are not necessarily Traditional Dancers that compete for prizes during the powwow; they can be (and often are) elders who had "opened" the powwow during Grand Entry and wear their Legion uniform.

Dancing around the fallen feather, they mimic the capture of the feather. Once the song has been repeated four times, at a specific point in the music, one of the veterans takes the feather from the ground and gives it back to its owner (the dancer who had accidentally dropped it). The latter has to "pay back" for the feather. He offers tobacco to the group of veteran dancers and the Drum who performed the "Honor Song" for the feather.

This short ceremony, which prevents any other activity from taking place while it is being performed is a solemn moment: spectators and participants must stand up and take off their hats. No photograph can be taken for "the eagle feather is the soul of a fallen warrior" and retrieving it is a "personal spiritual matter" (Emcee at the Six Nations Powwow). In a paper on this ceremony, B. Ladd explains why only veterans can touch the fallen feather: the feather "is the spirit of a fallen warrior and can only be matched in power by the same" (*Windspeaker*, June 19 1987: 8). The feather, in this particular instance, has the characteristics of things sacred: its "power" is so great that it is dangerous to handle. What then constitutes this power?

One answer to this question may lie in the meaning of eagle feathers since the middle of the Nineteenth century. As we have seen, the eagle feather was a war honor decoration bestowed on a warrior who had killed or wounded an enemy. The feather that falls literally represents the warrior who has fallen on the battle field. Eagle feathers stand for the lives of warriors killed by their wearer who is, himself, transformed into an eagle. In this case, the eagle is the predatory bird that symbolizes the warrior's power to kill and his sacrifice in combat. The eagle is the eagle of military prestige and its meaning can be defined as "residual" (Williams 1980: 40).

b) Grand Entry

This militaristic component of the role of the eagle imagery is enhanced by the role played by Veterans' Associations and the Legion as powwow organizers or/and participants in the other ceremonial aspect of the powwow, Grand Entry. During these opening ceremonies, flags are carried around the powwow ground by elders. The first man

to enter is a respected elder, dressed in a Traditional Dancer's outfit, carrying the Eagle Staff. After him come three veterans carrying the Canadian and American flags and a third which was, during the Six Nations Powwow, the Veterans' Association Flag, during the Odawa Powwow the British Flag. They are usually followed by the two "lead dancers", a man and a woman, both dressed in Traditional outfits. The other dancers march after them in the order mentioned earlier. After the fourth round, the flags are fixed on the outside poles of the "Drum Arbour", the Eagle Staff facing the entry (East). A "Flag song" is performed while everybody, spectators and dancers, stand up. Then the dancing proper can begin. These flags are retrieved in the same manner at the end of the afternoon session, and just before sunset during the evening session, even if the session is not yet finished.

This ceremony indicates a hierarchy of values, the first of which being militaristic worth embodied in the Eagle Staff (decorated with eagle feathers) and in the order in which the procession of dancers is organized. These elements seem to establish a clear dominance of masculine and militaristic symbolism in the ceremonial aspect of powwows. They underline the bravery of Native men in past wars while enhancing the role of Elders in collective life. If there is continuity between past and present, the valor of native warriors signifies that the present speaks of the military struggle waged against white encroachment of native land, but also of the participation of native soldiers in the last wars. Linked to this set of values and underlying it, is the contemporary political struggle which demands tribal solidarity and claims its share in the building of the Canadian nation. In his article on the origin of the powwow (Windspeaker, June 12 1987: 6), Boye Ladd asserts that

"For over 100 years tribal chiefs and war leaders signed and validated treaties under our nation's flag. In many ways these flags symbolize national unity. The various tribal flag songs speak of special war deeds in defense of our country and acknowledge that 'as long as the flag shall fly, Indian people shall live'".

This overlap between resistance to white encroachment and contemporary comment on negotiation for sovereignty was particularly obvious in the Odawa Powwow, where the British flag, a reminder of past treaties between the Crown and aboriginal Nations, was

carried during Grand Entry, together with the eagle staff and Canadian and American flag. But standing for the warrior in his past or present military glory, the eagle feather signifies the prestige obtained by Native men.

c) Give-aways

Eagle feathers figure in another solemn moment during the powwows I have attended: the give-aways. During give-aways, any participant in the powwow can honor someone or a group of peoples he/she considers worth of recognition and prestige by giving away presents to persons he/she chooses. The gifts bestowed on the peoples called by the "giver" (the person who desires to honor someone by "giving away") were household items, cash or eagle feathers. On one occasion an elder of the Six Nations, at the Odawa powwow, gave away eagle feathers to the powwow participants (dancers, drummers, other organizers). Women and men were given eagle feathers. An eagle feather, much more personal, was given in honor of a young Anishnabe (Ojibwa) woman who had just finished her period of seclusion after menarche. In this case her uncle gave her an eagle feather to wear in her headdress in recognition of her excellent behaviour during this "trying time of fast and danger". The object given away was not explicitly related to the seclusion itself. The giver said that by giving the feather he was honoring her attempt to live the traditions of her ancestors.

In both cases (which involved men and women), eagle feathers were tokens of recognition for anyone who has demonstrated his or her value for the community at large, whether as participants in powwows or in a way of life which enhances native identity. In both cases, the give-away emphasized the value of the actors as participating in the social and cultural continuity of native peoples' lives. People were rewarded for having left aside their personal well-being to the benefit of collective welfare and/or enjoyment.

In the origin legend of the Ceremony of the Eagle Feather Retrieval, one can read the same underlying meaning. "Over two hundred years ago", during a battle between two enemy tribes and the retreat of the invading war party that followed, a feather was lost by

one of the retreating warriors. The chief of the pursuing war party decided that "if these people [were] truly warriors and respect[ed] this feather they [would] come back to retrieve it". He thus sets an ambush for the fleeing war party. A few hours later, a group of enemy warriors came in search of the fallen feather and was captured; but, instead of slaying them, the chief gave a feast in honor of their bravery and stressed in his second speech the common worship for the eagle feather by all Indians. The author of this article concludes:

"If ancestors could stop an entire war to retrieve an eagle feather, it shouldn't be too hard to stop a powwow to do the same" (Ladd, Windspeaker June 19, 1987: 8).

The retrieval of eagle feathers stops the course of the powwow which is a time of enjoyment and individual competition. The chief that spared his enemies showed clemency, denying for himself and his warriors the pleasure of revenge and victory.

What then is the common denominator that articulates the semantic field occupied by the eagle feather in the ceremonial aspect of the powwow? What is there in common between military bravery, tribal solidarity, cultural integrity and clemency? I would suggest that the link between these elements is the strength to surpass oneself and the present, the ability to transcend one's individual interest. In this case, the dominant image in the symbolism of the eagle is the "soaring eagle", which lives in elevated places, in solitude. This image of the "soaring eagle" is pivotal in understanding that the eagle-of-war, bird of prey can also be the "eagle-of-life", portrayed as perched on the tree of life. In a brochure recently published by the Woodlands Cultural Center, the author says:

"To the Iroquois people the eagle is a guardian bird, perched on the summit of an enormous pine tree. The symbolic tree of peace achieved its great size from the power of the weapon of war, buried beneath its roots to stop bloodshed" (Native Headdresses, 1977: 1).

This image of the "perched" or soaring eagle is also used in a context that marks its moral value as the bird of "purity", of "cleanliness". At a give-away already mentioned, the uncle of a young woman told the spectators of a poem she had written about the eagle: if

she had the choice of being an animal, she would be an eagle which flies very high, away from the "garbage" on this earth; she would be able to fly and "feel free". This came after a speech which spelled out the cardinal sins of the White man who had destroyed "Mother-Earth" with "waste and nuclear war". Employed in the contemporary context, the eagle becomes the romantic symbol of a "pure", "heroic" past. This is why, "in the presence of many distinguished warriors", it is also demanded that powwow participants be pure, "maintaining a clean body and a spirit free of 'bad medicine' at powwows" (Ladd, 1987: 9). Alcohol and drugs are explicitly forbidden from the powwow ground.

The image of the perched eagle conveys the notion of transcendence. As symbol of protection and strength, the eagle feather signifies the triumph of courage over vanity and fear, of collective interest over individual desires, of continuity over immediacy. This does not mean, however, that these categories of analysis are clearly articulated in the subjective forms of social practices. What counts is that the eagle embodies the subject's struggle to accommodate his/her individual desires with societal imperatives. Inasmuch as the eagle marks the victory of the latter over the former, men and women receive eagle feathers as "rewards". Inasmuch as it signifies transcendence, eagle feathers are worn at the top of the body and go beyond sexual bodily differences, simulating the image of the eagle perched on the Tree of Life.

But note that the favorite eagle feather that is worn on the head is not the brown feather of the mature golden eagle, which is used in the making of ornaments placed on the rest of the body (lower back and sometimes shoulders, as epaulettes). It is the black and white feather of the sexually immature golden eagle that is placed on the head, mapping in the outfit of the powwow dancer the dialectical relationship between the head and the rest of the body. The top of the head is the only place where men and women can wear the same feather ornaments, because the ornament is not sexually "active". What is signified below is the domain of play on sexual differentiation, represented in the bustle.

4. The Conqueror and the Conquered.

Each of the feather ornaments worn in powwow regalia drew their meanings from their inscription in a gendered code. How, then, can we articulate what could be called the political meanings of the eagle feather with the gendered encoding of feathers?

With the disappearance of warfare practices in the Plains, the former opposition between turkey feathers and eagle feathers was re-interpreted in the light of new practices such as exhibition dancing, pageants and rodeo shows. Because the new social order in the Plains put the Indian men under the gaze of white audiences who "craved" to see Indians appearing in public "with little on them except paint and feathers" (Cox, forthcoming: 16-17), it seems that the symbolism of the turkey took precedence in the building of the new dancing outfit. The participation of male dancers in "shows" created a split between dancers wearing "Fancy" costumes and others wearing "Straight" outfits (Traditional Dancers are sometimes called Straight Dancers). The first became part of a "strategy of appearances", i.e. of seduction, using an increasing amount of feathers that signified their position as performers, in a context of social enjoyment where courtship and the seduction of women counted.

Masculinity was not built any longer around signifiers defining men as part of the labour of war and hunt but as part of the "labour" of seduction. The bustle of the Fancy Dancer reformulated and translated the former military heraldry that glorified the role of the men as warriors in terms of a sexual conquest. The gobbler, the rooster and the prairie chicken are the forms on which the contemporary bustle is constructed, expressing both the sexual potency of these male birds and their reproductive might. Yet, in order to seduce, male performers recognize the power that women possess over men, that is the power to desire them without which they would not be "men". The Fancy bustle which simulates a conquest has to bear the signs of being itself conquered: there is in the Fancy Dancer's bustles, an appropriation of signs of femininity. The male conqueror is conquered by the "audience" he wants to seduce, whether it is women or the audience at large.

The eagle feather which, in the 19th century outfits of male dancers and warriors, proclaimed their prestige and power, kept its symbolic function as a war honor decoration due to and used by contemporary soldiers. In the contemporary ideological production of Native peoples, in their "symbolic competition" with the dominant ideology, the eagle feather becomes the privileged signifier of "Indianness", fixed in an exegesis that glorifies an "heroic past". This mechanism, which consists in fixing in one signified the multiplicity of past meanings, attempts to close the gap between the contemporary Indian and the Indian of the nineteenth century, the sacrificial warrior. This is done in terms of an ethic that privileges the negation of bodily and affective drives which denies the disempowerment of Indian males by the colonizing gaze of the conqueror. The supremacy of the ultimate hunter/warrior, the eagle, is then signified by the hierarchical ordering of dancers and its ceremonial power, which parallels the position of the eagle and gallinaceous birds in the ecological chain: eagles prey on ground birds. The resistance to the "white gaze" is expressed by the explicit prohibition of photograph taking during the ceremonial use of eagle feathers.

Whereas, in the nineteenth century, the warrior could wear at the same time turkey, crow and eagle feathers, the contemporary "warrior" cannot wear these feathers together. If they did, the proper distance between the sexes would not be maintained as would not be recognized the distinction between the conqueror and the conquered. Hence, I would suggest, a display of signs on the Traditional bustles that asserts the masculinity of the "Traditional" and denotes a will to dissociate oneself from the "fancy", which is too "seductive". This distinction operated from within the code of feathers shows a radical split between what is considered serious, or "straight" and what is considered "fancy". It also shows that the political discourse cannot be "touched" by the discourse of seduction, desire and pleasure.

It is argued here that this dissociation is not inherent to a sexual ethic akin to the judeo-christian discourse of sexual purity but to the relative position of Indian males in the whole

context in which their regalia was constructed after the conquest. The male Traditional Dancer's elimination of any signs of femininity from the feather ornaments has to be understood in the light of a history that disempowered Indian men in general. It is then no wonder that the fiercest of attacks against stereotypes of Native peoples bears on the most universal of the signifier of Indianness: the unqualified "feather", for it is also the signifier of a (possible) male defeat.

It is thus also not surprising that the crow, which stood for the victorious hunter-warrior, which gorged itself after the conquest, has been silenced in the contemporary feather symbolism. The mediation that the crow operated between sexual conquest and military conquest has become "dangerous" in as much as the survival of the group is seen as endangered by this mediation. The eagle feather, that can be retrieved only by men that are "pure of mind and body", that stands for a human subject living in a world that has not be touched by the debasement of "pollution", is in stark contrast with the crow that thrives on garbage. In the past, feasts were celebrations coming after the hunt and war. Nowadays the absence of conquest, which, in social terms, means the difficulties of life on a reserve (unemployment, high levels of alcoholism and drug addiction, broken relationships) has turned the image of the feasting crow into a symbol that endangers the "reconquest" by native men of their place in society.

The reshaping of eagle feather ornaments according to the Fancy Dancer's bustle attests, however, of the contradictions within the political discourse conveyed by the male Traditional Dancer. The definition of masculinity in terms of sexual conquest is not the prerogative of the Fancy dancer. The male Traditional Dancer also speak a language of desire but is caught in a double bind. He is both "awesome" and at the limit of parody.

The central position of the eagle feather is contested by the presence of other male dancers and the changes in categories of dancers the past few years indicates that it is challenged. The recent development of the Grass Dancer's outfit is, in my view, a place where the "feather" as symbol of Indianness is questioned. The name of "Grass Dancer"

itself, which is a revival of the name given to the ceremonial dance at the origin of the powwow, confers to this category an authority and prestige that the Fancy Dancer lacks. Its place as second to the Traditional Dancer during Grand Entry also indicates its role as a possible challenger to the political economy of signs within the feather code (4).

