INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI®
RICE UNIVERSITY

"Going Native" in the Twentieth Century

by

Dorothy A. Fontaine

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

Doctor of Philosophy

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:

Wesley A. Morris
Professor and Chair, English

Walter W. Isle
Professor, English
Clarence L. Carter Distinguished Service Professor
Associate Provost

Stephen Tyler
H. S. Autrey Professor, Anthropology

Houston, Texas

May, 2001
ABSTRACT

"Going Native" in the Twentieth Century

by

Dorothy A. Fontaine

Originally a pejorative label assigned to someone who has left a structured, civilized, sophisticated society for one (presumably) less responsible, less structured, and less industrious than the original, going native seems deceptively simple to define in its implications. However, it raises critical questions about one's sense of self within a group or nationality, opening up new categories within old oppositions. As the term's pejorative nature seems to continue to moderate, this text seeks to find the spaces in which the term "going native" places itself in the writing and film of the 1900's.

The term is originally a British term for a phenomenon that touches all historical multicultural contacts and clashes. I am looking at a one-way street in examining this term: the characters involved were all created (in the case of fiction) or born (in the non-fiction examples) Anglo-American or British but found their ways into cultural settings that these two particular cultures find extremely foreign and mysterious.

The Introduction looks briefly at the Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* to find a space for the idea of going native as well as looking the linguistic construction itself, its issues for Anthropology, and transculturation.
Chapter One looks at the personality of the new native in Sokolov’s *Native Intelligence*, Tidwell’s *Amazon Stranger* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (as well as Roeg’s film of Conrad’s novella and Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*). Chapter Two examines the texts and films about Archie Belaney/Grey Owl and why a white man at the turn of the century would want to trade a white racial identity for that of an Indian at a time of such social disparity between the races. Chapter Three examines the intersection of going native and treason, focusing on Harry St. John Bridger Philby, Kim Philby, Galsworthy’s *Forsyte Saga* and the writings of Rebecca West. The final chapter looks at an extreme of going native—going feral—(where the new native joins another species rather than another culture) through Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing* and the story of Dian Fossey.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Rice University English Department for being open to the bewildering variety of research possibilities that I presented to them as I searched for an area to ponder in detail. I was never discouraged from exploring any topic or text I proposed and I appreciate the intellectual freedom that afforded me.

My thanks to Bonnie Tebbetts and Spike Gildea, formerly of Rice University, for lending me great books, including Sokolov’s *Native Intelligence*.

I would like to thank Mike Tidwell for his response to an e-mail from a total stranger asking for suggestions of books on people in the Peace Corps who might be perceived to have gone native. He seemed moderately embarrassed to refer me to his own work but I was delighted and remain grateful to have read his version of the remarkable story of Randy Borman.

My thanks, too, to Professor Donald B. Smith of the University of Calgary’s History Department. I had read his meticulously-crafted biography of Grey Owl and knew that there was a television documentary available on Grey Owl using Professor Smith’s title but I was unable to locate a copy either through the CBC or The National Film Board of Canada. When I e-mailed Professor Smith to see if he knew of a source for this documentary, he immediately and graciously offered to lend me a videocassette of the documentary in question plus that of another he had about Grey Owl. Both documentaries were absolutely crucial to
my understanding of Grey Owl's persona and I cannot thank Professor Smith enough for being so generous with an unknown fellow scholar.

My final thanks go to the community surrounding me in Frogtown, Virginia: to the parents who invited my wonderful but distracting son to visit, took him to church with them, drove him to hockey and Cub Scouts, and kept him the occasional night to give me time to think and write, and to my husband, John, who lovingly provided me with perseverance when mine seemed totally spent.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .................................................................................. ii

Acknowledgements ................................................................. iv

Introduction ............................................................................... 1

Chapter One: Finding Kurtz ....................................................... 29

Chapter Two: Race and Going Native:
The Story of Archie Grey Owl ..................................................... 70

Chapter Three: The Issue of Treason ......................................... 99

Chapter Four: Going Feral ........................................................ 131

Conclusion ............................................................................... 164

Works Cited .............................................................................. 167
Introduction

The colonial British colonel admonishing his troops in the African heat to maintain themselves properly and not “go Fantee”, and *Heart of Darkness*’ Marlow’s admiration for the chief accountant’s fastidious personal grooming in the depths of Africa (“... in the great *demoralization* of the land he kept up his appearance”) (28, italics mine) both carry within themselves the concept that, in a particular kind of foreign setting, one’s values and behaviour can “slip”. The troops and the readers—indeed all civilized people—are being warned of the danger of “going native”: succumbing to the attraction of an uncivilized or primitive culture. A pejorative label assigned to someone who has left a structured, civilized, sophisticated society for one (presumably) less responsible, less structured, and less industrious than the original, going native seems deceptively simple to define in its implications. However, it raises critical questions about one’s sense of self within a group or nationality, opening up new categories within old oppositions.

This text seeks to find the spaces in which the term “going native” places itself in the writing and film of the 1900’s. This term is, necessarily, an English—indeed, a profoundly British—term for a phenomenon that touches all historical multicultural contacts and clashes. I am looking at a one-way street in examining this term: from English language and culture to some Other. The characters involved were all created (in the case of fiction) or born (in the non-fiction
examples) Anglo-American or British but found their ways into cultural settings that these two particular cultures find extremely foreign and mysterious.

This text also raises questions that cannot be answered in absolutes. One cannot simply create a detailed list of criteria for going native (dress in a new way, eat strange foods, marry a native, speak a new language) and determine, based on some mathematical formula of percentage change per criterion, where or not someone has truly "gone native". That said, Mike Tidwell did express the three key elements for going native in his book *Amazon Stranger*: language; dress; and cultural knowledge (25). It is the depth of commitment to and knowledge of each of these three criteria that determines whether or not someone has "earned" the status of having gone native. Since "going native" has usually been a derogatory term applied by someone from outside the new native's situation, it can have more to say about the speaker (and his or her concomitant preconceptions and prejudices) than the one to whom it is being applied.

**Defining Our Terms**

There has been a definite broadening in the connotations of going native since the beginning of the century. A term of derision for those who did not have the willpower, strength of character or sense of self to maintain a colonialist's superior persona in the early 1900's, it has expanded to become an element of idiomatic English. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "going native" as passing "into a certain condition. Chiefly implying deterioration" (VI: 623). Since
the OED concerns itself more with long-term language patterns and meanings and less with slang or minor variants, the connotation of the colonial era may seem sufficient to cover the nuances of this term. This focus, however honourable over a long span of time, leaves out much of the current richness of this term.

There are a number of uses of the term within the popular culture sphere. "Going native" has become an acceptable light-hearted analysis of one's vacation from a nine-to-five job: "What did you do on your holiday?" "Oh, we just flew to the islands and went native for a couple of weeks." The vacationers' lives have hardly "deteriorated" in any meaningful way as the OED definition would have us expect. That they "went native" is an acceptable exaggeration in the vernacular to describe a holiday with few responsibilities and plenty of time to soak up the sun. It is used most often when the speaker has vacationed in the tropics, evoking Gauguin-like South Sea fantasies of relaxation and sensual living. In 1999 Seventeen magazine, a fashion magazine for teenage girls, ran a photo feature of casual clothing with a Native American flavour and entitled it "Going Native". The clothes in the article were (supposedly) reminiscent of the dress of aboriginal peoples. The Wall Street Journal, a journalistic mainstay of American culture and business, has used the term casually to describe U.S. firms establishing overseas concerns. Going native is clearly evolving into a less-threatening cultural term, losing its ability to insult in the process.

Although the linguistic construction of go + native has expanded to cover a number of other situations and, in this process, has lost quite a bit of its
pejorative flavour, evolving associated constructions still maintain the negativity inherent in the original use of the earlier term. If a worker in the entertainment industry "goes Hollywood" it is understood, in a pejorative way, to indicate a change in his or her attitude towards life. Presumably a "nice" all-American girl or boy has been corrupted by the high fashion, see-and-be-seen superficial culture of moviemaking and has lost balance in his or her life. Image has become of paramount importance and substance of character has become superfluous: old friends who do not share these new values are summarily dropped; new friends are nothing more than relationships of convenience for furthering a career; those who do not share these new, improved values are considered hopelessly provincial and out-of-touch. To those who lament the deterioration of the character of this new native, both the person involved and the environment share the blame for such a character change. Those on the outside of the Hollywood world often partly excuse the change because of the inevitability of being swallowed up by the Hollywood machine. The new self-important person is seen as a victim of a system inherently evil and necessarily corrupting. There is little, if any, choice involved in this change. The same fatalistic view of love marketed in American books and films—one is helpless and without power in the face of love—seems to extend to this change in character. The new native receives an absolution of fault but still must live with his or her former community's disapproval and judgement.

A similar criticism is leveled at a former rebel who "goes Establishment". This is a charge of which former hippies from the 1960's and 1970's are likely to
be accused. Unable to establish the societal change they hoped to effect through a counter-culture movement, those who “go establishment” put on conventional suits and get conventional jobs in the mainstream marketplace. Some may indeed be continuing to try to bring about change from inside the system while others may have abandoned the hope of change altogether and just decided to fit into society as it now exists. Despite the philosophical differences of the two groups, both are subject to the charge of having “gone Establishment”.

An American variation that has not made it into the OED is the action of “going postal”. This expression came about due to a number of incidents involving disgruntled or former U.S. postal workers taking guns to their local post offices and running amok, firing at co-workers and customers for no apparent or immediate reasons. The term exists today in the vernacular to describe a violent lashing-out against a Thoreau-like “quiet desperation” of a life. When a worker, usually perceived as a minimum-wage worker, feels his or her personal desperation and hopelessness rising, and his or her dissatisfaction with a dead-end job situation becoming intolerable, the worker is likely to snap and irrationally turn to violence to release the pressure. This is the action of “going postal”. Due to the vagaries of American English, even though random violence is not an unknown social reaction to this level of frustration, the post office incidents are the ones that have directed the lexicon. Indeed, in 1995 “The American Dialect Society voted “go postal” the most original new phrase of the year”.¹ It now

appears fairly regularly in newspaper articles in the United States, indicating that editors feel confident that the average reader is comfortable with the term and understands its meaning.

It becomes clear, then, that English continues to pick up idioms with the structure of go + adjective/noun² to describe a personal shift in perspective or behaviour that is not a socially valued or a socially sanctioned shift. The movement signaled by the use of the verb “go” is clearly not a physical movement but an emotional or spiritual movement, a movement of one’s internal being. It is a movement of scission, not of coming together. The pejorative flavour of the expression is inherent in the use of a verb of departure, not a verb of arrival.

If the “go” + noun construction had an oppositional construction in English of “come” + noun there could be an entirely new dimension to this concept of crossing cultures. If one “came” to be native, the negativity of the idea would be submerged under social approval. As an example, it might be useful to look at *Dances With Wolves.*,³ the novel by Michael Blake and the blockbuster movie starring Kevin Costner. In the movie, the first two Sioux that visit Lt. Dunbar, Wind in his Hair and Kicking Bird, react to him from two opposing positions. Wind in His Hair is contemptuous and suspicious of Dunbar and thinks the Sioux

---

² It is usually go + noun. There is, however, limited use of the structure with adjectives such as “go postal” (described above) or “go batty” to describe a frustrating situation that is causing someone to feel overwhelmed and confused.

³ The movie is a period piece from the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865). My focus in this text was to be on twentieth century examples of going native and, despite the period depicted in this movie, it still is. *Dances With Wolves* is a movie with 1990s sensibilities in multiculturalism and the contemporary need to expiate white guilt for previous wrongs collectively done to the native peoples of this continent.
could perform no better task than to kill him outright. Kicking Bird is more cautious, more curious about the soldier all by himself on the prairie. The viewers have already seen that Kicking Bird and Dunbar are men of similar souls. In wonder at the immensity and beauty of the prairie, we have seen Dunbar walking in the hip-high grasses, unconsciously allowing the seed heads to caress his open, flat palms as he circles to gaze in all directions around him. Breathing in the peace of the air, he is also grounding himself in the feel of the grasses and the earth. Soon after their first encounter (when Kicking Bird has tried to steal Dunbar’s horse, Cisco), Kicking Bird needs to think through the phenomenon of this lone white man, and he wanders in the prairie himself, echoing the palm-to-grasses caress of Lt. Dunbar. There is a spiritual connection between these men of different cultures and as Dunbar spends more time with the Lakota Sioux and less time in his lonely fort, it is Kicking Bird who serves as surrogate father/brother to Dunbar. It may be Stands With a Fist who acts as language liaison for the Sioux and Dunbar, but it is Kicking Bird who is the spiritual guide and mentor for Dunbar’s understanding of the people’s lifestyles and values. He is the cultural broker between the Sioux and Dunbar, foreshadowing Dunbar’s later hope to act as an intermediary between the Sioux and their inevitable encounters with white settlers and the American government*. If there were a situation of “coming” native, the Kicking Bird-Dunbar relationship would exemplify it. Kicking Bird is patient, curious, and open to Dunbar’s questions. His

*For a detailed and absorbing interpretation of the various roles of cultural brokers in this kind of encounter, see Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker by Margaret Connell Szasz.
acceptance of Dunbar relaxes the rest of the village and they deal with the newcomer with trust, too, accepting his questions and explaining things to him. When Dunbar and Stands With a Fist want to marry, the entire community is approving and supportive. Kicking Bird comes to admire Dunbar's journey to find himself and there is no hint that Kicking Bird would consider Dunbar a traitor to his own kind in coming to a Sioux way of life: it is simply the man's chosen path. This is, of course, in sharp contrast to later in the film when Dunbar is "captured" by the new garrison of soldiers at the fort. "Gone Injun, ain't ya?" leers a private in the army, a man so personally repulsive that the good Indian/bad whiteman juxtaposition of the film is fully realized. All the private understands is that an officer is in trouble and he takes pleasure in that. He cannot see that Dunbar has not "gone" anywhere—he has "come" home to himself. This monocular view of Dunbar's situation underscores the inadequacy of English in dealing with this crossing over. Perhaps those who do "go" native, away from their own societies do, also, "come" native into their new, but those new societies are not the ones that level the "going native" charge at the person crossing over. It is an expression aimed at one leaving home not an expression of welcome to a new home.

Is it Possible to Go Native?

Mid century, Albert Memmi wrote a seminal and remarkably non-judgmental work exploring the inequities of his society in Tunis under French
control. As he struggles with the complexities of a multi-layered society
subjugated under a colonial power he explores the power relationships and finds
them much more interdependent than a lesser mind would have admitted. He
sees transculturation taking place with both the culturally-uniform colonizer and
the diverse colonized in his home country and can distance himself enough to
see not only the disadvantages of the colonized in a colonial situation but also
those of the colonizers.

Memmi allows for two portraits of the colonizer: one who accepts and one
who refuses. The colonizer who accepts arrives in his country’s colony to do a
job—foreign service, trade, administration—and remains to do that job, aloof
from personal relationships with, and the issues of, the local people. If he sees
inequities in the treatment of the natives either he condones them as the natural
result of the natives’ inferiority in the face of the values of the colonial power or
he shrugs and turns away:

If his living standards are high, it is because those of the colonized
are low; if he can benefit from plentiful and undemanding labor and
servants, it is because the colonized can be exploited at will and are not
protected by the laws of the colony; if he can easily obtain administrative
positions, it is because they are reserved for him and the colonized are
excluded from them; the more freely he breathes, the more the colonized
are choked. While he cannot help discovering this, there is no danger that
official speeches might change his mind, for those speeches are drafted
by him or his cousin or his friend. The laws establishing his exorbitant
rights and the obligations of the colonized are conceived by him. As for
orders which barely veil discrimination, or apportionment after competitive
examinations and in hiring, he is necessarily in on the secret of their
application, for he is in charge of them. If he preferred to be blind and
deaf to the operation of the whole machinery, it would suffice for him to
reap the benefits; he is then the beneficiary of the entire enterprise.

It is impossible for him not to be aware of the constant illegitimacy
of his status. It is, moreover, in a way, a double illegitimacy. A foreigner,
having come to a land by the accidents of history, he has succeeded not
merely in creating a place for himself but also in taking away that of the inhabitant. . . .
He is a privileged being and an illegitimately privileged one; that is, a usurper. Furthermore, this is so, not only in the eyes of the colonized but in his own as well. (8-9).

The colonizer who accepts may recognize his illegitimacy in the society but is unwilling to give up his privileges. He is in the colony to make his fortune and more than likely is planning to return to the metropole when that fortune is made. Those plans can change, however, in the face of economic realities. "How can he return to his homeland," he asks himself, "if this would mean cutting his standard of living in half? Go back to the viscous slowness of progress at home?" (5). Not only does one's pay not go as far back home but, with so much competition, promotions are few and far between. The colonizer unwittingly sets himself up as a permanent alien resident, unwilling to release privilege while simultaneously homesick for his birth country. In some cases, his family is with him in the colony and their social world is that of a transplanted metropole. They see other colonizers in settings and social gatherings reminiscent of their home country, the news they discuss is that from home, and their habits, diets and social mores are as close to those of home as can be arranged.

---

5 This is the position of Morgan Leafy (played by Colin Friels) in the film A Good Man in Africa, directed by Bruce Beresford (1994). A junior embassy bureaucrat posted to a fictitious African country that has recently gained independence, Leafy has few personally redeeming characteristics: he drinks; he womanizes (white or native); he frets for a transfer; and he has no respect whatsoever for the native population. By the end of the movie, the influence of a difficult and incorruptible white doctor, Alex Murray (Sean Connery), removes the blinders from his eyes and he happily resigns his post to try to work against government corruption. "Murray said I was in the wrong game," he muses, "Time to find a new one I think." Morgan is reformed from a colonizer who accepts into one that does not. Memmi would not find this a very likely scenario.
It is the colonizer who refuses that is the one with the potential to go native. This colonizer arrives in the colony to do a job but finds himself acutely aware of the inequities of the system:

It sometimes happens that a new arrival—astonished by the large number of beggars, the children wandering about half-naked, trachoma, etc., ill at ease before such obvious organization of injustice, revolted by the cynicism of his own fellow citizens (“Pay no attention to poverty! You’ll see: you soon get used to it!”), immediately thinks of going home. Being compelled to wait until the end of his contract, he is liable to get used to the poverty and the rest. But it may happen that this man, whose only wish was to be a colonial, finds himself unfit for this role, and soon leaves (19).

If unable or unwilling to leave, Memmi sees a middle ground for this colonizer who refuses: “a position of principle. He may openly protest, or sign a petition, or join a group which is not automatically hostile toward the colonized” (20). This posture allows him to object on moral grounds but still accept his advantages as a colonizer (greater buying power, local inexpensive servants, enhanced social status) if he wishes⁶. If the middle ground is not enough for the colonizer who refuses, his compatriots come to see him as a victim of “humanitarian romanticism”. In his zeal to aid these people and help them out of the inequities of the colonial system, the refuser “is launching into an undeclared conflict with his own people which will always remain alive, unless he returns to the colonialist

---

⁶ Leafy is another half-step beyond this point at the end of the film but it is critical to note that William Boyd’s screenplay gives no indication that Leafy is someone likely to go native. He is white and will work against corruption and inequalities as a white man within a black country. This country is, of course, post-colonial and Leafy may find a position for himself there that Memmi, focusing on the pre-revolutionary situation, has not yet imagined. Memmi does acknowledge the possibility of living as a foreigner in a colony that has achieved independence as a “minor pseudosolution”: “. . . such an arrangement is destined to be worn down by history,” Memmi maintains, “One can scarcely see why the memory of unjust privileges would be sufficient to guarantee their permanence” (150). He would expect Leafy to skip the country if his privileged infrastructure ceased to tend him and Memmi is sure that it would.
fold or is defeated" (21). For Memmi, humanitarian romanticism is "no more and no less than going over to the side of the enemy" (21) for a colonizer but Memmi exaggerates here. At this stage, the refuser is only guilty of emotional treason—he still has not acted to bring about the downfall of the colonial system that has brought him to this place. What makes him anathema to the other colonizers is that he is an annoying insect, buzzing around perfectly respectable colonial institutions and finding them wanting. He is articulating the very sentiments that they, in their initial fresh-off-the-boat naïveté, secretly hugged in their souls and knew to be true. He is publicly and rudely showing them their illegitimacy and this is what must be stopped. If he cannot cease his prattling, he will be socially ostracized, professionally compromised and, almost certainly, be expected to leave.

It is at this stage of his argument that Memmi both introduces, and very soon dismisses, the idea of a colonizer going native:

There are so few of those colonizers, even of extremely good will, who seriously consider following this path, that the actual problem is rather theoretical; but it is a problem of significance in terms of an accurate view of colonial life. To refuse colonization is one thing; to adopt the colonized and be adopted by them seems to be another; and the two are far from being connected (22-23).

The problem of going native is two-fold: the refuser must want to accept the colonized and their lifestyle but also he must be accepted himself by them.

Memmi sees the cultural gap as too wide between the groups for this kind of joint acceptance even to be possible, let alone feasible. No matter how open-minded each side considers itself, the other side's habits and likes and dislikes are seen as strange, even repulsive. It is at this level where we find the limit for the
Morgan Leafy character: finally willing to accept the Kinjanjan lifestyle as a valid way to live but not willing to live that lifestyle himself. Small adaptations are fine, even comfortable, but that is not his purpose. Leafy has no desire to go native; he only wants to right some political wrongs he has discovered and help the fledgling country get a less shaky start. Is Memmi right? Is going native only a theoretical option?

Embedded in Memmi's argument is the assumption that there can, ultimately, be only one possible resolution of colonial power: an inevitable revolution and a return to local power accompanied by the expulsion of the colonizers. Memmi contends that a colonizer cannot go native with the colonized because at the time of this inevitable revolution, despite his contributions to their well being and his connections to their lives, they will expel him as a colonizer. While this pattern has played itself out, with varying degrees of political success and stability, in former European colonies throughout Africa and Asia, this is not what happened in North American history. In North America, the colonists have entrenched themselves and their descendants to such a degree that, after 1900, there is no imaginable revolution that the indigenous peoples could wage to win back their territories. Going native in this political environment would rearrange Memmi's assumptions about one's inability to join the native culture.

As well, Memmi does allow a tiny window of opportunity for a few souls to cross over with credibility in the midst of declaring the entire issue a largely theoretical one. Some Europeans have gone native in the Middle East (Harry St. John Bridger Philby will be discussed in this context in Chapter 3 of this text) as
well as a fair number of whites crossing over into Native American cultures, particularly in North America. It is indeed possible to go native but, as Memmi suspects, it is correct to consider such a crossing an unusual situation.

What Does it Mean to “Go Native”?

If one chooses to divorce the term “going native” from its casual applications and try to pin down when it fits someone’s situation, what are the characteristics of one who has gone native? When a person is perceived to have left a literate heavily-structured society for a non-literate, less-structured society, that person is open to the charge of having gone native. It is immaterial whether or not the new culture really is non-literate or really is less-structured: only the perception of members of the original society matter. Outsiders see the process as an escape from, often a rejection of, one’s proper responsibilities and loyalties in one’s home country. Thus T. E. Lawrence’s affaire de coeur with the Middle East was seen as going native even though he was dealing with a highly literate and hierarchical society. The average Englishman back home could make no sense of Arabic writing that looked so much like artwork and not communication, nor could he relate to a society in which men wore robes and many people were nomadic. Despite the hierarchical complexities and long history of this culture, it was seen by many that Lawrence was succumbing to its romance and, in the process, losing his edge and character as an Englishman. The “non-literate” and “less-structured” merge with the concept of the exotic. Dangerously enticing, possibly sensual, this self-indulgent attraction to an exotic
lifestyle or society signals the supposed deterioration of the new native's character.

Going native usually begins as an unexpected personal journey. Unlike immigration in which the immigrant decides before departure that he or she will make a new life in a new culture, going native is usually an accident. There are many situations in which such an accident can happen: a traveler spends time in a new country and comes to feel more at home than at home; a traveler experiences a spiritual rebirth: a colonialist's eyes are opened to the true nature of his country's actions; an expatriate sees a greater possibility for success in life if approached from another perspective. The critical issue is intention. When going native, one is not usually seeking a new society in which to live. It usually happens that one finds unexpected connections with the new society and feels either irresistibly drawn to it or inordinately at home in it.

There are some other critical differences between the immigrant and the new native. An immigrant deliberately leaves his or her home to live in a foreign country. Unlike a long-term visitor (such as a missionary, Peace Corps volunteer, or an illegal alien seeking work), an immigrant makes the journey with the intention of leaving his homeland on a permanent basis. This journey is also not usually intended to be a solitary one. Members of the family are usually included in the plans and encouraged to come along. They may travel to or immigrate into another country for economic opportunity, to escape a civil war, to join a family member, or any number of other reasons, but still intend to maintain themselves as themselves in that new country. There is no overt intention to
radically change their religious beliefs or personal opinions. They intend to adapt, perhaps assimilate gradually, but not to totally lose the selves known to them at the outset. The intent is to take oneself elsewhere but not to take that elsewhere into oneself.

With the physical baggage of moving a household comes the mental, emotional, and spiritual baggage of the immigrant family. Rather than a rejection of the home country, immigrants bring that home country with them in their language, attitudes, customs, diet, and religion. The first generation of the immigrant family is more home country than host country. The second generation struggles with trying to accommodate an inexperienced past valued by its parents while making its way within what seems as natural a society to them as it seems foreign to the previous generation. It is the third generation that counts itself of the new country and is indignant at implications of being less loyal to this “new” country because of family history. This third generation is the solid citizenry, the first generation in a position to fully assimilate, and is the unspoken goal of the original migration two generations before.

Naturally, people in a new environment adapt to a certain extent and will adopt small, external customs in their host countries and still not be open to the charge of going native. Speaking the local language or dialect, participating in local festivals, eating local foods do not constitute going native unless there is also a strong emotional, spiritual or personal bonding with and practise of local social customs on a daily basis. Christian missionaries do not go native⁷, no

---

⁷ Of course, there are always exceptions to such a sweeping statement. In *Lives Between Cultures: A Study of Human Nature, Identity and Culture*, Richard M. Swiderski relates the stories
matter how long they may stay abroad. They are purveyors of their home culture: bringing a new religion to another culture, they also hope to instill the values of their own culture in the process. They may live on foreign soil most of their lives but they still maintain customs, ties and attitudes from home and, indeed, pass those values on to their children born on foreign soil.

While the series of small accommodations to the local culture do not make one go native, the degree of participation and level of commitment to those customs could lead one on such a path. In this fashion, the person who goes native is usually taken unawares. In Blake’s novel, Dunbar, extremely lonely, gradually spends more time in the Sioux village. He arrives there one day to find that his friends have put up a structure for him to live in when he is visiting and he is grateful both for the convenience of not having to ride back and forth to the fort so often and for the trust inherent in this generous gesture. Dunbar, curious, finds himself learning as much Sioux as he teaches English. When he finds that the people have a Sioux name for him, he is touched that they are beginning to accept him as part of the community. There is, indeed, no single point at which one could point to Dunbar’s evolution and say that this was where he switched over and yet the final product of his being is clearly Lakota Sioux and not white.

---

of James Hudson Taylor and Roberto de Nobili both of whom, as missionaries, made highly controversial lifestyle choices and adaptations in their attempts to bring alien cultures to God. They largely went native in everyday life but continued to try to convert others to Christianity. Swiderski’s is an interesting collection of stories but he shies away from the true issue of going native and the personal and public ramifications of such a conversion. Some of his study subjects perpetrated frauds rather than truly committed to a new culture (for example, Princess Caraboo of Javasoo, a British maidservant who pretended in the 1800’s to be a South Sea Island royal, complete with obscure language and pagan rituals).

* The American author and Nobel Prize winner Pearl Buck, raised in China, is an example of this situation. Randy Borman, discussed in Chapter 1 of this text, is an exception.
The reason is that going native is not a destination, not a final existential resting point.

The journey to going native is, as well, non-linear. There is no steady progression of change, no predictable pattern to follow. Before the buffalo hunt in the movie, Dunbar keeps himself separate from the Sioux as they prepare for the hunt. The viewer feels his loneliness but is not totally privy to the facts. In Blake's novel, it is clear that Dunbar maintains his distance out of confusion: the Sioux that day had led a raid and killed a group of white hunters to avenge the hunters' wasteful and disrespectful slaughter of buffalo earlier in the day. As a white man, Dunbar cannot condone the murder of the whites. As a fair man, he cannot condemn the Sioux for their sense of balance and justice. He is still apart from the Sioux, but he is also growing away from the whites. The buffalo hunt itself the next day is one turning point for Dunbar. Exhilarated by his participation and comradeship during and after the hunt, he is lonely and wistful once he returns to his fort alone. He is beginning to yearn for the life of a Sioux warrior. Even once he is accepted by the tribe, however, he is still slow to be totally candid with Kicking Bird about the inevitable white migration across the plains ("Maybe my sense of duty," he muses to himself), showing that he still recognizes his military persona as the one to which he owes the greatest allegiance. Dunbar fulfills one of Memmi's requirements necessary for conversion: Memmi demands a "moral hero" and Dunbar is just that. His is the personality and nature that can overcome the two-fold problem to both accept the natives and be accepted by them.
Does the process of becoming increasingly adaptable and flexible in relation to another culture create a hybrid on its way to being a new native? Are the people themselves also hybrids or just adaptable? If the new native is a hybrid, that is only one possible level of commitment to the new culture out of many possibilities. Hybridity implies an almost equal influence of each of the factors—or cultures—that goes into the hybrid's characteristics. One actually goes native on a continuum, on one end of which is the xenophobic extreme of one's birth culture and the other end of which is the new culture's xenophobic extreme. Depending on a person's adaptations of language, dress and cultural knowledge, he or she may land at any number of positions on that continuum. The key issue is, still, how that new native is perceived. In observer groups that are severely xenophobic, it may take very little change in a person's outlook or tastes to earn him or her derision for going native. In other groups that have regular contact with diverse cultures, it may take a significant level of adaptation to the new culture for them to acknowledge such a change. There is room, therefore, for a person to be labelled as having gone native without a substantial personal change (although that is unlikely). What is likely is that someone may be so labelled before realizing the extent of the change in himself or herself that precipitated the label. One can be alienated in one's own culture, go native in another and still feel separate from others within that new culture. Since every human being, however fully socialized, feels some alienation within his or her culture, the separateness one feels after having gone native in the new culture may indeed be analogous to, or less than, the alienation originally felt in the
home culture. The issue is, however, that everyone—regardless of position on the continuum—is going to feel separated from his or her fellows at some time or another. A feeling of separation from the new culture, then, cannot be seen as evidence that someone has not gone native: if one is accepted by the new culture, there exists a new native.

The question that comes to the fore is, of course, what is the difference between going native and transculturation? The most immediate difference is the emphasis or lack of emphasis on the individual in each of these two conditions. The solitary nature of the person who goes native and his/her separate condition in the ‘new’ culture has already been discussed. Transculturation is, however, a social phenomenon. While every social phenomenon is necessarily composed of individual elements (in this case a wide variety of people adapting to another culture on various levels and to varying degrees), transculturation is essentially socially driven while going native is individually so. Transculturation assumes a certain level of mass hybridity in the ambient society. Mary Louise Pratt notes that ethnographers use the term to express a relationship between groups, “to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture” (6). The pidgins developed, the customs adopted or adapted, are socially constructed, however at random and chaotic the “results”

\footnote{I use the term “results” loosely here. Adaptations of custom, language, trade, familial relationships, etc. between two cultures that find themselves inhabiting the same physical territory are always adjusting to the needs of the two cultures and their shifting emotional and power relationships.}
contact zone that results in the metropolitan centre belittling the barbarism and lack of polish (most pronounced in language and manners) of the transculturated. The natives of the marginal groups are much less sophisticated than those of the metropole. In a mirroring of metropole contempt, the natives of the margin are disgusted with the metropole’s emphasis on tradition and social status and their seeming inability to constantly adapt to changing conditions. The metropole’s inflexibility and adherence to outmoded social structures is what later begins to turn these marginalized natives into dogged revolutionaries.

Is going native a necessary outgrowth of living in a contact zone? Not at all. Individual differences of character and circumstance are more significant in creating a new native than the social interaction of a contact zone. Can going native be an outgrowth of living in a contact zone? Most assuredly. Lt. Dunbar moves to the frontier because he wants to “see it before it disappears” and he sets out to maintain his army outpost strictly according to army regulations. His does not seem to be much of a contact zone. Prairie stretches for miles in all directions, uninterrupted by farms or settlements. He is limited to a sod house and shack arrangement near a foul pond that is his only source of fresh water. His orders are to keep an eye on the local Indians but he cannot find any for some time. When they find him, they steal his horses and he fires his gun at them. It is only when he rescues one of their own, Stands With a Fist, from her own suicide and carries her back to their camp that several leaders of the tribe begin to try to establish a relationship with Dunbar. It is a contact zone of one
soldier and a tribe of Lakota Sioux. Pratt emphasizes the inequality of most contact zones:

... the term “contact zone” which I use to refer to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. (6)

In Dunbar's case, the "coercion" and "intractable conflict" do not seem to be forthcoming. He is anxious to make friends and anxious to establish communications with the Sioux. Michael Blake's script endeavours to make Dunbar the anti-imperialist because of his deep need to make friends with and understand the natives. Those other whites who are coming west, those other whites who do not understand the nuances of proper respect for other cultures, are the close-minded, coercive imperialists who, with a deep moral sense of purpose and righteousness, will subjugate the native peoples and attempt to eradicate them. Their cruder counterparts are represented by the disgusting muleskinner who spits and scratches his way across the prairie and delivers Dunbar to his isolated post. The muleskinner is rewarded for his insensitivity and lack of connection to the land soon afterwards by being murdered by the natives and left under the open sky to rot. Their official counterparts are represented by the western colonel who sends Dunbar off to his lonely shack amid erratic giggling and incontinence. The officer's inability to adapt to conditions in his

---

10 In this case, the Pawnees. The us-and-them opposition is complicated in this film by the participation of two groups of natives: the Sioux and the Pawnee. As in Little Big Man, the Pawnee are cast as the "bad" natives and our heroes join the "good" natives (the Sioux and Cheyenne respectively). In Blake's novel, the "good" Indian tribe concerned is the Comanche, culturally and politically a very different group from the Lakota Sioux of the movie.
remote posting and his inability to see the natives as anything but a monolithic nation to be systematically eliminated pushes him to a mental state that drives him to suicide.

Dunbar, however, is the romanticized good guy. His scripted character is a product of the multicultural mindset of the 1970's and on. Although he meets the initial contacts of the Lakotas with fear, he has the fortitude and emotional intelligence to see that the natives are human beings who are just like him. He would respond to hospitality so he reasons that they would too. Dunbar becomes the One, the Liaison, the Cultural Broker. He becomes the bridging figure between the two cultures despite his uniform. He is not, however, without blame in the growing migration of families west. The film glosses over the fact that Dunbar is the government-sanctioned vanguard of all the other whites who will assume that the Lakota are racially inferior and that will create that “intractable conflict” by limiting the nomadic people and animals of the prairie with solid, immovable farms. He is only the first wave.

Anthropology and the Danger of Going Native

Although popular culture has co-opted the term to sell clothing and add colour to the slang of news articles, it is a serious charge for a field anthropologist or ethnologist to be accused of going native. Inherent in the study of other cultures are the twin dangers of seeing too much through the filter of one’s own culture or rejecting the value of one’s home culture in favour of the one studied. In short, a scholar risks being blind to another culture or going
native in it. Seeing too much through one's own filter produced, in the early part of the twentieth century, ethnological data of the Inuit that focused almost completely on weapons, hunting techniques and travel and glossed over or excluded the day-to-day home life of the Inuit. Thus, scholars have available to them plenty of information about the masculine lives of the Inuit at the turn of the century but have had to do some serious work to recover the same amount of detail on meals, the making of clothing and family value systems—the domain of the women—from the same period. It would be absurd to imagine a mass conspiracy to exclude women from the studies of the time. It is simply an offshoot of the pervasive attitude of the society of those studying the Inuit that the men perform all of the interesting or significant duties in life and studying the women's roles in the society would not be as illuminating of the society as a whole. This understanding that all roles in a society need to be examined—gender roles, lifestyle choices, work habits, language, social taboos—to have some understanding of the coherence of a complete society has grown gradually as scholars in the field have acknowledged the complexity of many societies formerly considered simple and primitive.

The rejection of one's home culture is the other great risk involved in ethnographic or anthropologic fieldwork. Truly going native, in such a situation, is more than an increasing respect for and empathy with the new society. It is nothing short of an absolute loss of objectivity and balance in the observer.

In June, 1994, Anthropology Today published an open letter to the editor in its "Narrative" section devoted to the controversy of an anthropologist
"becoming [too] closely identified" (18) with his country of study. William J. Klausner, a professor of law and anthropology at Chulalongkom University in Bangkok and a graduate of Yale, has lived and worked in Thailand since 1955 and teaches in both Thai and English. He was responding to a private letter from the journal's editor that "referred obliquely to the ambivalence of my persona" (18). The overall tone of Professor Klausner's response is defensive as he acknowledges changes within himself through the experience of his decades in Thailand but refutes the insult he finds implicit in this charge of cultural and professional ambivalence. He attacks this charge of going native on a variety of levels. He first defends his ability to remain detached from the society even as he lives within it. Continuing, he challenges the very existence of the possibility of truly going native. He ends his essay by espousing the virtues the "tension" between Eastern and Western elements in himself and his work.

The ability to remain detached when studying another society is a prized skill in ethnological studies but Klausner examines this truism and finds it wanting:

I remember being cautioned in Yale Graduate School not to forget that the anthropologist's very presence in the field can itself change the atmospherics and alter the very reality one seeks to capture. Actually, my experience, living for a year in a fairly remote northeastern Thai village, did not validate such an admonition. Very quickly, I found myself swept up into the rhythms of daily village life. Any impressions my footprints may have made on the village paths were quickly erased. If there was any meaningful alteration, it was in my own perceptions and perspectives. However, there was no wholesale change. In taking off my Rayban glasses and trying on Thai shades, did I lose my detachment? I would hope not.

Despite my close identification with and commitment to Thailand, I do not feel I have lost the detachment necessary for objective scholarship (18).
His personal experience does not support Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle\(^{11}\) as it applies to anthropological fieldwork but it does support the principle’s mirror image: in the course of the study, the anthropologist’s perspective changed but the phenomena studied did not. He is arguing that identification is not antagonistic to detachment, that the sympathetic observer’s look is a richer and more accurate portrait than that of the one painted by the rigid chronicler.

There are limits to be placed on the sympathetic observer, however, because with no personal cultural filter, the observer is even worse off than the chronicler:

Those foreign scholars who deny completely their own heritage, their cultural roots, in their attempts to take on the coloration and hues of another culture, are fated to live in a fool’s paradise. Such an expatriate does not—and I believe cannot—fully change his or her persona and become Thai, Japanese or Indonesian. Those that believe they have fully assumed the cultural identity of the country they have studied and identified with are, I would contend, deluding themselves. They have denied and lost one identity and yet not truly found a new one. They remain in limbo. For these cultural alchemists who have convinced themselves that such a total conversion has been achieved, objectivity and detachment are invariably lost.

There are limitations to culture conversion, no matter how close one’s identification, engagement, attachment and empathy (18).

To Klausner the key element of going native is “wholesale change” which he doesn’t, personally, believe is possible. He is arguing that the only definition of going native is to move completely across the continuum from birth culture to new culture (excepting, perhaps, the greatest extreme which is xenophobia of

\(^{11}\) In general terms this uncertainty principle states that the very act of observing a phenomenon changes the behaviour of the factors involved, so one can never be certain of the validity of the data that are gathered.
one's own birth culture). Klausner does not recognize, indeed cannot afford to recognize, that there are many different resting places on this continuum—and that he occupies one of them.

This is not, by any means, an argument against scholars in Klausner's position. His example is an illustration of the classic situation with going native: an accusation is made which is hotly denied by the accused. In Klausner's field, unlike in many other situations, the charge of going native is still filled with negativity.

An Overview

This text is seeking to explore these issues of going native from the various perspectives of a number of non-fictional and fictional texts and films of the twentieth century. The works span almost the entire one hundred years, beginning with Joseph Conrad's 1902 novella *Heart of Darkness* to Richard Attenborough's 1999 feature film entitled *Grey Owl*. Chapter One, *Finding Kurtz*, examines the iconic insistence of Kurtz as the quintessential example of going native and finds him wanting. Works drawn in for this discussion include Nicholas Roeg's television movie of *Heart of Darkness*, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* and Raymond Sokolov's satiric novel *Native Intelligence*.

Chapter Two is a look at the remarkable story of Archie Belaney, who was born an obscure white Englishman, and died as the celebrated "Red Indian" author and conservationist Grey Owl. The chapter is concerned with why a man from a privileged race in the early part of the century would be so anxious to be
transformed into a member of a race with very little power or influence during this period—and how he managed such a racial transformation.

Chapter Three looks at an extreme of going native and examines the relationship of going native with the idea of treason. The discussion involves an analysis of treason itself with reference to Harry St. John Bridger Philby—who went native in Arabia—and his son, Kim Philby, known as one of the most notorious spies of the twentieth century. John Galsworthy's trilogy *The End of the Chapter* adds clarity to portions of the argument.

The final chapter, *Going Feral*, addresses the issue of going native with another species' culture rather than another human culture. The works considered include Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* and a number of works about Dian Fossey, including *Gorillas in the Mist* (movie and text).
Chapter One
Finding Kurtz

“Find Kurtz” is the siren call of the traveller to the “blank spaces on the earth.” “Find Kurtz” is the superior’s order that begins the river journey into darkness. “Find Kurtz” is the pervading whisper of twentieth century English literature concerned with going native. Joseph Conrad’s Kurtz in Heart of Darkness is, to many, the quintessential figure who has crossed over into another culture and discovered there a dimension of himself that he had hoped never to find. For all our bland end-of-century feel-good chatter of multiculturalism and diversity, the idea of Kurtz is the nightmare of going native that none of us hopes to encounter.

Finding Kurtz, even searching for Kurtz, has always been difficult because Conrad’s book is solely from Marlow’s point of view and Kurtz’s mind processes remain obscured. Marlow hints at what he thinks may have gone on in Kurtz’s mind but he is, at best, looking through a glass darkly and cannot truly retrace Kurtz’s steps in any meaningful way. For this reason it is useful to speculate on Kurtz’s progression by looking at visual depictions of his character in television and film12, a written non-fictional account of a white South American tribal

---

12 Literally quoted from Mike Tidwell’s Amazon Stranger (4) but figuratively evoked in many literary travel pieces of the twentieth century.
leader**, and, to begin with, another fictional character, Alan Casper, from Raymond Sokolov's 1975 novel Native Intelligence.

A scathing satire of the Peace Corps mentality of the Kennedy years in the United States, Native Intelligence follows Casper's short career as a Peace Corps volunteer. He is assigned to the fictional country of Qatab, which is described to him as "the poorest and least populated nation in Latin America" whose "2 million people represent 11 distinct aboriginal, 3 African (ex-slave) and 3 European cultures" (33). The classified papers the Peace Corps sends to Casper describe a pitiful former colony with "indigenous hordes of carnivorous red ants and anacondas [that] combined to make this the least popular outpost" of nearly every colonial power ever to set foot in the Americas. Shunted from the Spanish to the Dutch and, finally, to the unlucky French, the country was "renamed Qatab (because Talleyrand confused the area with an unexplored portion of the Sahara)" (34). The rest of its history is likewise hilariously unremarkable and remarkably unlucky—Casper reads that "During both World Wars, Qatab sent soldiers to Europe. Those dispatched in 1940 arrived in Le Havre after the fall of France, and spent four years at forced labor" (36). Finally, in despair of ridding itself of this godforsaken colony, France created "a sham capacity for self-government" for Qatab, pulled a traditional tribal chief (formerly a hotel busboy) out of a random village and made him President in 1959 (36). The Peace Corps soon established a "humanitarian" position in Qatab—perhaps because of the United States' Cold War interest in Qatab's large natural deposits

---

**4 The story of Randy Borman in Mike Tidwell's Amazon Stranger (1996).**
of uranium 235—and Alan Casper is sent there to work with the mysterious and fierce Xixi tribe in June, 1963.

The novel is a collection of letters to and from Casper, entries from his journal, and papers in his possession compiled by his "good friend", ostensibly Raymond Sokolov, after his death in Qatab from an amebic liver abscess, a complication of amebiasis, a tropical disease. Except for his application essay to Harvard, all of the collected papers pertain to the months of May through December, 1963 as Casper is graduating with his BA in Linguistics and fulfilling his Peace Corps assignment in Qatab. In the Forward, the compiler congratulates himself ("Alan," he writes bitterly, "obviously, was no help") on putting together

the facts behind a modern American tragedy, the intimate details of an unusual sex initiation and of an interracial romance, a close-up view of the impact of Western culture on the Third World, and, most of all, a new chapter in the history of the breakdown of language. Beat that (2).

The novel does, indeed, deliver on all of those fronts. It examines a post-adolescent viewpoint of the phoniness in relationships and society that plagued a more naïve Holden Caulfield\(^\text{15}\) twenty years earlier, details Casper's marriage to a young Xixi girl, satirizes the West's rape of the jungle for its own purposes (in this case, uranium) and examines the imperfections of trying to coordinate two languages that express two completely different cultures.

Brilliant beyond compare, Alan Casper wants to go to Harvard because

For ten years I have held to the hope that some day in another place I would walk through a door into a golden room filled with bright and glancing talk. No subject there would be too abstruse, no liaison too

---

dangerous. Everyone would have read everything and thought the great thoughts. The Golden Room is the room whose existence libraries imply. It is the place to which Western culture leads us, men and women nourished by their civilization, sophisticated in life, experienced, witty and at home in their own lust. The Room exists only in my daydreams. But in Cambridge, I hope to find something like it (4).

He feels isolated in his home in suburban Flint, Michigan and longs to branch out intellectually. He disdains the quiet of the Flint suburbs, realizing that that quiet is sustained by the schizophrenia of American society: noise from "the wrong side of the tracks" made by the labour of black workers maintains the economy and continues to support the quiet upper-class white structure that, in turn, continues to repress those same black workers. "Here I sit," he muses, "a WASP out of sympathy with the order of the hive. What can I do about it? Sit in? Work for the government in Gabon teaching the American Way to yet more blacks?" (31). As he graduates from Harvard, realizing that The Golden Room is still eluding him, he decides to try another tack by serving in the Peace Corps. Even Alan's way out of this vicious cycle is really, on many levels, only a change of venue. He can see that the Peace Corps is an imperfect approach to the worldwide problems of racial and class inequities but he wonders if spending time in a foreign culture can help him "to see whether people uninfected with the American schizophrenia can cure someone who is" (32).

Casper is, already, classic fodder for going native. Despite his easy ability to understand and live within his home culture, he is already deeply alienated from it. The values of the class in which he was raised—manifested by the white-picket-fence suburban lifestyle—are boring and pointless to him. The
dating rituals at university bewilder and annoy him as do any restrictions or rules that he, personally, finds illogical. Casting about for a future for himself, he decides to try the Peace Corps before graduate school, fully intending to return to the U.S. after his two-year assignment. Expecting to be sent to Gabon he muses

Falling utterly into an un-American life, soaking in the language and, through it, the essence of another outlook, that will have to be my way out. Instead of altering my consciousness with drugs, I'll take the more interesting risk of exchanging an American head for a Gabonese (32).

It sounds from this journal entry that Casper intends to fully assimilate into the culture to which he will be sent, but other entries indicate that he plans on observing, learning the language, involving himself for awhile and returning to the United States. The above journal entry is, however, pivotal in understanding Casper's change. It is an innocent entry, indicative of a young man so self-assured that he does not at all fear a loss of self in a new culture. He writes, almost glibly, of "exchanging an American head for a Gabonese" but it is clear that he does not understand the full power that the Xixi culture will exert on him. He writes casually of an "interesting risk" unaware of just how risky this cultural contact will be for him. Confident that he is going to a primitive culture, he feels insulated by his sophisticated self. It is a fragile confidence, however, since it is that precise sophistication whose value he has been questioning. A culture with similar values to those with which he had been raised—Canadian or western European, for example—could never have cracked the shell he had created around his persona. There would be no shock of awareness, no significant cultural doubt. It will take the primitive to strip Casper, if not to his essence, then to the closest he has ever been to his internal self.
One of the most common—and earliest—steps in going native is a change in dress. On his initial canoe trip upstream to Kuva—his assigned village—on August 7-10, (two paddlers, 35 miles a day, three days), Alan fell out of the canoe at a ford. Later,

My wet clothes, hung from the gunwhales, slip off into the olive waters and sweep downstream behind us. They are lost, for under the tepid, smooth surface of this part of the Mashmish lurk piranhas and caymans and snakes, which no one will brave for the sake of a Lacoste shirt (103).

There are hidden dangers in the waters as well as in the jungle. The Lacoste shirt has its own totem of an American alligator discreetly embroidered on its chest but that alligator has no power here. The indigenous wild creatures and native crocodilians take precedence and Alan, unencumbered, lets the shirt go. He is not yet aware of the American values that he releases along with that shirt. On the same trip, his next shirt becomes a sponge, a mere tool that he uses to sop up water in the bottom of the canoe so that he can wring it out over the side. In his August 15th journal entry, only a few days after his arrival in Kuva, Alan admits that “In place of normal clothes, I now wear a penis shield and nothing else,” the standard dress of all Xixi males. “At first it chafed and I had trouble tying it on so that it didn’t come undone,” he complains, but “Thank God that stage is over with” (113). The comment on his adaptation period indicates that it hardly took any time at all for him to feel silly in American clothes and discard them as

---

16 Significantly, during Alan’s initiation as a Xixi, he is ritually burned in one, small spot on his breastbone, very close to where that Lacoste logo would have rested. Musing later about the significance of his new scar, Alan writes: “I'm the first in my family to have one,' I thought. Some people brag about being the first in their families to finish college or wear shoes. I have a ritual cicatrice. Mother will be so proud” (186).
impractical. Alan does not see the implications of his shedding of his habitual clothing but the process of going native has begun.

Most of those depicted in text and film as crossing over are inordinately intelligent\textsuperscript{17}, either academically like Casper (such as St. John Philby and his son, Kim Philby) or, simply, inherently bright (such as Dian Fossey or the fictional Dinny Charwell\textsuperscript{18}). These people are articulate and self-aware. Atypical of those around them who seek to force themselves into the pattern of surrounding social expectations and the status quo, the intelligent ones seek to create a life that fits them\textsuperscript{19}. These are thinking people who want to find their proper places in life.

Do not, however, mistake this intelligence as a force that leads to happiness. Although there is a fitness to being where one feels he or she belongs, going native does not usually lead to happiness. Casper’s journal entries show a steady fragmentation of the tidy compartments of his mind that separate imagined from lived experience. His early entries discuss sex, love, film, elaborate crossword puzzles and linguistics, while his later entries detail local Xixi myths, the day-to-day frustrations of trying to promote clean latrine

\textsuperscript{17} Some examples that come to mind are: Paul Gauguin the philosopher-artist in \textit{Noa-Noa: Séjour à Tahiti}; Ellen Roxburgh and her adaptability in Patrick White’s \textit{A Fringe of Leaves}; Robinson Crusoe and his resourcefulness in the face of what must have looked like incredibly-limited resources; Jack Crabb, the “street” smart satiric protagonist of \textit{Little Big Man} (film and text); and the thoughtful, journal-writing Lt. Dunbar in \textit{Dances With Wolves} (film and text). Each of these characters displays an intelligent and analytical approach to the difficulties—or advantages—of his or her situation.

\textsuperscript{18} The two Philbys and Dinny are discussed in Chapter 3 of this text entitled \textit{The Issue of Treason}. Dian Fossey is discussed in Chapter 4, \textit{Going Feral}.

\textsuperscript{19} It may be argued that Dinny Charwell, of Galsworthy’s \textit{The End of the Chapter} (a trilogy from within \textit{The Forsyte Saga}), is a very traditional young woman and governs her life by the rules of the society around her. While she is very aware of her family responsibilities and class proprieties, when an alternative lifestyle becomes open to her, she is not afraid, after both intellectual and emotional consideration, to embrace it despite the misgivings of others. See \textit{The Issue of Treason} for a more complete discussion.
practices and his initiation as a man into the tribe. He goes into the jungle of Qatab living the reality of his life in his intellect and gradually begins to live his life through his body. The chief of Kuva, Warramunga, finds Alan's desire to discuss ideas in the abstract extremely funny. Warramunga wonders why Alan wants to "pull them [words] away from life" (130), underscoring the Xixi focus on the practicalities of daily life. One could discuss abstractions, but what would be the usefulness of it? Such discussions serve no purpose in trying to feed and tend a village of people. After only ten days in the Xixi village of Kuva, Casper frets about his role in the jungle:

August 17. They warned us about culture shock during training. And I am coming down with a serious case, I think. It isn't any specific part of the routine of life here that is getting me down. . . . The people are pleasant, even if they do treat me like a big baby. I deserve that anyway, because in this setting I am an infant. I have none of the skills a nine-year-old should have. I can't spear fish. I don't know what berries to eat or what kinship words are taboo for me.

But the worst part, what nettles and upsets me and leaves me glum and shaky, is that none of the things I can do matters at all here. I have no function, no value (121, italics his).

Having conquered the extremely difficult Xixi language, Casper is still stranded in this society by his own intellectual past. Missy, his American lover, records "Before we finally managed to make it, he had covered wading birds, the pineapple, gypsies and the history of Negroes at Harvard." "It seemed sometimes," she continued, "As though he had been planning our conversations for years and was desperately glad to have someone who would . . . take him seriously" (14). With wide-ranging interests and a brilliant ability to fuse theory and fact, Casper has always been comfortable with his intellectual self. Xixi society blows that comfort out of the water for him. A society grounded in day-to-
day existence has little use for an erudite discussion of windows and window imagery or wading birds and pineapples. The Xixis tolerate his lack of useful skills with good nature and find his attempts to persuade them to adopt more sanitary methods of defecation and waste disposal ludicrous. Sanitation is what Casper has to offer them and it is a gift of no foreseeable value to them. He cannot establish his credentials as a person of intellectual authority with them precisely because he cannot spear fish or speak the language well (Alan observes "they are linguistically naïve and can't comprehend that a grown man would not know how to express himself properly in their language" (107)). Indeed, despite his genius at picking up languages he finds "Language is the most mentally exhausting part of the whole adjustment" (122). The main problem is that he was not prepared for any difficulty in this, his great area of expertise. And he does not have any trouble technically with Xixi—the trouble is "to force what I want to say into a Xixi framework. To think like a Xixi". Learning languages at home in the U.S. was easy, Alan writes, "because I could settle for technical, superficial proficiency. I could always slip back into my 'real' identity any time I wanted to" (122). In less than a two-week period immersed in the Xixi culture, Alan is already finding his personal identity shaky. Unlike the other volunteers in his training group who were either posted as a married couple or sent as a group to work in Chiotteville, Alan Casper is totally and completely without reference to any other American. He has only a short wave radio and has been instructed to use that only in an emergency. His situation brings one to wonder about the true nature of an emergency. A physical emergency—a
serious injury or illness—would seem to be a valid reason to use the radio but
what about an emergency of consciousness? Alan finds himself in deep waters
here:

I have nothing to reassure me that I am who I am. None of the little details
that confirm your identity in America is present here. Superficially, I have figured this place out as well as I even need to to get
through the day. I have more or less mastered the routine, which couldn't
be simpler. What I miss is my old routine that kept reinforcing subtly that I
was a normal person with a name and a background, not a perplexing
anomaly (122).

To illustrate this disjunction in his routine, he writes that, because of his
confusion, he does not want to get out of bed in the morning but then wryly
observes that even the idiom in which to think that thought is wrong since he
sleeps on mats now and not on a bed at all.

Despite these problems, he is still trying to hold onto his American self.
His next journal entry is part of the field work in which he is indulging himself in
anticipation of graduate school: a series of observations on the linguistic
structures of the Xixi language. This is the Alan that the reader has known since
the beginning of the novel and his exegesis on Xixi reassures the reader that
Alan will be just fine. There are, however, more cracks appearing in the veneer.
When Alan was in training for the Qatab assignment, he and his girlfriend, Missy,
had a fight over his unwillingness to commit to a future together after the Peace
Corps. At the time he was cynical about societal stresses to marry and how such
expectations make puppets of us all. Despite the earlier unpleasantness, they
made arrangements for Missy to meet him in Gé, the last outpost in Qatab on the
way to Kuva, in December. In early August, Casper remains casual about her
Christmas visit. By September 10th, in a letter to Missy, he is desperate for her to come:

And that makes me think of you and what it would be like if I were still in your world and not committed to martyrdom in shit at the edge of the world's largest rain forest. I can't picture it. We have lost the video portion of our program down here. Sometimes I can hear your voice, but my memory of your face gets hazier and hazier. Please don't think that means I am forgetting you. No, I want you more than ever and cling to the prospect of your visit like a sloth to a mahogany branch. You will, you must, meet me in Gê on December 20, as we promised each other (131, italics his).

He has never shown this much raw emotion to Missy before. He needs her to reassure himself of his real self, the self he knew before his exile in Qatab. His use of the sloth simile is as apt as it is unconscious; in using local animals in his metaphors, he is beginning to think like a Xixi.

Alan also finds his intellectual equivalent in Kuva in Suri, a thirteen-year-old marriageable Xixi girl. When villagers dump Casper's books into the compost pile as a joke, it is Suri who helps him retrieve them:

My cache of advanced Western culture lay half-buried under moist Tapir dung. Another Xixi put-on.

To them, it was a good joke. How could you blame illiterates for abusing books? There was no point in mounting an investigation or losing my temper. The only thing to do was what I did—jump into the pit and toss the books out.

I sank to my hips in warm manure and European prose (144, italics his).