In contrast with the profusion of feathers worn by Fancy and Traditional Dancers, the Grass Dancer only wears downy feathers at the tip of his headdress. His outfit consists of long yarn fringes that swirl and whirl like the shawl of the women Fancy Dancer (which are also fringed with yarn or chainette). I would suggest that the growing popularity of this recent regalia challenges the predominance of the Traditional dancer by adopting the aesthetic forms predominant in the women's costume. The contemporary Grass Dancer has the name of the former ceremonial dance that is considered to be at the origin of the powwow (5). The name itself comes from the bunch of grass that Omaha Dancers (who did not all wear the "crow belt") stuck in their belt to represent the scalps that they had taken during a battle (Fletcher and Laflesche 1911:461). These scalps were the property of their female relatives to whom they were given upon the warriors' return. Omaha and Plains warriors' garments were decorated by strands of hair, furnished by their female relatives (id: 448). The contemporary costume of the Grass Dancer bears the traces of its association with femininity, although it is not made of "grass" or hair any longer. But its long yarns of wool echo the long fringes of the dresses of women and the shawls they wear.

As we said earlier, the structural opposite of the bustles of male outfits, is the shawl that women wear either folded (Traditional Dancers) or open on the shoulders (Fancy Dancers). Thiel (1982c: 8) notes that eastern plains women included "shawls of wool rainbow selvage trade cloth decorated with abstract floral bead embroidery or ribbon applique". In old photographs of "Round Dances" (i.e the social dances in which women participated at the turn of the century), women wore very large shawls that look like trade blankets (6). Shawls were trade item in the nineteenth century (Koch, 1977: 81-82). I

would thus suggest that the shawls of women's regalia are trade items to which was associated the role of women as "producers of durable goods", in a society where the division of labor between the sexes defined gendered meanings as much as sexual identity (Whitehead, 1981).

Although it would be possible to associate the wearing of shawls to a more universal symbolism of the womb and of the house or tent which were the property of women, no semantic evidence confirms this view. Rather, in my opinion, it is precisely their place as trade items that makes them signs of femininity. They constituted the rewards of female labour and brought prestige to women who did not acquire prestige and glory in warfare and hunting but as skilled craftwomen (Whitehead, 1981 ; Albers and Medicine, 1983; Schneider, 1983). Shawls as signifying femininity are signs of female prestige, as feathers were of male prestige. The involvement of men and women in the powwow reworked the wearing of shawls within the female costume. The open shawl of the Fancy female Dancer is seductive and can bear the signs of sexual mediation whereas the Traditional female Dancer shawl is worn folded and plain, signifying its parallel position to the eagle feather. The male Grass outfit that bears the signs of a new mediation between gender, to the point of dispossessing itself of all signs of masculinity, is the aesthetic form that, literally, "defeathers" the Indian.

NOTES

(1) Two kinds of eagles are used to decorate outfits: the golden eagle (*Aquila Chrysaetos*) and the Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus Leucocephalus*). The first, when mature has a brown plumage and is sometimes called in the ethnographic literature "the brown eagle". When immature, the feathers of its tails are black and white, and Fletcher, in her description of the Hako, calls it the "white eagle". The Bald Eagle has a brownish plumage when immature and becomes achromatic with age. Its head becomes white while the rest of his feathers turn dark brown, almost black. This eagle is the heraldic bird of the United States. The

analysis presented in this thesis does not deal with syncretism in the symbology of eagles in North American native cultures. This would require a study in itself and considerably more fieldwork.

(2) There is, in this decoration, a play on historical meanings, and the mixing of the arrows with the machine gun signifies that there is a conscious reworking of past signifiers into contemporary ones, as Valda Blundell pointed out (1989: 14).

(3) A comparison between the use of feathers in western society and in the powwow regalia can be instructive in understanding the reworking of the feather code in the contemporary Fancy and Traditional bustles. In western society, feathers are usually worn by women, except in transvestite theatrical performances. They are worn, in fact, in a manner very similar to the powwow bustle, i.e. at the back, in a "bustle", during cabaret shows. I would suggest that the feathers of the women dancers obey the same code as the bustle of powwow dancers. They both stand for the plumage of male peacock and other birds and for the glorification of a femininity found in the "fluff" of these feathers (hence the use of the fluffy and voluminous feathers of the ostrich). By inscribing on their bodies (especially at the lower back) signs of femininity, the women dancers dissimulate, obliterate the relations of power between genders in a western patriarchal society. At the same time, the gaze of the men that recognize the inscription on the female body of their own sexual power re-enacts the appropriation by men of the female body. Hence the seduction of female cabaret dancers that reproduces and comforts the power of men in western patriarchal societies.

(4) In a leaflet advertising the 1987 Powwow of Saddle Lake (Alberta), the Grass Dancer comes first.

(5) The only papers on the history of the contemporary Grass Dance outfit are Howard's study of the "Northern Style Grass Dance Costume" published in 1960 and Johnson's paper on the Cree Grass Dance costume (1972). Since then, the "grass costume" has changed considerably. For Howard, the Grass Dance outfit of the Plains "became the dress

of the young active, dancers rather than the one utilizing the crow belt and shoulder bustle"... "It is more or less the equivalent of the Oklahoma Fancy dancer" (18).

(6) This usage of blankets by men on ceremonial and festive occasions has disappeared for reasons that have not (yet) been documented.

CHAPTER 5.

Semiological analysis of fur and shell ornaments.

In the preceding chapter, feathers were analysed as bearers of gendered meanings. With the drastic changes that occurred in the first twenty or thirty years of this century, the former symbolism of feather ornaments, which marked male prestige in the military and political arenas, was renegotiated and reworked into a different symbolic system within the male Dancer's outfit. This process involved a new direction that supplanted military heraldry and emphasized sexual conquest through the enhancement of symbols of male sexual potency combined with signs of sexual mediation. Categories of dancers that previously did not exist as such emerged and the meanings of feather ornaments were reinterpreted in the light of the position of power that they conferred to their wearer. The following chapter will use the same analytical tools in order to unravel the symbolism of furs present in the Powwow Dancers' outfits and will, as well, examine the changes that occurred in the wearing of furs between the last century and 1987. Whereas the meaning of feathers was reworked through a rearrangement in the male costume, we will see that a redistribution of furs occurred in female and male costume.

While my study of feathers relied on a vast body of anthropological literature describing their use in former outfits and on "arts and crafts" magazines explaining the construction of feathered ornaments, data on the use of furs in former and contemporary dancers' outfits are scantier. As a result, for ornaments worn in the past, I had to rely on visual data, i.e. on old photographs taken by anthropologists or photographers at the end of the last century (see, for example, old photographs reproduced in American Crafts and Culture Magazine, in The American Indian Hobbyist, in Whispering Wind. Another publication, Powwow, Vol 1, compiled by Adolph and Beverly Hungry Wolf and published by Good Medicine Books, B.C., no date). On the other hand, the corpus of tales and myths concerning fur-

bearing animals seems to be much more developed and systematic than mythological data regarding birds. This is why it is at the same time more difficult to know with certainty the material changes that occurred in the past one hundred years, and easier to "unearth" the symbolic meanings of fur-bearing animals in the parent cultures of contemporary native peoples.

The meanings of fur, in contrast at least with the explicit symbolism of eagle feathers, are implicit and have to be inferred from empirical observation and structural analysis. When asked about their fur ornaments, dancers answered that they were wearing them because "they liked it" or indicated to me the nature of the fur. On one occasion a male Traditional Dancer told me how his fur ornament was acquired but did not elaborate on the possible meaning of his otter necklace. This silence surrounding the significance of fur is compounded by the fact that many but not all dancers wear fur ornaments.

Still, some broad generalizations can be made in the case of furs. In the last part of the 19th Century, when woolen coats and blankets were very common furs were used as ornaments for festive or/and ceremonial occasions. This chapter will thus focus on furs used not as clothing but as ornaments. The second generalization concerns the geographical distribution of furs so defined. Broadly speaking,

"men's cloth and fur outfits represent a more eastern style while feathers symbolize more western regalia, and among women many cloth dresses are eastern while buckskin dresses are western" (Young, 1981: 336).

This East-West distinction can be traced back, actually, to a more ancient division between Northern and Southern traditions. According to Brassier (1976: 30-31), Northern traditions have their prehistoric origins "in a nomadic hunting complex", centered in the northern forests of Canada and Siberia, "carried out by Algonkian-speaking peoples", while the Southern traditions, "based upon sedentary horticulture", were carried out by Iroquoian and Siouan speakers and originated in the Ohio-Mississippi region. In the Canadian context, however, the horticultural peoples were still quite reliant on wild food and

hunting. The Northeastern cultural area was characterized by an art style which had "a magic quality" and "played a role in the practice of shamanism". Southern Traditions were characterized, among other things, by an extensive use of feathers in headdresses and robes, by the use "of the roached headdress made of red-dyed deer hair... engraved shell gorgets, shell beads, tubular copper beads" (id: 31). Migrations, trade and intermarriage, political affiliations and rivalries affected the seemingly clear distribution of these areas and spread aesthetic practices among non-related tribes. As a result, many traits were shared by enemies such as the Ojibwa and the Sioux, reinforced in the late eighteenth century "by the immigration of many population groups from the Northeastern forests and the Great Lakes" (Brasser, 1976: 32). This is why, while unravelling the symbolism of furs in powwow costumes, I will call upon the body of anthropological literature dealing more extensively with hunting cultures of the Northeast. Moreover, the area of the powwows considered in this study, entices me to deal more exclusively with the cultural area where they are taking place, while being aware of the diversity of origins of tribal distinctions.

Lastly the difficulty involved in the study of furs and their symbolic meanings can be traced to the "positionality" of the researcher herself. In the Euro-american culture, to which I belong, a wealth of meanings is attributed to fur. From S. Masoch's "La Venus en fourrure" and the connotations of fur blankets and rugs in erotic literature to the contemporary protests against the use of fur coats and the "inhumanity" of trapping by western do-gooders, fur, in Euro-American thinking, is loaded with meanings from which it is difficult to escape. This obstacle, in my opinion, can be bypassed by using our sensitivity to furs and hunting in order to see what can be validly brought together in native and non-native interpretations of furs. In any case, I would explicitly put forward that furs are the object of universal symbolic appeals (although expressed in different manners) for the following reasons which will pervade the arguments of this chapter:

(1) In order to obtain furs, an animal has to be killed and skinned, which is not necessarily the case for feathers or quills. Pelts come from animals that have been hunted.

It is my opinion that it is not so much the killing of the animal which triggers the imagination than the skinning. In the case of the bear, for instance, North American Indian comments and texts relate its skinned body to the human body (Hallowell 1928; Dunning 1959). This act of "skinning" an animal consists in divesting it from its protection and ornament in order to appropriate its vesture. There is, in this movement, a moment of crucial importance inasmuch as, by covering oneself with the animal's skin, we enter into "la peau d'un autre". The person who covers him/herself with the skin/fur of an animal goes through the ceremony of an "investiture", as was the case with the ermine robe of the French or English Monarchs.

(2) Furs, in our western culture, have become the symbol of wealth, prestige and status. More exactly, almost exclusively worn by women, fur have become the symbols of their husband's wealth. We will see that furs, too, in Native parent societies were associated with wealth. Western society's quest for furs in the past centuries has greatly influenced the way furs were regarded in North American Indian societies, at least in the regions whose economy was dominated for a century or so by the fur trade. In order to unravel this other side of the meaning of fur, however, a closer look at their association with shells is necessary. Indeed, if furs are signs of wealth, they become so in association with shells, with which they are invariably connected, not only in the religious practices and beliefs of the parent cultures of contemporary peoples but also, more literally, in the organization of fur and shell ornaments in the powwow regalia.

We will come back to these two points later, while unravelling the meanings of fur ornaments in contemporary powwow outfits. But first, how were and are the furs used and displayed?

1. The Use of Furs as Former and Contemporary Ornaments

At the beginning of the reservation era, furs were still worn as everyday and festive ornaments only by men. These furs were most of the time furs of animals belonging to the

mustelid family, i.e. otters, mink, weasels, skunks, marten and ermine. The fact that the most used furs were mustelids' furs directs our attention to the possible meaning that these animals held for pre-reservation and early reservation native peoples. Before going into this part of the study, a brief description of the way these furs were worn is necessary.

Many photographs taken by professional photographers at the end of the nineteenth century show that men used to wrap their braids with otter fur: "The hair was sometimes braided in two braids and a long roll of otter fur was attached to each braid, almost concealing the hair. This was worn only on festive occasions" (Densmore, 1929: 39). It seems that women's braids so ornamented were a rare occurrence. One such photograph, taken at the end of the 19th century, shows a Coeur d'Alene woman in front of her Tipi, and qualifies her as a "well-to-do" woman (Niethammer, 1977: 56).

Turbans or hats of fur were very common. Among them, turbans made of otter fur (illus. 11) had a very wide distribution among the Plains and Prairie tribes, as well as among the most Eastern Woodland tribes (Feder, 1961:84). It consisted of a cased skin or a flat skin of an otter; the head of the animal was inserted into its tail vent in order to create the cylindrical shape of the turban and the tail was left hanging on either side or at the back as ornament. Sometimes, the tail was cut off. The turban as well as the tail were ornamented with ribbon applique, or beadwork (Koch, 1977:96-99; Feder, 1961; Skinner, 1921: 109).

Dancers and warriors of the Plains and Woodland areas also wore otter fur as breastplates which were known as "Otters" and studded with "concha" i.e round disks of shiny, white or pinkish shell or round trade mirrors (illus. 12). A variation of this full breastplate was a bandoleer of otter fur, decorated in the same manner. Both the turban and the "otter" were worn exclusively by men. Otter fur which was one of the "most widely distributed and used furs" besides bison hide (Koch, 1977: 42), was also used to make "chokers" which were common on the Prairies (id, 45).

On the northwestern parts of the Plains, stoat skins and weasel skins entered into the composition of "weasel shirts" in ceremonial occasions, and the sun bonnets of the warriors had their sides, above the temples, decorated with ermine skins. Skunk skins were also worn by Sioux (Koch, 1977: 44) and Chippewa (Densmore, 1913: 86). Men also carried unadorned pouches made of the skin of fur-bearing animals of the mustelid family (illus.13).