There can be no clearer juxtaposition of Sokolov's leitmotif in this book: the physical production of the jungle body overwhelming the intellectual production of the Western mind. Alan's battle to maintain his American intellectual self is
becoming buried under the excrement of daily existence. Suri and Alan struggle to rescue what books they can and Suri asks Alan to explain what they are. In the process, Alan begins to spell out Xixi words with English letters and Suri “caught on immediately”. He teaches her to write in Xixi, but she later insists on learning English since no one else in the world writes Xixi. She becomes his liaison with Xixi customs, explaining procedures to him that others simply assume that, as an adult, he will already know. After his initiation into the tribe, Alan becomes Suri’s first husband (the tribe practises polyandry). She is bright in terms of Xixi life but she also shares with Alan the qualities of a good academic: quick to pick up on ideas, open minded, able to make connections between disparate situations. She is able to pull words “away from life” like no other Xixi Alan encounters. After his death, it is she who acts as liaison again nine years later for the author of the text, filling him in on details of their lives in Kuva in “a pure but stilted and noticeably literary English” (206). She, incidentally, had also become fluent in French. Casper’s equivalent indeed.

Alan approaches his initiation into the Frog clan of the Xixi tribe with ambivalence. When it is an abstraction in his future with the Xixi, he does not consider it a significant problem. In October, when Warramunga tells him that it is time, though, Alan feels slightly ashamed of going through the process, knowing that he will abandon the tribe in two years when he returns to the States. “You must accept or leave Kuva,” Warramunga tells him, “No clan will feed you if

---

20 This digging in dung may not be an altogether negative image. The tapir dung is, after all, an environmentally-friendly compost pile that is in place to help the village’s agricultural efforts.
you fail to face the mountains bravely" (146). As well, Alan is beginning to understand the power this society is exercising over him:

I nodded, feeling as if, for the first time in Kuva, I was in real danger. Not physical danger. The initiation for frogs\(^\text{31}\) was short and did not involve facial tattooing or any risk of death. Rather, I was afraid of losing myself in the ritual, of shuffling off that inner certainty that I was not a Xixi. I have been clinging to my own identity with less and less strength as the weeks had passed.

You will doubt that I could feel threatened by the prospect of a week in the mountains devoted to the pursuit of animism. I can only reply that you have not felt yourself gradually sinking away out of one self into another. You have not let a new language invade your thoughts like an incubus, parasitize your mind until the words and memories of your earlier life spoke to you as from another room, muffled voices from a dream.

Three months ago, I would have joined you in doubting these fears, but now, when I am beginning to feel the need for an English dictionary to continue this diary, . . . when letters from the other world barely connect me again with my old life, now I am worried and fearful of going further along the path I have taken (146-7).

Alan is confident of his physical safety and the initiation will not leave scars and tattoos that would make reintegration into American society difficult.

On this level, as one from outside of the traditions of the Xixi, Alan is also distanced from the relevance of this initiation to his position and life in the Xixi world. If it goes badly, he will be leaving in two years anyway. If it goes well, he has additional material for his fieldwork on Xixis. Alan realizes, though, that all of his true risks are psychological—and very real. He considers fleeing back to Chiotteville, but realizes dimly "how silly my justification will sound" back there in the bustling city. It would be an acknowledged failure on his part, a ticket home to Flint, and he is not quite ready to return to that world. There is a primitive depth within him, too, that wants to see if he can withstand the initiation, to finally

\(^{31}\) Alan's clan as Warramunga's adopted son. Warramunga is a tapir.
know what the mystery of it is all about. It is this curiosity, this sense of standing on the threshold of an unknown part of his being, that takes him over the edge.

Alan’s initiation ends on November 26th, the same day that the U.S. Embassy in Chiotteville sends him a letter recalling him to Chiotteville and reassigning him as an English teacher there. November and December mails are delayed and Alan never receives this order. During this period, he is too busy in Kuva having sex with young women and their mothers in the process of finding a wife. In July, Alan had written in his journal: “Primitive peoples are clearheaded and honest enough to see that sex impulses have to do with sex and that marriage is a convenient way of conveying property, identifying parentage and, in some cases, rearing children” (70). Although the Xixis do not care particularly about identifying parentage in their matrilineal society, it is in this spirit of sex drive and practicalities that Alan becomes involved in post-initiation courtship rituals. He only deceives himself. The one woman he is interested in marrying is not the one he has sex with but the one who engages his mind, the one for whom he feels a growing affection. On December 4th he marries for the promise of love and marries Suri, who “seems to have spent every minute of my initiation reading my books”. Suri’s English has become very strong and Alan writes “This comes as a great relief... because I have spoken so much Xixi that I am beginning to forget English vocabulary” (185). He is, indeed, fulfilling the role he had feared: that of “teaching the American Way to yet more blacks”. Suri is an avid student and as he is more and more consumed by his Xixi self,
she, on the other hand, is happy to try to understand his home culture in as much
detail as possible. They are almost exchanging cultures.

It is in his final illness that his cultural identity finally comes to the fore.
Delirious with fever, Alan tries to write in his diary but cannot hang onto English:

"December 13. Chayapu ... chills ... must have hampi ... manan
mikhuy ... write English ... I am American and can recite the pledge to
the flag, name all state capitals ... Pisipa ... fever raging all day ... Suri
says eye was in complete state of muspha all day, very phuchu ... qañañañña ... Fever must have been extremely high. It's remitted now ...
. enough for me to write anyway (189, ellipses his).\textsuperscript{22}

In a few lucid moments, Alan and Suri set off to take him to the doctor in Gé,
ironically only one day late in meeting Missy there, on December 21\textsuperscript{st}. Missy
takes the delirious Alan away in an airplane, abandoning Suri in Gé. Alan dies in
the hospital, babbling in Xixi, and there the story is left until his "friend" Raymond
decides to tell it later.

Missy has a transcript of Alan's last words as he raves in Xixi, translated
by a Xixi living in Chiotteville, and they all focus on The Golden Room and Alan
being there with Suri: "I am very anxious for Suri to hear you play the Scriabin.
She is bashful still about coming here to the golden room. . . . Thank you, yes,
the dictionary is well on its way. I'll be happy to show you what I've done when
Suri and I get back from London . . . . (201). Before his initiation, Alan cannot

\textsuperscript{22} According to the Appendix to the novel, this would be a translation of this text: "December 13.
Chronic disease ... chills ... must have medicine ... no to eat ... write English ... I am
American and can recite the pledge to the flag, name all state capitals ... I'm faint (or "weak") ... fever raging all day ... Suri says eye was in complete state of delirium all day, very sick ... (howl of pain) ... Fever must have been extremely high. It's remitted now ... enough for me to write anyway." Notice Alan's use of "eye" in place of "I" in this written text. He is confusing a pair
of homonyms that is very basic in English: further evidence of his increasing dislocation from his
first language.
conceive of his friend Suri managing to function in western society. He realizes that if they marry, he will be leaving her in two years to return to the U.S. and she will probably marry a Xixi man (or two). He makes a particular point of the inevitable dissonance of her being in Europe or the United States. However, after his initiation, he sees her differently—now as a wife and lover and not just as a friend—and imagines a future in which he might be able to take her back to the States with him. Missy has ceased to be a factor. The irony is, of course, that Suri may be able to manage American culture in time but another 18 months in Kuva would make it absolutely impossible for Alan to reintegrate. They are now both "cultural schizophrenics" and will be out of step in either culture but Alan is, by far, in the more advanced state of assimilation with the secondary culture. Alan has found The Golden Room but in a manner and place that was totally unexpected to him. He has an intellectual soulmate in Suri and a strong familial and social support system in Kuva. In his final delirious fantasies, he can see the fusion of the earthy life of the Xixi and the western intellectual life coming together in that moment of perfection he has always dreamed of.

In Casper's last passionate discussion with Warramunga about composting, Warramunga argued against the wisdom of introducing American farming practices into Xixi agriculture. In the process, he affirms Alan's true identity:

"But I am a Xixi. And so are you. You went through the initiation, you speak our language better than anyone else in the village. I don't know what village you came from or why your skin is so pale, but you are certainly a Xixi. How else could you have learned so quickly to live as we do in Kuva?"
The answer is that you always knew and only pretended to know other things. Someday you will tell me why. But for now I am happy with you in spite of this game you insist on playing" (189).

In September, Alan's U.S. Embassy contact, Kaufman, had written

"Should you simply survive the first year without losing your mind, that will beat the world's record for living alone with the Xisis" (135). Alan did not survive the year and he did not lose his mind. He went native.

Randy Borman, Cofan Chief

There is a South American indigenous tribe in the Ecuadorian rainforest known as the Cofan. They hunt for their food with blowguns in the northeastern rainforest as their people have always done. They build their homes from natural materials available to them from the bounty of the earth. They have an uncanny ability to find their way in the depths of the rainforest without getting lost, even in sections of the jungle they have never before explored. And, oh yes, they have a website. And solar panels on their roofs. And an American tribal chief who is leading them through the intricacies of trying to keep Petroecuador and American oil interests from destroying the rainforest that sustains them.

Randy Borman sounds like a transplanted American bleeding-heart liberal, trying to save an indigenous tribe's way of life while railing against big business. The truth is much more compelling. Randy really is Cofan—his parents just happen to be American. The son of missionary-linguists who were living with the Cofan, Randy (the eldest of four children) was born in Ecuador in 1955. As his parents worked, he ran free with the children of the village. Mike Tidwell, an
American journalist, encountered Randy’s story when he was in Ecuador writing a travel piece on ecotourism in 1991 and became so intrigued with the story that he later spent several months living with Randy’s band of Cofan and turning that experience into a book, *Amazon Stranger*.

The first inkling Tidwell had about Randy’s existence was from a conversation about the Cofans’ struggle against the oil companies that he heard on his ecotour:

... we heard the rumor about the small village down the river where the great white chief lived. The chief was an American, reportedly born and raised among forest Indians, a blowgun hunter since age four, a man gone totally native. With paint on his face and wild-boar eye teeth strung around his neck, this bushed-out Caucasian was leading the Indian campaign to keep the oil intruders out. The name *Kurtz* settled over my mind like equatorial heat when I heard this. I saw a malarial dream of a man. Conrad’s antihero fast-forwarded to the late twentieth century (3-4, italics his).

Tidwell’s use of the term “bushed-out” paints an image of a man totally wild, actively out of control. “Bushed-out” describes a person so long away from civilization that he or she has lost all civilizing influences—and certainly lost good sense. This is a textual illustration of an Indian on the warpath: weapons, face paint, ceremonial jewellery made of teeth. Tidwell projects the mental and physical deterioration, the disease (“malarial”), of Conrad’s character, onto this mysterious white chief and is intrigued by the picture. How would a century (Kurtz to Borman) change such an icon, Tidwell is wondering. In any case, the story hooks him despite his personal distaste for investigative reporting and he stays to investigate further.
There is a dissonance to Tidwell’s first meeting with Borman. After hours in a lost airplane that was crisscrossing desperately to find an airstrip, after hours in a canoe on the Rio Aguaroico, after suffering a drenching thunderstorm, steamy sunlight and screaming parrots, he arrived in Zábalo, Borman’s Cofan village.

His guide goes to find Borman:

Felipe returned ten minutes later accompanied by a man who—in some ways, at least—could have just as easily sashayed right out of a Des Moines café: White skin, blue eyes, thick mustache, baseball cap. But there were differences. Big ones. Randy was barefoot and wore the thin, gownlike cotton tunic typical of the other Cofan men standing around him. He also had around his neck a string supporting the tooth of a wild puma which, I learned later, he killed himself using only a machete.

“So you’re journalists?” Randy said to Russell and me in perfect American English, fingerling the puma tooth (20-21).

The man himself is a shock to Tidwell, partly because of the juxtaposition of Indian and American, but also because, at this point, the reality of the rumour does not really seem to fit the larger-than-life expectation of that rumour. Tidwell has to fight himself to keep from asking “a thousand different questions all at once” but Randy does not seem unapproachable. Tidwell claims that there are big differences between Randy and a typical American but all he can really point out at this meeting is the difference in dress (Randy’s machete killing of the puma is information he gains later). At this stage, in other words, Tidwell is basing his entire assessment of difference on setting and appearances since Randy’s manner and speech are culturally identical to his own. It is only later, as Tidwell talks with Randy and observes him in action, that he can see Randy’s “cultural schizophrenia".
As he spends time with Randy, Tidwell begins to understand his Cofan side. After growing up in a Cofan village, Randy spent some time at a high school in Quito, Ecuador and then attended college in the United States for a few years. The college experience was a turning point for Randy:

I think it really began to dawn on me just which culture was truly my own when I tried to go to college in the States. I missed the Cofan while I was at Michigan State. I missed the forest. I was also broke, so I did the only thing I knew to do: I hunted and gathered. My Cofan impulse took over. I had a pellet gun and I would go out in the morning and kill pigeons and rabbits in other people's yards before dawn. I would cook them and eat them with fruit I gathered like mulberries and blackberries and damaged apples from orchards. I also had a bicycle, which is how I got a lot of my food. I would ride it around on roads near my house and keep track of roadkills every day. Whenever I spotted a fresh roadkill, I'd pick it up and bring it home and cook it—raccoons and stuff (26).

Borman is aware of American mores and understands that his diet of roadkill and backyard bunnies is not the stuff of American culture but he does not find this diet distasteful on any level. He clearly violated private property laws in his hunting expeditions (and perhaps thieved an apple or two) but he does not seem to be aware of that on a personal level either. One forages to survive and that basic rule does not change with one's location. It is interesting to note that Randy could see bounty where Americans would believe there was nothing to eat. That ability, perhaps even more than his predilection for roadkill, sets him apart from white, middle-class society. He speaks of his Cofan "impulse" as though that side of his being operates automatically and Borman has no control over it\textsuperscript{23}, signaling that it is an effort for him to consciously "act" white. Out of

\textsuperscript{23} This seems to be the same idea as was expressed in the Introduction of this text noting the "inevitability" of falling prey to certain overwhelming cultural situations: one's visceral impulses are too strong to fight one's logical or moral capabilities. In the Introduction, it is related to the idea of "going Hollywood".
place, Borman did not stay at Michigan State to finish his degree. He returned to
the rainforest, vaguely thinking of settling down with a nice white girl, when he fell
in love with a Cofan girl and committed himself finally and firmly to a life in the
forest.

Tidwell is concerned with the question of Randy's true self and the issue
of authenticity. Soon after first hearing of Borman's existence, Tidwell pumps his
cotour guide, Roberto, for more precise information about him:

"But what is he?" I asked Roberto, trying to get a better fix on this man. "Is
Randy an Indian or an American or both or what?"
"He's an Indian," Roberto said. "He's white like you and speaks English.
But he lives in a village and hunts animals and up here"—Roberto pointed
to his head—"he's really Cofan, I think." (15)

Tidwell, who had been in the Peace Corps in Africa and had come to
understand the levels of cultural variation available to people, allows for every
possibility in his question: either one, both or some hybrid as yet unnamed?

Roberto is definite in his answer. He looks—and sometimes sounds—white but
he is truly Indian: Cofan in the way he looks at the world. Fishing with Randy
one day, Tidwell asks his question:

Despite the language and the dress and the cultural knowledge he
possessed, I asked him if he ever felt a little odd, a little out of place, living
this way day to day as the Caucasian chief of a clan of forest Indians.
Was perhaps part of it some sort of Western fantasy come true? A way of
dropping out along Robinson Crusoe lines? Or did he really feel
legitimate? Really feel authentic? (25-6).

The three critical issues of going native are enumerated: language, dress and
cultural knowledge. Tidwell asks the crucial point: is this life a frivolous attempt

---

24 For an excellent rendering of his experiences in the Peace Corps in Africa, see his book The
to go native? He is asking Randy if he is simply a long-term touriste de bananes, a French term that describes social dropouts that flee to remote tropical islands to live on love, no work, and indigenous fruit. He wonders at Borman's commitment to these people who look, speak and live differently from those of the world of his own blood family. Randy has obviously anticipated this question, and perhaps struggled with it himself, because his answer is swift and confident: “The only reason I’m chief here is because these people absolutely see me as a Cofan. That’s the only test that matters... And as long as I’m one of them in their eyes and they want me as their leader, then that’s enough for me. The rest of the world can say whatever it wants. And it’s not a fantasy,” he adds, “I don’t wake up in the morning thinking, ‘Wow, this sure is better than being a lawyer in Philadelphia’ or anything like that” (26, italics his). Borman understands the mindset of those who would find him inauthentic. He has read extensively in English (he calls himself a “readaholic” and Tidwell had spotted Robinson Crusoe in his collection) and has made a conscious, informed choice of lifestyle. Randy also understands the key point: that his identity is founded as much in how other people see him as it is in himself. If he is Cofan to the Cofan, he is satisfied. The choice for him comes in which group identity he chooses to reject. “The rest of the world” may see him as a white American but it is the Cofan viewpoint he chooses to accept. Tidwell wavers with agreeing with the rest of the world but he feels the connection of Borman’s identity to the Cofans one day in the forest together:

I felt myself drifting deeper and deeper into one of the strangest cross-cultural experiences of my life. I was beginning to feel seriously off
balance around this man. Forget the Des Moines face and American accent. This guy was different. *Foreign.* Being with him was like watching a movie where the words have been poorly dubbed: What you're seeing and what you're actually hearing don't match up. . . . Written all over both Randy and Alonzo was a demeanor of utter openness and guilelessness I've come to associate only with very traditional people in developing countries (22, italics his).

After a two-year Peace Corps stint in Africa, Tidwell understands a great deal about the nature of cross-cultural relationships. Despite the face his eyes are seeing and the voice his ears are hearing, he realizes that the filter through which their conversation is taking place is Cofan culture, not American culture. This realization comes to him at random, as a jolt in conversations with Randy, and underscores the native-ness of the man's inner being.

While Roberto is correct to say that Randy speaks English, he also speaks Spanish and Cofan. Exposed to great numbers of workers moving into the rainforest to support Petroecuador, most Cofan speak Spanish and many of them speak it better and more often than they speak Cofan itself. According to Bolívar, a member of the Zábalco Cofan, "Rancy knew as much about Cofan ways as most of the Indians and actually spoke the language with greater breadth and fluency than did Bolívar himself, a blood Cofan" (61). Here Randy is sharing a quality with Alan Casper. According to Warramunga, Alan speaks "our language better than anyone else in the village". Randy's greatest advantage here, ironically, is growing up the child of accomplished *foreign* linguists. To develop a knowledge of a language that is deep enough to translate spiritual texts is a meticulously detailed endeavour. Randy has obviously benefited from his parents' exhaustive efforts. Indeed, in one of the most disconcerting
conversations that Tidwell had with Borman, Randy broke off the conversation abruptly saying "I'm sorry. So much English makes me tired. My language is Cofan. I've got to rest now." Startled, Tidwell leaves.

... having forgotten for a moment, lured into unawareness by his midwestern U.S. accent, that the man across from me was suspended between states of being: Caucasian-Indian, American-Cofan, Westemer-savage. One consequence of the dichotomy was that I, the one-hundred-percent unadulterated gringo, was work for him (53).

It is a dissonance again of thinking oneself with the Same and finding oneself with the Other. Tidwell finds the dismissal "almost brusque" and takes the blame upon himself for being unaware of the strain he is putting on Borman. The underlying issue may be, however, that Tidwell is a cultural threat to Randy. Randy must be careful not to let himself enjoy his intellectual conversations with Tidwell too much or he may bring out the American side of himself more than is safe. His Cofan identity is fragile in some ways and Borman needs to keep deep introspection to himself. Pleading a fatigue with a "foreign" language, however true that fatigue may be, is also a signal for him to return to Cofan. Thinking in the Cofan language is one of the key elements that keeps Randy Cofan.

There is a deeper issue than linguistics at work here, though. Borman must visually out-Cofan the Cofan to maintain credibility as a native in his own eyes. The tribe around him seems unconcerned about his differences from them, but Randy seems to feel the need to accentuate any Cofan characteristics or habits he may have to negate the white man that he seems to fear he really may be. Tidwell notices this most dramatically one Sunday as Randy appears in church:
As I surveyed the scene from my back-room seat, peeking up from the prayer, I became sharply aware of just how different Randy looked from everyone around him. It was much more than just the melanin-impaired skin in a sea of lustrous brown bodies or the blond-gray hair bowed alone amid row after row of jet-black heads. What set Randy apart, simply, was his getup. From head to toe, he had no peers that morning, his dress as elaborate and ambitious as it seemed he could make it. No other Cofan adult came adorned in face paint and shiny beads that Sunday. No one wore fierce-looking peccary tusks strown by the dozens across his upper body. Even the older men like Mauricio and Lorenzo, more traditional in their habits, were embellished with simple hand-woven headbands atop their hair, nothing more. Randy, it seemed, was more Cofan than the Cofan that morning (183).  

Tidwell belittles Borman’s manner of dress by calling it a “getup” but his reaction is the same as anyone who sees someone overdressed for an occasion; it is not intended as an insult to the traditional Cofan manner of dress at all. It is likely, though, that he is the only one to notice the difference in fashion in church that morning. Randy grew up with these people and they are accustomed to his style of dress. Nevertheless, it points to what must be an issue to Randy: the necessity of looking like a Cofan despite his Caucasian features.

If Randy Borman speaks, eats, hunts, lives, and loves as a Cofan, how can anyone say he is anything else? There is an American side to Borman that is both boon and bane to him: it is a boon in the Cofans’ dealings with big oil but it is a bane in that it keeps Randy, on some level, separate—and separated—from the people with whom he lives. Roberto notes his ability to speak English—

---

25 The same issue arises for Grey Owl in the chapter Race and Going Native: The Story of Archie Grey Owl later in this text. Grey Owl takes the same path as Randy Borman in his native dress.
26 My father-in-law in Louisiana calls an overdressed lady at church “a fussed-up cat”, a southern version of Tidwell’s disapproving term. Both terms reflect on the person himself or herself, not on the general habits of dress of the culture.
27 Their website shows a photo of Randy Borman in full Cofan costume—see www.cofan.org. For a photo of another Cofan chief in full regalia, see www.cofan.org/chief.jpg
and Randy’s ability to read and think in English is a difference between himself and the Cofans—but this ability to think in American is related to his ability to think as an American. Early in the book, Tidwell asks Randy if he checks his fishnets at a regular time each day. Randy sees little relevance to the issue of time—he checks the nets when he wants fish, not by some clock. “Sometimes,” he confides to Tidwell, “the whole village loses track of what day of the week it is and we have to have a meeting just to try to figure out what it is” (22). In sharp contrast is the Randy that shares a taxi with Tidwell in Quito, thirty minutes late for an appointment with a government commission on Indian affairs: he is anxious, glancing at his watch, frowning. Someone unacquainted with western notions of time would not have shared his level of anxiety. Thinking in American, Randy realizes that being late, according to clock time, can seriously harm his position in negotiations. He is late because of a previous high-level meeting with oil executives and Tidwell wonders aloud what those “suits” must think of Randy. Randy speculates

. . . they accept me as an Ecuadorean. Whatever else they may think of me, they know this is my home.

Beyond that, I think in some ways I’m a relief to them. They prefer working with me over many indigenous leaders. I’m dependable and consistent in talks. I’ll do what I say I’ll do, so they know where they stand with me. I understand the thinking of their culture that way. The average indigenous negotiator from the forest doesn’t . . .

At the same time, I’m a bit scary to the company—and the reason’s simple: They can’t pull the wool over my eyes the way they can many indigenous leaders. If they slip up and renege on me, I’m going to respond the same way they would if someone slipped up and reneged on them. Protest, go to court, go to the media. And they know it (130).

Borman shrewdly understands both his value to big oil and his threat to them.

He is also able to differentiate between himself and other native leaders, showing
a separateness that he does not usually wish to acknowledge. He understands schedules, business problems, laws and negotiations. He has a sense of time and the fitness of certain responses to given provocations. He also has an fine instinct on how far to go on the oil issue in that he realizes the Cofan cannot publicly be anti-oil. That extreme a position would give the government and big oil the justification to stop negotiating with them entirely by dismissing them as some simple tribe out of touch with the global economy. Randy has to espouse a delicate balance of protecting his rainforest home while allowing the oil companies to have limited successes (and impact). That strategy seems to be paying off for him, at least in the short term:

One thing was clear, however: Without Randy’s knowledge of both Indian and Western values and vulnerabilities, without his ability to match—to maximum advantage—his tribe’s strengths against the invaders’ various weaknesses, oil rigs would already be clamorously sucking crude out of the ground all along the lower Aguarico, Roberto believed (151).

When in Quito, Randy operates as a western businessman. In the small apartment he shares with his brother Ron, he has a telephone and an office area with a computer, fax machine and filing cabinet. To Tidwell, it is the “urban campaign headquarters” (121) in Randy’s fight to save his rainforest. Tidwell also realizes, however, that the more Randy has to fight for his forest as an American-style activist, the less time he has to spend in that forest. His very success at fighting for his lifestyle is, paradoxically, keeping him from living that lifestyle. Randy speaks of an alternative career and Tidwell wonders what his “career” is now. “No doubt about it,” Randy says wistfully of a specialized aspect of entomology, “If I weren’t operating an indigenous community, insects are what
I'd want to be into” (88). Tidwell does a double-take on this job description—operating an indigenous community—and then agrees with its pragmatism. Ironically, expressing his very traditional position as chief of a clan of Cofan in language that smacks of office-tower-title politics and management doublespeak makes Randy seem even more American than before. On a trip into the rainforest one evening, Tidwell asks Roberto if he thinks Randy is a typical gringo: "I think that if he leaves the forest and goes to Quito for a long stay, maybe a month or so," Roberto speculates, "he starts thinking and acting as much like a gringo as you, Mike" (152). Randy must realize this danger too, and when Tidwell brings it up to him, he resists answering the question. His soul wants to be Cofan and he is anxious to do everything he can to help it remain so.

Although Randy Borman fits the image of one who has gone native, he is different from Alan Casper and the several manifestations of Kurtz that will be explored below in that he was raised in the Cofan culture. Borman has a cultural birth claim equal to that of his racial birth claim.28 Everyone else discussed in this chapter came to the new culture as an adult (indeed, as an adult male). There is an element in the term going native that implies a process in which the party had a choice to exercise. Randy's siblings have not chosen his path; his younger brother Ron, the only other Borman child discussed by Tidwell, lives in Ecuador and preaches there but does not live as a Cofan. Ron clearly sees himself as Ecuadorian and maybe even as a “modern” Cofan, but he chooses not to live as

28 The United States, for example, lists two primary legal claims to citizenship. One is *jus soli*, having been born on U.S. soil and the other is *jus sanguinis*, having been born a child of Americans, even if those Americans are abroad in a foreign country at the time of the child's birth. Randy Borman, it would seem, can take his pick of Ecuador or the United States.
a forest Cofan would. It is, however, difficult not to see the Cofan culture as
Randy's first culture rather than as his adopted culture. On this issue, Randy
describes himself as a "third culture" child²⁹, implying an additional dimension to
his cultural identity rather than focusing on a lack of ability to fit into either culture
properly.

However, from the viewpoint of American society, which would be the
arbiter for Americans abroad, Randy has indeed gone native. The child of
foreign missionaries, raised in a foreign country, usually remains rooted in his
immediate family's culture.

Randy may have been born Ecuadorian not American but that would not bar him
from living a "white" lifestyle in Quito. That he chooses to remain in the
rainforest, living as traditional a life as possible, labels him as having gone native.
The label would apply equally to an urban Ecuadorian forsaking Quito for a
similar lifestyle with an indigenous group. In this case, it is not so much the
nationality of the new culture that matters as it is the cultural group within that
nationality.

Kurtz

In *Apocalypse Now*, the Vietnam war film based on Conrad's *Heart of
Darkness*, director Francis Ford Coppola does not want to lose the resonance of
Conrad's mythic figure and keeps that name for the man at the end of the river.
Marlow the riverboat captain has become Willard the hired assassin but Kurtz

²⁹ A term equivalent to but less loaded than Sokolov's "cultural schizophrenic".
remains the lodestone pulling both men to him by the sheer force of his personality. When the term going native is uttered, Kurtz's name is often the first example mentioned by readers of English literature, sharing a common image of a man who has succumbed to the primitive darknesses of an alien culture and his own soul. Like Marlow, we all seek Kurtz, we all try to find that point at which the good man goes bad. Because in Conrad's story, going native is synonymous with deterioration, with going bad, physically and psychically. Out of the many tellings\(^{30}\) of this tale, this text will focus on three interpretations of Kurtz—those in Conrad's original novel, Nicholas Roeg's 1994 teleplay by the same name and Apocalypse Now, the 1979 cinematic event—tying them in with the Kurtzian qualities of Alan Casper and Randy Borman.