In contrast to nineteenth Century regalia, when ornamental furs were worn exclusively by men, contemporary powwow regalia are ornamented with furs for both men and women. Yet, there are two categories of dancers who never wear fur: the Grass Dancers and the Jingle Dress Dancers. Fancy male Dancers wear leggings made of the skin of mountain goats which are symbols of the Dancers' agility. Only the Traditional Male Dancers and the Traditional and Fancy Female Dancers wear furs of the kind described above.

Some Traditional Men Dancers wear the "otter" described earlier, in the shape of a fur necklace studded with mirrors. Three Traditional male Dancers wore otter turbans during the powwows I have attended. These turbans consisted of an otter skin surmounted by a short roach on which were attached two feathers of the immature eagle feathers. In one occurrence the tail of the otter was left hanging at the back and was decorated by a lining of blue and red cloth, on which were pinned silver brooches (illus. 14). Finally, otter fur is also used for wrapping the "uprights" (or "horns") which stick out of the bustle as described in the previous chapter. Generally speaking, the use of otter fur has not much changed since the end of last century in the male outfit. There are, however, two important exceptions:

(1) Weasel and ermine furs are very rarely seen on the regalia of Traditional Male Dancers, at least in the powwows of Ontario. Yet these furs had, in the nineteenth Century, definite meanings. Densmore (1913: 63) observed that Chippewa used to have "war shirts" fringed with narrow strips of weasel skins because "the weasel is a hunter, a wanderer and

a warrior". The skunk tail that hung at leg or arm band level and were worn as war-honors in the dress of some of Densmore's informants (1913: 86) has equally disappeared from the Dancers' regalia.

(2) The absence of otter fur wrapping the braids of men can be easily explained: most men wear their hair short but even in the case of dancers who wear their hair long I have not seen any ornament of this kind.

On the contrary, female dancers wear furs as hair ornament: pelts of mink (black, tawny or white) and marten are used to lengthen the braids. Attached to them with elaborate beaded brooches and barrettes or a round white shell, these pelts fall to waist level and even further. They are generally, especially in the case of Fancy Female Dancers, worn hanging over the breast but swirl with the rapid steps of these dancers. Finally, the pointed head and the paws of the animal have very often not been removed from the pelt.

The following table summarizes the use of furs and their redistribution since the early days of photographic record:

Table. 2: Distribution of fur ornaments in male and female regalia

	19th century	1987
MEN	otter	otter
	ermine and weasel	(ermine, rarely)
	skunk	
WOMEN	(otter, rarely)	marten, mink

Two categories of animals belonging to the same species (mustelidae) are structurally opposed along gender lines. Otter, worn by men, is in structural opposition with marten/mink. These three fur bearing animals constitute a code for gender differences. In a

first part of this analysis I will focus on analogies and contrasts between the animals that constitute the zoological code and the specific link that associate masculinity with otter and femininity with marten/mink. The second part of the analysis will attempt to answer this question, keeping in mind that one cannot dissociate these fur ornaments from the entire outfit of dancers.

2. Otter, Mink and Marten.

Otter, Mink, Marten and Ermine belong to the same family, the mustelids (family Mustelidae). One could thus wonder about the traits that these animals have in common, traits that could have been recognized as similar in the whole species by keen observers.

2.1. A Snake-like Animal

Except for the badger and the skunk, which also belong to the same species, all mustelids are recognizable by the shape of their body. Otter, mink and marten, as well as ermine, possess a long, slender body which allows them either to be very good swimmers (as for the mink and the otter) or to scrawl unnoticed on the ground. They have short legs and are very swift animals. This quality gives them a locomotion akin to that of snakes, with which they often share a diet of rodents. That this snake-like appearance was noted by native peoples is confirmed by Skinner's account of Menomini hunting bundles (1913: 134-136). While the bundle was being made, fur-bearing animals approached Nanabush, the culture hero and trickster of most Algonkian peoples. Among them were the weasels

"who are mighty hunters, who run softly like snakes through the grass in summer and in winter under the snow, they who are always sure of the game when they go hunting" (Skinner, 1913: 134).

In a word, in action, they are the exact opposite of birds, especially those raptors which soar up high in the sky, like eagles. Woodlands and Plains mythology was characterized by the relentless war that the Thunderbirds and their representatives waged against the Underwater world which was represented by animal-spirits "characteristically sleek of

body and long of tail" (Hamell, 1987: 78). These "long-tailed amphibious beings" were represented as large, horned under-water panthers in the Great Lake region where they were called "Misshipeshu" (Phillips, 1987: 61). But this mythical master of the underwater-world was not the only one.

"The spiritual masters of the buffalos, otters, beavers, reptiles, fishes and several other animals also inhabited the underwater world" (Brasser, 1976: 25)

Otters, mink and marten, who are all "sleek of body and long of tail" belonged to the underworld and were opposed to the "sky-beings" which have been analysed in the preceding chapter. That otter, mink and marten can be considered as "underworld" creatures" is seen in their habitat. All these mustelids live in dens that are found, above ground, in hollow trees, rock crevices, beneath stumps and roots or, in the case of the otter in a semi-aquatic environment.

2.2. A Hunter

The second common feature of the mustelids is their hunting habits. They store their prey and will finish hunting only when no more live prey is found in the area. This habit of most mustelids has given them a bad reputation as "blood-thirsty" animals not only in Europe (Herter 1975: 43) but also among native peoples as indicated earlier by Densmore's Ojibwa informant (1913: 63). This is confirmed by Skinner's report on Menomini hunting bundles, which characterizes the mink as "always a successful hunter" which "returns quickly from the hunt with food" (Skinner 1913: 135); this is why its pelt was used to wrap the tiny bow and arrows that were used in propitiatory hunting ceremonies (id: 135). Furthermore, "many mustelids display behavior toward enemies which has anthropomorphically been labeled bravery" (Herter, 1975: 43). Ermine, for instance, "do not wait for the enemy to approach but attack themselves" (id). These features, which are most pronounced in the ermine and the weasel explains the role of ermine fur attached as fringes on the shirts, leggings and war bonnets of Plains Indian outfits, in the pre-

reservation era. They signify the warrior's exploits. Ermine and weasels have thus come to symbolize the perfect hunter and warrior who does not miss its prey.

2.3. From water to Tree.

We have noted above that the habitat of the mustelids can on the whole be defined as "underground". There are nevertheless differences between each species. On the continuum between water and land, the otter represents the most aquatic of the mustelids. Clumsy on land, it swims faster than man and is a powerful diver. Furthermore, its swimming is characterized by undulations reminiscent of fish or water serpents. Instead of "paddling", as most mammals do, it uses its streamlined body to advance in the water and its powerful tail as a rudder. On the contrary, marten are mostly arboreal animals: they can " leap more than 3 m from branch to branch in pursuit of a chipmunk" (Herter, 1975 :57). In the spectrum of these animal habitats we would thus have:

If, as we have said earlier, male dancers wear mostly otter but also ermine, and women wear mink, ermine and marten, we can establish that the distance between men and women is symbolized by the distinction between water and tree, below ground level and above ground level. Hunting practices of native hunters of the 18th and 19th century show that women, who in the winter trapping camps stayed "around" the winter lodge, used to trap animals like marten and rabbits (Thompson, in Van Kirk, 1987: 382)) whereas men went for days at a time outside the immediate range of the lodge, to hunt beaver , otter and

other aquatic animals such as the muskrat (1). This distribution of prey according to gender is significant in as much as it defines the position of men and women toward animals that are living in environments that were, themselves, pervaded with sexual meanings, the underwater world being associated with the female domain and the upper world with male (Brasser, 1976: 25). Hunting otter and hunting marten place men and women in a position whereby each sex "hunts" the other. Does this mean that one has to consider Otter as a sign of femininity and Marten as a sign of masculinity which would have been appropriated respectively by men and by women? To answer this question requires that we delve further into the whole symbolic system of these fur-bearing animals.

Otter, mink, marten and ermine all belong to the paradigmatic list of "underworld beings". The difference, however, between semi-aquatic and terrestrial and arboreal animals is also relevant. In this case otter belongs to another list including other aquatic animals like the beaver, the muskrat or even aquatic birds. In the following pages I intend to see how these two semantic fields are articulated in the world view of the parent culture of the Woodlands and Eastern Plains areas. Encompassing these differences, however, the fact that these animals were both hunters and hunted, is of capital importance to understand how they function symbolically as fur ornaments.

3. Otter and his Words.

While in all past and contemporary practices of Woodlands and Eastern Plains nations, feathers were and are associated with military or social practices that foster prestige, the otter has entered into religious and shamanistic practices since, at least the middle of the 18th century until the disappearance of the Midewiwin Society of the Ojibwa, in the 1930s (Vecsey, 1983: 188). Describing the otter fur turbans worn by Menomini men, Skinner links it to the complex set of religious and ceremonial practices of the Medicine Dance Society, which had spread to the Plains but was closely linked to the Midewiwin.

"The most valued variety is a fillet of dark otter fur. Not only does it present a handsome appearance, but the connection of the otter with the sacred rites and original myth of the *Medicine Dance Society*, and its own supposed supernatural powers, influence the natives in their preference" (Skinner, 1921: 109).

Unravelling the meaning of the otter and the use of its fur leads us to consider its former connections with the complex set of religious concepts of the *Midewiwin*. This is not, however, the only mythological "role" taken by the otter. Otter appears in a group of myths describing the emergence of the world as we know it, the earth-diver myth (motif A 812 in Thompson, 1966). Furthermore, in the *Midewiwin* and in the usage of otter furs, Otter is closely associated with shells. By interpreting these three components present in the semantic field of the otter I hope to be able to see how the otter enters into a gendered symbolism.

3.1 Otter and the Midewiwin

The *Midewiwin* Society has been extensively studied by anthropologists since the end of the 19th Century and a wealth of information is available on its practices and functions. For the purpose of this research, however, only the elements that pertain to the otter will be considered. An historical contextualization of the emergence of the *Midewiwin* could yet be fruitful in order to define its functions.

Originally a specifically Ojibwa Ceremony, it appeared as such during and after their migration to the Southern shores of Lake Superior, at the end of the 17th Century (Hickerson, 1962; Vecsey, 1983: 174). By the end of the eighteenth century it had spread to the South and West, to Siouan speaking peoples (Radin, quoted in Vecsey, 1983: 174) under different names usually translated as "Grand Medicine Society". According to Vecsey "no suggestion of the full *Midewiwin* complex appeared until the nineteenth century" (id: 176). It seems that former rituals called "Black Dance or Pawwaw Dance" (J. Carver, 1781:270-278), performed to secure the collaboration of animals, were reinterpreted in the light of the new economic and social situation which made the *Midewiwin* a central institution for the recovery of health and social well-being,

undermined since the first contacts with European traders (Brasser, 1976: 27-28). Despite its departure from traditional rituals (systematized ritualism and hierarchical structure of a priesthood opposed to a more individual quest for protective animal spirits for hunting), Hickerson (1962: 402-406) has shown that the Midewiwin Society perpetuated many traits of the Ojibwa world view. Among them was its respect for the animal spirits which were the founders of the Midewiwin among which Otter figures prominently.

The ritual centered on the initiation of male or female candidates who, for a substantial fee, were brought into the society after being taught the origin myths of the society. During the ritual, the foundation myth was reenacted by the candidate. After purification rituals in the sweat lodge placed at the eastern entrance of the Mide lodge, the candidate "passed through" the lodge to emerge at its western end. This initiatory journey, called "the path of life" (Vennum, 1978: 757) included a dramatic and central moment when the initiate was "shot" and then revived by the mide priest. This was done by blowing "into" the candidate a shell, called Megis or mikiss in Ojibwa or Kona'pamik' in Menomini, through the device of a bag, often made of an otter skin. Hoffman (1896: 262) depicts the Mide bag in the following manner:

"One bag of this character , made of an otter skin, was provided with a clever contrivance: by pressing onto a small rubber ball within the body, the air was forced through the tube into the mouth, where a small whistle had been attached. The sound resembled closely the voice of the otter, and the credulous firmly believed that the sound was the voice of the shadow of that animal... These bags are used for holding various parcels of mystic remedies and charmed objects employed by the shamans in the profession of incantations and exorcism."

The origin of the use of otter bags in the ceremonies of the Midewiwin is given by Densmore (1929: 93):

"The custom of carrying these bags and the manner of their use was derived from a tradition connected to the origins of this society. This tradition relates that the four Mide manidos with the colors of the dawn painted on their forehead came out of the eastern sky, each carrying a live otter in their hand. They used these otters as the Mide bags are now used in ceremonies of the society, and by this means they restored to life a young man who had been dead eight days."

The otter thus figure as a central character in the Midewiwin Society rituals, first as ritual paraphernalia, second as the "bringer" of the ritual itself, as the agent of the spirits that initiated the life restoring ceremonies. Although it is obvious that these two functions are closely linked, let us, for the sake of clarity, deal with each separately for the moment.

a) The mide bag

Otter skins are not the only material used in the manufacture of mide bags. In his account of the Black Dance or Pawwaw Dance, in which the Mide Rituals can be easily recognized, Carver notes that the bags used by the participants are made of otter or marten (Carver, 1781: 277). Later Mide bags of the 19th century consisted of weasel, mink, wildcat paw or bear paw and rattlesnake skin and even owl skin (Densmore, 1929: 93; Hoffman 1896: 83-84). Hoffman specifies that it was never made of fish (id: 261).

A study of this paradigmatic list of materials shows that each animal used to make the Mide bags is characterized by the fact that it belongs to two different strata of the cosmos that are sometimes combined with the seasonal cycle of renewal. While able to function as terrestrial animals, mink and otter are aquatic mammals. A very swift runner on the ground, marten is also an arboreal animals. In the case of the bear, to which we will come back later, ethnographic accounts place it as an "underworld animal" (Densmore, 1929: 87). According to Hallowell (1928), what makes the bear such a central figure in Northern American hunting culture is his hibernating habit, where it disappears in a den (i.e. underground) during the winter to be revived at the beginning of spring. The bear, in this case, would be a symbol of cyclical renewal like the weasel which changes color with the seasons, and the snake which sheds its skin without dying. The latter has been considered, in many cultures, as the symbol of rebirth and of eternity. The owl, although a bird, is a nocturnal hunter like the mustelids that enter this list (except for the weasel) (2). Finally all these animals use crevices in rocks or trees as permanent or temporary shelters.