The stories share many similarities of structure. In each case, there is a journey to a mysterious interior on a river. The journey is simultaneously a passage forward in movement and backwards in civilization, away from urban culture. The journey is also moving into the future and simultaneously moving back in evolutionary time. Consistent with the western insistence on seeing time as linear, a movement from a highly structured and con-structed world of roads, solid municipal buildings and mass transit to a world of trails, impermanent structures of mud and thatch, and individual travel by foot or canoe must, necessarily, be interpreted as a movement back in time—a

---

\(^{30}\) Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario presented a single performance of A Reading of Heart of Darkness adapted (for seven readers) and directed by Neil Munro on August 17, 2000. It was a haunting performance. At the time it was recorded by the CBC for broadcast on CBC Radio One and CBC Radio Two in April 2001. This is only one example of a number of adaptations of Conrad's novella.
devolution unraveling the higher evolutionary state already reached in the urban world. The familiar dangers of civilization (such as robbery, assault and car accidents) are largely inter-personal dangers: people come into contact in some way that is hazardous or dangerous to one or both at the time. Penetrating into the unknown along the river, the dangers become im-personal (such as wild animals or tropical diseases) instead of interpersonal since the passengers become targets not necessarily because of who they are or how prosperous they look but solely because they exist: Alan Casper loses his shirt to caymans in his river; Tidwell’s progress is stopped by huge fallen trees blocking the road of the river; Conrad has a rogue hippopotamus teasing the whites at one station; and Willard and Chef encounter a tiger when they leave the boat to look for mangoes. The key to safety is, of course, what Willard and Chef screamed repeatedly and hysterically when they safely get back to the PBR\(^\text{31}\): “Never get out of the boat! Never get out of the boat!” As long as each of these men stays on the boat, he maintains the self he knows and understands. Tidwell excepted, when any of these men leave their boats, if they can physically survive, their lives and beings change in fundamental ways.

When Chef’s screaming dies down, Willard quietly observes “Kurtz got off the boat”. To this idea of Kurtz leaving the boat, film critic Karl French comments “To expose yourself to the country, the jungle, is to risk danger, to risk

\[^{31}\text{PBR—Patrol Boat River. The American craft that took Willard upriver to Cambodia in Apocalypse Now. This particular PBR was named Erebus, a ship referenced early in Conrad (5). It was the name of a ship of Sir John Franklin’s that was lost in the Arctic, eventually losing all hands after several had been forced to engage in cannibalism. In Greek mythology, Erebus is a dark region that the dead must pass through on their way to Hades.}\]
going native. The boat, a microcosm of America manned by a cross-section of American soldiers, chugs through a nightmare of madness and ever-increasing hostility" (171). French interprets going native almost as a palpable force against which one must be protected, another impersonal danger of the journey. Despite the fact that the Erebus is American and draws personal enemy fire from Viet Cong along the banks of the river because of that, it is also in danger of friendly fire or indiscriminate bombing by the Americans since it is moving so deeply into enemy territory. Thus, in Coppola's nightmare vision, the PBR is in danger from both interpersonal and impersonal dangers at all times, blurring the lines of civilization and the primitive. And, as they all know, stepping off the PBR is not a safe solution because there is "a country, a jungle" waiting there to engulf whoever may be so foolhardy—or arrogant.

Another factor that all of the stories have in common is the lone traveller-observer. Mike Tidwell is the lone anglo in the midst of the Cofan and Ecuadorian cultures as he observes Randy Borman and his methods. He is not technically racially alone since Randy is Caucasian but their cultural differences maintain a distance between them. There is a note of hurt feelings that surfaces in Amazon Stranger occasionally—Tidwell notes that Randy can be "inconsistent" and "moody"—and the times when these moods direct themselves at Tidwell, his feelings of being betrayed show in his text. Because Randy is the only other English-speaking Caucasian around and because he sounds so American, Tidwell finds himself lured into feeling a connection and intimacy that Randy does
not feel on the same level. This separation keeps Tidwell personally isolated in Zábal as he gathers information for his book.

Willard is obviously alone despite the crew members of the PBR. This is not a large boat, but Willard can withdraw and be still as the others perform their duties or indulge in random activities to stave off boredom. He creates his own quiet bubble in which to study Kurtz’s file and consider his assignment. The others are wary of him, knowing his orders are secret, but he is usually so unobtrusive that they relax and act naturally onboard the PBR.

Both Marlows are alone within the crowd, standing apart from interpersonal relationships on the river. Roeg’s Marlow sees a picture of Kurtz at the first station as he talks with the chief accountant and there is almost an air of keeping himself for Kurtz in his avoidance of other relationships. This is the beginning of his fascination with the man. Marlow has little in common with the petty bureaucrats and the cannibals he is thrown together with and it is not until after the spearing death of his helmsman that Marlow realizes he had feelings for him. Conrad’s Marlow is a slightly more detached observer than Roeg’s, much like Willard. Both feel the undercurrents of foreboding in the forest around them but Marlow stays so busy piloting his boat that he is not exposed so thoroughly to the strangeness of the pervading atmosphere.

In the film version of the story, there is some question as to the dependability of the narrator and his viewpoint. Since Willard is in virtually every scene, the audience does not get a chance to test his dependability as an

---

32 Willard is being sent to find Kurtz and to “terminate with extreme prejudice” his independent activities upriver (i.e. to kill Kurtz).
observer against the skills of anyone else. The opening visions of napalm destruction and Willard's own state of drunken despair set the stage for a spiraling down of humanity—and sanity—in this film. As French observes, the voice-over Willard is different from the Willard in the movie. As narrator, he (like Marlow in Conrad's text) has been through the fire of his experience upriver and is now coming to terms with it by telling the story. The experience itself, though, is skewed by Willard's internal demons and it is through his depression, anger and aimlessness that he saw the events he is now narrating. At a different time in Willard's life, perhaps on his first assignment in Vietnam, Kurtz would have been, simply, an officer gone wrong, an officer gone badly native. Now that he is immunizing himself against social contact and humanity with alcohol and his work as a professional assassin, Kurtz takes on the air of a true individual, a true man of conscience within a senseless war. Willard's brooding on Kurtz upriver gives him time to consider Kurtz's side of the story but the bizarre incidents along the way (the riot over the Playboy bunnies, water skiing behind the PBR, the senseless destruction of an innocent family in a sampan) colour his preconceived notions of Kurtz and take the audience with him.

Marlow conceived Kurtz as a voice, whereas Willard (who had heard Kurtz's voice on tape), focused more on his own inability to reconcile that voice with the colonel's achievements to date. Marlow acknowledges the many gifts of his Kurtz but remains in wondering anticipation of hearing him speak:

The point was in his being a gifted creature, and that of all his gifts the one that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words—the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating
stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness (79)\textsuperscript{33}

Charismatic, mysterious, compelling—Kurtz has become iconic in Marlow's mind of the ultimate philosopher-king. He grants a "real presence" to Kurtz's voice and whether Kurtz speaks of good or evil, Marlow is ready to hear him. The Russian sailor, Kurtz's lone white companion at the station, confirms Marlow's prediction: "You don't talk with that man—you listen to him" (90) he says fervently. It is a letdown for Conrad's and Roeg's Marrows when they finally encounter Kurtz and his voice. Weakened by illness, Kurtz is lethargic, his voice uncooperative with him. Both Marrows are left to scrounge around for evidence of the great mind each had anticipated. In Roeg's film, Marlow spends some time in Kurtz's cabin which is tastefully and comfortably furnished as an outpost European gentleman's home should be. There is European furniture, bric-à-brac, bookcases and, in the midst of this, an African touch in the shape of a pet monkey. Until Kurtz himself is lying on the couch, weakly expounding on existence to Marlow, there is no indication from him that there is anything amiss except his health. The movie has, of course, pushed the same moody dread as Conrad's text but, so far, that has not been fulfilled in Kurtz himself. As Marlow sits with Kurtz, however, the monkey runs about, up and down Kurtz, as Kurtz absentmindedly strokes him and talks. This frenetic action in an otherwise quiet scene becomes still as Marlow hears a single crack, and Kurtz gently lays the motionless monkey on the floor, still talking undistractedly. The monkey is dead; Kurtz has broken its neck with as little concern as would be shown the killing of a

\textsuperscript{33} All pagination for quotes from Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* is from the Bantam edition.
mosquito. In that instant, Marlow sees the foreignness in Kurtz and feels his detachment from these European surroundings. He is no longer European (although "all of Europe went into the making of Kurtz"). He has gone beyond that label by remaining intellectually high but morally low. It is not the voice that lets Marlow understand the depths of Kurtz's change: it is the message he sends with his actions.

For Conrad's Marlow, the physical voice is weakened and he must find the voice by searching text and story. He finds Kurtz's report on The Suppression of Savage Customs but its reasonable tone is in discord with Kurtz's connection to the local people and his enigmatic postscript of "Exterminate all the brutes". Readers have usually interpreted "the brutes" to refer to the natives and the postscript as a final, desperate cry on Kurtz's part to release him from his hell of inexorably crossing over into their primitive world. Frances B. Singh argues the possibility that the "brutes" in the postscript are those colonialists who have commissioned his report (277). The voice is still communicating in a European language but the message has altered. The Russian sailor supports Marlow's notion of Kurtz's intellectual prowess, but that prowess has turned foreign and savage in attitude and Marlow is left stranded without the kinship he had hoped to share with Kurtz.

On the question of going native, Robert Burden argues

Doesn't Marlow fail to understand the much more anthropologically sensitive point that Kurtz doesn't go native enough because he fails to "assume the positive virtues of the tribe"34 (21). How reliable is Marlow? As the representative of an older Victorian set of values, he misreads

---

34 Burden is quoting Singh's article.
Kurtz's depravity through the traditional colonialist fiction of "going native" (72).

Burden makes two critical points in this passage: the first is that Kurtz's process of going native is incomplete; and the second is to bring into question the existence of a cultural state that can be referred to as going native. To see going native as a commitment to a new culture over that of the culture of one's birth, Kurtz absolutely does not go native enough. He apparently speaks the language which Marlow finds so unintelligible:

We had carried Kurtz into the pilot-house: there was more air there. Lying on the couch, he stared through the open shutter. There was an eddy in the mass of human bodies, and the woman with helmeted head and tawny cheeks rushed out to the very brink of the stream. She put out her hands, shouted something, and all that wild mob took up the shout in a roaring chorus of articulated, rapid, breathless utterance. "Do you understand this?" I asked.

He kept on looking past me with fiery, longing eyes, with a mingled expression of wistfulness and hate. He made no answer, but I saw a smile, a smile of indefinable meaning, appearing on his colourless lips that a moment after twitched convulsively. "Do I not?" he said slowly, gasping, as if the words had been torn out of him by a supernatural power (114).

This is the closest Marlow comes to knowing whether or not Kurtz actually can speak the language but it is clear that Kurtz and these people are communicating and the ability to communicate is fundamental to the process of going native. If Kurtz is indeed a leader primarily because he is a voice, then he must be able to speak at least one of the local languages.

The second major test of having gone native is adopting local dress, the outer self reflecting the change of the inner. Ill, carried about on a pallet or filmed lying on a couch, Kurtz's clothing is insubstantial, like lightweight sleeping apparel, but it is not native dress. Kurtz does not appear to anyone in any of his
incarnations—Roeg's, Coppola's or Conrad's—in anything but western dress. As much as he may have come to relate to the natives around him, he maintains his distance as a product of the colonial power that originally sent him to this place.

The third major test is the extent of the new native's cultural knowledge. While each Kurtz undoubtedly must understand a great deal about the culture of the people around him to be able to lead them, cultural knowledge has no particular attraction to him. While Casper and Borman exert tremendous effort towards understanding their new cultures and assimilating effectively, Kurtz prefers to rule from above, a man who would be king, and not relate in any meaningful way with the people around him. Coppola's version even eliminates the hints of an intimate relationship with a noblewoman of the local tribe that Roeg and Conrad use to great advantage, juxtaposing her visceral sensuality against the fragility and purity of Kurtz's European fiancée. Kurtz takes part in local rituals and ceremonies—in Coppola's film, Kurtz is the absent host at his own ritualistic killing—but even these connections with the people fail to ground Kurtz in their culture. There is as much of his being resisting the drums as there is responding to them.

In this ambivalence, lies the truth as seen by Singh: Kurtz didn't go native enough. The darkness in Kurtz's soul is caused by the disjunction of the actions of his home culture in relation to the internal personal morality of Kurtz. Coppola's Kurtz is haunted by young soldiers under his command killed in senseless, political maneuverings and he comes to believe in the "crystalline" purity of action that is grounded in personal integrity, no matter how brutal.
Roeg's Kurtz delivers the ivory that he is expected to deliver but chafes at the colonial brutality of the Central Station and cannot bring himself to return there, despite his unease at the inner station. Conrad's Kurtz is so torn between the clarity of right and wrong in his forays into the jungle with the natives around him and the murkiness of the morality of his own government's actions that he cannot commit to either society. In all cases, the pain of their split loyalties brings them to a need for release through death.

The murkiness of Kurtz's character is largely due to the fact that he is not actually a character at all—he is an idea, a myth created by circumstances, and Marlow's imagination. In Conrad's book, very little is known of Kurtz's actual words—all the reader has to go on is Marlow's exposition on Kurtz's incredible voice and, later, scenes with a sick, feeble, supposedly-charismatic leader. The mist on the river and the oppression of the mood blanketing the boat on its trip upriver is as fully personified as Kurtz's actual character. Roeg's film, by virtue of being able to present visuals of Kurtz, manages to give him a corporeal reality in John Malkovich but, even so, the character remains vague and insubstantial. Malkovich does, however, give a sense of what Kurtz has been, and what he could have been, and does so in a way to coordinate his image with that of Marlow's imaginings on the river. Brando/Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now* is, paradoxically, more fully grounded in reality precisely because Coppola (and Brando) clearly present him as having gone mad. Conrad's Kurtz's soul was mad: Brando/Kurtz is mad in mind and soul. There is substantial connective tissue between his ideas, but Brando/Kurtz's fundamental morality has been so
skewed by both his superior officers and the situation in Vietnam and Cambodia that his soul and personal integrity have been unable to stand the strain placed on them. Willard is allowed into Brando/Kurtz's mind and soul much more thoroughly than are both Marlows.

Burden refers to the "traditional colonialist fiction" of going native, denying that any such cultural state is possible. Chinua Achebe argues that "For reasons which can certainly use close psychological inquiry, the West seems to suffer deep anxieties about the precariousness of its civilization and to have a need for constant reassurance by comparison with Africa" (261). In place of "Africa" could be substituted "perceived primitive societies" and still satisfy the remainder of Achebe's argument. If the West is, indeed, as unsure of its cultural integrity as Achebe is implying, then Burden would be right about the "fiction" of going native. The term would exist solely as a failed society's justification for the loss of individual, intelligent, sensitive citizens who see a better life in a different lifestyle. Since it is the home society which affixes the label, the term would exist only to satisfy the home society that the person changing cultures is a freak, an anomaly of nature. The truth of this issue, again, is two-fold. To the home society, the term obviously exists and remains a shorthand for describing what seems to be erratic or unexplainable behaviour. The factors involved are too complex and personally grounded to make a fair assessment of each individual case. Rather than argue that the new native is a victim of extended transculturation or childhood psychological factors now coming to the fore, it is easier, simply, to label them as having gone native.
The other side, of course, is the viewpoint of the new native. Sensitive to
the possibility of being considered a traitor either to one's immediate family and
upbringing or to one's country, the new native would shy away from such a label.
Randy Borman, for all his Cofan ways and familiarity with English, never applied
such a label to himself: it was Tidwell who suggested it. The new native sees his
or her integration into the new culture almost as an inevitability, albeit not always
a pleasant one. Casper, for instance, struggled with his transition into Xixi
culture even as he intellectually knew there was little future of value for him in his
home culture.

So Burden is right but for the wrong reasons. If a person uses going
native as an excuse for a change in his own behaviour it is probably just that—an
excuse. If the label is applied by the people in the metropole to describe the loss
of one of their own it is, very likely, a true assessment.
Chapter Two

Race and Going Native: The Story of Archie Grey Owl

When most writers and filmmakers tell the story of Archie Belaney, they
like to begin late in his life or at his death. He was born, white, as Archibald
Stansfeld Belaney in Hastings, England in 1888. When he died a famous author
in 1938, most of the world believed he was a full-blooded "Red Indian" named
Grey Owl. It is this punchline that the writers and filmmakers want to exploit by
telling the tale backwards. How could an ordinary, urban, English boy pass as a
half-breed or full-blooded Indian most of his adult life? And why would he want
to?

These are the basic facts of Grey Owl's life. He was born in 1888 to Kittie
Cox Belaney and George Belaney. George had married a number of times and
had a spirit of restlessness. When Archie's younger brother, Hugh, was born,
George abandoned his family for America, Kittie stayed in England with Hugh,
and Archie was given to his grandmother and two maiden aunts, Ada and Carrie,
to be raised in Hastings, England. Archie grew up on the stories of Ernest
Thompson Seton,\textsuperscript{35} James Fenimore Cooper and penny dreadfuls\textsuperscript{36} about Red

\textsuperscript{35} Ernest Thompson Seton (1860-1946). English-born North American artist, author
and naturalist. Founded the Woodcraft League, a sort of Indian-oriented precursor to Boy Scouts
(Benét's Reader's Encyclopedia, 885). His first book, Wild Animals I Have Known (1898) made
him famous. Grey Owl had a copy of his book Two Little Savages, Being the Adventures of Two
Boys Who Lived as Indians and What They Learned (1903) in his library as a boy and reviewers
have noticed Seton's influence in his writings (Smith, 18). Seton was without Indian ancestry.

\textsuperscript{36} A penny dreadful is “any cheaply printed paperbound book of adventure or mystery popular in
England and America, particularly in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. As with the dime novel, penny dreadfuls
were inexpensive and known more for the sensationalism of their stories than for any literary
merit” (Benét's, 749).
Indians and the North American wilderness. He spent his free-time teaching himself to move silently in the woods, and stocking and maintaining a small menagerie of wild creatures in the attic. Either through his own romantic dreams or through Kittie’s (probably exaggerated) tales of her and George’s time in the United States, Archie constructed a story of his father’s life in which he had travelled with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show and was an intimate of the Apaches in the U.S. southwest. For himself, however, Archie dreamed of a future in the northern woods of Canada as a trapper and guide and urged his aunts to send him there as soon as he escaped from school at the age of sixteen. They resisted and found him a position as a clerk, which was cut short by his setting off an explosion in the company chimney—probably a reaction against the limitations set on him but certainly a good way to get fired from a job he loathed. He left for Halifax in 1906, worked for a time in Toronto (it is supposed) and managed a train ticket as far north in Ontario as trains were running at the time. He made friends both with white people and Indians who helped him learn his way around the north and he developed a reputation as a good guide but a bit of a reckless character when it came to temper. He married a number of times, including one marriage to an Englishwoman when he was back in Europe for a few years serving in WW I (he never bothered to officially end one marriage or relationship before embarking on another). In 1925 he fell in love with the woman most associated with him, Gertrude Bernard, nicknamed Pony, a 19-year-old town-raised Mohawk. They were married in an Ojibwa ceremony (dates and timing vary greatly according to the text being read) and lived in the
wilderness for some years. She encouraged him to give up trapping and, after adopting two orphaned beaver kittens and observing the rapidly-declining numbers of wild animals in the north, he decided to set up a beaver colony whose purpose would be to protect the beavers and help rebuild their populations. He supported this work by lecturing and writing, first articles for English and Canadian magazines and, later, books. He had told Pony, whom he now creatively called Anahareo (a near-anagram of the name of her great-great-grandfather Chief Naharrenou) that his late mother had been an Apache and his father was a Scotsman, George MacNeill, and that he had been born in Mexico. This story had already sold well to rich sportsmen, in various versions, around campfires on hunting trips and he was anxious, despite his blue eyes, to make himself as Indian as possible. As knowledgeable as Archie was about Indian life and customs, Anahareo had no reason to doubt the story he told her.

The Canadian government offered Grey Owl a position as a conservation spokesman on their behalf and built him a cabin in a remote part of Saskatchewan on Lake Ajawaan in Prince Albert National Park where he and Anahareo tended two new pet beavers, Jelly Roll and Rawhide, and made several short films with and about them for Parks Canada. Grey Owl's British publisher, Lovat Dickson, encouraged Grey Owl to embark on two separate lecture tours in England where he was a great success and even delivered a command performance to King George VI and the royal family (including, of course, the little Princess Elizabeth, now present-day Queen Elizabeth II). Newspapers wrote of him as a half-breed or as a full-blooded Indian and Grey
Owl corrected neither version. Between tours, he and Anahareo parted for the last time and Grey Owl married a French Canadian woman, Yvonne Perrier. They were not to be married long. Exhausted on his return to Canada from his second lecture tour, Grey Owl fell ill with pneumonia and died at the age of 50 in 1938. The day following his death, the *North Bay Nugget* (a northern Ontario newspaper) carried the sensational story that Grey Owl had no native blood whatsoever and was, in reality, an Englishman from Hastings.

How could Archie Grey Owl have managed such a transformation? Certainly, Hastings was too staid for him and there was no trade available to him in England that he found interesting. Many other young Britons were travelling to Canada to make their fortunes in the early 1900's. Confederation had only taken place a mere forty or so years before and the country was full of opportunity:

Certainly the Canada of to-day [circa 1931] can boast of unlimited opportunities for those who are willing to work, and there can be found in her cities and small towns a civilization as prosaic and matter-of-fact as exists in many older and longer-settled countries. There is big business; there are mining developments and engineering projects second to none in the world. Several finely equipped railroads span her from coast to coast. The mountains have been conquered, mighty rivers dammed, and vast reaches of prairie and woodland denuded of their game and brought under the plough. There are few improvements or inventions of modern times that are not in common use, even in sparsely settled districts.

All this is known to the world at large, and the word "Canada" is synonymous with "Prosperity" and "Advancement" (MLF, 6)  

---

37 The British North America Act, which made Canada a federation within its own right, was enacted by British Parliament July 1, 1867. At the time, there were only four provinces (Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia). Manitoba, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island entered between 1870 and 1873. As late as 1905, just when emigrating was becoming a possibility to Archie, Saskatchewan and Alberta joined Confederation. The tenth and latest province is Newfoundland, which joined after WWII.

38 The Grey Owl text quoted here is from *The Collected Works of Grey Owl* consisting of three full-length books: *The Men of the Last Frontier* (1931, MLF); *Pilgrims of the Wild* (1935, PW); and, *Sajo and the Beaver People* (1935, SBP). The pagination listed is that of the collected works.
In 1905, reading the latest news from Canada, Archie must have been champing at the bit when Alberta and Saskatchewan joined Canada, fearing all the Canadian wilderness would be gone before he could get there. He hints at this fear at the beginning of _The Men of the Last Frontier._

During the last twenty years or so, with emigration pouring its thousands of newcomers into Canada to seek fresh homes, the world has been wont to consider the Dominion as a settled country, largely shorn of its forests, and given over almost entirely to farming, mining, manufacturing, and like industries (MLF, 6).

His aunts Ada and Carrie had hoped to keep Archie in England long enough to settle him down a bit and help him at least learn a worthwhile trade—trapping seemed a ludicrous occupation at best to them—even as he feared the way of life he hungered to taste was fast becoming obsolete. The explosion in the chimney that got him fired from Cheale Brothers was as much an expression of his frustration at not being able to leave Hastings as it was a foretaste of the reckless reputation he was to engender in northern Ontario.

When he finally arrived in Canada, Archie seemed to have had a vague idea of perhaps living with some Indian tribe, if one would have him, and working as a guide and trapper in northern Ontario or Québec. It was, ironically, a white man, Bill Guppy, who took Archie on as helper in the northern woods and taught him to trap and canoe. Archie had a talent for this kind of work and his self-taught patience in stalking and willingness to put up with hardship stood him in good stead with Guppy. It was only later that Archie came in contact with a group of Ojibwa at Lake Temagami (near Biscotasing, Ontario) and married a young Ojibwa woman named Angele Egwuna in 1910. "He told her that he
would make a white woman out of her," quotes Duncan's documentary *The Legend of Grey Owl and the Story of Archie*, "Angel declined the offer and said instead she would make an Indian out of him." He lived with Angel and her people for some time, attaching himself particularly to Alex Espaniel and his family and picking up Ojibwa language and customs as he could. Angel taught Archie how the real Indians lived. Richard Bradley's *BBC Timewatch* television episode *Grey Owl: The Great White Hoax* interviews her granddaughter, Jean Constanti, who says: "She taught him how to speak Indian, how to trap, hunt, how to set a net. My grandmother taught Archie all of that because he liked the Indian culture." Archie later claimed that the Ojibwa band officially adopted him and gave him the name Wa-Sha-Quon-Asin, which he translated as Grey Owl.

Author and poet Armand Ruffo, Alex Espaniel's great-grandson, likened Archie Grey Owl's public evolution into an Indian to a journey by canoe with his white identity as the safety of the shore. The journey begins near the shore where the water is quiet and the paddling is easy. The paddler has total control and the canoe can be turned back to shore at any time. Gradually, the canoe encounters swifter water and the paddler is carried into the current of the river and loses the ability to bail out on shore. He and the canoe are swept along with the force of the river. Just so, Archie Grey Owl began by adopting certain Indian skills and traits and speaking the language. He was not mistaken for Ojibwa but if mistaken at all for an Indian he was flattered. Gradually, around campfires and

---

30 Archie spells this "Espagnol" or "L'Espagnol". The times are conflated slightly in this text. He was closest to the Espaniel family in the early 1920's according to biographer and historian Donald B. Smith of the University of Calgary.
on scouting trips, his tall tales slipped into personal fantasy tales of an Apache and Scottish mixed heritage. When these stories seemed to be accepted without question, he moved closer to that swifter current. When he enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces to fight in WW I, he identified himself on the official papers as being part Indian. By the time he had become a well-known author, his canoe was totally out of his control and he could not escape from the torrent of lies he had begun to create, relatively obscurely, in the northern woods. The world declared him an Indian and it was far beyond the point at which decency could have afforded him the chance to disavow the label. Anahareo locates the event that marks, for her, the point of no return. When a journalist in Montréal refers to him in print as a full-blooded Indian in 1937, a patron, Sir Charles Delmé Radcliff, encourages Archie to correct the error but he dismisses the importance of doing so. “Had Archie known how seriously people were going to take his ancestry,” wrote Anahareo in Devil in Deerskins, “This would have been the time to have clamped down on that ‘full-blooded Indian’ stuff. But how was he to know that the more he wrote, the more Indian he became in the eyes of the public?” (138)

Ruffo once asked his grandmother, Jane Esplanian, about Archie Grey Owl and his Indian playacting:

“Oh, that Archie,” she said. “We just let him go on. We didn’t pay it any mind.” In fact, she indicated because he wanted to be native they just helped him to be native. Native people have always adopted non-natives into their tribe, into their community. So it wasn’t anything out of the ordinary (Duncan).
Archie revelled in their attention and felt himself assimilating more and more deeply into their culture. By 1920 he would periodically perform Indian war dances (of his own choreography) for the amusement of tourists and sportsmen and to the bewilderment of the natives. Ruffo laughs that Archie Grey Owl would drum and sing all wrong—the local Ojibwas and Crees noticed but, of course, the white audiences and performer did not. In 1936 while in Ottawa on a visit, Grey Owl met John Tootoosis, a Cree chief from Saskatchewan who was in Ottawa meeting with members of the Department of Indian Affairs. Donald B. Smith writes

Grey Owl fascinated John. When he saw the beaver man up close, he simply could not believe the tall man wearing braids and dressed in buckskin was Indian. Yet, fair skin and blue eyes did not themselves constitute proof, as much racial mixing had already occurred in Canada. Blue-eyed Indians existed, the descendants of unions between fur traders and Indian women. Just south of Prince Albert, for instance, lived a large Cree group almost all of whom were descended from one George Sutherland, an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company. About 1800 he had left the company and went to live on the prairies as a native. He took three Cree wives, who bore him nearly thirty children, the first members of his band . . . .

John wanted to find out more about Grey Owl’s background. He had spotted in his room a little round drum, the same size as those the Plains Cree used. The Cree suggested that he would sing first, with Grey Owl to begin when he finished. John discovered that his new friend did not put words into his singing. He imitated the sounds but not the words of the Ojibwa language, a tongue closely related to Cree. Now John knew that Grey Owl could not have lived with the Ojibwa for twenty years, as he claimed (151).

---

40 In Richard Attenborough’s 1999 movie Grey Owl (Pierce Brosnan plays the lead), a white sportsman scoffs at Grey Owl’s upcoming war dance before a group of tourists. After the first dance, locking the challenger dead in the eye, Grey Owl’s voice rings out “Ladies and Gentlemen, for the next dance, The Dead Man, [when] the dance is done and the drums fall silent, we hurl ourselves upon the hated white man and we kill him. But,” he continues, tongue-in-cheek, “That costs extra.” His white audience is charmed and greatly entertained. Later on, Annie Galaup as Gertrude Bernard (a.k.a. Anahareo) comments, eyes twinkling with irony, “Nice dance” to a Bear Island Ojibwa who took part in Archie Grey Owl’s theatrical production. He has the grace to blush as he mumbles a reply. It’s subtle, but the movie script is recognizing Archie Grey Owl’s lack of authenticity.
Interviewed in Bradley’s documentary, John Tootoosis’ son, Gordon, remembers his father telling him of the encounter:

Grey Owl offered to teach my father a song. But when he heard Grey Owl sing he knew right away there’s not a trace of Indian in this guy. He was intrigued with this man who was from England who wanted to be an Indian when, at the time, it wasn’t a very good idea to be an Indian even if you were, you know. But he was quite amused by that and he got to really like and respect Grey Owl.

John was too polite to let Grey Owl know that he could see through him and, too, there was the conservation work to be considered. By 1936, Grey Owl was internationally famous and had brought a great deal of public activism and growing governmental awareness to bear on the issue of dwindling wildlife resources in the country. John Tootoosis, and others who could see through Archie Grey Owl’s elaborate masquerade, preferred to overlook it for the good he was doing in the world. Wally Laird, an R.C.M.P. officer stationed in the west from 1932-1948 claims Grey Owl “was a figure of fun to the Indians. When he put on his Indian war dancing, they just laughed at him. They knew he was no Indian” (Bradley). Ron Davies, son of the Warden at Prince Albert Park asserts “My father knew that he wasn’t an Indian . . . . But nobody made a big thing of it in those days. They would just keep quiet. It was a time when people minded their own business” (Bradley). Indeed, the North Bay Nugget had held the story of Archie Grey Owl’s true identity for three years before his death. The article had been written by journalist Britt Jessup, confirmed by his colleague Mort Fellman, and was on file with the newspaper but the editor, Ed Bunyan, was

---

41 While technically a federal police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police act as provincial law enforcement if a province does not have its own force.
more willing to risk losing the news scoop than to risk endangering Archie Grey Owl's valuable work on behalf of conservation and native peoples by publishing the article as soon as it was written (Smith, 172). Once Grey Owl was dead, of course, it was safe to publish and Bunyan hastened to do so within 24 hours of the death notice.

Jane Espaniel recalled elements in Grey Owl's books that puzzled her, particularly the references in which he included himself as an Indian or made ludicrous comments about Indian customs that simply were not true.\(^4\) The honesty of their meeting in 1935, years after Archie Grey Owl had been, in essence, a member of the family is telling:

When Archie met Jane they talked for some time, then he asked: "Have you read any of my books? What do you think about my writing?" Jane liked him too much to lie. She replied that she had read Pilgrims [of the Wild], then added: "I can't spin long tales like you do. To me it's just a lot of north wind blowing." To which her author-friend smiled, and said in his gentle, soft-spoken voice: "You're the first one who has ever said that to my face." Then he shook her hand. (Smith, 177).

A gentle rebuke as from a little sister to a wayward big brother, Archie took it gracefully. Her discomfort at his exaggerations and duplicity about his personal identity was common to not a few of his native friends. Anahareo herself, interviewed in Duncan's documentary, was unhappy with Grey Owl as he prepared to go on his first speaking tour.

\(^4\) Smith comments, in both his book (177) and in Duncan's documentary, that Grey Owl loved to tell a story that the Indians and beavers were so closely allied that if a beaver mother was killed and the kittens left helpless, Indian women would occasionally nurse them until they were ready for weaning. No small feat, according to Smith, since beaver kits are born with a full set of sharp teeth! It was just this sort of exaggeration that bothered Jane Espaniel. (Jane was Alex Espaniel's daughter.)
in Great Britain. He was planning to dress as an Indian chief for his tour and this
shocked her since he had no ancestral right to do so. "Why not go as the
woodsman [you are]?" she wondered, to which Grey Owl replied "They expect
me to be an Indian." He knew his audience and he once rationalized his
overdone public persona by saying that even if his talk was a failure, the
audience would at least feel as though they had seen a
real Indian. Anahareo, of course, is also not without a sense of theatre in that
her name is Gertrude Bernard\textsuperscript{3}, not Anahareo, but she accepts the more "native"
name by dismissing it as "the name Archie calls me in his writings" (Anahareo,
33).

When Archie Grey Owl arrived in England for his first speaking tour, the
\textit{Sunday Express} gushed "There never came a redder Red Indian to England"
(Bradley). Archie Grey Owl took definite steps to try to look as Indian as
possible. Other than his manner of dress (rough shirt, buckskins or work pants,
and moccasins while at the cabin, and fancy buckskins with beadwork for his
speaking tour), Archie Grey Owl coloured his hair and his skin to heighten the
native effect. Jane helped him dye his hair black with notox hair dye at least
once and Albert Lalonde, his and Angele's grandson, confides "My grandmother,
like, got the puff balls\textsuperscript{4}, you know, from the ground and she used to rub that on
his skin and that's how come he become brown. It stayed—it's like a dye." His

\textsuperscript{3} She changed her name when she remarried after Grey Owl's death: "I did not marry while
Archie was alive, because a divorce is unknown among the Lac Simon Indians, and I considered
Papati's marriage ceremony legally binding. It wasn't until December 2, 1939, that Count Eric
Moltke Huitfeldt, of Sweden, and I were married" (Anahareo, 189).

\textsuperscript{4} A large form of edible wild fungus.
sister Jean corroborates: “And she used to wash him down with tea” (Bradley).

What is amazing is that some people who helped him with the colour still believed in his mixed heritage. Margaret Winters Charko, whose family raised his and Anahareo’s daughter Dawn and who, as a teenager, typed his manuscripts for him remembers:

We thought Grey Owl was an Indian from the first time we saw him. He had his long braids and dressed like one and we had no reason to doubt his word. He looked enough Indian to us. His blue eyes came from his Scottish grandmother and that’s all there was to it . . . . He had her [Margaret's mother] put some lotion on his face because he told her that he had been ill and his tan had faded off and they would expect him to be a little darker. And my mother didn’t think anything of Grey Owl wanting all that done. She just helped him out (Bradley).

More evidence of people minding their own business. Margaret adds that Grey Owl had “a very serious face” that he would manufacture and put on for tourist photos and publicity shots because he felt it made “him look more like an Indian”. Wally Laird, who never believed the mixed blood story, says that Grey Owl “practised in the mirror—usually in profile. And in profile, he has a hooked nose and everything like that.” Another R.C.M.P. officer from the Prince Albert National Park area, Stirling McNeil, thought of him as being a native from a specific region of Canada: “He had a long braid down the back and he was tanned up and everything else and he was tall and slim. He could a well been taken for an Eastern Indian” (Bradley). The point is that Archie Grey Owl went to considerable trouble to convince people that he was, at the very least, a half-breed Indian. Being mistaken for a full-blooded Indian was not an error he was likely to correct either.
When Archie Grey Owl went native it was, to quote Gordon Tootoosis, a “time it wasn’t a very good idea to be an Indian even if you were.” Indians had very little status in Canadian society. Canadian laws were strict and limited the rights of the aboriginal peoples. Indians couldn’t go into a liquor store in those days so if an Indian wanted liquor, he or she had to find a bootlegger. Many had been herded onto reservations in undesirable areas, being weaned from their traditional lives of hunting, fishing and farming into low-level service sector jobs such as waitressing, guiding tourist hunters and fishermen, or seasonal ranger work for the Ministry of Lands and Forests (when jobs were available to them at all). Many Indians on those reservations led impoverished lives and still others were, ironically, in a worse situation because they had no reserve. These were people, like the Bear Island Ojibwa (the Teme-Augama Anishnabai), who were eventually denied hunting rights on their own ancestral grounds so that the lands could be leased to hunters to the benefit of the Crown. When Archie Grey Owl met John Tootoosis in Ottawa, the Chief was there “to present the resolutions passed by the meetings of the League of Indians of Western Canada” to the Department of Indian Affairs. These resolutions included “petitions from Indian councils which called for a more humane Indian policy” asking for freedom of religion, better schools and teachers and a hands-off policy that would restrict the government’s forcing Indians to live a white lifestyle (Smith, 149-150). The day after his wedding to Angele, Archie was pointedly snubbed by a forest ranger who “regarded Archie as despicable for marrying a ‘squaw’ (Smith, 44). This

---

45 Public lands in Canada are, to this day, referred to as “Crown land.”
Englishman's perception of the taciturn, dignified deepwoodsman Red Indian was totally at odds with the situation the Aboriginal peoples were finding themselves in by the time he arrived in Canada. Archie had surely known back in Hastings that Indians would be regarded as lesser beings in England but it is impossible to know if he also realized their reduced social status in Canada as well. Despite his observations of their treatment and lifestyles and his negative treatment personally when he was perceived to be a half-breed, once he was committed to the idea he doggedly persisted in his desire to become Indian himself.

Archie probably began his career in Canada convinced he could be satisfied only to become a trapper and guide in the Canadian wilderness. The freedom from external controls and the challenge of pitting himself against a hostile environment thrilled him. He describes the relationship that the trapper has with the backwoods:

The real trapper (by which I mean the man who spends his days up beyond the Strong Woods, not the part-time hunter, or "railroad" trapper out for a quick fortune) is as much an integral part of the woods as are the animals themselves. In tune with his surroundings, wise in the lore of the Indian, he reads and correctly interprets the cryptograms in the book that lies open before him, scanning the face of Nature and forestalling her moods to his advantage. Dependent entirely on himself, he must be resourceful, ready to change plan at a moment's notice, turning adverse circumstances and reverses to what slight advantage he may. The hardships and privations of the trapper's life have developed in him a determination, a dogged perseverance, and a bulldog tenacity of purpose not often necessary in other walks of life (MLF, 9).

He dismisses the trapper who is out for a quick buck during a winter's work; these are the men that use crude methods such as scattering strychnine, a poison that leaves lingering death on the trail for curious dogs the following
spring. Archie is admiring the stamina and williness of the “real” trappers who are consumed by their independent lives of danger and solitude. These men are respectful of the wilderness even as they try to master its difficulties. Archie equates these trappers with the animals they trap. The trapper is just another natural predator stalking its rightful prey as he prowls around the woods setting traps. They are “wise in the lore of the Indian” Archie declares, showing the reader where he feels his research and focus on native lifestyles and history has brought him. There is a difference between understanding Indian ways and being an Indian, though. Despite his childhood obsession with Indians, he does not yet see fully assimilating into any Indian tribe as a realistic possibility for himself. He is, of course, very anxious to learn about Indians and be accepted by them but it seems, since trapping is not exclusively an Indian practice, as though Archie will be content to join the ranks of those whites who trap in northern Ontario and Québec. It is his “greenhorn” accent, not his race, that impedes him at first. Dickson writes of Archie’s first sight of Bill Guppy:

He knew that he stood at a disadvantage in the sight of this hard-bitten individual [Bill Guppy]. He knew that for some reason his English accent was a cause of humour to Canadians. He found theirs strange, but not funny; and recognizing himself in a minority in this matter had studiously been trying in his months in Toronto to capture the colloquialisms of Canadian speech, its quick slur, which he found most attractive, its terms of slang (HB, 84).

His race will not keep him from his northern dream but his perceived inexperiencen and naïveté just might. His skin is white, his parentage British and, while this undoubtedly feels like a prosaic and unfair accident of birth, with
practice, he may be able to pass as a Canadian\textsuperscript{46}, but not as an Indian. Although he can adjust his ethnicity from British to Canadian, his race seems an absolute to him. David Murray addresses this issue:

\begin{quote}
It has often been pointed out that ethnicity can be seen as being about choice, whereas race is not. You can choose to embrace ethnicity, which is defined in terms of group, whereas race is quite different; in fact Blacks were in some ways negatively characterised as not having all of the elements which constituted ethnicity, like community and a sense of valued identity and origins. Another way to put this is to say that ethnicity can be creative, an act of imagining and reimagining the past, a creative use of memory. (96, italics mine).
\end{quote}

The creativity of ethnic identity speaks directly to Archie Grey Owl’s childhood fantasies of his father’s life in the American southwest. In his first biography of Archie Grey Owl (\textit{Half-Breed: The Story of Grey Owl,} published in 1939) Lovat Dickson feels it is “conceivable” that George Belaney “came into contact with Colonel Bill Cody, for ‘Buffalo Bill', as he was known everywhere in America, was active in the western States” during George’s unaccounted years in America when he was presumed to be in the southwest (HB, 20). More than thirty years later when Dickson wrote another biography of Archie Grey Owl, which he entitled \textit{Wilderness Man: The Amazing True Story of Grey Owl} (1973), his suppositions about George were much more curtailed. Cognizant of his restlessness, his drinking and his tendency to abandon his women and children at will, Dickson discretely resists perpetuating random speculations about where George had been in the U.S. and what he had been up to unless there were legal

\textsuperscript{46} The movies made by Archie Grey Owl with Parks Canada that I have seen pre-date the use of sound on a widespread basis. There are, however, newsreels and radio broadcasts in which one can hear his voice. He was so successful at adopting a Canadian accent that he does not sound the least bit British in any of these pieces.
documents pinpointing his whereabouts. Dickson had learned to be wary of the
Belaney men's skills at weaving good yarns. Throughout his life, Archie Grey
Owl told, retold and embellished stories that had his father working, variously,
with Bill Cody or as a Texas Ranger. Raddall quotes a Frank Coryall,47 a Toronto
businessman who hired Archie as a guide in 1913: "He was a prolific storyteller
and entertainer—fighting Yaqui Indians in New Mexico, his father's violent death
as a member of the Texas Rangers, etc. At that time he was frankly a white
man, although he could talk to the Ojibwas in their language" (94). Still white,
Archie is already creating himself a life as an Indian as he distances himself
more and more from his English upbringing. He is at that critical point in
assimilation where he is adopting the language of his chosen people. Now, too,
his father's adventure tales also involve him as well: father and son, side-by-side
in a battle with the Yaqui. Archie's Apache mother Kittie becomes Kittie Cochise
as Archie draws on the resonance of the legend associated with that hero's
name. While reckless in the overall fantasies of his background, he is careful in
the details. Cochise himself was Apache, although he was Chiricahua Apache,
and Archie claimed that his mother's people were Jicarillo Apache. After Archie
Grey Owl's death, Yvonne told the Regina Leader-Post that "Grey Owl's mother
was a near relative of the great Indian, Chief Geronimo [also Chiricahua Apache],
famed in the western border history" (Smith, 171). Not illogical combinations and,
presumably, very convincing because of the specifics48. He even embellishes the

47 Donald B. Smith, a more careful scholar than Raddall, spells his name "Coryell".
48 In later life, to skirt the unpleasantness of being found out a bigamist, Archie Grey Owl told his
last wife, Yvonne Perrier, that Belaney was the name of an aunt who raised him. His father was a
McNeil—a McNeil of Barras, he specified—whose family had been in the States for three
lives of those around him, particularly his women. Anahareo, he avers to his aunts in a letter around 1927, is “an Iroquois chief’s daughter” (Smith, 98), even though she makes no claim to any such rank in her book *Devil in Deerskins*.49 His last wife and companion, Yvonne Perrier, was thoroughly French-Canadian, but once she was given the honour of being adopted into an American Iroquois tribe as Silver Moon, Archie Grey Owl always referred to her by this name to perpetuate the idea of her having native ancestry. In a letter written in 1937, Dickson sounds convinced of Perrier’s heritage: “Grey Owl, by the way, told me some time ago that Yvonne is a half-breed—her appearance certainly gives evidence of that—and that her name amongst the Indians was Silver Moon” (Smith, 189). Photographs of Yvonne do not seem to indicate any native heritage. Looking for what he expects to find, Dickson sees Yvonne as Silver Moon and sees Archie as Grey Owl. Race is becoming as mutable as ethnicity in Archie Grey Owl’s life.

It is being “seen” as an Indian that allowed Archie Grey Owl to go native. By the time he met Anahareo in 1925, he had been in the bush for almost twenty years.50 With long hair, his skin tanned and weathered by sun and cold, and his beaked nose, he was the epitome of what white North Americans and Europeans considered an Indian to be. Despite all the native skills that Angel taught him,

49 Anahareo writes that she had originally planned to name this book *Grey Owl and I*. Grey Owl had once said that his last book would be about himself, “things that even you don’t know” he told her, and that he would call it *Devil in Deerskins*. He never wrote that book and she appropriated the title (180). Calling himself a devil is one thing, but Anahareo’s use of the title seems to indicate some lingering exasperation with her ex-husband.

50 Excluding his time overseas and in England during WW I.
she never made an Indian of him. It was the white sportsmen who hired him as a
guide, his fellow soldiers in the trenches, the Canadian Immigration Service (who
took Archie’s word that he was a half-breed)—these were the people who made
him Indian. His hair colouring and skin darkening did not fool the real aboriginals
of Canada; they merely indulged him in his fantasy. Even Chief John Tootoosis
would have overlooked Archie’s fair skin if he had been able to drum and sing
appropriately. It is because Archie Grey Owl can pass as an Indian among
whites that he “becomes” an Indian and he can pass because he has carefully
and gradually built up the appearance and the persona of what white society
considers an Indian to be. By the early 1900’s, Indians were living a wide variety
of lifestyles with many of them assimilating into mainstream culture in the cities.
When Brosnan’s Grey Owl first meets Galipeau’s Pony in Attenborough’s film,
she is in a pretty dress. She says she’s Mohawk and he grunts that she’s the
“first Mohawk I’ve ever seen dressed like that.” Unwilling to accept that as an
insult, Pony laughs and says “Then you’ve never been in downtown Val d’Or51 on
a Saturday night!” She knows she’s just as much 100% Mohawk whether she
dresses the part or not. Her identity is secure. It is Archie Grey Owl who must
be constantly vigilant about his appearance. His beaded buckskins, leather
thong-wrapped braids and “loping gait” of an Indian are necessary elements in
his attempt to fix his newly-assumed racial identity. His lifestyle and habits must
also be under constant scrutiny for authenticity. Eric Gaskell, Grey Owl’s friend
and editor of Canadian Bookman from 1938-42, unconsciously supported an

51 A town in the Abitibi region of Québec.
Indian stereotype in his interview for the Bradley documentary: "He [Grey Owl] had a natural rapport with all animals. He could attract moose by call—he studied the Indian call—and moose would come far closer to him than they'd normally come to any human, the same with deer" (Bradley). Indians are perceived as creatures of nature just as are the animals of the forest, just as are the trappers in Archie Grey Owl's imagination. The wild animals came to Archie Grey Owl because he could imitate the Indian call, not necessarily because he could imitate their own animal calls. He is Indian and, therefore, in tune with the bush and its inhabitants because he is now a natural part of the bush as well. The wild animals recognize their own and so they do not fear Archie Grey Owl. Gaskell tellingly notes that deer and moose would come closer to Archie Grey Owl than to "any human"—he specifically does not say to "any other human", making Archie Grey Owl both less a human being and more a wild animal in one breath.

Steeped in Ernest Thompson Seton's books and penny dreadful adventures and descriptions of Indian life read in his childhood, Archie Grey Owl has an old-fashioned concept of what it is to be an Indian and, oddly, this outdated stereotype is what draws people to him. Whites are initially attracted to Archie Grey Owl the Indian author through the magic of his prose and the sensitivity of his Indian heart, in harmony with nature. White society feels a dissatisfaction with the industrialized world and Grey Owl's calm, dignified, native persona opens up the natural world to them again. Native peoples are attracted to Archie because he genuinely wants to learn about their culture and do well
within their community. He is anxious to love them and be loved by them. He sees a nobility of character in these people that has been denied them by the social currents of the twentieth century and the Indians he meets naturally respond favourably to one who sees the greatness in their culture. The only lifestyle option Archie Grey Owl sees open to him initially in Canada is to operate as a trapper because that is a free and self-reliant lifestyle that he perceives to be consistent with Indian values. He's certain he cannot simply walk into an Indian village and be accepted and he sees this wilderness life as his own personal way to be as Indian as possible. His early acceptance by the Bear Island Ojibwa must have been a great surprise to him and a tremendous boost to his dreams. This community was making it possible for him to be Indian instead of just living like an Indian. One of the confusions for Archie Grey Owl is, of course, that he does not really know how present-day Indians live because the material he has been studying has been both filtered through a white man's sensibility (Seton) or sensationalized (the penny dreadfuls). He must live in the bush for awhile to see the multiplicity of lives available to him in Canada as an Indian in the twentieth century. Community life is not for him, he decides, and his restlessness causes him to continue to follow the traplines, a lifestyle he considers quintessentially Indian. It is Anahareo, the true Indian, who brings him to see the falsity of his position. Trapping is not a traditional Indian lifestyle, she argues. Trapping came into being as whites moved into North America and demanded furs and paid top dollar for them. The traditional Indian way is to take only what one needs, only when one needs it. As Archie Grey Owl considers this
position, it completely changes his path in life. Gaskell notes that “He came to believe it, himself, that this in fact had been wrong, that he had transgressed the Indian philosophy of life. That all living things have a spirit and a soul and he had a mission to redeem himself by preaching the gospel of conservation” (Bradley). Archie Grey Owl is still suspended in his old-fashioned view of Indian values but that is exactly where he wants to be. He sees Indians as romantic and unchanging and still perceives them against a background of the Canadian forest primeval. Archie has projected certain expectations upon Indian culture and his process of going native consists of fulfilling these expectations in the limelight of white society. Archie, obscure in the Canadian north for twenty years, goes native and recreates himself and his history to support his desired identity. Grey Owl, a rising star in the literary world, exaggerates the Indian-ness he has acquired and creates an unconscious parody of the Indian for white consumption. As far as he is concerned personally, he is wildly successful at both endeavours.

Murray notes that mixed-breed writers may emphasize their Indian heritage to put a certain slant on their writing:

Ethnicity therefore need not be reliant on authenticity except as an important rhetorical weapon. So, present-day Indian writers may choose whether to invoke an Indian heritage. Louise Erdrich, as her name suggests, has German as well as Chippewa ancestry, and has written, in The Beet Queen, about German immigrants. Many contributors to collections of Native American writing choose to identify themselves as of

---

52 Raddall is less convinced of Archie’s original change of heart noting that “Gertrude Anahareo was that sort of woman, even if Archie was not quite that sort of man. His new spirit of mercy and atonement did not extend to the fox, marten, lynx, fisher, weasel and mink he also trapped for their pelts, nor to the moose, deer and wild fowl he hunted for the pot” (111). Hunting for food was not outside of the Indian’s philosophy so it is understandable that Archie may have felt no qualms about continuing to do so. It is true that he initially only stopped trapping beaver and kept up the other trapping to make a living but, as his success with writing picked up, he was happy to abandon the troupes entirely.
mixed origins, and the implication is that the Indian element is in this context the operative one (96).

Archie Grey Owl is able to sell his conservation message precisely because he is an “authentic” Indian. White society “tended to measure progress in terms of trees cut down, dams built or how many skins had been conveyed to market”\textsuperscript{33} and Grey Owl’s conservation message, approach and persona were fresh, engaging and newsworthy. Eric Gaskell reflected on his friend’s creative ethnicity: “Sure it was an audacious deception but he realized the only way he could dramatically and effectively project his message was by doing it in the guise of a native Indian” (Bradley).

Gaskell’s argument seems persuasive at first but there are two major stumbling blocks to accepting it. The first is, of course, that Archie Grey Owl adopted his native persona long before he ever considered writing for a living or engaging in conserving the beaver population in Canada. He was telling tall tales of his past as truth very early in his days with Bill Guppy; his Indian identity was not adopted specifically to further his conservation aims. The second is that no native Indian of that time could have written the way Archie Grey Owl did. No native Indian could have delivered the conservation message to so broad an audience so appealingly as Archie Grey Owl because Archie understood the people on both sides of the question. The Indians did not need persuading but periodically needed someone with high visibility to speak for them and Archie Grey Owl was willing. Gaskell marvelled “For all practical purposes, this man looked like a native Indian. But his language, when he spoke, the phraseology,
the forming of sentences, I thought this was extraordinary. No Indian would normally speak in this fashion” (Bradley). Gaskell is, of course, correct. No Indian of the time would have had Archie's classical British education or would have had the opportunity to have read as widely as the solitary Archie had done as a child. No Indian of the time would have had an ear trained to British mainstream diction and tastes. The reality is that no Red Indian of the time was capable of writing what Archie Grey Owl was selling in his books. Archie Grey Owl understood the British reader of the time intimately and, by approaching British magazines first, knew how to give them what they wanted from his unique perspective. To appeal to the educated white Canadian or British reader, Archie Grey Owl wrote on their terms, in their language. He expressed himself as that public would have expected a Red Indian to express himself: slightly stilted English; occasional awkward sentences; and with the somewhat self-conscious formality of one who is writing in a second language. It was very early in his article-publishing career that Archie amended his by-line to enhance that unique perspective. Donald B. Smith traces the progression:

Gradually Archie now [circa 1929] transformed himself from a trapper to an Indian. If he wrote as a North American Indian he knew that his public would credit him with an insight into nature denied non-native writers.

From Cabano on May 6, 1929, he wrote to *Country Life of Indians* as “them,” but claimed to have been adopted by the Ojibwas about twenty years earlier. By November 5, 1929, he reported to his English editor that “for about 15 years he spoke nothing but Indian.” On November 12, 1930, he signed himself “Grey Owl” for the first time, after once trying out the name, “White Owl”

---

53 Quoting Hillary Russell, a Parks Canada employee interviewed in the Duncan documentary.
54 Washaquonasie is the Ojibwa word for screech owl, a small owl that can be greyish in colour. The word can also be translated as “shining beak of the owl” or “white beak owl” but it does not refer at all to the Great Grey Owl, a different bird. Grey Owl preferred his own spelling—
Archie Grey Owl has gone native but now he wants to trade on that change in identity. As well, there must have been some sense of entitlement involved. Having switched his identity from a member of a privileged racial group to that of a downtrodden one (and "half-breeds" have traditionally been even less respected than full-blooded Indians), he must have been amused that he was able to lift up his own status again through the sheer force of his own personality and writing. In the final analysis, however, the joke is, sadly, on Archie Grey Owl. The more famous he becomes as an Indian, the less he is able to live an Indian lifestyle. Committed to his beaver colony, he must live at Lake Ajawaan instead of roaming around as he was accustomed. Worse still, as he becomes more and more famous as a writer, he must leave that wilderness and live a white lifestyle on the road, lecturing and being interviewed. His northern vistas become views out of urban hotel windows, his loping gait hurries him from engagement to engagement without rest or a decent diet. The pneumonia that killed Archie Grey Owl was very mild. If he had not been in an exhausted state from touring and lecturing it probably would have passed as other bouts of pneumonia had. He really died of his own success at imposture.

There are, still, two schools of thought on the Indian, Archie Grey Owl.

Raddall takes the negative:

He was the most romantic and the most successful impostor of his time. In figure he was tall and lean, with a jutting nose and grey-blue gaze that could be bold and challenging, or shifty and furtive, or again as innocent as a child's. He was an obsessive liar, even in small matters where a lie had no purpose or advantage. He had a gift for his native English

Washaquonasin—and occasionally, dramatically, said the name is also translated as "He Who Walks By Night" (Smith, 92).
language, written or spoken, and with it he bamboozled hundreds of thousands of people, ranging from Canadian Army doctors to the King and Queen of England. And he got away with it to the very moment of his death (85).

Raddall acknowledges his writing talent while emphasizing his "native English" background. The language here is loaded with negatives—"shifty", "obsessive liar", "bamboozled"—and when Raddall later focuses on Archie’s army career, he is certain that Archie was discharged with a cowardly self-inflicted wound. He sees Archie’s attraction to native life arising out of laziness. "Archie was charmed with the Indians’ way of life," Raddall asserts, "in which women did all the work about the camp and the men enjoyed indolence, with occasional necessary spells of hunting and fishing, and trapping fur to get money for tobacco and ammunition and, whenever possible, firewater" (91). One of Archie’s abandoned children, the son of Marie Girard—known as Johnny Jero, dismissed Grey Owl as "Archie Baloney" if his name came up (Duncan). And, in Bradley’s documentary, tellingly entitled Grey Owl: The Great White Hoax, the narrator intones this epitaph: "In death, Archie Belaney was revealed as a bigamist, a fraud and a compulsive fanatacist with a drink problem". All, of course, technically true.

Precisely why were the press and public so outraged to find that Grey Owl had been born English and not part-Apache? They had bought the Red Indian identity so readily—and embellished it so thoroughly—that all must have felt foolish when his unreconstructed self was revealed after his death. The press

---

56 Archie did not marry Marie Girard and abandoned her soon after he found out she was expecting their child. When he was overseas in WW I he sent her a little money but she died of tuberculosis soon after that and Johnny was raised by family friends.
was also cheated of the chance to confront and humiliate him publicly for the public humiliation many of them undoubtedly felt. In the midst of all this indignation, Archie Grey Owl's conservation message was lost along with his credibility: evidently the message is negated when the spectacle is inauthentic. The irony is, of course, that he had truly lived a hard life in the wilderness, hunting and trapping wild animals for his own survival and, in the process, coming to realize that that world was fast disappearing. He was an insider in both worlds: he knew the wilderness well enough to feel its cri de coeur and knew the white metropolitan public well enough to know how to sell this message to them. However, it wasn't enough to have "talked the talk and walked the walk" of a northern Canadian half-breed trapper. Archie Grey Owl's birthplace was a limitation on him that he refused to accept for himself but which observers could not ignore.

The other school of thought glosses over his faults to focus on his commitment to his message and his life as an Indian. In his later biography, Dickson quotes Laya Rotenberg, a young Toronto woman who met Archie Grey Owl on the ship to England for his first lecture tour:

If as later investigation showed he was not part Indian, well I for one am reluctant to describe him as an imposter [sic], or put any pejorative label upon him. After all, am imposter is a hypocrite or a quack with devious ulterior motives, a person who misleads knowingly or is without qualification to advise. Certainly where his life and work were concerned he had earned the right to be respected and cleared of either epithet (WM, 264).