These characteristics lead us to believe that these animals were thought of as spatial and temporal mediators: they are the "guides" between two spaces, the underwater world and

the earth, the middle world above (trees) and the earth; they are the animals that mediate between night and day, between winter and summer; they are the cosmological mediators, and their dwelling in crevices and fissures, i.e. at the entry points to the underworld enhances their nature as liminal animals, placed at the cross-road of the death/ rebirth ritual of the Midewiwin.

The Mide bags, however, function as "bows" that are aimed at the initiate and shoot "arrows" which consist of shells (Densmore, 1910: 40; Vecsey, 1983). This association between Mide bags and shells allows us to go further in the analysis of the role of the otter in the Midewiwin. According to one of the earliest accounts of Mide practices given by Warren (1885: 78), the Mide elders of Fond du Lac, one of the ritual centers of the Midewiwin, Otter was equated with the Megis or sacred shell. This close association is not surprising if we consider that among all the animals described earlier, the otter is the only one that in its natural state makes use of shells:

"Among the bedding of captive, and in the holts of wild ones, it is common to find small shells and rounded pebbles which they have carried in as playthings" (Harris, 1968: 7).

This important feature of the otter leads us to question the role of the Megis and its place in relation to the animals used in the Mide rituals. In order to understand it we need to go to the "teachings" of the Mide, i.e. to the origin legend of the religion that was taught to the initiate. We will in this case follow Vennum's account of this myth "collected from informants in widely dispersed Ojibwa localities" (Vennum, 1978: 755).

b) The origin myth of the Midewiwin

Observing the miserable conditions of human beings on this earth, the manitos (Gitchi Manito or the manitos of the four directions, according to different versions) sent the culture hero of the Ojibwa, Nanabush, to restore their health and spirit. While he was wandering on the surface of the earth, Nanabush heard someone laughing and soon discovered it was Otter as it emerged from the water. Nanabush then descended to an island

at the center of the earth, initiated the otter in the four degrees of the Midewiwin and sent the animal to spread the rituals among humans. Otter migrated from East to West, followed by the people. Each time it emerged from the waters, the people settled to perform the mide rites, founding a place where the Midewiwin would be practiced, from now on. Vennum (1978: 755) adds to this core version of the myth two variants that are, in a way, echoes of the variations found in the construction of the Mide bags: sometimes Otter is replaced by Bear as agent of Nanabush. In other versions, the Megis or sacred shell leads the way, followed by the otter who, "in turn guides the Indians".

In Ojibwa versions of the myth, Otter thus follows the water ways from East to West, and is often depicted as an "eastern" manito (Densmore, 1929: 93). The origin and migration narratives of the Midewiwin correspond to the historic routes taken by the proto-Ojibwa in their westward expansion along the shores of the Lake Superior (Hickerson, 1962). Many students of the Midewiwin have tried, sometimes quite successfully, to trace the "resting places" of Otter on the map of these shores. (Dewdney, 1975; Vennum, 1978). Yet this explanation of mythology, based on geographically accurate accounts of migratory paths is not totally satisfactory, for it does not account for the characters (otter, bear, Megis) involved in the myth. Why choose these animals, why the shell? The answer to this question may lie in the hypothesis that, as much as an actual, historical journey, the origin myth depicted a spiritual and cosmological journey. Let us first examine the association between shell and otter.

Warren (1957 (1885): 78) describes the role of the megis in the foundation myth in the following manner:

"While our forefathers were living on the Great salt water towards the rising sun , the great Megis showed itself above the surface of the great water and the rays of the sun were reflected from its glossy back. It gave warmth and light to the An-ish-in-aub-ag [the Ojibwa]".

The sacred shell of the Midewiwin is the sun that rises in the eastern sky, symbolized by the "reflecting light" on the "glossy back" of the Megis. It then continues its route towards

the west following the natural solar movement. Yet, we have seen that it is the otter that brought the Megis to the mide ritual and they seem to be described as following the same route in the migration path of the ritual. According to Hoffman's (1896: 91-92) informant, Otter came from the South, followed by the sun:

"From the South, then came Mikek', the Otter, who said to Manabush, "My brother, I come to give you the Kona'pamik; you will find it on a rock in the waters of the lake; there you will find it and give it to your mita'v brothers".

The Sun gave Nanabush the direction of the ceremony: "as I go westward you will see my path which you will in time follow" (id: 92), in a movement similar to the Ojibwa's sun/ otter/ Megis route. It would thus seem that we have two different ritual objects, the shell characterized by its white and shiny appearance, that goes from East to West and the otter whose black color is always referred too. It may be remembered that Skinner, describing the otter turbans mentions that the darkest otter furs are chosen for the construction of the headdress. In the "parent" version of the Midewiwin (Brasser, 1976: 128), the bags that were used were made of black skin. Carver calls the early Midewiwin ceremonies the "Black Dance (1781: 270). Why then this choice of black for an animal associated with the sun? Why "choose" an "underwater world" animal to signify the sun?

One could interpret this in the light of color symbolism, summarized by Hamell (1987: 76) in the following manner:

"Black-ness connoted the absence of both cognition and animacy- that is , asocial or socially-liminal states of being".

The Black Otter, contrasted with the white glowing Megis, is the "black sun", the "other side" of the sun, when it disappears beyond the horizon to the west, at night and in winter, the time "in between" death and rebirth. If that is so, the otter and the Megis have to be interpreted in the light of ancient shamanistic practices prevalent in most of North America, especially in hunting cultures whose practices were concerned with cosmic rejuvenation (Hulkranz, 1987: 14).

Summarizing the "basic cosmic model" of shamanistic cosmogony of the New world, George MacDonald (1981: 227) makes the underworld the place where the sun returns to the east, after being "swallowed" by "the underworld monster". The sun then passes...through its digestive tract during the night only to be swallowed again by a sky monster". The seasonal pattern follows the same movement, and winter, which allows spring to come, is the realm of the underworld. If we know that the otter has its darkest fur during the winter, Skinner's remark becomes decipherable: the color black of the otter fur or the medicine bags of the Black Dance refers to this northern/ winter function of the underworld otter. Furthermore, the otter's diet consists of shells that it eats in great amount, "never seeming to tire of the amusement" (Barnston, 1863: 151).

The Mide ritual is characterized by a movement that attempts to re-enact the rebirth of the initiate but also the cycle of life: the participant follows the path of life (from east to west) and thus follows in the footsteps of the otter, in as much as it leads to his/her inescapable death. By "blowing" sacred shell into the initiate, the mide breathes life into the initiate, giving him or her the possibility of being resurrected or cured. He also re-enacts the return of the sun which has been "hidden" in the pouch made of otter fur. The ritual description of the Midewiwin implies a spiritual and cosmogonic journey, summarized in the following diagram:

Figure.1: The Cosmological Journey of Otter and Megis.

In order to be rejuvenated the sun has to disappear in the "underworld" and the otter (or the bear) of the migration songs of the Midewiwin literally swallows the sun, as it does in the natural world.

In the Midewiwin, it is only in conjunction with the sun (itself represented by the sacred shell, the Megis) that it becomes a mediator. One of Hoffman's informant, Shuni'en, expresses a direct link between Sun and the otter turban worn by many "Indian Chiefs" in the nineteenth century:

"The sun is a being like ourselves. Whenever an Indian dreams of him he plucks out his hair and wear an otter skin about his head, over the forehead. This the Indian does because the Sun wear an otter also about his head" (Hoffman, 1896: 210)

The link established by Shuni'en between the sun and the otter ("the sun wear an otter about his head") becomes decipherable in as much as the otter represents the eclipse of the sun necessary for its reappearance on a seasonal or daily cycle, itself linked to the "path of life" of human beings who die but are also born. It is the "black sun", the "night sun" that determines the cycle of life, both shiny and black like the fur of the otter.

The otter becomes the symbol of rejuvenation and renewal of plants, animals and human life and is able to hold the promises of the Midewiwin. This cycle of life could be literally read in the fabrication of the otter turban itself where the head of the otter is inserted in its tail vent, giving the turban its rounded shape, similar to the image of the serpent swallowing its tail which, in our culture, became the symbol of eternity (3).

Many questions, however, remain unanswered first of which is the exclusive link between otter fur ornaments and masculinity. In order to suggest a solution, let us delve deeper into Otter's world, and examine the symbolic associates of the otter i.e. the bear, water and shells in the light of gender practices and modes of signification.

c) Otter and Bear

As shown by Hallowell (1928) in his major article on Bear Ceremonialism, the meaning of rituals surrounding bears in North America is complex and multi-faceted. To determine what, in the bear, makes it a central figure in North American cultural systems and social practices would demand an exhaustive research that cannot be undertaken within the scope of this thesis. This is why the following remarks can only be taken as hypotheses for further research, raising more questions than providing answers.

One point, however, strikes as particularly significant in the study at hand, and concerns the image of Bear as being a menstruating woman. Dunning (1959: 100), studying changes in the social structures of a relatively isolated band of Ojibwa mentions that:

"Approaching the time of a girl's first period, she is known as wemukowe - literally, "going to be a bear" - and during her seclusion she is known as mukowa - she is a bear... One father explained to the teacher that the cause of his daughter's absence from school was not due to sickness but to the fact that she was a bear - wa-uhkawin-akosi-dashmukowe".

Contributing to this identification is a linguistic equation between hunting and courting. The same Chippewa term was used for both flirting and hunting game (id: 101n), while another Chippewa term "connotes both using force in intercourse and also killing a bear with one's bare hand". (Dunning, 1959: 129n).

Dewdney (1975: 157) suggests that the "confusion" between bear and otter may have stemmed from the attempts made by the Mide Masters to "harness" the powers of the most dangerous manito, the Bear (Dewdney, 1975: 157). He argues that, in order to "put down the arrogant manitos, giving them milder, protective roles... the southern Mide tradition gave the role of Messenger to the Otter, instead of to the far more dangerous bear" (id: 158). If this is the case, the symbolism of the Bear, which is associated with femininity, can be transferred to the symbolism of otter. Wearing otter fur would mean that men appropriate for themselves a sign femininity by literally investing themselves with the

power of the female bear. This combination, on their (male) body of the female principle of life would be a pledge for the continuity of life.

There are, however, possible objections to this argument, objections that would place the Otter at the center of the rituals. Indeed, Dewdney's argument could be reversed; it could be argued that the powerful bear spirit, instead of being replaced by an euphemistic otter, had in fact invaded a more specific symbolism, because of its power. Furthermore, the connection between otter and the sacred shell, founded in the actual behavior of the otter, would remain unexplained. Finally, "at every major Grand Medicine ceremony, the leaders recited the traditional Creation Myth, recounting the heroic deeds of Nanabozho [Nanabush] and recalling his victories over the powers of the universe" (Vecsey, 1983: 177). It is precisely in this Creation Myth of the Ojibwa, which is much older than Mide rituals, that Otter figures again as mediator between two worlds, the first, underwater, "pre-creation world" and the second, human world in which people live.

3.2. Otter as Earthdiver.

Besides its role in the Midewiwin, Otter figures in one of the most widespread myths of North America, known as the Earthdiver myth (Motive A 812 in Thompson, 1966). This myth is summarized in the following manner by Erminy Wheeler-Voegelin (1949: 334):

"In North American Indian myths of the origin of the world, the culture hero has a succession of animals dive into the primeval waters, or flood of waters, to secure bits of mud or sand from which the earth is to be formed. Various animals, birds, and aquatic creatures are sent down into the water that covers the surface of the earth. One after another animal fails; the last one succeeds, however and floats to the surface half dead, with a little sand or dirt in his claws. Sometimes it is Muskrat, sometimes beaver, Hell-diver, crawfish, Mink who succeeds, after various other animals have failed, in bringing up the tiny bit of mud which is then put on the surface of the water and magically expands to become the world of the present time".

This is the general plot of the myth, but it does not account for the preceding events nor does it name the various animal-characters involved in the re-creation of the world. In the following analysis of the myth we will concentrate on Woodlands versions of the myth, both Ojibwa and Iroquois.

In the Ojibwa versions (for a complete list of Ojibwa versions of the creation myth, see Vecsey, 1983: 87-88), Nanabush (or Nanabozho), the Great Hare, is the culture hero. During his wanderings on the "first" earth, he had joined a pack of wolves. After having been expelled from the group, he pursued his journey with the youngest of the wolves who became his "wolf-brother" and who hunted for him. Unfortunately, the underwater manitos drown the young wolf. Full of grief, Nanabozho avenges the death of his brother by killing the underwater spirit responsible for it (generally represented by an "underwater panther" or lion, called Misshipeshu) who take revenge by flooding the earth. The versions of the myth give two sorts of "explanation" for what Wheeler-Voegelin calls the Primeval water. The flood is caused by either the underwater spirits, or the blood resulting from the murder of the Underwater Lion (Radin and Reagan, 1928: 62, 68).

In a Seneca version, however, the culture hero(s) are not yet born when this episode of the creation takes place. It is their grandmother, (Sky-Woman) who, after having been cast down from the sky, is received on the back of the great Turtle. Finally a toad succeeds in bringing back the mud out of which the earth is made (Thompson, 1966: 14). Whereas in the Iroquois version given by Stith Thompson, the animals that fail to bring back the earth are not specified, the Ojibwa versions generally mention the otter, the beaver, the loon and the muskrat. Thompson (id: 279) adds that the latter is the only successful earthdiver in most myths. All are revived by Nanabush after their attempt and the bit of mud necessary to form the earth is taken from the nostrils and claws of the muskrat. Nanabush then enlarges this bit of mud by breathing on it until it is large enough to sustain life.

This earthdiver myth has attracted the attention of anthropologists and folklorists for three main reasons: its extensive diffusion in America, Asia and Europe (Kongas, 1960; Count, 1952), its relation to the Ojibwa world view especially on hunting (Vecsey, 1983), and finally its imagery which can be interpreted by psychoanalysis. The most extensive article on the subject is Alan Dundes' paper entitled "Earth-diver: creation of the mythopoeic male", published in 1962. Using a Freudian approach that suggests that myth

is "psychology projected upon the external world", Dundes advocates a cross-cultural reading of the earthdiver myth which, for him has for main themes "the creation from mud and dirt" and the "magical expansion of this bit of mud". According to Dundes, these themes originate in "man's projection of the phenomenon of human birth" (id: 1037) and the tentative and imaginary dispossession by men of women's reproductive powers.

In order to prove his point, he examines in detail the two key assumptions that underline his hypothesis: "(1) the existence of a cloacal theory of birth" and "(2) the existence of pregnancy envy" in the male psyche. For Dundes, drawing on Ferenczi (1956), the presence of mud in the nostrils and in the "fingernails" of the successful animal suggests that the inflating earth is, in fact created from faeces, which is a birth fantasy frequently found in young children ignorant of the physiology of parturition. Combined with the spur of "pregnancy envy" documented by clinical evidence and ethnological reports (Bettelheim, 1955; Devereux, 1951), the earth-diver myth can be interpreted as a male fantasy: to be able "to create without any reference to women" (Dundes, 1962: 1046) and as an ideological tool in patriarchal societies.

Dundes is very conscious of the possible pitfalls of a psychoanalytical interpretation of myths and of the universalization of symbolic constructs on the base of clinical evidence drawn from western civilization. To counter these criticisms, he cites the numerous North American myths which depicts the creation of men from the rubbings of skin and birth from the mucus of nose which parallel the anal imagery of parturition and excludes the womb as the place of birth (and thus give men the possibility to give birth). At a theoretical level, following Kluckhohn, he advocates the idea that, although anthropologists have generally shunned the idea that there are "universal culture patterns", there are, in the regularities of mythological structures, features that can be "the result from recurrent reactions of situations and stimuli of the same general order" (Kluckhohn, 1959: 268, quoted in Dundes: 1036). According to Dundes, each specific culture will give these recurrent features of human life (generally drawn from physiological and anatomical

givens) a different form. This, for Dundes, does not preclude us from looking into universal psychological reactions to these givens.

Dundes's interpretation of the earthdiver myth attempts to link psychological constructs taken as more or less universal with the cultural specificity of mythological narratives. However, because it reduces the earth-diver motif to the structure of its narrative, without searching for the particulars of the protagonists in the myth, Dundes's analysis does not relate it to the general animal symbolism of North-eastern America. I would argue that his emphasis on the notion of "pregnancy envy" is seductive. It allows us to see gendered symbolic constructs in term of tension, not exclusively in terms of an already always present male domination.

However, by not examining the specificity of the zoological code, Dundes remains open to the accusations of ethnocentrism that is often addressed to the psychoanalytical interpretation of myths. I suggest that an examination of the characters of the narrative and the position they occupy both in the natural world and in the knowledge of Nineteenth Century animal lore allows us to better understand the importance of the otter in the earthdiver myth. In this respect, I would suggest that the earthdiver myth is a product of a tension that is ultimately resolved in favor of the male principle of life, in the Ojibwa versions, by the intervention of the culture hero, as Dundes saw it. However, I would argue that this tension is always there and that the earthdivers (the characters of the mythical narrative) as well as the narrative structure itself allow to see this tension.

3.3. The Hunting Otter.

Let us, for a start, see what the narrative line has to tell us. I have noted earlier that the myths, in the Woodlands versions, start with the culture hero sending the animals to "dive for mud", not to create the earth but to recreate it, after it has been destroyed. In fact, the movements of the earthdivers consist first in penetrating into the primeval water and then in coming back from the depths, implying "death" and "rebirth". The process consists in diving in a "black" water and coming back to the surface in order that an ordered world, a

"named world can be reinstated. Indeed, "after completing the earth's surface, he [Nanabush] named animals, created laws, placed trees, lakes, mountains and valleys in the proper locations" (Vecsey, 1983: 91). The dominant imagery of the myth suggests a clear distinction between a "chaotic world" signified by water (or body fluids) and a new world where "things" have found their proper place and their proper name.

As we have seen, the otter never succeeds in bringing back the bit of mud from which the earth will be made. The beaver or the muskrat or the toad (Seneca) are the ones that bring mud back, or in other versions, waterfowl or crustaceans (Wheeler-Voegelin, 1949: 334). The narrative of the myth suggests that one could establish a difference between the different characters. Observation of the natural ecological chain on which these animals are placed as well as Native trappers lore of the nineteenth century can be instructive as to the place of otters in the cosmology of the Woodlands.

In the nineteenth century, two "types" of otters seem to have been distinguished by native trappers. One, called Neekeek or Mikek is the common Lutra canadensis. The other was called Pinaikiwawkeek, literally the "pulling down otter" which Barnston (1863: 157) translated by Lutra destructor. This last species, besides its smaller size, was characterized by its preying upon beaver .

Barnston's description stemmed from an information given to him by Cree Indians and an "Indian of the Albany River", "an elderly man, not one of the best characters...deemed a conjuror by his tribe":

"I was told by him that it was the small otter that killed the beavers, by breaking down their dams and getting into their houses; or so disturbing them as to take them at disadvantage abroad, devouring the young and all he could succeed in mastering...I shall only add that this has been confirmed by many hunters on the shores of Lake Superior".

In a way, Lutra destructor displayed a behaviour very similar to trappers and compete with them for their prey. The second observation that lead Barnston (1863: 157) to distinguish the two types of otters was that according to Barnston's informants

"the Pinaikiwawkeek did not consort with the Neekeek and that the two were at enmity with each other and fought when they met".

That there were two species of Lutra has been questioned by later zoologists who are of the opinion that otter do not hunt beavers in the systematic ways described above and that the distinction established by Barnston does not exist. Contemporary zoologists admit, however, that the greatest part of the otter's diet, besides fish and shell, consists of water fowl, crustaceans and muskrat (Harris, 1968: 60) which are all the other earth-divers found in the emergence myth. Within the image of the otter, it thus seem necessary to make a distinction, at least in Nineteenth Century Native lore, between two dimensions of the otter. One, which is a "hunting otter", a "pulling down otter" (who would kill its prey by drowning it), and another otter which does not display the same hunting behaviour, but belongs with the other earthdivers to the underwater world.

What, then, are the qualities that make the muskrat the "successful" diver? The muskrat is the most humble and unassuming of the animals figuring in the myth, and this could be said also of the toad, the crayfish and even of the beaver if we consider it in the light of what precedes. In a word, of all the animals that make the earthdiver myth, the otter is the only one that has hunting and killing capacity (and was considered as such). It could be suggested then that the failure of the otter to succeed in bringing earth back is inherent to its "hunting" character whereas the modesty of the muskrat (which is strictly vegetarian and is always the hunted, never the hunter), in a sort of reversal of values, becomes the successful animal. In a sense, the power of the hunter is offset by the power of animals that could be equated with the non-hunter, whose survival and life is closely linked to the act of giving birth. It is then possible to ascribe to the muskrat and other underwater creatures a "feminine nature" that would confirm the general statement made by Brasser:

"The Underwater beings were primarily associated with the female aspect, herbal knowledge and witchcraft" (1976: 25)

The passage between different temporal and spatial strata of the cosmology, the cyclical renewal of life (the re-creation of the earth) and the stages of life (and rebirth) is mediated on the one hand by an animal that is "powerful" because it gives life to numerous offsprings but is always the hunted (the beaver and muskrat). On the other hand it can also be mediated by animals that, although liminal in a similar manner, are also hunters (the weasel, the marten etc). The otter, which belongs to both world, is the mediator between the two. The tension between the hunter and the hunted, between the two sides of the division of labor (hunting and giving life) is resolved in favor of an animal that belongs to both worlds. This mediation tips the balance in favor of the otter-as-hunter for it silences the role of the muskrat and the beaver, who are not the animal-spirit of the Midewiwin and whose furs are not worn, at least ceremonially. By making the otter the ritual mediator in the curing ceremony, the masculine role in life generating processes is affirmed at the "expense" of the muskrat and the beaver.

One could wonder, however, what is at stake in the mediation offered by the otter and muskrat. What is the "life-giving principle" that is not given by the muskrat but offered by the otter. The otter, in the Midewiwin, literally, "blows", "shoots" life into the initiate. This life, figured by the Sacred Shell (reflecting the rays of the sun but coming from the water) has been "swallowed by the otter to be regurgitated through its mouth, with a sound that is considered to be that of the "shadow" of the otter (Hoffman, 1896: 262). The gift of the otter-as-hunter (the male earthdiver) is language/ words in a manner similar to Nanabush's breath on the "bit of mud". The sacred shell is not only the "reversed" mediator of the otter, as we saw earlier, it is also language, the ordering principle that allow the infant (etymologically one who does not yet speaks) to come to a world where exchange between humans before all verbal and linguistic exchange. (5)

The otter, according to Desveaux (1988: 41) is, among the people of Big Trout Lake, "incarnation of language mastery. Its variant is the mink... which according to another narrative, possesses a double, but a minor one indeed, in the person of the weasel". Otter,

who blows the words-shells into the Mide initiate stands for the phallic life principle. By wearing otter fur ornaments, men reaffirm this principle. My conclusions are compatible with Dundes's interpretation of the earthdiver myth, although I arrived at it in a different manner. Otter robs muskrat of its speech as Nanabush had extracted the bit of mud and sand (the ingredients of shell, that which is produced when a shell is decomposed) from the mouth of the successful earthdiver. These conclusions would also be in keeping with the approach of Lacan, for whom the human subject emerges to language through the Phallus-signifier. However, I have interpreted the symbolic function of otter (which is undoubtedly male in the degree of mediation it operates), in the context of hunting practices.

4. The Language of the Hunt.

4.1. Men as "hunters".

The semantic field of the hunt and that of courtship often coincided . Landes (1970: 163) notes that love medicine used by Potawatomi in the nineteenth century were also used for hunting. She adds:

"Flirting and hunting were closely linked ideas among Band folk, as among the Ojibwa. In both situations and among both peoples, the one verb "to hunt" was used".

Narratives of courtship are often couched in terms of hunting stories as does Black Elk recounting how a young man, High Horse, approaches a young girl for whom he is [love]"-sick.

"Well after High Horse had been sneaking around a good while and hiding and waiting, and getting sicker all the time, he finally caught her alone and made her talk to him" (Neihardt, 1972: 57).

This approach of a young girl shows striking similarities with hunting techniques when the hunter lies in wait for the game. In the courtship ritual of the Lakota, a man enveloped a girl in his blanket, a custom called "catching a woman" (DeMallie, 1983: 252).

4.2. Mirrors and arrows.

The use of mirrors is highly indicative of the role of the Otter necklace within hunting symbology. In his paper on "Artistic Traditions of the Northern Plains", Ted Brasser mentions the use of "mirrors" in a ceremonial society, called the Elk Dreamers (Brasser, 1987: 126; Wissler, 1905). This society consisted of "young men who dreamed of the bull elk and his amorous success" and "acted out dreams in dance performance". They wore elk masks and "carried hoops and magical mirrors to "shoot" elk power at the women in the audience". At the beginning of the nineteenth century, these mirrors were wooden boards with carved decorations. One of them, which Brasser describes, has

" a circle of thirty one women and three headless men, surrounding a large rosette" which "may be interpreted to be the magic mirror itself, shooting beams of elk power at the audience" (Brasser, 1987: 126).

For the author, these wooden mirrors were later replaced by glass mirrors "which undoubtedly added to the excitement"(id).

In other terms mirrors were tokens of masculine sexual potency whose rays were phallic projections. Directed at the women of the audience, they projected the piercing sun rays that penetrated into the female spectators. In Illus. 9, the Fancy Dancer of the 1920s has also adopted mirrors as center of their arms and wrist bustle. In a similar manner, but with an adaptation to new technologies, flashlights were used in 1955, as light projecting devices to signal both the position and intention of young lovers on Pekangikum Reserve (Dunning, 1959: 129). Flashes of light, pointed like arrows in the direction of women, are projections of the elk's power to seduce. The elk's whistle, his polygynous behaviour was thought to arouse the sexual passion of women. Courting flutes decorated with elk effigies were used by young men in imitation of the whistling sound of the elk.

There is evidence that otter was used in conjunction with elk. Wissler (1912: 95) describes Elk Dancers of the Oglala in the following manner:

"[they] wear peculiar masks made of young buffalo skins, with a pair of branches trimmed to represent elk's antlers. These horns are wrapped with otter fur to represent horns in the velvet... They carry a hoop of two cross cords, supporting a mirror at the center".

Fletcher and Lafleshe (1911: 412) found "seven skins of the fetus of the elk" in the war bundle of the Omaha. They add:

"The last-named are said to have been used by the chiefs in a ceremony now lost, which was not unlike some of the ceremonies of the Shell society, these elk skins taking the place of the otter skin".

Mirrors, that were associated with the Elk Dance and are attached to the otter necklace as the sacred shell was associated with the Midewiwin, stand for this power. But they also constitute a language where the elk-otter seducer is thought to "shoot" his power as a hunter shoots his arrows. Hunting and the seduction of women are couched in the same terms.

4.3. Women the Hunted?

It would be possible to show that women responded to the symbolic arrows of the otter necklace and elk mirrors by taking the place of the hunted, the elk that is shot or the deer that is caught by the hunter. In the Lakota culture of the nineteenth century, women were thought to derive their power from deer (DeMallie, 1983: 254). Ella Deloria (ms. 1: 110), quoted by DeMallie (id: 255), reported that women who were particularly attractive were called "deer" (men were called elk). This association of women with deer is still visible in the shape of the Blackfoot skin dresses characterized by a curved yoke in the front. This curved pattern is due to the shape of the tip of the deer tail that was still attached to the skin when the yoke-piece was cut (Conn, 1961: 116). It is thought that the jingles that decorate the dress of Jingle Dress Dancer were the dewclaws of the doe (Blundell, 1985: 62).

On the other hand, there are many indications, in women's regalia, which contradict this somewhat simple equation man:woman :: hunter: hunted. The dew claws of the Jingle Dress Dancer have lost their association with the doe. Rather, they are now pointed conical bells, made of metal, that display an obvious shape (in contradistinction with the round or square-shaped bells of men's outfits) (4). Women wore and still wear elk teeth to decorate their skin or cloth dress. Women prolong their braids with the pelts of fur-bearing hunters,

marten and mink. The dress code of women dancers, based on signs of femininity, like deer skin dresses, display a number of signs of masculinity that transgress the gendered code. With their pointed and aggressive muzzle and claws, mink and marten pelts inscribe their wearer in a phallic mode of signification.

As Fancy Dancers wore shawls that displayed the insignia of men (arrows, feathers and guns), female Traditional and Fancy Dancers display in their outfits items generally associated with hunting. By doing so they wear on their body signs of manhood, and play on significations showing the possible union of men and women. At the same time, this "masculinization" of the woman's body is denied in many way, or more exactly "played with". The pelts worn by Fancy women dancers swirl and whirl during the intricate and rapid steps of the dancer, denying the "rigidity" of the sharp claws and threatening muzzles of their soft furs. Being there, and not there, the women dancers' body plays on signifiers to "lead astray", to seduce.