Lovat Dickson, Archie Grey Owl's publisher, friend, confidant and host while he was in England on tour had more right than many, perhaps, to be angry
that Archie had not been forthcoming with him, but his writing never shows the least amount of rancour against his author. He, too, hopes that Grey Owl's message will not be lost within the controversy over his identity. Back in 1939 in his first biography of Archie Grey Owl, Dickson reports that Archie's mother, amazingly, declared "He was an Indian; he thought so; why cannot they let him remain so? Why must everything be looked into and gone over again?" (29).

Dickson, searching for a way to separate some man named Archie Belaney from the author Grey Owl he knew and trusted, is disappointed to find that Kittie's comment does not apply literally to Archie Grey Owl's birth. He was born an Englishman and Dickson is dejected by the cold facts. Kittie was, however, more right than Dickson gave her credit for. He was Indian in ways that overcame his parentage and birthplace. Kittie could see this. Anahareo could see this once she got over the shock of his origins. His readers could see it in his evocative texts. Margaret Winters Charko gives him credit because "He became what he dreamt of being—thoroughly an Indian" (Bradley). As Hillary Russell of Parks Canada put it at the end of Duncan's documentary:

It's not that strange that he did what he did. Lots of, I mean, other people do it. Pretend they have ancestors they never had. You know. Concoct a life for themselves they wish they had. He just managed to succeed better than many others at becoming the person he wanted to be.

Archie Belaney was, like everyone else, choosing himself as he chose to be Grey Owl but he chose himself on a level where others in white, Anglo society could not conceive of a choice being possible. White skin is an absolute. Being an Englishman is an absolute. Once cannot make a choice to reject either of these stations in life without becoming totally untrustworthy in all other areas of
personality and lifestyle. Archie Grey Owl is someone who cannot be allowed to exist because such a person blurs fixed boundaries and has no definable station in life. The stratum of society to which he belongs cannot be codified and is, therefore, suspect. Created as the dream outlet for a parentless boy, life as a Red Indian in the northern Canadian wilderness became the only reality in which Archie Grey Owl could create the man his soul needed him to be.
Chapter Three
The Issue of Treason

Benedict Anderson's view of nationalism in *Imagined Communities* raises questions about the location of the individual when considering the idea of going native. Anderson sees nationalism as a logical result of a variety of factors in history: a shift in the concept of time from sacred/eternal time to linear time—i.e. an awakening concept of history as events in a certain order, a cause and effect; a release of the influence of the religious in everyday life which allowed the rise of political kingdoms over sacred kingdoms; the increasing use of vernaculars as the élitist sacred languages (such as Latin) lost a great deal of common usage; and the rise of print capitalism, disseminating knowledge and information, following and leading this rise of vernaculars. With the easier spread of news and political discussion possible, it became clearer to people that they belonged to a group called "Us" and others belonged to groups of "Them". A sensibility of nations arose from this and these nations, according to Anderson, are constructs, are imagined communities, fascinating in their separate creations because they exist not necessarily because of shared vernaculars or cultural practices or "natural" boundaries, but because of some intangible will of the people or accepted historicity of the boundaries.

---

54 The idea of "natural" boundaries is that certain rivers, mountain ranges, etc. create natural nations because of their existence and placement. As maps became more popular for helping to designate territories of specific kingdoms, natural boundaries were called upon (based on ancient Greek texts) as logical divisions. The problem is, of course, which rivers and mountains should be so designated?
Given these theoretical criteria for the understanding of the rise of nationalism on a world-wide scale, we are still left with the theoretical gap of what is happening to the individual as these major shifts occur. The agricultural poor are, as always, still tied to the land since they are too poor to move, but now the shift in sensibility has put them in the position of being able to commit treason in relation to a country rather than be disloyal to a specific ruler. Because of an accident of birth, allegiance to the country is assumed to be the norm and subversive activity or dissent are considered abnormal. Excessive dissent has always been a punishable offense but it may be more difficult for the individual to understand what is excessive or subversive to a nation versus what is excessive or subversive to an individual ruler. The level of acceptable dissent is now determined by the nation, by laws that (presumably) apply to everyone and the individual must now be, to varying degrees depending upon the local régime, politically aware to remain safe. Travellers and immigrants to the nation must be sensitive enough to the mood of the populace to understand these limits without specifically asking about them or violating them, keeping themselves safe but also leaving open the possibility of assimilation within this new culture.

In the twentieth century, the government of Great Britain could charge its citizens with treason from two different angles. If a person was tried for treason proper ["conspiring 'together and with other persons unknown for purposes prejudicial to the safety or interest of the state to communicate to other persons information which might be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy"" (West, 301)], and convicted, the conviction carried a mandatory death penalty.
According to Rebecca West in *The New Meaning of Treason*\(^7\), outside of wartime this charge was seldom leveled. Those accused were usually charged under the Official Secrets Act which carried a significantly-lighter maximum penalty of fourteen years’ incarceration\(^8\). It is interesting to note that, even within the heat of the Cold War when suspicions and covert activity both ran high, Her Majesty’s government hesitated to submit traitors to capital punishment. The Official Secrets Act was ideally suited to cover inadvertent treasonous activities—MI5 and SIS\(^9\) secretaries and underlings chatting about work just a little too publicly or too much—fairly and with punishment commensurate with guilt. What is interesting is that it was also used for blatant acts of treason\(^6\). A distinct hesitancy to put anyone to death as a traitor, however clearly implicated, suggests that the charge itself is somewhat suspect. In a crime such as murder, for instance, one that is considered by many countries a crime punishable by death, the authorities may be lucky enough to have a motive, a weapon, a body and a suspect all at once, making the administration of justice, if not easy, certainly relatively straightforward. Of course not all murder cases are that tidy and that makes some quite tricky to solve. Cases of treason, however, are, at

---

\(^7\) Her book *The New Meaning of Treason* (1964) was an expansion and update of her earlier work *The Meaning of Treason* (1945). All quotes are from the later edition.

\(^8\) West’s information dates back to 1964 and there may have been changes to the law since then. For our purposes, however, and the people about whom I am writing, these are the statutes under which they would have operated.

\(^9\) MI5 is the “secret service department responsible for counterespionage and security in Britain and in all British territory overseas” (K. Philby, 12) and SIS is “Secret Intelligence Service, formerly MI6, the British secret service department in charge of all secret intelligence work, both espionage and counterespionage, on non-British soil” (K. Philby, 11).

\(^6\) One example is that of Klaus Emil Fuchs, arrested in England in early 1950 for giving secrets about the American and British atomic defense systems to the Soviets. He freely admitted his responsibility but he was only charged under the Official Secrets Act and was released from jail in 1959. For a thorough treatment of his case see West’s *The New Meaning of Treason*. 
best, always murky when trying: first, to ferret them out; and second, to charge
the action to someone. Motives are usually only clear in retrospect, after pundits
and acquaintances have put two-and-two together regarding previous
conversations and activities and come up with four, whether or not the data
support such a conclusion. The weapon involved is one's own trust of the
suspect used against one—a clandestine government organization dependent on
tightly-knit relationships and the sharing of secrets damned by its own need to
share those secrets. The body is, of course, always an item of doubt in treason.
What body of knowledge did the traitor pass along? Precisely what material was
passed along? How damaging was that material? How damaging will it be?
Have any of our own people died as a result of this person's machinations? As
to the suspect, knowing intellectually that someone in the organization is a spy is
far different from having to be constantly on guard with individual co-workers and
always being suspicious that one of them is not dealing honestly with the others.
A pervasive atmosphere of mistrust is not only damaging to the morale of the
organization but it erodes the stability of friendships and individual workers within
the organization. So the very act of charging someone with treason, however
much "proof" there may be is still fraught with doubt (particularly as to the
motives of the accused and the seriousness or level of the actual transgression)
and mixed emotions. The Official Secrets Act gives the flexibility to temper the
punishment for such an imprecise crime.

What, then, may be a definition of treason in relation to the concept of
going native? If treason is a rejection of one's home country to the extent of a
loyalty to a new place, then all who go native would be, by definition, traitors. One might be loathe to apply that name across the board, however, so the term needs some further definition. Intentionality may be necessary to the concept of treason: the traitor must consciously wish ill of his or her home country. Certainly there are stories in espionage in which a traitor's intention is clearly to do harm to the government of his or her own country, but is that necessarily the same intention as wishing ill of one's home culture? Is it too fine a point to distinguish between treason against a government versus treason against a culture? Rebecca West writes that many of the British of her post-world-war time feel that "treason has a certain style, a sort of elegance, or, as the vulgar would say, 'sophistication'" (275). The worldly Briton understands that others do not live as he does and admires the loyalty to ideology of the traitor:

They [West's average Briton] would have admitted that it is not right for a man to accept employment from the state on certain conditions and break that undertaking, when he could easily have obtained alternative employment in which he did not have to give any such undertaking; and that it is even worse for an alien to induce a country to accept him as a citizen when he is homeless, and then conspire against its safety by handing over the most lethal secret it possesses to a potential enemy of aggressive character. But, all the same, they would have felt that subtlety was on the side of the traitors, and even morality (275-6).

In an effort to hate the sin and not the sinner, there is sympathy for the traitor. It could be argued in some cases that the traitor sees a brighter future for his country than does his own government and is working towards that brighter future in his own way, present government be damned. The treason is then against a monolithic bureaucratic monster, not one's true country and culture, and is, again, seen as a pure expression of a noble ideology.
In 1951, Harold Adrian Russell Philby, known almost universally as Kim Philby, was recalled to London from Washington, D.C. to be interrogated in connection with the defection to the Soviet Union of two of his co-workers, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess. At the time, Kim was the SIS representative in Washington, the top British Secret Service officer working with both the CIA and FBI; he had previously served the British Secret Service post-WWII as head of SIS Section IX (whose specific mandate was to work against the Soviet Union and communism) and as head of the SIS station in Turkey. He was asked to resign from the foreign service in connection with the Maclean-Burgess affair and he did so\textsuperscript{61}. In 1952, Kim was questioned by a number of SIS operatives in a so-called ‘Secret Trial’ and “for a mysterious reason, was exonerated by the British authorities;” writes a bewildered Rebecca West, “But the sweat poured down their foreheads as they did it” (250) she finishes ominously. As well it should have.

In his own memoir, My Silent War, Kim runs over his career with the British Secret Service and as an agent of the Soviet government. Published after his defection to the Soviet Union in 1963 after more than 30 years as a Soviet agent, the memoir is not meant to be an autobiography but to relate the progression of his professional life as a communist mole in the British service. In the reading, it is difficult not to root for Kim. In the opening anecdote of the book, he describes being roused out of bed with the “thunderous hammering” of two armed Civil Guards in the middle of the night in Cordóba in 1937 when he was

\textsuperscript{61} There is evidence, however, that Kim continued to perform the odd job here and there for the service perhaps even as late as 1963 when he was a journalist in Beirut.
working in Spain. He realizes that his pocket contains a slip of incriminating paper that would brand him a Soviet agent but he is unable to shed himself of it.

At the station, after interrogation, his suitcase is unpacked and every item minutely examined. Satisfied at its innocence, the police tell Kim to turn out his pockets:

I could no longer postpone action. Taking first my wallet, I threw it down on that fine table, giving it at the last moment a flick of the wrist which sent it spinning toward the far end. As I had hoped, all three men made a dive at it, spread-eagling themselves across the table. Confronted by three pairs of buttocks, I scooped the scrap of paper out of my trousers, a crunch and a swallow, and it was gone. I emptied my remaining pockets with a light heart . . .

It was not a heroic episode. . . . But in subsequent years I have often had occasion to reflect that the really risky operation is not usually the one which brings most danger, since real risks can be assessed in advance and precautions taken to obviate them. It is the almost meaningless incident, like the one described above, that often puts one to mortal hazard (19-20).

Ostensibly not “a heroic episode”, Kim’s deliberate use of this story to open his memoir, coupled with his ability to fool the Spanish officials, makes him a hero in the tale even as he denies the role. He admits that he awoke in a stupor and was slow-thinking at first but this self-deprecating tone exudes a quiet confidence and a cool head in the face of danger. He has a talent for vivid word choices—flick, dive, crunch—and a sense of the dramatic that makes the reader want to continue with his story. Kim also has a deft touch with exploiting a sense of the ridiculous (“Confronted by three pairs of buttocks”) as comic relief within the tension. He manages to be self-congratulatory without rubbing the reader’s face in it and shrewd without sounding duplicitous. He also manages to insert a moral for the aspiring traitor: survival is in the details, not the grand plans. Kim is
saved, in a very close call in a very early phase of his Soviet career, and all of us living in the free world reading this memoir sigh a sigh of relief for our hero who should be, of course, anything but a hero to us.

This is the main seduction of *My Silent War*. There are many instances in the text when Kim uses a collective pronoun such as “we” or “us” and the reader is left, perplexed, trying to figure out which “we” or “us” is intended: British interests or Soviet interests? The reader is in collusion with the spy, rooting for his success even as the reader simultaneously hopes for his failure. In the guise of character analysis, Kim is generous in his mocking-praise for many of the British operatives with whom he worked. Kim looks “back on the chief [of SIS Sir Stewart Menzies] with enduring affection” although Menzies

. . . was not, in any sense of the words, a great intelligence officer. His intellectual equipment was unimpressive, and his knowledge of the world, and views about it, were just what one would expect from a fairly cloistered son of the upper levels of the British establishment” (117).

The Deputy Chief of the Secret Service when Philby entered was Valentine Vivian, who

was long past his best—if, indeed, he had ever had one. He had a reedy figure, carefully dressed crinkles in his hair, and wet eyes. He cringed before Dansey’s little memos, and shook his head sadly at his defeats, which were frequent. Shortly before I joined Section V, Cowgill had brushed Vivian aside, making little effort to hide his contempt (59-60).

Kim, significantly, finds most of his superiors to be without the intellectual gifts on which Kim prides himself. He writes that he was amazed how easily he got into the British Secret Service, especially considering that he had some well-known communist leanings when at Cambridge and had married a communist girl on a
holiday in Germany. Indeed, his entrée into the SIS was so easy that, for a time, his Soviet sponsors did not believe he had entered into a covert field of service. Kim makes much of the ineptitude of the British Secret Service at the time of his recruitment and the excess of pedestrian minds he encountered in its service. Many on this side of the Iron Curtain expected *My Silent War* to be a long polemic in favour of communism and the Soviet way of life and were pleasantly surprised to find that it wasn't. Actually, it *is* such a polemic but Kim manages to make his case by arguing the ineptness of the British government and its inability to operate efficiently rather than focusing on the superiority of the Soviets. The comparison is more often implied than stated but that does not make this text less a piece of pro-Soviet propaganda.

Of Felix Cowgill, his immediate superior when he was in Section V and the man he personally conspired against when the Soviets ordered him to take over the newly-forming Section IX, Kim writes

His intellectual endowment was slender. As an intelligence officer, he was inhibited by lack of imagination, inattention to detail and sheer ignorance of the world we were fighting in. His most conspicuous positive quality, apart from personal charm of an attractively simple variety, was a fiendish capacity for work (57).

Cowgill is, apparently, a simple, charming hard-worker and little else of note. According to Kim, Cowgill made enemies easily and when Kim was instructed to take over the Section, Cowgill's own personality made it easier for Kim to manipulate the office politics to make his own appointment come about. Kim writes about the ins-and-outs of this takeover in some detail "An episode," he writes, "Which will make sour reading, just as it makes sour writing" (101),
alluding to his ruthless manipulation of the abrupt end of his supervisor's career.
Kim is playing virtue against virtue by taking this tone; his loyalty to a comrade-in-
arms, Cowgill, must be sacrificed to his loyalty to the greater good, Soviet
Communism, but Kim makes it clear that he certainly doesn't relish the process.
We are expected to be sympathetic to his qualms and, indeed, his friend Graham
Greene⁶² later was:

The story of how, to attain his position, he eliminated Cowgill makes, as
he admits, for "sour reading, just as it makes sour writing"—one feels for a
moment the sharp touch of the icicle in the heart. I saw the beginning of
this affair—indeed I resigned rather than accept the promotion which was
one tiny cog in the machinery of his intrigue. I attributed it then to a
personal drive for power, the only characteristic in Philby which I thought
disagreeable. I am glad now that I was wrong. He was serving a cause
and not himself, and so my old liking for him comes back (3, Introduction
to My Silent War).

The situation at the time was blatant enough that Greene felt compelled by
honour to resign—truly he could feel the "icicle in the heart" that Kim hides most
of the time in his memoirs. In retrospect, however, Greene buy the sympathy
package and is relieved that Kim isn't—horror of horrors—ambitious: he's "only"
a spy. Assured that Kim is, thankfully, faithful to an ideology and not acting out of
personal selfishness, Greene forgives his faithlessness to the country he has
vowed to protect.

Rebecca West attacks this very line of thinking in her book:

. . . it is a common belief, held by people not otherwise sympathetic with
Communists, that Communists are idealists. In fact, the nature of
communism is such that it must of necessity recruit far fewer idealists than
any other party. Only an idealist too stupid to notice what is going on
round him could feel happy in an organization which has no other aim than

⁶² Graham Greene (1904-1991) British novelist and critic, author of The Confidential Agent, The
Quiet American, Travels With My Aunt and Our Man in Havana, among others.
to seize political power against the will of the majority through the use of fraud (257).

She attributes the popularity of the communist movement after WWI with children being raised by parents who had seen hope for British society in the rise of socialism. When those hopes were dashed by the failure of the Labour Party in 1931 to maintain a government, many who had seen the Left as the hope for the future—including an impressionable Kim Philby—continued farther left in the hopes of finding an instrument of salvation. Kim sets down his own intellectual journey:

But the real turning point in my thinking came with the demoralization and rout of the Labour party in 1931. It seemed incredible that the party should be so helpless against the reserve strength which reaction could mobilize in time of crisis. More important still, the fact that a supposedly sophisticated electorate had been stampeded by the cynical propaganda of the day threw serious doubt on the validity of the assumptions underlying parliamentary democracy as a whole (K. Philby, 11-12).

Kim had the same arrogance of opinion that got his father into trouble in the British foreign service but Kim played his cards close to his chest, a skill his rash father was never able to develop. There is no room for discussion with Kim once his mind is decided: the electorate was foolish and unable to see the truth. He knew that that truth was left of centre and he would defend the Left until death. He had found communism.

West continues to dismiss this reasoning:

The Labour Party cannot put itself back into the glorious drunkenness of permanent opposition, but the Communist Party can still do that. It can put people farther left than anyone else, and it can relieve its supporters

---

63 His father, Harry St. John Bridger Philby, is discussed later in this chapter.
from any nasty fear that a general election may impose on them responsibility for government (166).

She feels nothing but scorn for the party since, because of its radical and anti-patriotic nature, it is “safe” from any possibility of actually having to run Great Britain. It is easy, she argues, to criticize when one has no power to actually effect change. The extreme left is a position of opting-out to West’s way of thinking, a denial of the possibility of change from within the current system.

It has been argued that working for communism itself, at this time in Great Britain’s history, was not necessarily treason because the communists were working for the “good” of British society in the only way they felt would work: as communist activists. West is not convinced by this argument either:

. . . the Communist Party is an association which requires of its members that they abandon their loyalty to their own country and obey all instructions issued by the Soviet Union, even when these instructions tell them to put the Soviet Union’s interest first (259).

This, then, is the basis of West’s new meaning of treason. If a personal ideology or doctrine requires one to honour a rival country before one’s own, that doctrine is treasonous. It would not seem a new idea if the twentieth century had not been operating on global, rather than national, levels of thought and communication. The ideals of socialism and communism transcend national boundaries and bring us back to Anderson’s idea of the nation. The nation may be a construct, the nation may be an accepted historicity of boundaries but within the minds of its people, it exists in a very fundamental way. Most people in the world consider their nationality to be a basic part of their personal identity—when
a citizen of the world does not feel that way, it brands him or her an outsider. A traitor, if you will.

"Desert-Loving English"\textsuperscript{64}

Sir Richard Burton, the famous 19\textsuperscript{th} century British explorer, travelled around Africa and took on native dress and customs as it suited him to explore areas previously unseen by Western eyes, but he didn't make that necessary emotional commitment to change or go native and remained British to the core and to the end. Contrast his situation with those of T. E. Lawrence or Harry St. John Bridger (Jack) Philby, both British and posted to the Middle East in the first two decades of the 1900's, and the issue of the level of personal commitment becomes clearer. Lawrence's story, made famous in David Lean's epic film \textit{Lawrence of Arabia} and also in Lawrence's own autobiographical \textit{Seven Pillars of Wisdom} underscored his growing attachment to Arab rights and lifestyles. Despite his disagreement with a number of his country's policies, he stayed in the British Foreign Service until they chose to send him home. England was never quite home again for Lawrence, though, after his years in Arabia, and perhaps it was just as well for him that he died young.

In 1915, St. John Philby was transferred to Mesopotamia as a linguist and

\textsuperscript{64} This is a quote from Robert Bolt's script in David Lean's movie \textit{Lawrence of Arabia}. In Lawrence's first meeting with Feisal (Peter O'Toole is Lawrence and Feisal is played by Sir Alec Guinness), the Arab Prince is impressed with, and wary of, his knowledge and understanding of the Middle East: "Ah," says Feisal to Lawrence, "I think you are another of these desert-loving English." Earlier in the scene Feisal had observed "The English have a great hunger for desolate places. I fear they hunger for Arabia."
Political Officer from his post as a British Civil Servant in India. A product of England’s privileged class, St. John had been a Queen’s Scholar at Westminster and had taken a First in Modern Languages at Trinity College, Cambridge. It was at the tail-end of his time at Trinity that his heretofore orthodox viewpoints took a decided turn. He read publicly an essay he had written entitled “The Convenience of Convention”, arguing the relationship of religion to modern philosophy (and coming down on the side of religion). Later

Out for a walk, after this exposé of faith, he stopped in his tracks (as he liked to tell) and said to himself: ‘Do I really believe this stuff?’ Both in writing and conversation throughout the rest of his life, he told of that Sunday evening as the cause of a complete change in his cast of mind. Here was ‘the swansong of my championship of orthodoxy’ and a switch to unbelief to which he stuck for years in an ‘uncompromising passion for the truth’ uncluttered by the conventions of social and political life (Monroe, 16-17).

Fancying himself “uncluttered by” political and social “conventions” was St. John’s own way of congratulating himself for being a man of personal integrity. If others in the Foreign Service would not tell the truth as they saw it, there was no fear that Philby would shirk such a duty. So, almost inevitably, the more he came to understand the political situation in the Middle East at the time, the more he came to strongly oppose British imperialist and foreign policies there. He was respected for his intellect, his talent as a wit and raconteur, and his amazing ability to pick up languages (he spoke eight very well) but managed to get himself into hot water on a regular basis by tactlessly—and often publicly—speaking out against British policies in the region. While working for Sir Percy Cox, the High Commissioner, Philby was
Sent away for a ten-day rest by Cox [and]... on his return was called to the High Commissioner’s office. Could he [Philby] accommodate his views? Cox wanted to know. Philby refused; he could not go along with the official agenda for an Arab emir. Cox was furious and informed his aide he had no choice but to relieve him of his duties. It hurt Gertrude [Bell]\(^\text{65}\) to see Philby destroy himself. "It’s a real tragedy, he’s dismissed," she wrote disappointedly, "but he has himself to thank." Cox had given him ‘a long rope’ and every chance to use it. Philby told her [Bell] he was quitting politics, but Gertrude acknowledged sadly, ‘He’s not a man we can afford to lose’ (Wallach, 313).

Cox, Bell and the British government were in the process of trying to establish a Hashimite kingdom in the Middle East, friendly to British interests, under Prince Feisal. Philby vehemently disagreed with the choice of the Hashimites and was single-minded in his support of Prince Ibn Saud\(^\text{66}\), leader of the Wahhabi, as the best candidate for such a post. The government—and the Foreign Service—disagreed with St. John. In a single anecdote, the above incident illustrates Philby’s entire approach to authority figures: uncompromisingly, he always knew better than they did. Almost simultaneous with being fired, St. John quit the British Foreign Service in disgust in 1924 and decamped to the court of Prince Ibn Saud. In the next few years, St. John sought other posts in the British government and tried to make money importing cars, radios and other modern devices to Ibn Saud’s court, hoping to make big money. He and Ibn Saud became quite close and he acted as an unofficial advisor to the now-King while

---

\(^{65}\) A privileged Englishwoman, Gertrude Bell (1868-1926) travelled extensively in the Middle East exploring, mapping, making friends with Arab Sheiks, and working on archeological finds. Her unique perspective, brilliant intellect and great capacity for work later made her invaluable to British Intelligence in the region during and following WWI. Politically aware and locally savvy, she was always impeccably turned out. She was a great friend of Jack Philby and helped him with his career whenever possible before he rashly and belligerently selfdestructed.

\(^{66}\) Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman bin Faisal al Saud (1880?1953), King of Saudi Arabia 1932-1953, earlier King of the Nejd, El Hasa, Qatif and Jubail.
he waited for the court to pay for the conveniences it had "bought" from him. Meanwhile, Philby's wife, Dora, was home in England trying desperately to make ends meet and raise their children⁶⁷ without much help from St. John. In 1930, Philby converted to Islam but many remain skeptical of his true faith. Ibn Saud's main supporters were Islamic fundamentalists and an infidel in his court had little chance of advancement or of continuing access to the King: conversion made good business sense⁶⁸ and helped him remain in Ibn Saud's inner circle as a political advisor. With the King's permission, St. John travelled extensively over harsh terrain and took a Royal Geographical Society Medal in Great Britain for his explorations of the Rub al Khali (the Empty Quarter), the interior of the Arabian peninsula. In 1945, the King gave him "a new jariya [consort] so slim and pretty that, though unseen by strangers, all Riyadh knew about her" (Monroe, 233). One of the King's 125-or-so wives had chosen the sixteen-year-old for Philby and "[t]here was belief indeed that she was one of Ibn Saud's daughters" (Brown, 376). Rozy al Abdul Aziz bore St. John four sons, two of whom died in infancy. He had admitted to sexual relationships with other women in his long letters to Dora but, despite his pride in his own candour, Philby kept his Arab family secret from her for many years. Kim was the only member of his British family ever to see Rozy and St. John certainly never considered divorcing Dora.

⁶⁷ St. John and Dora had married in 1910. Kim, born in India New Year's Day 1912, was their eldest child.
⁶⁸ "Philby's own experiences of Wahhabi fanaticism and of the Ikhwan's loathing for foreigners enabled him to size up Ibn Saud's dilemma; here was a ruler who wanted to modernise his country but was at grips with reactionaries who saw as heresies any inclination to come to terms with lax Muslims or to import modern inventions" (Monroe, 135).
When St. John died in Beirut in 1960 while visiting Kim there he left behind extensive writings. In the Foreword to Monroe's book, James Craig addresses these:

Now we come to his virtues. The diaries he kept on his journeys were a revelation. He records every place name: hills, wadis, wells, trees. He collects birds, beetles, lizards, flowers, geological samples and sends them off to the British Museum. He takes the temperature, the barometric pressure, the height above sea level, the compass bearings. He sketches landmarks and copies inscriptions. He cross-examines his guides and the strangers he meets about history, society, tribal origins, desert customs. He does all this while travelling on foot or on camel-back across the icy or the torrid waste, keeping alive on a handful of dates and a skin of noisome water, sitting down at the end of each day's march to transcribe, by lamplight in a neat and legible hand, the results of his observations and his questionings. . . . he never relents (Monroe, ix).

Craig goes on but the point is made: a remarkable mind, with remarkable energy and stamina, remarkably interested in everything. These were some of the qualities that made St. John Philby a household name in his time but it is the darker or, perhaps, more perplexing side of his nature that concerns us here.

Did St. John Philby go native? By all of the measures explored so far, he did. T. E. Lawrence was said to have gone native by a combination of speaking a number of Arabic dialects, championing Arab independence, living an Arab lifestyle, wearing Arab robes and adopting Arab desert-fighting methods. He was comfortable on a camel, happy to eat indigenous foods and could quote the Koran persuasively to make a point. Philby had an equal commitment of all of these Arabic elements in his life but had also acted for decades as an advisor to the King of Saudi Arabia, had converted to Islam, had an Arabic wife and family and a private mansion in Riyadh. All of the external measures of going native were there but internally he seemed to remain of two hearts. There is no doubt
St. John was committed to a life in Arabia—he was “another of these desert-loving English”—and extremely loyal to King Ibn Saud, both personally and professionally. Ibn Saud’s personal magnetism, forcefulness, presence, and virility (he visited his harem twice a day in an effort to unite all of the tribes by blood) impressed St. John in a way that the British parliament and its lacklustre monarchy never did. St. John was truly never happier than when he was exploring the desert à la Doughty, Thomas or Thesiger, discovering new species and mapping previously unmapped areas. What, then, of his continuing interest in making a name for himself “back home” in England? Even after his conversion to Islam, Philby visited England for long periods—he even stood for Parliament twice (failing miserably each time)—and never missed an opportunity to network with old acquaintances in the hope that they could find a post for him in the Middle East representing Great Britain again. That seems to indicate that he remained British despite outward shows but it is by no means conclusive. When in England he was the epitome of the privileged gentleman: wearing elegant suits (when times were flush), dining at the Athenaeum, visiting government friends at their country homes, playing with his children, lecturing, enjoying cigars and brandy. When in Arabia, he was the model of Islamic virtue: no alcohol, no smoking, prayers five times a day, devoted to his family, and, dressed in Arabic robes, a loyal member of the King’s inner circle. St. John’s desire to be famous and to have an effect on world history was played out most thoroughly in his Arabian life and perhaps the depth of his loyalty to Ibn Saud is the deciding factor
when determining how much he had gone native—and where that condition crossed over into treason.