Otter was shown to mediate between the feminine and the masculine principles of life. It is a phallic ornament but also belongs to the aquatic realm of femininity. It functions as a "gun" or a "bow" which projects arrows into the women. For women to wear "otters" would amount to a misrecognition of the mediation between masculinity and femininity operated by the otter. It would reverse the proper distance between the sexes and, therefore, blur the language of desires spoken by the otter. On the other hand, women can wear mink, marten and ermine (which are not symbolically associated to the same extent with femininity), for they are the signs of the woman's desire (of the other), and thus participate in the play of seduction.

5.Changes in the Meaning of Furs and Shells.

With the intervention of the European market for fur, "the Indians' traditional mythical reality and its dependent cultural subsystems, over time and across space, were "serially and systematically reinterpreted and restructured" (Hamell, 1987: 83) at the expense of the

native world view and adapted to new conditions. By making shells and their equivalent (shiny beads and round shining disks like medals or gorgets) an instrument of exchange for furs, the new system of exchange shattered the cosmological and mythological equilibrium, that the Midewiwin attempted to recapture in the nineteenth century. Hamell (1983, 1987) argues convincingly that Woodlands native populations adopted trade with Europeans because they saw in the trade goods brought by the Europeans an extension of their own "value" system. Archaeologists have recently concluded that the impact of European technology with iron tools and other "utilitarian trade goods" was minor in comparison to the social and cultural upheavals made available what the Europeans of the time considered as "trinkets" (Trigger, 1976: 243-245).

Hamell (1987: 81) suggests that the cause of this phenomenon resided in the "fundamental cognitive role of color" which semantically organized mythical realities of Woodlands Indians. Among these colors he sees white (and the reflective quality of shells) as being the color of "the cognitive and social aspects of life - the purposiveness of mind, knowledge, and greatest being - "(Hamell, 1987: 76). This implied that white objects such as shells were seen as holding the promises of "physical, spiritual and social well-being", i.e. of "wealth". This wealth, in the form of "preeminently white shell" (Hamell, 1987: 84) was granted by "under-water spirits" which "were the traditionally ascribed source of metallic substances such as red copper, and of "white stones" and white shells" (Hamell, 1987: 79). Contact with Europeans modified Native "conceptual articulation of wealth as well-being and of the under-water world ... particularly the water-dwelling, fur bearing mammals" (id: 85).

While hunting otters and beavers and acquiring more "wealth" in the process, native populations were subject to massive epidemics and warfare, denying the well-being conceptualized by the native concept of "wealth". As a result as new relation with the "underwater" world evolved, deplored by an Ojibwa chief relating the creation earth-diver episode to Squier:

"in gratitude to the beaver, the otter and the muskrat, those animals were ever after held sacred by the Indians, and they became their brethren, and they never killed nor molested them until the medicine of the stranger [Whites] made them forget their relations and turned their hearts to ingratitude" (Squier, 1851: 231, quoted in Hamell, 1987: 83).

Otter and shells were no longer the mediators through which life could be renewed and cures performed but the token of a socially bounded exchange of riches. Shells which were formerly part of a "metaphysics of light" shared by Northeastern Woodland Siouans, Algonquians and Iroquoians (Trigger 1978: ix) proclaimed the presence of the new order. Furs lost their shamanistic reference to the "matrix" of the earth. The role of shells in the fur Trade, by tipping the terms of the mediation in favor of an exchange that made them a currency, was instrumental in the introduction of the new economic and social order, of new cultural practices. Accordingly, hunting practices were disrupted.

It could be argued that these shells were at the "conjunction of historical metaphors and mythical reality" (Salhins 1981). As trading objects exchanged by white traders for native goods in early historic times, the nature of shells used in decoration changed. This exchange system introduced the cowrie shell in great number in Northern America (Dewdney, 1975: 71). White traders also often replaced shells with porcelain objects imitative of the glowing light of shells. White beads and pale blue beads were introduced and semantically could be considered as "shells" in the process of exchange (Hamell 1983: 20). However, the availability of shells and beads "gave the freedom to manipulate these substances into new significant cultural forms" (id:20).

6. Shells as ornaments

Three kinds of shells are still observed on powwow regalia: Cowrie shells (Cypriæ moneta) which are a women's dress ornament. "Concha", disks of pale pink or white shell made from the wall of the "Bahama" conch shell, are used by men and women. "Hair pipes", which are akin to beads, "first made by the Indians from the columella (central

columr.) of a conch" (Koch, 1977: 41) but which nowadays are imitations made of bone or plastic. As each of these shells have a particular history and are used differently, they will be studied separately at first.

6.1. The Cowrie Shell.

Let us start with the cowrie shell as it is used in powwow regalia. The only instance of its use that I observed was on the cloth dress of a Traditional Woman Dancer. It decorated a dress made of cloth and was sewn on the dress in parallel rows. This pattern is similar to a more common decoration of women's dresses with parallel rows of elk teeth (or bone objects made in the shape of elk teeth). The use of cowrie shell was, however, "fairly common" in the nineteenth and early twentieth century "fashion" in the Plains (Koch, 1977: 48). As I mentioned earlier, cowrie shells were not native of North America but imported by European traders, following their usage in other colonial trades in the world. Hence their usage as decorative item was preceded, at least in the Plains, by the decoration of dresses with elk teeth (6). These elk teeth demonstrated

"the wealth or standing of the family... The teeth were very expensive, one hundred being worth as much as a horse, yet several hundred, even as many a thousand were sometimes sewed on one dress" (Farabee, 1921: 243).

6.2. Shell Disks.

Polished disks of shells are worn by women as barrettes to attach mink and marten pelts to their hair. Men use them in two ways: as the central piece of a "choker" made of hair pipes, or as ornaments directly attached to their shirt, at breast level.

These shiny disks of shell, contrary to the cowrie shell of "recent" introduction, are of great antiquity in North America. Since prehistorical times, a particular emphasis seems to have been placed on "discoïdal beads" (Speck 1919: 16) and conch shells which are found in graves dating back from 1500 B.C-1000 B.C (Wright, 1972: 12). Conch shells from the Gulf of Mexico (id: 49) were ground down and given the shape of disks and drilled in the middle in order to be used as pendants. The remote origin of these shells indicates a very

ancient "trade" or exchange system over all North America. In later times (Point Peninsula Culture, 700B.C - 1000 A.D.) these conch disks have been found with bits of native copper from Lake Superior and of Ontario silver (id: 48).

Much evidence point to their gradual replacement by metallic disks in the early fur trade period. The replacement of shell gorgets by metallic objects has been noted as early as 1740 "when European traders offered silver ornaments in exchange for furs (Brasser, 1976: 39). As metallic disks fixed on belts, they parallel the usage of brass tacks to decorate belts. A belt decorated with discs of metal is called a "concha belt" (Koch 1977 :77) and is worn by both men and women.

6.3. Hair-pipes.

Hair-pipe shells (or beads, depending on the perspective) are the most commonly worn ornaments by powwow dancers. They "were manufactured from large shells in New Jersey in the later 1700s" (Koch, 1977: 41) but are nowadays made of bone and plastic. They are usually arranged in rows that are fashioned in the manner of breastplates, worn by Traditional Dancers, both men and women. According to Koch (id: 41), breastplates were probably invented by the Comanches around 1850. They consist of rows of long cylindrical hair pipes laid out horizontally or vertically, in such a way that they cover the whole front upper body of the wearer. In female Traditional Dancers' outfits, they can be so long as to reach to the knees or below. Hair pipes are often separated by large colored or metallic beads. Moreover, bandoleers of hair pipes can be seen among Traditional male Dancers; they "were observed among the Omahas and the Western Sioux after 1890"(Koch, 1977: 42). "Chokers" made of hair-pipes are also common necklaces in contemporary outfits.

What are the common features that can be drawn from this description of shells in historical and contemporary clothing ornamentation? Shells are worn in an identical manner by men and women. Both men and women wear breastplates and shell disks. Portraits of native men and women in the nineteenth century show a common usage of shells for

decorative purposes, as necklaces and earrings. Even the adoption of breastplates made of hair-pipes, perhaps in imitation of white military uniforms, did not challenge the attribution of the ornament to men and women. Only the cowrie shells, which are worn by women in a similar manner as elk teeth, are never worn by men and thus mark a gender differentiation in the usage of shells. But this usage can be related to the wearing of elk teeth more than to the wearing of shells (Koch 1977: 48).

6.4. The Meanings of Shells.

So far, I have regarded shells which were associated with arrows, as phallic projection. As such they could be considered as symbols of male fertility and enter into a symbology of seminal substances. For instance, among the Iroquois, wampum (which are made of small circular shell beads) were mythologically associated with the quills of birds, falling from the plumage of mythical eagles (Speck, 1919: 10-12). On the other hand, their shape, especially that of the cowrie shell that was used as Megis, could be associated, iconographically, with the female vulva (Fulford 1988: 67) (7). The close symbolic connection between shells, beads and berries (Hamell, 1983; 1987) may be interpreted as including shells in a symbology associated with femininity. Yet, there is little semantic evidence that indicates that shells were equated with the female sex (except for Speck, 1919: 6 n1,n2).

The lack of research into the symbology of female self-decoration among North American Indian peoples, combined with the small amount of evidence of a symbology based on male sexual physiology in North American cultures (Whitehead, 1983: 87), prevents any firm conclusion to be drawn from these few semantic data. Yet two elements should be brought to attention: 1) the parallelism between the way furs and shells are worn 2) the role of shells as mark of status and prestige in the parent societies of contemporary dancers.

As otter furs were used as "breastplates" by men, so are the hair pipe ornaments worn by men and women. The former choker of otter fur worn by men of Prairie tribes (Koch,

1977: 45) can be compared with the choker of shell of contemporary dancers. Strings of shells were worn by women as earrings that sometimes reached to the waist (Koch, 1977: 48) as do pelts of mink and marten of female Traditional and Fancy Dancers. There seems to be an exact complementarity between furs and shells, not only in their past meanings but also in the actual display of ornaments in the regalia. If, as we said earlier, furs and mustelids are signs of masculinity, it is more likely that shells participate in a symbology of seminal substance. By wearing them, men assert their masculinity, doubly so when, as is often the case, the otter necklace is worn in conjunction with the hair pipe breastplate underneath. Women, by "covering" their own body with signs of masculinity display their femininity inasmuch as the combination of the two (the female body and the shells) signify motherhood. I will thus suggest that the use of shells in former female outfit inscribed the body of women in a system of signs that construct them as mothers.

At the same time, the accumulation of shells on the female dress was a mark of "family, thrift, wealth or distinction" in the Plains, as did elk teeth decoration and wampum beads for Algonkian peoples (Speck, 1919 :20-22). It thus seem that the female capacity to give life was not dissociated from the concept of wealth. As producers of children and as producers of "significant durable goods" (Whitehead, 1981: 104), women played an important role in the system of gift and exchange which accelerated with the arrival of European traders (id: 104).

7. Change and Continuity.

Can we still read these meanings in the use of shells in the female Traditional outfit? As men do not attribute any explicit meaning to their otter necklace and turbans except for their link with the past, women do not seem to attach any particular significance to the shell ornaments. It is only by replacing them in the context of their whole outfit that the observer can interpret their value. Although it would be dangerous to attribute too much meaning to this ornament or to make sweeping generalizations, a correlation between the way

breastplates are worn and the norms that preside at the choice of a Powwow Princess is indicative of the meaning of this ornament.

A Powwow Princess is chosen for her behavioural qualities more than for her appearance (8). She has to be knowledgeable in the traditions of her people, and to behave during the whole course of the powwow in a dignified manner. She has to make her own outfit as she has to demonstrate her expertise in this craft. In other words, her seduction does not come from the "beauty" of her body. Her body is not where her worth resides in contrast to men who are judged according to physical standards enhanced by spectacular and colorful ornaments and outfits. The discourse on the powwow Princess emphasizes two things, the apparent irrelevance of her "shape" and her role in the continuity of cultural practices as producer of goods. Breastplates, which conceal the whole front of the woman's dress also conceal from the view the body of women. I would argue that the qualities that are demanded from a "traditional woman" position her as a mother and link this role with her position in the economic realm.

This "economic" importance of women is underlined by other ornaments in her outfit. Most women carry a beaded purse in the hand or hang one at their belt. While he was conducting fieldwork in 1967, Rynkiewich (1980: 90) noted that all women "seem to carry their "store-bought" purses while dancing". We have also seen that the shawl that is carried by female Traditional Dancers were trade items that could signify the position of women in the economic domain. Signs of femininity that locate women in the economic life of communities provide women with a position of relative power in the "ideological production" (Tanner, 1983: 35) of Native peoples. They are oppositional forms to gender constructs in the dominant society which is seen as constructing women as "sexual objects". They could be regarded as residual values, in Williams' sense (1980: 40), in a discourse of Tradition.

As we saw shifts and changes in the usage of feathers in the male outfit, women's regalia have also changed, however. At first sight, the breastplate of female Traditional

Dancers is the structural opposite of the open shawl of female Fancy Dancers. Worn in the front like an armour, the breastplate contrasts with the soft and brilliant material of the shawl, worn at the back, whose fringes swirl at each dance step. We have seen that the latter entered into a "language of desire", being often decorated with signs of masculinity. A closer look at the breastplate worn by women, which seems to encase women's body and conceal their body from view, shows, however, that its apparent rigidity is softened by strings of beads and hair pipes which dangle and sway during the dance. Furthermore, women's hair pipe breastplates are laid out in a vertical manner, in contrast to men's which are laid out horizontally. There is a fluidity and a "wrapping" quality to the whole outfit that mirrors the long fringes of their shawls and the male Grass Dancer's outfit. As on a musical score, the dancers' outfits echo each other across categories and across genders.

The long shell earrings described above, that "reach[ed] to the waist" (Koch, 1977: 48) have been replaced, at least in the distribution of ornaments on the body, by long mink and marten pelts that respond to the male language of the hunt. I would thus suggest that the recent history of female regalia shows a gradual integration in a language of desire defined in male terms, inasmuch as to express the processes of seduction in cynegetic terms is to cast men in the role of hunters. But the play of signs is endless: furs, nowadays, are also indicators of wealth. Mink and marten as "feminine" furs are the most expensive furs on the stockmarket. It is precisely this ever shifting, multi-layered quality of sexual meanings that accounts for the vitality of new aesthetic forms in powwow regalia and their importance in ideological production. Fashion is not the reflection of the whim of creators. It arises at the point of conjunction between a language of desire and a language of empowerment.

Similarly it is only by considering the whole construction of the male Traditional outfit that the meaning of otter fur ornaments can be read. As we mentioned earlier, it would be impossible to attribute to the otter a symbolism linked to shamanistic practices. The world view that searched for an equilibrium between hunters and their prey has been shattered and

the cosmological significance of Otter has "disappeared". One could thus wonder what constitutes the "appeal" or permanence of an ornament that is not the object of explicit comments, in contrast to Eagle feathers. I do not think that there are easy answers to this question and the scope of this thesis does not allow for a full discussion of this issue. Yet, it is remarkable that the otter is worn exclusively in conjunction with other predatory animals in a single type of dancing outfit, the Traditional male regalia. The claws of predatory animals, the rapacious eagle's feathers and the hunting otter' fur, compounded by a choreography that mimic the steps of hunters, form an ensemble that signify the predatory nature of this male outfit. I would thus argue that it is within the permanence of the language of the hunt that we can understand the meaning of otter fur ornaments, in the context of parent cultures for which hunting was not only a mode of production but also a mode of signification.

Notes

(1) This division must not be taken as a taboo or even as a rule. If a male trapper caught a marten, it was taken, and if a woman caught an otter nothing stopped her from taking it. But it was a clear enough opposition for fur traders to notice it.

(2) The owl can fill many more symbolic functions in native cultures. For the sake of clarity I will focus exclusively on its function in the context of the Midewiwin. I do not have sufficient data on the case of the wildcat to infer what specific trait makes him enter the list of animals in the Midewiwin.

(3) There is, during contemporary powwows, a very popular "demonstration" dance called the Snake Dance, where the dancers progress in a sinuous line and then coil into a circle. After a while, this circle of dancers "breaks out" and this part of the choreography is explicitly likened to the "serpent shedding its skin". The second part of the dance consists of crossing a line (materialised by a rope) which is "death". The dancers do this in rows of

four or five at a time and show "hesitation" before crossing, while the tempo increases.

This dance shows how the symbolic appeal of the molting snake is still significant although I doubt that dancers really "believe" in the cosmogony associated with it in their parent cultures. Nevertheless, the amount of tension that I perceived in the public during the dance and the obvious popularity of the Snake Dance shows that its symbolic appeal is very much alive.

(4) Given the small amount of information on the dress of the Jingle Dress Dancer, it is difficult, however, to draw definitive conclusions on the symbolic function of these bells.

As for most of the meanings of female powwow regalia, data on the signification of female ornaments are few and scattered.

(5) The most studied case of shells-as- verbal exchange is the case of wampum belts among the Northeastern Algonkian and the Iroquois. These wampum were "strings" of cylindrical white or dark beads, woven into "belts", the pattern of which "signified" a transaction, either commercial (especially among the Iroquois), political or matrimonial. Studying the function of these wampum, Speck summarizes their "features of usage", allowing for variations among the different peoples composing the population under study. These features are:

- 1) "Negotiatory belts, Peace, War, Death Messages. 2) "Speech" symbolism and synonymy. 3) Ransom. 4) Money. 5) Chief's condolence ceremony with wampum. 6) Marriage Proposal with wampum 7) Mythical association, Wampum bird, Beads, falling from mouth etc. 8) wampum as ornaments" (Speck, 1919: 71).

Of all these features two remain constant among all tribes: wampum are "messages", are "speeches" and are used as ornaments (all tribes use feature No 1, 2 and 8). Wampum were used since at least the beginning of the eighteenth century and as late as 1902 among the Malecite as "speeches" interceding for a groom asking a family to marry their daughter (Speck 1919: 53). Strings of wampum shell-beads were thus used, sometimes in a very direct manner, as "strings of words", as "material" support for speeches delivered during official occasions. One has thus to view shells not only as means of commercial exchange,

matrimonial and legal exchange (Hewitt, quoted by Speck, 1919: 68) but as all manners of exchange, whether words or good.

(6) Woods (1957: 382) indicates that the best elk canines that were used as decorations of the female dress came from the male elk which are more "specialised" (hence larger).

(7) According to Dewdney (1975: 71), the cowrie shell was not the aboriginal shell in shamanistic practices that gave birth to the Midewiwin, according to Dewdney. His informant's mide bag contained "a white ivory bead and two sea shells quite unrelated to the money cowrie". These last shells were identified as the Prunum bellum and Cerithium, both indigenous to Atlantic waters, confirming the late introduction of the cowrie shell, at least as THE sacred shell.

(8) The choice of a powwow princess is always contested within the Discourse of Tradition. For some, Powwow Princesses are remnants of "Indian Princess" pageants that smack of Canadian and American Beauty contests. As such they are contested (personal communication with Alison Odjig, June 1987). For others, given the popularity of competitive games, competition among women should take place but only if it concerns women's craftwomanship. The on-going practice of choosing Powwow Princesses should raise, however, the question of its persistence despite the stereotypic views it entails. What kind of (relative) power do the gender constructs elaborated in the discourse on Tradition confer ^{upon} women who participate in the competition?

CHAPTER 6

Concluding Remarks.

To bring semiological analyses to a close is not easy. It requires that the constantly shifting, evolving and multi-layered meanings that can be read in the text of the powwow regalia be fixed in a single interpretation which can only be that of the reader.

Interpretations are fraught with difficulties for they question the ethical and political nature of the enterprise. By defining semiology as an attempt to un-cover, in the web of social action and social life, the "hidden logic" of signifying practices, the semiologist places him or herself in the uncomfortable position of the voyeur, however sympathetic s/he is to the peoples s/he is observing. My own social situation as a newcomer in a country and a continent in which the peoples I have studied were the first citizens is also bound to be read in the text I have written. The contradictions and silences that are in this thesis are part of the make-up of the observer. Power and desires are not for others only. In many ways, anthropology is the realisation that the spiralling play of significations that I attempted to describe here also applies to its own workings. The reader of the reader of peoples who read their own past is also, willing or not, caught in the spiral of interpretations of the hermeneutic circle.

Yet, there is the determinacy of the codes, our own and that of others. Interpretation may be the result of a dialogue which is fraught with mis-understanding and mis-recognition, but the echoes and the disharmonic chords of systems of significations, the glissando of meanings have a reality that cannot be avoided. There is the glimpse in the eyes of the other that is recognized, the feeling that is offered as a gift to the bystander. If interpretation can be seen as a theft for it robs the interpreted of their intimacy and their secrets, at least it demands that the interpreter takes the responsibility for what s/he thinks s/he has understood. The following concluding remarks should then be seen in this light.

The purpose of this thesis was twofold. One of its aims was to read, in the powwow regalia considered as text, signs of femininity and of masculinity that informed the representation of gender during the festive event. My theoretical stand in this regard was to read these signs, not as classificatory categories posited for ever in the mind of the reader, but as generated in a concrete social practice. The second was an attempt to understand how this gender code was articulated with a discourse of political empowerment. The following concluding remarks will assess to which extent the preceding analyses allow me to answer these questions. First, through a summary of the different conclusions arrived at in Chapters 4 and 5, I will examine how a semiological analysis of aesthetic forms like powwow regalia provides an approach for understanding the articulation between gender and politics in contemporary Native societies. In a second part, I will assess the boundaries of this study, both empirical and theoretical, and suggest further applications of the work undertaken in this thesis.

My analysis of the feather and fur ornaments relied on the structuralist principle, developed by Levi-Strauss, whereby systems of differences and similarities constituted at a certain level of experience are used as a language for a system of differences and similarities experienced at a different level. The zoological code that is observable in the dancer's regalia is a language for gendered differences. In the theoretical chapter of this thesis, I argued that signifying processes did not emerge from or reflect cognitive processes of classifications but practices that engaged the subjectivity of the culture bearer. Powwow regalia, as systems of signification, are built on signs of masculinity and femininity that both express and generate practices that define the relative position of men and women. Genders are defined by the operation of a code or codes that both differentiate between women and men and mediate between them in a practice that I called seduction. The different codes observed in the powwow regalia operate as both mediating and

differentiating between genders. What are the articulations between the different codes described in the preceding chapters?

A first answer to this question lies in the economy of the zoological code that we analysed in the preceding chapters. The ornaments made of animal material (feathers, furs, skins and claws) belong to two classes of animals: hunting, predatory animals and hunted animals. To this latter category belong the deer (as in deerskin), the elk (elk teeth decorating the dress of female Traditional women) and the turkey or gallinaceous birds that provide the feathers of male Fancy outfit. To the first class belong the fur-bearing mustelids, the eagle and other predatory birds. It is argued here that this dichotomy between the hunted and the hunter provides a metaphor for sexual meanings and also provides some insight into the contemporary political discourse held during powwows.

1. Hunters and their prey.

This thesis argues that the gender code displayed in powwow regalia is embedded in a narrative form constructed upon the practice of hunting and the dialectics between the hunter and his prey. A comparison between hunting practices and the practice of seduction show surprising similarities that will be explored in the following pages.

In order to attract their prey, hunters often assume the appearance (or part of it) of the animals they want to catch or lure them with "decoys" or bait. In this respect hunters symbolically assume two positions: on the one hand they "transform" themselves, albeit partially, into their prey. Sometimes they will adopt the general shape of the game by wearing the head and skin of the animal. This was, for instance, the case in buffalo hunting on the Plains, before and after the diffusion of the horse. More frequently, however, this transformation takes place through scent or calling. Elk and deer were hunted by imitating the call of the rutting female through a birch bark cone. Hunting cannot thus be reduced to the mere slaughtering of a prey for the consumption of its meat or the acquisition of its fur.

Once the killing has taken place (and I will come back to this later), the hunter keeps the spoils of the hunt and dons them as ornaments, as clothing or, in the western world as trophies. Hunters thus appropriate for themselves what they consider the most valuable part of the animal, the skin of the otter, the horns of the elk, the feathers of the birds. But wearing and displaying these spoils can be a tricky path, for the hunter also assumes the appearance of the hunted. To wear skin, furs and feathers as ornaments, to hang horns on one's walls is thus not a unidirectional movement from the hunter to the prey. The pursuit of the animal entails an exchange of signs between hunter and hunted, a simulation of a union, loaded with expectations and desires, which results in the killing of the animal. Similarly, the donning of the spoils engages the body of the hunter in a dialectics between hunter and hunted that simulates a merging of the two. Hunting thus requires a "reciprocity" between game and hunter, reciprocity that transforms the hunter into his prey and verges on the dispossession of his humanity. The human identity of the hunter borders on the loss of a human identity.

As seduction emerges from a play on signs that mediate between femininity and masculinity but also maintain the proper distance between genders, the hunt is organized around signs that make the hunter participate symbolically in the nature of its prey, while keeping the proper distance between animal and man. Hunting thus becomes the privileged metaphor for seduction. As we saw during our analysis of powwow regalia, the dress code of dancers provides ample evidence for these parallels. Ornaments made of the skin or feathers of hunting animals are worn by men and some of the dresses and ornaments of women dancers are made of hunted animals. But, as we saw, the equation between men and hunters and women as hunted does not stand close scrutiny. Women wear the furs of predatory animals and decorate their outfits with the weapons of the hunt (shell-arrows and even guns and arrows). Men also wear the spoils of animals that are hunted, like the turkey. Finally, as we saw earlier, to wear, for men, the spoils of the hunt proclaims their

success as hunters but also transforms their appearance into the (predatory) hunted animal they have caught. While proclaiming their power, it also proclaims their surrender.

Yet the playfulness of this language is arrested by the ultimate denouement of the hunt. Hunting entails the death of the hunted. The pleasure of the pursuit and conquest is haunted by the tragedy of its conclusion. The surrender of the seduced signifies his or her death and the final blow of the lover stabs the beloved. It is not my intention, in this conclusion, to pursue this final image that runs through any language of desire that speaks the language of the hunt. I would like to point out, however, at two important factors. First, the theme of death that runs through the metaphor of the hunt as language for desire seems to be a cross cultural phenomenon. Don Juan, in Moliere's play of the same name, compared himself with Alexander the Great conquering the world. Ella Deloria (quoted in DeMallie, 1983: 253) reported that, in Lakota society, men sometimes referred to their sexual "conquest" in a vocabulary used in "counting coup" on the enemy. Secondly, I wish to emphasize the phallic imagery of the whole metaphor of the hunt, that could certainly be interpreted in a psychoanalytical framework.

Hartsock (1983), for instance, drawing her explanation from object-relation theory, links the death images that run through Bataille's work on eroticism with the formation of the male sexual identity in a patriarchal society. The fear of intimacy with the mother's body, born from the threat of castration, would be resolved in the young boy by an insurmountable duality between self and "(m)other", duality that is "combative and hostile". Any further intimacy between self and other is considered threatening to the ego-boundaries and sexual identity of the male subject. The resolution of this threat can be operated either by the destruction or by the sublimation of the threatening other. To accept any union with the other (and particularly women) means that one reenacts the same processes that presided at the sexual formation of the subject, with the same fears and the same "pleasures". Masculine desire would be fraught with the desire to kill and the object of their desire would be indifferently "loved" or "killed". The language of the hunt that

parallels the language of desire would thus convey this double-bind situation whereby the hunter/man loves and kills the prey. The only good hunter-seducer is the one that manages to mediate between these two poles and his rewards are the symbols of this mediation.

Such a psychoanalytical approach, however, raises more questions than it solves. The universality of psychoanalytical concepts elaborated in the west and applied to other cultures has been contested. Such a view also raises the question of the place of women in the language of desire and their participation in the hunt. In chapter 3, we asserted that only a careful examination of cultural forms at the empirical level could lead to an assessment of the discursive practices surrounding gender. One can thus wonder how the metaphor of the hunt is organised in the signifying system of powwow regalia. Two main points can be made in this case. The hunting metaphor does not apply exclusively to the relation male to female. Feather ornaments which are exclusively male are organized according to a hierarchical order that privileges the eagle (and other predatory birds) over the turkey and hackle-feathers-bearing birds. This hierarchy parallels the relation of hunter to hunted. Secondly, although it was possible to show that the metaphor of the hunt was embedded in the dress code of women, most of the signs that define them as women place them outside of the dichotomy hunter/hunted, such as shawls and, in a different manner, shells. The second part of my interpretation will thus bear upon the questions raised by these two points.

2. The conqueror and the conquered.

The dichotomy between hunting and hunted animals provides a hierarchy which governs the categories of male dancers. Male Traditional Dancers decorate their regalia with predatory birds. These ornaments are enhanced by the addition of claws, arrow-shaped objects (the "horns" of the bustle, the rays of reflecting mirrors). The choreography of these dancers often imitates the cautious steps of the hunter or of the warrior. Traditional dancers are unmistakably linked to hunting and warfare.