In the early 1930’s, the world’s great powers were looking for oil. The British had a grip on the Middle East oil industry (France had some control in the region but to a lesser extent) that the Americans had been trying to loosen since 1919. Brown notes that the British had in place in the Middle East the political system, military and commercial power, telecommunications, shipping and the only airline: a formidable infrastructure that the Americans could not match (148). The British, however, did not have St. John Philby. He encouraged the Americans to approach Ibn Saud and accepted from them a secret cash honorarium. He met with Francis B. Loomis, the former Under Secretary of State of the United States and Loomis put some feelers out on how Philby would feel about an American company pursuing oil contracts with Ibn Saud. “I told him that I would be glad to help in any scheme which would contribute to the prosperity of Arabia” Philby recalled in Arabian Oil Ventures in 1964 (Brown, 150). Nevertheless, Philby still maintained a relationship with British interests who were also seeking Ibn Saud’s cooperation in multiple oil ventures. Brown writes

Philby was himself rather pro-American. He believed the United States to be an anti-imperial power, interested only in business, not, like the British, in obtaining political control of the region where they invested money. This attitude was to change later, but at the time it was an important factor in the events that now developed (150).

Relying heavily on Philby’s advice and negotiations, on May 11, 1933 King Ibn Saud signed an agreement to do business with the Americans and “Standard Oil [later the Arabian American Oil Company—ARAMCO] gained the concession to
what proved to be the richest oil field in the world" (155). All of Great Britain was thunderstruck.69 Despite all the water under the bridge, they had never considered the possibility that Philby might work against them in the deal. Indeed, the Americans were surprised as well since many of them “believed Philby was a British spy, and continued to do so for the next twenty years” (Brown, 156). If he was ever a British spy, brokering this deal was the best cover a spy ever had.

There are many who still consider this act of Philby’s to be treasonous to Great Britain. He gave advice and assistance and, more than likely, shared confidential information that he had gained in the service of his birth country with the King and counselors of his adopted country. Should St. John’s primary loyalties be to Great Britain in perpetuity even if he resides, as a permanent resident, in another country?70 Would St. John have been guilty of treason to King Ibn Saud by not sharing his knowledge and expertise with him since he was in a position of the King’s trust and under the King’s protection when in Arabia?

To the last question, Rebecca West’s text indicates a positive response. She quotes Hale’s History of the Pleas of the Crown from the seventeenth century:

---

69 At a Christmas party I attended in Toronto in 1999 a drunken man with a British accent spit out “Philby was a whore! He was a whore!” Uncertain of which Philby he meant—son or father—I asked him. In place of a reply he demanded, “Do you know who paid for Kim’s university?” (ah, he was speaking of Jack). I didn’t know and asked him to explain. “ARAMCO, that’s who!” he thundered. That would make sense, I mused, since Jack had helped the American oil company get oil contracts in the Middle East. My informant was, unfortunately, too tipsy to have a coherent conversation on the topic but I am intrigued that animosity still runs very deep on the subject of Philby senior and his escapades. He did, after all, die in 1960. That’s a long time to bear a grudge.

70 Note, however, that St. John never surrendered his British passport—at least, never by choice.
'Because as the subject hath his protection from the King and his laws, so on the other side the subject is bound by his allegiance to be true and faithful to the King. And hence it is, that if an alien enemy come into this kingdom hostily to invade it, if he be taken, he shall be dealt with as an enemy, but not as a traitor, because he violates no trust nor allegiance. But if an alien, the subject of a foreign prince in amity with the King, live here, and enjoy the benefit of the King's protection, and commit a treason, he shall be judged and executed, as a traitor, for he owes a local allegiance' (West, 14).

Philby, therefore, as an alien living in Ibn Saud's kingdom is subject to a 'local allegiance' and is bound to obey his local King who is, indeed, "in amity" with the British government. Not to put too fine a point on it, Eric Carlton, in his book *Treason: Meanings and Motives* wonders if it is possible, strictly speaking, to be guilty of treason except during a time of war. Could any sharing of information, technically, be referred to as treason if the two nations involved are not actually at war with each other? How can one be offering aid and comfort to an enemy if no enemy has been officially declared by the government in power?

The answer must be that treason is not simply a violation of the law of the land and cannot be seen simply in legalistic terms. In a public life such as St. John's, it is the emotional response of the residents of the home country that determines the label "traitor". Many would consider that St. John simply went native and, in the process, served his new King with the loyalty expected of any subject accepting that King's protection. St. John himself wrote rather disingenuously of his role in Ibn Saud's government:

And I may add, if only to dispose of a common misapprehension, that I had never at any time during the reign of Ibn Sa'ud been his advisor, or received from him or his Government any salary in that or any other capacity. I was always his friend, and no more than that; and if ever he
accepted my freely expressed views as sound advice, that was his business and not mine (H. Philby, 5).\(^1\)

There seems to be a recurring theme in issues of treason that money and secrets go together. St. John is perpetuating this idea that if no monies are received then information has been given for ideological or personal reasons and that doesn’t quite count as treason. To the extent that those who represented British oil interests disagreed, and those in Great Britain who couldn’t fathom the idea of an Englishman going Muslim also disagreed, made St. John a traitor (economically) to his country and (spiritually and emotionally) to his class.

In a legalistic argument, West can easily make the case that St. John’s son, Kim, was a traitor even though the Soviet Union and Great Britain were not technically at war at the time he was operating. She writes of the danger of releasing sensitive information “to a potential enemy of aggressive character” (275, italics mine), cementing the concept that the strict rule of law may apply less than does personal morality in some cases. The ideologies of the Soviet Union and Great Britain were so clearly in conflict as to make a declaration of war superfluous on the legalistic level of government or on the intellectual and judgmental level of the masses. Communism just felt wrong to a democracy; democracy just felt decadent and passé to communism. An endorsement of one

\(^1\) St. John writes of a conversation with one of Ibn Saud’s ministers who says “the king had come to know that I was living in somewhat uncomfortable circumstances” and proceeded to make improvements to his home (he later gave St. John a mansion in Riyadh). He also offered St. John £50 gold as a monthly allowance. St. John said he “would on no account accept it.” The minister, unwilling to have St. John refuse the King’s gift said “I shall credit it to you in our books each month, and it will be at your disposal when you like.” St. John said that “that was the end of it so far as I was concerned” (H. Philby, 177). Even if St. John didn’t see his court role as advisor, Ibn Saud evidently did.
when born to the other must be at least suspect. From Kim’s point of view he is, of course, not a traitor *per se* but a clear-thinking man of principle who sees the truth and the honourable future of the world. In his introduction to West’s book, Sidney Hook feels that this concept is the “new” meaning of treason:

The key . . . is the ideological traitor. He is primarily a man who does not betray his country for money, for power, for women or position. He is most often a dedicated zealot whose deeds of betrayal are in his own eyes not really violations of an ethical code but actions in the cause of humanity, which he identifies with the cause of the party (in West, xvii).

Kim has focused his life and personal security on the promises and ideals of a country and a political system he has never personally experienced. In any sense of the phrase could Kim Philby have gone native? Yes, but in an unlikely fashion. Unlike others examined in this text, Kim does not go native because of a personal exposure to a different way of life. In essence, he goes native by proxy. The social order of Russia draws him, it feels like home to him and he commits himself to it without any previous intimate contact with it.

St. John’s status, however, is more difficult to categorize. One way to approach his unique situation is to examine the British class structure of the time.

The Philbys are often labelled in the press\(^7\) as members of the aristocracy of Great Britain, but that is an inflated view of the family’s situation. They were privileged, well educated and had good connections, but the Philbys were all

---

\(^7\) Most recently in Evan Thomas’ story in *Newsweek* on the alleged CIA traitor Robert Hanssen who credits Kim for deciding this course in his own life: “H.A.R. (Kim) Philby is an interesting and provocative role model,” writes Thomas, “Himself the son of a spy who turned traitor. Philby was an arrogant, self-loathing *aristocrat* recruited by the Soviets at Cambridge University in the early 1930s” (italics mine). I love the casual summing-up of St. John’s complicated life simply (and inaccurately) as that of “a spy who turned traitor.”
working people, supporting the crown in the British raj or serving in her armed forces. It was necessary to make money since there was little to inherit. For a number of years in both St. John's childhood and his married years there was not enough money and meeting the expenses of life was a constant concern. It must have been frustrating to St. John to be so well equipped intellectually but limited in scope by an accident of birth. He attended school with members of the nobility and must have been impatient to see someone with a "name" get a position for which he was likely more clearly gifted. West understands his frustration:

... the intellectual who had not a religious sense of the duty of selflessness burned till recently with the grievance that unless he was a man of fortune he could not gain a position of power. He felt this more and more as the nineteenth century went on, for the industrial revolution had created a new field of power other than that which had been cultivated by the landed aristocracy (West, 157).

This description of the intellectual fits Kim as well as his father. The Philbys do not have the money to position themselves into power in the usual ways open to aristocrats in their society, neither do they respect the manners and habits of those in the industrialized class of nouveau-riche. They are trapped with the sensibility that they are better than others in a society that operates with a glass ceiling determined by birth. Kim is certainly less concerned with appearances than his father (although he looked much more establishment in his person and manner than St. John), but St. John was making his way at a time of significant social change in Great Britain. In the rising wave of individualism in Great Britain, he saw himself making his own path in life with a loyalty to himself first and the British establishment second. Unfortunately, he was a little ahead of his
time in this attitude and his reputation back home suffered for it. For an understanding of the undercurrents of this era, St. John’s class, and his position in society, it will be helpful to take a look at the work of a prominent writer/observer of the period.

During St. John Philby’s time, John Galsworthy was writing his enormously successful Forsyte Saga, a multi-volume opus following the lives of the extended Forsyte family, written in three trilogies and a collection of short works. The third trilogy deals extensively with the reputation of the English abroad in the post-WW I period. In *Maid in Waiting*, the first volume of the third trilogy, Galsworthy introduces Elizabeth (Dinny) Charwell. Dinny is everyone’s ideal of a pretty, bright, caring young woman of the time: close to her family, protective of her friends, staunch in her orthodoxies. In *Flowering Wilderness*, Dinny falls desperately and completely in love with Wilfrid Desert, a respected poet a few years older than she who has only recently returned from travelling the Middle East. Desert is as taken with Dinny as she is with him and asks her to read his unpublished poetry. Of particular importance is a long poem called “The Leopard” which tells the tale of a young monk travelling abroad who is confronted at pistol point by an infidel and ordered to recant his religious beliefs and embrace those of the infidel or die on the spot. The monk, who secretly cares little for religion but cares, personally, a great deal for the infidel involved and

---

73 The third trilogy, published originally in 1931, was called *End of the Chapter* and consisted of *Maid in Waiting* (p. 1-330); *Flowering Wilderness* (p. 331-592) and *Over the River* (p. 593-ff). Significantly, this text was published within a year of St. John’s conversion to Islam. Although Harry St. John Bridger Philby is not a household name in the United States in the year 2001, he was so in Great Britain in the first half of the twentieth century. It is not unlikely that his adventures may have provided some inspiration to Galsworthy.
knows that he is fulfilling a vow made under other circumstances, recants his religion and accepts the latter's. Both friends are relieved and they go their separate ways. Dinny finds that the piece is thinly-veiled autobiography and that the young monk in the poem is actually Wilfrid. In the desert of the Middle East a friend's brother held him at gunpoint and, in tears, begged Wilfrid to become Muslim. Wilfrid acceded to his demands. Wilfrid knows that great social repercussions will be felt in their social circle in Britain if he publishes this poem, but Dinny supports him in publishing this, his greatest work. Wilfrid himself struggles with the implications of his poem:

This was his third day in London after three years; and in the last two years he had been through a good deal more than he would ever care to speak of, or even wish to remember; including one experience which still divided him against himself, however much he affected to discredit its importance. In other words, he had come back with a skeleton in his cupboard. He had brought back, too, enough poems for a fourth slender volume. He lay there, debating whether its slender bulk could not be increased by inclusion of the longest poem he had ever written, the outcome of that experience; in his view, too, the best poem he had ever written—a pity it should not be published, but—! And the 'but' was so considerable that he had many times been on the point of tearing the thing up, obliterating all trace of it . . . . To tear it up would be . . . . parting with his best protection from his own conscience, too; and perhaps with the only means of laying a ghost. For he sometimes thought that, unless he proclaimed to the world what had happened to him, he would never again feel quite in possession of his soul (349-50).

Others may be more judgmental about Wilfrid's choice to capitulate rather than die for something in which he had no faith, but no one could have greater doubts than Wilfrid himself. Here is a man who professes no particular religious belief but still acknowledges the existence of a soul and despairs that his is in jeopardy. Wilfrid knows in his mind that, back there in the desert, his was the sensible decision to make for all parties concerned. The problem is, of course, that this
isn’t a decision that can be based on good sense or logic but can only be based on traditions and fundamental loyalties. Wilfrid was a representative of Great Britain abroad; in recanting Christianity, however little it means to him, he is letting down all Britons abroad. Dinny’s Uncle Lawrence is blunt on this point:

In the East, . . . the Englishman . . . is generally isolated: traveller, archaeologist, soldier, official, civilian, planter, doctor, engineer or missionary, he’s almost always head man of a small separate show; he maintains himself against odds on the strength of the Englishman’s reputation. If a single Englishman is found wanting, down goes the stock of all those other isolated Englishmen. People know that and recognise its importance. That’s what you’re up against, and it’s no use under-estimating. You can’t expect Orientals, to whom religion means something, to understand that to some of us it means nothing. An Englishman to them is a believing Christian, and if he recants, he’s understood as recanting his most precious belief.

Unless there were complete mutual confidence between these isolated beings that none of them will submit to dictation, take a dare, or let the others down, the thing wouldn’t work at all. Now would it? (415-416).

Dinny doesn’t have an answer to this précis of the Empire. It is the “complete mutual confidence” of the network of those in the extended imagined community that binds it together. Really, it is not simply an imagined community but an imagined Empire, with clear spheres of influence in the cities and bazaars, yes, but minimal supervision in the countryside. An Englishman’s character and behaviour outside of the protection of the metropole is critical to the continuing success of the Empire. Dinny can understand in general why one must maintain an “Englishman’s reputation” but she remains frustrated that the Empire can expect to dictate the consciences of its people.

Wilfrid’s friend Michael struggles with his friend’s situation, too, seeing and appreciating both sides:
Wilfrid had been caught, as it were, in a snare! One could see how his rebellious contempt for convention and its types had blinded him to the normal view. But one could not dissociate this or that from the general image of an Englishman; betrayal of one feature would be looked on as betrayal of the whole (403).

Michael knows and understands the individual man but that is not enough. This is one of those critical points at which Anderson’s “imagined community” exerts even more control than the government of that community itself. Wilfrid’s action is not a betrayal of his King or country, it is not an act of treason against his country or its citizens, but it is an act of treason against his culture. Anderson does not look at this aspect of treason in his text but it is an inevitable outgrowth of his imagined community. Just as a citizen can commit treason against a formal, recognized ruling authority, he or she can also commit a form of treason by going against the understood tenets of his or her culture. Wilfrid is a product of the privileged class in Great Britain; he is minor nobility, the second son of a Lord. Even if he cannot articulate his obligations to his class and the culture of that class, he understands them to the depth of his being and it is this betrayal that is haunting him: “... my whole soul revolts against dying for a gesture that I don’t believe in” (402), he rails to Michael, recognizing that it is just this “gesture” that is key to his place in the world. Wilfrid is a veteran of WWI so his personal courage, his bravery under fire, is not in question:

If a man tried to force me to torture an animal, to hang another man, to violate a woman, of course I’d die rather than do it. But why the hell should I die to gratify those whom I despise for believing outworn creeds that have been responsible for more misery in the world than any other mortal thing? (402)
Wilfrid is morally right, of course, but it doesn't matter. He knows in his heart that, in this case, having the moral upper hand doesn't matter and this is why his conversion remains a skeleton in his closet. Dinny broaches the matter with her Uncle Adrian who puts the true issue into one brutal sentence: "The question before him was: Do I care enough for what is thought of my country and my people to die sooner that lower than conception?" (413). Dinny doesn't want to accept Wilfrid as a representative Englishman and frets to her Uncle Lawrence, "...[Adrian] seems to think Wilfrid has lowered English prestige in the east. Just what is this English prestige? I thought we were looked on as a race of successful hypocrites. And in India as arrogant bullies" (415). Dinny is calling forth the forces that, fifteen-or-so years hence, will encourage nations across the Empire to rally for home rule and freedom from English control. For now, however, Uncle Lawrence has the last word: "You're confusing national with individual reputation. The things are totally distinct. The individual Englishman in the East is looked up to as a man who isn't to be rattled, who keeps his word, and sticks by his own breed" (415). The confusion of national reputation with individual reputation: isn't this the essence of the individual's struggle within the rise of nations? In some countries, or in some periods of history in those countries, the nation's reputation is in ascendancy over that of the individual. The twentieth century, between the wars, was just such a time in Great Britain.

So what does all of this make of St. John? Although like Wilfrid in not wanting to be told what to do, and in his disregard for the conventional, St. John's arrogance exceeds that of Wilfrid. St. John lives his life on his own terms. If he
feels an obligation to his own imagined community of Great Britain, it is not any kind of obligation to kowtow to unwritten rules of behaviour or "complete mutual confidence". St. John commands those around him by the force of his own personality. Her Majesty's government is foolish not to use him to his best advantage, by his way of thinking, and his best advantage is absolute, public, embarrassing candour. As well, if he wants to follow Islam, that is his affair. In this, St. John is a transition figure in British society. Dinny prophesies this transition phase to her mother:

No child has any religion worth speaking of till it's grown up, and then it can choose for itself. Besides, by the time my children, if I have any, are grown up, the question will be academic... It's nearly so now, except in ultra-religious circles. Ordinary people's religion becomes more and more just ethical (387).

In modern circles, ethics are in the process of superseding the influence of the church. A time is coming when an Englishman's religion is his own business. A time is coming when the Empire will release its holdings one by one. The time is coming in British society when being the representative Englishman will not matter so much. For St. John, however, the time is not yet there. He is judged by the same society and the same standard as Wilfrid and he is found wanting. The final line in Michael's assessment of Wilfrid's situation is critical and is something that St. John should have heeded more carefully: "betrayal of one feature would be looked on as betrayal of the whole". St. John betrayed his country by dealing secretly with Americans on behalf of Arabia. St. John betrayed his government by leaving the foreign service and going to work for a foreign power. And, finally and most significantly, St. John betrayed his class
and all that class held dear by abandoning his family, renouncing his religion
and placing himself outside of Britain's immediate influence in a foreign country.
Going native was looked upon as a degenerative state in the British Empire
because of its connotation of slipping emotionally and morally as one developed
a relationship with the new culture. St. John fulfilled the negativity of the term as
he made a life for himself in Arabia.

In his book *Treason: Meanings and Motives*, Eric Carlton struggles with
the question of a psychological or sociological theory that could explain why
some commit treason and others do not. His first chapter explores theories of
personality, most notably social theories having to do with deviancy, but he
himself is not satisfied that any particular theory of personality can provide a
consistent backdrop for what we call treason. The difficulty is, of course, in the
many nuances of the term itself. Carlton's remaining seventeen chapters deal
with treason in many of its manifestations: "Treason and Divided Loyalties";
"Treason as Appeasement"; "Treason and Ideology"; and so on. He totally
dismisses the idea of "some kind of inbred instinct for deception and treachery"74
(244) and comes up with what, he confesses, is a conditional statement:
"Qualified as this must be, our studies have shown that it is the context of treason
that largely determines the definition of treason and it is the circumstances of

---

74 An idea Anthony Cave-Brown plays with even in the title of his book *Treason in the Blood*. Brown is perfectly willing to blame the sins of the fathers on the sons as he laments the "regrettable throwbacks" of St. John and Kim Philby. Their "villainy" cannot be from the wellsprings of their own souls—it must be hereditary in some way. He blames it on the family's Scandinavian origins. Those early Danes were hairy, hardy and cruel lot. Brown asserts, "And they made much trouble for the English—as did St. John in his time"(1). Of St. John and Kim
together he writes: "Treason was in their blood; they possessed the 'wild trick' of their ancestors...

... Both rose high in the crown service; both turned traitor to escape it" (3).
treason that largely determine the act of treason" (244, italics his). Carlton is conceding that a definition of treason cannot be made in absolute terms: the context is critical. No individual action can automatically be determined to be treasonous without an understanding of the current zeitgeist and the personal situations of those involved. From this viewpoint it would be fair to say, as well, that no determination of a crossover from going native to treason is possible without a consideration of each individual case. If one intentionally serves a foreign government to the detriment of one’s birth government, one is a traitor. If one physically remains in one’s birth country but goes native intellectually, so to speak, one is a traitor if one acts according to that new perspective. If one goes native in a new environment, a new imagined community, one is a suspected traitor—and possibly guilty on a number of levels—but not necessarily a criminal. It seems that the crucial differences between going native and being a traitor are, in the final analysis, the viewpoint of one’s observers, one’s intentions, and simple geography.
Chapter Four

Going Feral

In 1972 Margaret Atwood published *Surfacing*, a novel made much of in the United States as a feminist tract and in Canada as a distinctly Canadian novel, one that called so heavily on a Canadian sensibility as to be, necessarily, Canadian. The feminist appellation was borne out by the female protagonist who neither named herself nor was given a name—in short, an expression of her having no unique identity. She had a life, a job, a live-in boyfriend but no discernible self. She lived in an expected manner, with an expected denial of self to achieve the admired life: one in which she served but was not allowed to want anything for herself or to question why life should be like that for a woman. At the end of the novel, she becomes something less than human and grovels in the leaves and dirt of the primordial wilderness, undergoing a spiritual rebirth and a rejection of patriarchy: “This above all, to refuse to be a victim. Unless I can do that I can do nothing. I have to recant, give up the old belief that I am powerless . . . .” (222). A feminist tract indeed.

How is this, then, also a novel of Canadian sensibilities? Atwood infuses the novel with local colour. There are vivid descriptions of sights along the road as two couples drive to a cabin in the northern woods:

> In the first few hours of driving we moved through flattened cow-sprinkled hills and leaf trees and dead elm skeletons, then into the needle trees and cuttings dynamited in pink and gray granite and the flimsy tourist cabins, and the signs saying GATEWAY TO THE NORTH, at least four towns claim to be that. (11)
We're nearly to the village already, the two roads joining here but widened—rocks blasted, trees bulldozed over, roots in the air, needles reddening—past the flat cliff where the election slogans are painted and painted over, some faded and defaced, others fresh yellow and white, VOTEZ GODET, VOTEZ O'BRIEN, along with hearts and initials and words and advertisements, THÉ SALADA, BLUE MOON COTTAGES ½ MILE, QUÉBEC LIBRE, FUCK YOU, BUVEZ COCA-COLA GLACÉ, JESUS SAVES, mélange of demands and languages, an X ray of it would be the district's entire history. (18)

Reading it for the first time as a Canadian living in the United States, recognition of place was like a blow to the head because the descriptions were so close to the personal experiences of driving a similar trip a hundred times myself. The trip begins with the tidy farmland and dairy cattle of the extra-suburban, just-barely-rural countryside but as the miles add up the acreage gradually becomes much less settled and less suitable for farming because of the rugged topography. The local industries then become hunting and fishing and the woods are razed to make way for resorts, tea and Coca-Cola advertised to remind campers of the true necessities of life that they need to backpack into the wilderness campgrounds. As well, the juxtaposition of English and French ("O'Brien" and "votez") is so natural a sound to the native Canadian ear as to be unnoticeable. Raised reading poetic—and foreign—descriptions of English moors and American metropolises, to finally know and understand a place in a novel in such an immediate way was a revelation. This was not a description of place—it was this place in a way no other novel had delivered it to me. That ability to read a novel and feel "home" was an unusual phenomenon in Canadian literature at the time and helped mark a coming-of-age of Canadian literature
wherein an entire generation began to see that the stories of their own country and experiences had merits previously dismissed.

Another way in which the novel was clearly written from a Canadian point-of-view was inherent in the characters' attitudes toward Americans. In 1967, Canada's Confederation enjoyed its centennial and a nation of impressionable teenagers discovered nationalism. This is the generation to which the characters in *Surfacing* belong. For a time, a large segment of this population automatically equated Canadian nationalism with anti-American sentiment. This sentiment is blatant in the novel: “David says ‘Bloody fascist pig Yanks,’ as though he’s commenting on the weather.” (12). As an undividualized whole, Americans are to be vilified without thinking. David later builds an entire scenario of the two countries at war over the availability of fresh water, but when taken seriously he backpedals and whines that he’s “just speculating” (116)—the argument as ineffectual as he is in his own life. Canadians may dream “It wouldn’t be a bad country if only we could kick out the fucking pig Americans, eh?”(107) but to take actual action, to create violence is still unthinkable to the national consciousness.

But there was another crucial dimension of the novel that made it quintessentially Canadian: the heroine's relation to the bush. In her book-length criticism of Canadian literature, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (published, not incidentally, in the same year as *Surfacing*) Atwood began “with a sweeping generalization” and argued “that every country or culture has a single unifying and informing symbol at its core” (31). She feels the symbol for the United States is likely “The Frontier” since that concept contains within
itself the ideas of a new place, a place that is always "expanding, taking in or 'conquering' ever-fresh virgin territory" (31). "The corresponding symbol for England is perhaps The Island," (31), she speculates, seeing the island as a self-contained physical body "with a hierarchical structure in which the King is the Head," (32). So what of Canada? "The central symbol for Canada—and this is based on numerous instances of its occurrence in both English and French Canadian literature—is undoubtedly Survival, la Survivance" (32). Certainly there are multiple levels on which the survival theme plays out in Canlit but the first, the primary level of survival both historically and physically is surviving the harsh and unforgiving environment of the bush. The political reality of Canada has been wrested from an inhospitable countryside and left dangerously vulnerable to a return to that uncivilized inhospitability. In the second-largest country in the world lives a small population of fewer than 30 million souls, largely huddled in ribbons of cities and towns along the southern border. Out There, north of that 200-mile-or-so ribbon, lies a wilderness that waits for a lack of municipal vigilance to begin to creep back into the occupied areas and reclaim them. Schoolchildren are taught to cherish the environment, to recycle, to join organizations like Young Ontario Naturalists and receive newsletters describing balanced ecosystems. These are attempts to domesticate the wilderness and make it accessible and less forbidding. The truth is, of course, that Canada covers millions of square miles of land which are very hard on its people. There is extreme cold, extreme rock, extreme distances. There is a line arcing across the country, so easily discerned that it appears on maps, where trees simply stop
growing because the land and weather cannot support them. The settled
agrarian communities that amiably formed towns and cities in the south cannot
subjugate the northern reaches of the country in the same way as they did the St.
Lawrence lowlands. Those Young Ontario Naturalist newsletters full of balanced
ecosystems also include cautionary articles on how to build a lean-to, how to
signal aircraft, how to survive a night if lost in the woods. Nature is not the
benevolent nurturer that green groups exhort urbanites to support: it is, in reality,
the unforgiving bush against which generations of humanity have fought to
survive.

_Surfacing_ is a Canadian novel precisely because the civilized unthinkable
happens: the bush wins. Late in the novel, the heroine strips herself of
civilization:

I untie my feet from the shoes and walk down to the shore; the
earth is damp, cold, pockmarked with raindrops. I pile the blanket on the
rock and step into the water and lie down. When every part of me is wet I
take off my clothes, peeling them away from my flesh like wallpaper. They
sway beside me, inflated, the sleeves bladders of air.

My back is on the sand, my head rests against the rock, innocent
as plankton; my hair spreads out, moving and fluid in the water. The earth
rotates, holding my body down to it as it holds the moon; the sun pounds
the sky, red flames and rays pulsing from it, searing away the wrong form
that encases me, dry rain soaking through me, warming the blood egg I
carry. I dip my head beneath the water, washing my eyes.

Inshore a loon; it lowers its head, then lifts it again and calls. It
sees me but it ignores me, accepts me as part of the land.

When I am clean I come up out of the lake, leaving my false body
floated on the surface, a cloth decoy . . . (208)

This is not the tragic American novel in which the hero fights valiantly against a
hostile nature and, even though he suffers a physical death, triumphs spiritually
and materially by taming and moulding nature in a way that makes it easier for
the next generation to build on his civilizing influence. This is the unexpected Canadian novel in which culture and civilization are not seen as appropriate or even amendable; it is necessary to reject all things contrived and manufactured and return to a totally natural state. The protagonist washes her body and rejects her clothes, not with loathing but in a ceremonial cleansing that releases her from the trappings of civilization and returns her to her true self. The only item of manufacture she retains is "one of the wounded blankets" from the cabin which she realizes she will need "until the fur grows" (208). She acknowledges that this is a transformation on multiple levels: social, spiritual, physical. She understands her place in the universe, held to the earth by cosmic forces and carrying a future generation within her womb. Although she has come to understand her place in the order of things, she washes her eyes, finally, and completes her transformation. Even the notoriously shy northwoods symbol, the loon, is relaxed in her presence because she is now a natural part of the landscape.