I have shown that the most celebrated of the predatory birds, the eagle derived its symbolic appeal not only from its predatory nature but from its ability to keep its killing nature in check. Through this it was possible to show that hunters/warriors were not seen as the wanton killers that their practice entailed, but resolved one of the contradictions of the life of men of the time: how to reconcile the destructive power of the war and the hunt and their roles as fathers and lovers. The signs of the hunter are not those of a killer but of one who has successfully resolved this contradiction through sacrifice. This sacrifice is, in the case of the eagle, the sacrifice of the desire to kill and the sacrifice of reproductive might and sexual potency. The contemporary eagle is represented as "soaring" or perched on the Tree of Life and its soaring flight is likened to a "liberating" flight. As symbol of protection and strength, it has become a metaphor for the continuity of "Indian" values. It is the tutelary bird of ceremonial events and transcends gender divisions, when worn as headdress. However, because it is also the "warrior", in a contemporary context, it is still the bird that encodes men's prestige as "conqueror".

Fancy male dancers have outfits that are associated with birds signifying reproductive might and sexual potency. Despite the comparatively recent appearance of the Fancy outfit in the cultural forms of North American Indians, it was shown that its emergence seemed to obey a nineteenth century dichotomy between "ground birds" such as the turkey and "sky birds" such as eagles. A second dichotomy can thus be established between the (phallic) sexual might of the gobbler and the sacrificial power of the eagle.

On the other hand, Fancy outfits were elaborated in the context of a new practice in Indian Dances on the Plains. The social character of the new dances was emphasized in contrast with the ceremonial character of others. But it is, in my opinion, the presence of white spectators in the performing practices of Indian men which produced a radical rearrangement of male costumes, rearrangement that was based on a new social practice whereby the power of men was not anymore defined in terms of their achievement in the hunt or the war but was due to their seductive character. The disappearance, from the first

Fancy outfits, of any sign of what in the past had signified their social achievement signals the loss of a prestige linked to the sacrificial and mediating power of the eagle feather. Hence in the first Fancy outfits, the absence of eagle feather, or of furs of predatory animals.

The opposition between hunted and hunter, that parallels that of the eagle and the turkey, in the male outfits, signifies the moral obligation of sacrifice in "sexual" terms but also in political terms. The freedom and lofty flight of the eagle, opposed to the grounded and domesticated nature of the turkey feather plays on an opposition that is politically connoted, within the context of the dis-empowerment of Indian men at the end of last century and the beginning of this century. But this opposition is also signified in the sexual meanings of the outfits. Whereas the Fancy dancer's bustle displays signs of masculinity and femininity, that constitute its seductive character, the Traditional Dancer's bustle shuns signs of sexual mediation. I would thus argue that the contemporary distinction between feathers worn by Traditional male dancers and feathers worn by Fancy male Dancers enter into a signifying system that plays at both levels, the sexual and the political and proclaims the supremacy of one over the other.

The redundancy of signs of masculinity on the Traditional bustle (which are also signs of its sacrifice of a phallic might) makes it "straight", both in moral terms and in sexual terms. The Traditional male regalia thus proclaim that unless one shuns the power of seduction, one cannot attain a "real power", ie the power of the political arena. The language of (male) desires is incompatible with the language of political empowerment, for it transforms the hunter into the hunted. Yet, is it possible to say that the Traditional Dancer's costume does not seduce? We have seen, in chapter 4, how the bustle of Traditional dancers had been reshaped on the Fancy bustle. The straight language of political empowerment (the language of the hunter-conqueror) covers in fact a language that speak of seduction. But this seduction, in contrast with that of the Fancy Dancer, provides the means and justifications for the empowerment of males, empowerment that silences the

role of women in the negotiation of meanings with the dominant society. This^{is} why it is, in my opinion, crucial to examine the place of women in these processes.

Signs of femininity, as well, mark the position of womenⁱⁿ the language of desire. But instead of responding to the male language of the hunt, women mostly wear ornaments that signify wealth. Of course, shawls and shells could be associated with "natural" signs of femininity. There is some evidence which associates shells with male and female fertility. The association of fringes with "grass" and of berries with beads may be an indication of former links between the concepts of production and of reproduction. However, they were also part of a system of exchange that contributed to the welfare and prestige of the whole community. The position of women as makers of commodities and their place in the economy of durable goods ensured both the possibility of exchange through rituals or the continuation of a native economy through a commodity market. This certainly does not mean that seduction did not take place in the 19th century or before. However, although we have indications of the meanings of decoration in the male outfit, ethnographies of 19th century Native peoples are silent on the meanings of feminine decorations. This, in part, is due to the cultural biases of ethnographers of the time, but it is also partly due to the fact that female outfits were not "spectacular" and thus did not attract the attention of commentators (Pakes, 1985:8). But it is precisely this inconspicuous appearance that should be taken as a challenge for further research.

In contemporary terms, in a impoverished environment, the only resources available are sometimes the "baby cheques" and mothers allowance. Beatrice Medicine (1981: 20) asserts that in many native communities "Indian men most often frequent the homes of their female consort during the first part of the month when... welfare checks are distributed". The erratic nature of wage-labour for men compared to the relative economic power of women constitute a place where power can still be exercised. Women's work in cottage industries that have been installed by a policy that encourages "arts and crafts" contributes

to the available income of native families on the reserve whereas the chronic unemployment of native men prevents them, in large measures, to assume a major economic role. The dignified and stately appearance of Traditional women Dancers, wearing their shawls, beaded pouches, elk teeth and shell decoration, are the symbolic and aesthetic mediators that construct women as producers (and mothers).

To assign to signs of femininity a place in the economy of male desires without recognizing the importance of the symbolism of "wealth" would misrecognize the positionality of women in the discourse on "Indianness". By defining "womanhood" in terms of prestige and wealth, women as well as men oppose the dominant western discourse that defines women as constructed through their sexuality. This is, in my opinion, one of the reasons why feminism, defined in terms of the problematics of white women, has not been accepted by Native women, who, however exploited as women in the general social context of their lives, do not see their position in the same terms. Furthermore, to define the position of native women in terms of their "sexual oppression", however well meaning, is to rob them of their positionality as economic brokers, written in their outfit.

The recent development of the (male) Grass Dancer regalia, which has adopted some of the aesthetic forms of the contemporary female regalia, indicates that the play on signs that construct gender is evolving toward the recognition of the role of women in the signifying economy of "Indianness". Read either as a literal appropriation of women's wealth or as a recognition of women's power through their economic role as producers (both can be present at the same time), it shows that native women have a place in the empowerment of Native peoples in general, a claim that has been theirs for a long time.

This last remark should, however, be specified. The last forty years have seen the diversification of women's regalia. Fancy Dancers and Traditional dancers wear ornaments that inscribe them in the language of the hunt with the adoption of mink and marten pelts. One of the conclusions that can be drawn from this gradual reworking of the female outfit

is that it indicates a growing alignment of the gender code within a masculine language of desires. As for male outfits, the contradictions brought by the encapsulation of native women in a western discourse on sexuality are visible in the changes and diversification of their dancing regalia.

The system of signification observed in the powwow regalia is thus not an "archaic" reflection of former symbolism. Neither is it an arrested one. The dynamics of the serious play of seduction allows a constant redefinition of sexual meanings that construct gender. The multiple levels of signification which construct gender are the loci where the contradictions in the contemporary life of men and women are played out. The popularity of the powwow, and of the donning of powwow regalia, resides, in my opinion, in this ongoing process that allow both native men and native women to play out the contradictions of their life.

3. Suggestions for Further Research.

In the preceding concluding remarks, I have pointed at several key points in my reading of powwow regalia. One of them stresses the importance of an historical reading of signs of femininity and masculinity. This history of cultural forms and of signifying practices show that, far from being cast in a monolithic separate discourse on what it is to be an "Indian" or what it is to be a woman and a man, the two interpenetrate each other. In this respect, my conclusions belong to a body of work that attempt to show that sex and gender are part and parcel of any political economy of signification. However, I hope to have shown that the dynamics of gender representation and gender practices is not the product of a universal principle whereby women found themselves dominated by men, by virtue of their "sex". Rather, it is in the complex positions of relative power that is attributed to each sex, symbolically as well as materially, that gender is constructed.

I should add, however, that my interpretation of the place of women in the symbolic system observable in powwow regalia needs further research at an empirical and theoretical

level. As was pointed out, female dress codes have not been the object of the attention that male apparel has attracted. Contemporary research on the symbolism of beads and "trinkets" (metallic objects) that decorated the dresses of women could lead the way in unravelling the gender meanings of the nineteenth century female outfits (Hamell, 1987). My hypothesis - that women's self-decoration posited them as producers of goods and mothers and signified the importance of their place in the symbolic system of native parent cultures - has not attempted to unravel the relation between the concepts of production and reproduction in native cultures. This would require research at a theoretical level, as well as a careful examination of historical material in museums and the ethnographic literature. Interviews with Jingle Dress Dancers and an ethnohistorical study of this dress could also yield information on the representation of gender.

I have indicated that, whatever was the former dynamics of gender signifying practices, the contact between Native populations of North America and European settlers had a major impact on the ways gender was defined among native peoples. Whether it is the gaze of white settlers that redefined signs of masculinity or the fundamental reworking of hunting practices in the 19th century during the fur trade period, I think that the study of powwow regalia has to take into account the nature of this contact. One of the directions of further research would consist in studying the history of Native self-decoration in parallel with the history of Western signifying practices that constructed the "gaze" of the colonizers. Although there is a wealth of studies on the "stereotyping" of "Indians", I do not think that they give a complete answer to the question constantly raised by their authors: "What is it that fascinated Whites about Indians?". Some answers are provided by the literature: as "representatives" of paradise lost, "Indians" were the signs of western damnation. As representatives of an unconquered wilderness, they were the instruments of western salvation through religious work or scientific research, in which I would place anthropology.

This, in my opinion, is certainly true, but I think that we need to go further than that. The "fascination" of white settlers, whether they considered native peoples as "savage" or as "noble", as "closer to nature" is one that also speak a language of desire. The "ethnographic present" which is one of the concrete discursive practices that is an instrument of "power/knowledge" developed by non-native institutions, has certainly put native peoples in a position where they became their "archaic signs" (Corrigan, 1988: 5). But it also inscribes native peoples in an economy of desire that needs to be unravelled. It is in this relation that the dynamics of contemporary native culture has to be studied, not in terms of the "preservation" or salvation of a culture that would have been kept unchanged or would have disappeared under the gaze of the colonizer.

This relation, which is historical in nature, could be, in my opinion, unravelled in two ways: one would attempt to understand the white "ways of seeing" Indians in the past hundred years. It is widely recognized that North American Indians have been the most widely photographed and filmed peoples of the world. Although numerous studies have relied on such photographs and films to denounce the detrimental effect of these technologies on perception of "Indians" (Albers, 1983; Blundell, 1989), an approach that studies the "language" of desires in a technology, which is above all voyeuristic, is still to come. Here, the theoretical input of feminist criticism could be used, that attempts to understand the role of the "gaze" of male spectators in the construction of western femininity and its relation to power in the modern "technologies of gender" (De Lauretis, 1987).

The second approach would attempt to see the major discursive practices at work in modes of representation of gender, in native cultures. I have attempted to do so in this thesis, through one public mode of signification, the powwow regalia. But other popular forms like story telling or song writing could help unravel the intertwining of sexual and political meanings. In this regard, further research could also be undertaken concerning personal narratives of hunting and narratives of courtship, which, although separated as

different "genres", could be indicative of changes and modifications in the representation of genders.

This last remark, however, leads to a question on which I will conclude a thesis which, for me, only signals the beginning of a research. My approach to continuity and changes in modes of signification has been to consider that "former" meanings were reworked and more or less consciously manipulated in order to construct oppositional forms to the dominant discursive gendered practices, providing, as such, an empowering position for both native men and women. My approach, however, does not provide an explanation for why certain ornaments have "lost" their former signification. Although it is still possible to see, for instance, that otter turbans and otter breastplates are still efficient in the language of desires between genders, it is nevertheless obvious that their symbolic function in the renewal of life and in the cosmology of hunting practices is not perceived by contemporary native performers. How much, then, can we read into the ornaments that seem to be there as "traces" of former signifying systems? Fragmentary evidences and contradictory meanings, that are the "stuff" on which discursive practices are built, call for a theoretical approach that would show the workings of history within the workings of the codes.

APPENDIX 1 : ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1

Male Traditional Dancer at the 1987 Wikwimikong Powwow.
Photographed by author.

Male Fancy Dancers at the 1987 Wikwimikong Powwow. Photographed by author.

Illustration 3

Grass Dancer at the 1987 Wirwimikong Powwow. Photographed by author.

Illustration 4

Group of female Traditional Dancers circling the Drum Arbour
at the 1987 Wikwimikong Powwow. Photograph by author.

Illustration 5

Group of female Fancy Dancers at the 1987 Six Nations Powwow;
Note the stylised feathers of ribbon applique on dancer's moccasins
(first and fourth from right). Photograph by author.

Illustration 6

Group of Jingle Dress Dancers at the 1987 Wikwimikong Powwow
(photographed by author).

Illustration 7

Traditional Dancer's bustle, photographed by author at the 1987
Wikwimikong Powwow.

Illustration 8

Fancy Dancer's bustle, photographed by author at the 1987 Wikwimikong Powwow.

Illustration 9

Omaha warriors with war honor decorations, the Crow belt and war bonnet. 27th Annual Report (Fletcher and Laflesche, 1911). National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (with permission).

Illustration 10

One of the first Fancy Dancers, Standard Wilde, ca 1927. Note the "Eulu" headdress and the arm and wrist bustles. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (with permission).

Illustration 11

Tsha'-Ka'-Ne-Ma, Sac and Fox, wearing Otter fur turban and Hairpipe breastplate (date unknown, probably end of 19th Century). Denver Art Museum (with permission).

Illustration 12

Sioux man (1899) with Otter necklace worn over an Hairpipe breastplate
laid out horizontally. Southwest Museum, Los Angeles (with permission).

Illustration 13

Two men standing, Omaha (ca 1898). National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (with permission)

Illustration 14

Traditional Dancer wearing an Otter Turban surmounted by a short roach.
Photographed by the author at the Six Nations Powwow in 1967.

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