This transformation is outside of the parameters of a person going native yet the protagonist’s condition is related. True, there is no indigenous human population to whom Atwood’s heroine has shifted her identity. There is no questioning of loyalties in relation to birth country vs. adopted country because this character can no longer even recognize the very concept of “country”. There is, however, an unmistakable shift in the protagonist’s thinking and cultural understanding, a benchmark of going native that doesn’t seem to adequately describe the condition of this character. Atwood’s heroine is going on beyond going native; she is going feral. The adjective “feral” refers to a domesticated
animal that has turned wild. It is often used to describe abandoned cats or dogs that shun people but roam the alleys and parks of cities living on indigenous stolen food and garbage. Just so, the heroine rejects the trappings of civilization and finds sanctuary in the wilderness around her father’s northern cabin. She isn’t adapting to a native lifestyle but recreating herself as a woodland creature. She is truly wild, not in the sense that she has become unruly or unrestrained in her behaviour but from the standpoint that she has reverted to a natural state, become an untamed animal. The rules have changed for her and she recognizes the civilized authority she has always lived by has been properly superseded by a natural order of existence. Life has become elemental again and the basic needs of life—food, shelter, privacy—have become her focus. She must search for her own food now as she finds the cabin inaccessible to her new Self:

The sun is three-quarters, I have become hungry. The food in the cabin is forbidden, I’m not allowed to go back into that cage, wooden rectangle. Also tin cans and jars are forbidden; they are glass and metal. I head for the garden and prowl through it, then squat, wrapped in my blanket. I eat the green peas out of their shells and the raw yellow beans . . . I pull up one of the beets and scratch the dirt from it and gnaw at it but the rind is tough, I’m not strong enough yet. (209)

She now no longer recognizes the passage of day and night in terms of clocks and time, but only in reference to the sun and bodily needs. She sees herself continuing to evolve into her natural state: she isn’t ready “yet” to gnaw through the rind of a beet. The implication is that she will be able to perform such an act later in her evolution just as surely as hair will grow to protect her body from the cold. As well, she recognizes an inchoate but inexorable law-giving body that
communicates to her on a non-verbal level what is appropriate for her now and what is not ("I'm not allowed . . ."). These rules have been crowding into her consciousness throughout the novel but have become utterly undeniable now that she has shed her civilized being. As the days of her feral state advance, the rules become even more restrictive. The day after she raids the enclosed garden for peas and beans "The gate stops me. Yesterday I could go in but not today: they are doing it gradually" (210). She becomes more and more removed from her human state and this is perfectly acceptable to her. She doesn't doubt the wisdom of the pantheistic "they". She embraces the finality of the laws of nature in direct contrast to her earlier inability to find a way to adapt to the laws of society. She has always found personal relationships difficult, their rules written in a secret code she could not decipher. Now all has become clear to her and her anxiety over human interpersonal relationships has vanished.

Her reversion to a natural state is a gradual process, just like the process of going native. On the second page of the novel as the two couples drive north to her father's cabin to investigate his disappearance she recognizes "either the three of them are in the wrong place or I am." (10). The place calls to her spirit on a fundamental level but although she has inklings of what the north has in store for her, she doesn't fully understand yet. She has had elements of being feral all her life: "My throat constricts, as it learned to do when I discovered people could say words that would go into my ears meaning nothing" (14). She can already be distracted away from understanding language, the fundamental benchmark that separates humanity from rest of the animal kingdom. She can
hear sounds that she knows carry meaning but there are gaps in understanding for her, times when she cannot construe meaning from these sounds. She has also begun to develop the hyper-acute senses of a creature in the wild and feels the danger of the environment around them all: "... the island wasn't safe, we were trapped on it. They [Joe, David and Anna] didn't realize it but I did, I was responsible for them" (92). She is tuned to the wilderness around them and cognizant of its overriding menace. The others, not keyed into her developing feral pattern, do not sense this danger. They are on a fishing holiday in the north. They are masters of the environment around them. They are safe because they are the dominant species. The novel's protagonist alone understands their vulnerability.

The protagonist's father is the catalyst of the adventure north and her transformation into her feral self. Her father has disappeared from his cabin on his island in the northern lakes of Québec ("nobody can't find him," writes a French-Canadian native of the area to the protagonist, precipitating this trip) (28). At first she is mystified that a woodsman of her father's calibre could have gone missing but she gradually realizes his secret. She becomes convinced that her father is hiding in the woods and deliberately evading capture by the well-meaning people who go out to his island to find him:

I see now the impossibility of searching the island for him, it's two miles long. It would take twenty or thirty men at least, strung out at intervals and walking straight through the forest, and even they could miss him, dead or alive, accident or suicide or murder. Or if for some unfathomable reason he's chosen this absence and is hiding, they'd never find him: there would be nothing easier in this country than to let the searchers get ahead of you and then follow at a distance, stopping when they stop, keeping them in
sight so that no matter which way they turned you would always be behind them. That’s what I would do. (58)

He is her prototype escapee from civilization and her model of feral transformation. He has always preferred a life withdrawn from society, admiring the animals for their consistent predictability as compared to the irrational behaviour of human beings (68). Going feral is a family tendency and she has returned to the family site to fulfill her destiny of returning to the elements herself.

Going “Bushy” in Africa

It seems to be no accident that more than one principal in this text that has gone native has had a strong connection with the animal world. Grey Owl was an undisputed leader in conservation and, in his time, a naturalist internationally connected with beavers. Randy Borman, as a native in the Amazon, must be attuned to the wildlife around him to be in a position to successfully feed his family and maintain his ascendancy in the Cofan culture. While Lt. Dunbar is a fictional character, Michael Blake’s novel and screenplay both show him to be a man open spiritually and emotionally to the animal world in his sympathetic relationships with his horse, Cisco, and Fort Sedgwick’s loitering wolf, Two-Socks. Clearly, there is a sympathy or openness in these men, perhaps a flexibility in their spirituality, that makes the natural world more accessible and immediate to them.

While Surfacing represents a woman’s personal nature seeking redemption and a sense of place in a work of fiction, the issue of going feral is not confined to fiction and this flexible accessibility to the animal world is key to
understanding its existence in true-life experience. Certainly Grey Owl, despite his affinity for the Canadian wilds and his commitment to the beaver, did not so closely identify with the beavers that their relationships with him developed beyond the pet stage. They were companions for him as he wrote into the night in his isolated northern cabin, and unconditional friends as he ran through his polygamous personal life, but, like dogs and cats across America, it was a relationship in which he provided food and comfort and they provided company. That he loved the beavers there is no doubt—his and Anahareo’s heartbreak at the loss of McGinnis and McGinty75 are evidence of that—but there was no intimate connection with these animals, no particular meeting of the minds. It is this intimate level of connection that is necessary before one can be considered a candidate for having gone feral.

In 1966, a physical therapist from the United States, Dian Fossey, headed into the Democratic Republic of the Congo (and, later, Rwanda) to study mountain gorillas in the wild. Totally inexperienced in field work but with a deep, abiding connection to animals, Fossey had persuaded Louis Leakey to let her renew the work at Kabara, started by George Schaller, counting and studying the local gorilla population. With a few absences abroad over the years to lecture

---

75 McGinnis and McGinty were the two beaver kits that propelled Grey Owl from trapper to protector. One winter, seriously behind in profits, Grey Owl and Anahareo reluctantly set some spring traps, knowing that they may be killing a parent beaver after the spring birth of its kits. Sure enough, their greatest fears were realized and both parents in one pond were trapped and drowned. Prepared to shoot the kits to keep them from starving to death, Grey Owl acceded to Anahareo’s wishes and they adopted the two. Within months, it became clear to him that trapping these “Beaver People” was totally unacceptable and he and Anahareo decided to try to protect the species. The “two Mics”, unfortunately, disappeared without a trace one spring. While no one would say this out loud, it is a strong possibility that they were captured in another hunter’s traps.
internationally and take a Ph.D. at Cambridge, Fossey remained in the
mountains with her gorillas until her murder in 1985. She has been the subject of
various books (her own Gorillas in the Mist, Farley Mowat’s Woman in the Mists,
Harold T. P. Hayes’ The Dark Romance of Dian Fossey), films (National
Geographic television specials, Gorillas in the Mist starring Sigourney Weaver)
and articles and each portrayal has shown her intimate connection with the
mountain gorillas she studied—a connection made more intense by the erratic
behaviour she came to display with her own kind. Judging by the way she has
been portrayed in text and film, Dian Fossey is someone who can be seen as
having crossed over that inter-species gulf and gone feral.

There are clues in her early life that indicate a greater willingness to
connect with animals than with human beings:

Like many lonely children Dian loved animals and took comfort from their
undemanding acceptance of her, yet she was not permitted any pets of
her own except for a goldfish
, upon which she lavished the affection that
had few other outlets. The death of the fish left her desolate.
I cried for a week when I found him floating belly up in the bowl in my
room. My parents thought it was good riddance, so I never got
another. A friend at school offered me a hamster, but they
considered it dirty, so that was out
 (Mowat, 2).

Both Hayes and Mowat describe this incident but neither states Fossey’s age at
the time. A young age could, of course, explain such an excessive reaction but
that Fossey felt this story important enough, as an adult, to relate to a number of
people is significant. A week of crying is, apparently, a reasonable reaction to her

---

76 Hayes writes that Fossey’s mother, Kitty Price, indignantly denies this. “(This simply wasn’t
true, Kitty says. She had a bird, too, and a dog, and she was given riding lessons from the time
she was six)” (56).
77 Lines appearing in bold print in Mowat’s book indicate direct quotes from Fossey’s own writing.
for the death of a relatively impersonal creature such as a goldfish. This kind of attachment to a creature she could not communicate with, play with or even touch foreshadows the deep and abiding connections she would make with other animals later in her life.

After being unable to get into veterinary school, Fossey decided to go into physical therapy and focused, not on average patients, but on children with autism and other anti-social behaviours. While in some therapists this choice would be considered a situation of accepting a challenge, in Fossey’s it shows her unwillingness to relate to normal, communicative people on a day-to-day basis. In Fossey's own words

These children have a variety of physical and emotional disabilities and are lost in this world of ours. All are much younger than their years and are like wild animals penned up with no hope of escape. They need a tremendous amount of care and kindness to make them feel life is worth living. (quoted in Mowat, 3).

The children she preferred to work with were unable to develop normal, healthy interpersonal human relationships and Fossey finds that reassuring, within her comfort zone. She herself likened her patients to caged animals and her protective instincts are aroused by her need to champion those who could not champion themselves. Be they children or animals, those who are helpless are a no-risk project for Fossey. It is with those in her life that do not need a champion that Fossey must be on her guard.

---

78 Mowat’s book is filled with examples of her tending any kind of sick animal that came her way and extending that kind of care to any injured person who came her way—student, researcher, camp worker, tracker. Again, though, there is a clear hierarchy. Although she is tending them, she is in charge and they are her patients. There is a power disparity that she finds reassuring, a power disparity that maintains distance between herself and her human patient.
In both Hayes' and Mowat's biographies of Fossey, despite their major differences in perspective, the authors agree that her record of romantic relationships was replete with failures and it was consistently difficult for many people to get close enough to Fossey to consider themselves good friends. Interpersonal relationships were problematic for Fossey. This factor in itself does not brand Fossey as something other than human by any means but it does, again, set up a certain susceptibility to live in another direction from that of most people. Hayes and Mowat both acknowledge multiple lovers in Fossey's life, some married, one fiancé (possibly two depending on the version of her story), and a number of crushes, that all ended with Fossey alone on a chilly, damp mountain. Mowat seems to believe Fossey's notes without question in all relationships but Hayes is more cautious, allowing dissent from at least some of the men involved.  

79 She tended to become involved with men who were older and committed to other relationships at the time of their meeting:

Fossey liked men who could do many things well. She used these self-reliant, powerful men as yardsticks to measure every other man who subsequently came into her camp. Most failed to meet the test. Many had the skills. Some were strong. But few managed to combine these qualities with gentleness. Gentle men stirred something deep in her. (Hayes, 245).

These character traits are attractive to many women, not just to Dian Fossey.

What made her choices difficult for her, though, was her aching need for a

---

79 Notably *National Geographic* photographer Bob Campbell who, Hayes contends, from 1969 through 1972 "was the closest anyone would ever get to Dian Fossey" (italics his, 213). In Hayes' book Campbell admits that he wouldn't have said anything publicly on the matter of his personal relationship with Fossey "except for the appearance of various accounts of her life (including the film Gorillas in the Mist, which he considers to be more fiction than fact)." Campbell wrote to Hayes in October, 1987 that "I wish to correct false information already given and misconceptions that stem from it" (214). He did not, however, deny that he had had a long-term affair with Fossey while married to another woman.
permanent relationship coupled with the desperate fear of the loss of autonomy such a relationship would surely involve. Who would want a wife who wanted to live full-time in a rainforest with few amenities and overwhelming amounts of precipitation and difficult terrain? The difficulty of making a choice of living without her gorillas is tackled in the movie version of *Gorillas in the Mist* when Bryan Brown’s Bob Campbell wants Sigourney Weaver’s Dian Fossey to marry him and spend months at a time away from Africa. She cannot bring herself to do this, even for true love. Brown/Campbell appears to be an unreasonable male chauvinist to Weaver/Fossey’s devoted scientist and the audience is left to feel sadness at the inability of these two lovers to reach common ground. That Fossey repeatedly chose unavailable men and allowed herself to be hurt by them is ignored by the film. She is capable of great affection and friendship in her life, particularly with women, but unable to nurture a committed romantic partnership with a man. This emotional gap in her personal life leaves her susceptible to other unexpected attractions in her romantic life.

Both biographies sketch a Dian Fossey desperate for familial closeness in her life. Much is made of a lack of affection shown her by her mother and stepfather:

> Without a father, she had to look solely to her mother for emotional support, but she saw little of her, for Kitty had to work. When Dian was small Kitty was a fashion model for clothing stores. According to a gossip columnist on the *San Francisco Chronicle*, she was the most beautiful model in the city. In these years Dian was often left with Kitty’s sister, her Aunt Flossie, and her uncle Bert Chapin, whom she would later remember with great affection. (She named two gorillas after them.) She believed they had more to do with raising her than her mother. When Dian was five, Kitty married [Richard] Price, an ambitious entrepreneur whose aspirations would carry over into his social life, and Kitty shared his desire
for prominence in the community. Tall, well turned out, imperious and demanding, Price doted on his beautiful wife, but he was not naturally drawn to small children, and he had some stern views on how they should be raised. "They are little adults," he once said, but he didn't feel they should be included in the adult world. Although Kitty would sometimes have lunch with Dian in the kitchen, Dian was not allowed to join the Prices at dinner until she was ten years old (Hayes, 56).

Kitty is distracted from her daughter and there are undercurrents of negative feelings about her stepfather over and above his strictness with her. As an adult, Fossey is open about her unwillingness to spend time in California with her stepfather:

In 1977, when she was forty-five years old, Fossey told a friend that she was so terrified at the prospect of going home to Atherton that she was taking along a can of Mace as protection. A few years later she confided to another friend that she did not feel physically safe in the Price household unless she slept with a pistol under her pillow. She abhorred her stepfather and complained bitterly about him all her life (Hayes, 55).

This is the most detail that Hayes and Mowat are willing to print about Fossey's relationship with Price, leaving open a number of possibilities about her past with her stepfather. Of course the spectre of physical or sexual abuse hovers above Fossey's hatred of Richard Price but Hayes is cautious later in the book about taking many of Fossey's anecdotes of her past at face value. He and others reluctantly feel that there were times that Fossey over dramatized certain episodes in her life (as well as certain events in her field notes about the gorillas). Hayes is ready to speculate on Fossey's psychology and motivations many times in his book but he is unwilling to go any deeper with her relationship with her stepfather. It could be delicacy for her or for those still living, a reluctance to deal with domestic violence or child abuse in a book about an entirely different subject.
or, indeed, he may feel that anything he had to say on the matter would be pure speculation, based on Fossey's tendency to exaggerate or twist facts\(^{80}\).

The key issue is, however, that Fossey was pushed away from her mother due to Kitty's work and remarriage and the unconditional love she felt she should have had from her parents was sought elsewhere. In her youth, she connected with animals well and knew she wanted them to be her life's work but she was still looking for a human family into which she could fit. In Louisville, she was known at Kosair Crippled Children's Hospital "as aloof and maybe a little snooty" (Hayes, 52) but Mary White Henry, her officemate, saw a potential for friendship. Since Mary did not press Fossey for her friendship, this helped Fossey relax in her presence and become comfortable with her and the two became great friends. Mary included Fossey in her exuberant and welcoming immediate family and introduced her to a wide extended family that Fossey adored and responded to hungrily. She was, to all intents and purposes, adopted as another daughter and basked in the love and acceptance of the Henry family. Along with joining the Henry family, she also joined their religion and converted to Roman Catholicism under their influence. Despite the love extended to her, Fossey gradually became increasingly restless. Perhaps if Fossey's work had allowed more room to grow, more of a chance to be a significant contributor to her field

\(^{80}\) In 1963, as a tourist on her first trip to Africa hoping to see mountain gorillas, Fossey sought Alan and Joan Root's protection and guidance by inviting them to tea and, supposedly reluctantly, telling them that her tour guide, John Alexander, had tried to seduce her. Responding to her vulnerability, they personally took her out to see the gorillas at Kabara during their film assignment there. Alexander has consistently and hotly denied Fossey's allegations, contending that Fossey tried to seduce him and was angry when he turned her down. Hayes writes, "Joan Root says that today she is 'not so sure' about Fossey's story. 'Of course, in 1963, I believed what Dian told us.' she says." (Hayes, 98).
and to humanity, she would have been happy to stay in this situation. However, after a failed engagement, a reawakening desire to see Africa and, later, a connection to Louis Leakey, she saw her destiny in Africa with the mountain gorillas.

Fossey had a lifelong pattern of isolating herself from other people. When she moved to Louisville, she sought an isolated rental cabin on the grounds of a large estate. The owner, George Long, at first refused to rent it to a single woman living alone despite Dian’s strong intention to have the little house [“It would be irresponsible for me to do so. The place was too remote for a lady by herself,” he contended (Hayes, 45)] until Dian’s new boss at Kosair interceded and begged him to rent the place to Dian:

“She said Dian wasn’t kidding. She really would quit her job at Kosair if I didn’t rent the cottage to her. She said the position Dian held had been very hard to fill. She hoped I might be persuaded to change my mind” (Hayes, 46).

Dian got her way and lived in her remote cabin with an assortment of stray dogs she adopted over time. She moved to an even more remote house when, ten years later, George Long put a trailer behind her cabin for his two aunts to live in. Evidently two neighbours were way too many for Dian. Her standoffishness at work was also well-noted. She could be so unobtrusive that one doctor only noticed her existence after four months on the job. Hayes writes that as far as Dian’s associates at Kosair were concerned “[t]he consensus was that Fossey liked animals better than people” (46) since she appeared to have no social life and avoided conversation and gossip with fellow workers whenever possible but always remembered to gather food scraps from lunch trays for her many stray
dogs. One of her fellow researchers at Karisoke\textsuperscript{81}, Kelly Stewart, echoed this same sentiment: "... she liked animals and children. Especially animals. They took the place of humans, because Dian couldn’t deal with humans. Dian liked animals because they were completely vulnerable and could never hurt her or betray her" (quoted in Hayes, 277-8). Stewart and Fossey had enjoyed a warm friendship when Stewart first arrived at Karisoke but this changed as Stewart developed a romantic relationship with another researcher, Alexander (Sandy) Harcourt. She later played peacemaker between Fossey and Harcourt but her relationship with Fossey was never consistently positive again.

In Rwanda, Fossey was happy to be isolated:

During the years when there were four main study groups around the Karisoke study area, I was more than content to live for months without seeing anyone other than the camp staff, Kima, Cindy\textsuperscript{82} and the gorillas (Fossey, 152).

That she resented the intrusions of visitors is well-known but her fellow researchers at Karisoke (there were students and fellow researchers most of the time from 1970 until 1985) were initially stunned at how isolated they all were, even in camp. Meals were prepared and eaten separately and much of the communication between Fossey and students was by note rather than conversation. Observing the gorillas and going on anti-poaching patrols were all that mattered at Karisoke. She did not see socializing as useful or particularly desirable and the students were expected to follow her lead in this.

\textsuperscript{81} In 1967, Fossey established Karisoke Research Centre in Parc National des Volcans, Rwanda after she had been forced to leave Kabara in the Congo. The camp was named "‘Kari' for the first four letters of Mt. Karisimbi that overlooked my camp from the south; ‘soke' for the last four letters of Mt. Visoke, whose slopes rose north some 12,172 feet immediately behind the 10,000 foot campsite" (Fossey, 25).
Out of this mosaic of biographical detail, it is possible to get a feel for the vulnerability and isolation of the human soul within Dian Fossey. Couple that vulnerability with contact with an animal species so like her own in sociability and kinship but so unlike her own (in her personal experience anyway) in loyalty and affectionate acceptance and her desire for close, intimate contact with the gorillas becomes even more understandable. When Fossey first looked upon gorillas, although striking, they were simply other primates:

Their bright eyes darted nervously from under heavy brows as though trying to identify us as familiar friends or possible foes. Immediately I was struck by the physical magnificence of the huge jet-black bodies blended against the green palette wash of the thick forest foliage (Fossey, 3).

As she worked with them and they became habituated to her presence, she also became habituated to theirs. “In the gorilla’s eyes, one senses and shares the shock of recognition. This animal is not an alien species; it is someone else” (Hayes, 99, italics his). She felt that “shock of recognition” and developed poignant and significant relationships with the groups of gorillas she studied as well as warm connections with certain individual gorillas. Mowat comments on this phenomenon:

The depth of Dian’s affinity for the gorillas was largely incomprehensible to others, nor could she easily articulate it. Sometimes she came close.

I heard a noise in the foliage by my side and looked directly into the beautifully trusting face of Macho, who stood gazing up at me. She had left her group to come to me. On perceiving the softness, tranquility, and trust conveyed by Macho’s eyes, I was overwhelmed by the extraordinary depth of our rapport. The poignancy of her gift will never diminish.

No one who has spent time in the company of wild mountain gorillas can escape the recognition of kinship, but Dian took that for

---

82 Cindy was Fossey’s dog and Kima was her pet monkey.
granted. The essential words in this revealing passage are softness, tranquility, and trust, three elements so painfully lacking in many of her relationships with her own species (Mowat, italics his, 102-3. Bold type quoting Fossey, 201).

Mowat very perceptively catches the key to Fossey's attraction to the gorillas: vulnerability (like her own), coupled with serenity and trust. Fossey recognizes the "someone else" in Macho, and she seeks that level of relationship with each other gorilla she encounters that is willing to extend that trust to her.

In addition to friendship with individual gorillas like Macho, Fossey's deep need to mother was given a chance to flower. Unable to maintain a secure relationship with a man, Fossey had undergone two dangerous abortions and had suffered greatly, both emotionally and physically, from both. She had a deep yearning for a child and when two orphaned, seriously ill baby gorillas were given to her to bring back to health, she threw herself into their care. This is a particularly heartbreaking story in that the two gorillas were taken away from her and sold by the government of Rwanda to Cologne Zoo, but when in her care she tended them ceaselessly day and night. Another orphan came her way later and this one, Bonne Année, was returned to the wild. Oddly enough, gorilla mothers were comfortable with Fossey being close to their young ones once they were comfortable with her themselves. The youngsters' interest occasionally put Fossey in an awkward position:

Pablo [a two and a half year old], in his typical obstinate way, decided not to follow them [the rest of Group 5]. Instead, he settled himself cat-cozily on my lap and showed no inclination to move even when Liza returned to pig-grunt authoritatively at us both. Hoping I looked as helpless as I felt, I leaned far back to encourage her to take her headstrong son and go. Pig-grunting more harshly, Liza began pulling at one of Pablo's arms. He instantly returned her pig-grunts.
and grabbed tightly to my jacket with his free hand, making the situation worse. It was then up to me to pig-grunt softly at Pablo while prying his fingers lose [sic] from my jacket and pushing him into his mother’s arms. As Liza carried him away on her back, Pablo turned around to look at me with an accusing pout until he was out of sight (Fossey, 83).

In addition to the comic elements of Fossey being much more involved with Pablo than she had intended, this anecdote serves to show how comfortable Fossey was with gorilla language. Fossey identified a wide range of gorilla vocalizations consisting of, among others, belch vocalizations, roars, pig-grunts, screams and wraaghs. Early on in her encounters with gorillas, she began to record vocalizations for personal analysis (and, later, spectroanalysis) and practised these vocalizations in attempts to communicate meaningfully with the gorillas she encountered. In the *Gorillas in the Mist* movie, Brown/Campbell’s introduction to Weaver/Fossey consists of hearing unearthy, wild noises coming from her cabin and, investigating, finding her intently imitating gorilla movements and vocalizations, oblivious to his entrance. It is a comic moment in the movie but it makes a critical point. Fossey herself worked on her language skills diligently and the gorillas responded favourably as she worked out the proper use for the different expressions she learned. Along with learning to imitate gorilla feeding habits and etiquette, this skill was probably the most significant in her attempts to habituate “her” gorillas to her presence.

Fossey felt the individual beings, the individual souls, within the gorillas she got to know. Where others saw distinctive nose prints for distinguishing one gorilla from another, Fossey saw personal beauty in the gorillas she met:
The dominant silverback\textsuperscript{83}, one in his prime, perhaps twenty-five to thirty years old, was named Geronimo. He was a most distinctive male, with a triangular red blaze of hair in the middle of his massive brow ridge and luxuriant blue-black body hair that framed bulging pectoral muscles resembling steel cables (Fossey, 143).

There is a sensual eroticism to Fossey’s description of this male—his “luxuriant” body hair and “bulging pectoral muscles”—that signals a magnetic attraction for her. She describes his strength in terms of ropes of steel and gives him the name of one whom legend portrays as wild, virile and masculine in a way that is bigger than life. Geronimo was not, however, the only male gorilla she admired. On the first day she tracked Group 8 she noted

He [a young silverback] was followed by the extremely attractive blackback . . . .\textsuperscript{84} After whacking at some vegetation, the magnificent male swaggered out of sight into dense foliage seemingly quite pleased with himself. I named him Samson (Fossey, 138-9).

Here, again, Fossey’s naming describes her appreciation for the handsomeness and virility of the “magnificent” young male gorilla. The observer in her understands that the “swagger” is just for show but the female in her is, nevertheless, charmed by the young blackback. It is hard to know sometimes if Fossey is imposing an anthropomorphic slant on her observations (i.e. “swagger” has much more sensual tension than “walked” or “slipped away”) or if, indeed, the gorillas mean to emote these attitudes she attributes to them (certainly the latter is a possibility since our two species are so similar). Much later in her time

\textsuperscript{83} Fossey describes a silverback gorilla as “a sexually mature male over the age of fifteen years, who is the group’s undisputed leader and weighs roughly 375 pounds, or about twice the size of a female” (10). A silverback is so named because a male’s back hair turns from black to silver as he ages.

\textsuperscript{84} Fossey describes a blackback gorilla as “a sexually immature male between eight and thirteen years weighing some 253 pounds.” “Immatures,” she writes, “Were divided into young adults between six and eight years” (10).
at Karisoke, on her return from a trip to the States, Fossey and her editor, Anita McClellan, encountered Tiger, a lone silverback, in the forest. This is how McClellan remembers their reunion:

"He [Tiger] touched her [Fossey]. And it was so intimate, I started to cry. I was so moved by it that tears were streaming down my face. I felt like an intruder, it was such an intimate, personal greeting. It was almost like Anatoly Sharansky meeting his wife again after eighteen years of solitary confinement' (quoted in Hayes, 319).

There is a clear intimacy involved between Fossey and certain of her gorillas, a bond that goes beyond the scientist/subject divide. Gorillas like Tiger clearly accept Fossey with affection and welcome the opportunity to be with her. That Fossey was also capable of such deep feelings for individual gorillas' personalities leads to a discussion of her relationship with Digit, the gorilla most often associated with her.

Digit was a member of the troop that Fossey called Group 4 and about 5 years old when Fossey first saw him. Named for a "twisted middle finger that appeared once to have been broken," Fossey described him as "a bright-eyed, inquisitive ball of fluff" (Fossey, 167). She enjoyed watching this young adult play with his sisters and longed "to join in their escapades" (Fossey, 172) as she watched them. Fossey makes a point to mention that young Digit would wait for his half-sister Simba if she fell behind the group, almost as though she wants her readers to see the gentle thoughtfulness in this gorilla that Fossey could see for herself.
In Chapter 10 of her book, Fossey focuses on how the now 9-year-old Digit was becoming “more strongly attracted to humans than did other young gorillas” (182) in her experience:

I received the impression that Digit really looked forward to the daily contacts with Karisoke’s observers as a source of entertainment. Eventually he showed that he could tell the difference between males and females by playfully charging and whacking men but behaving almost coyly with women. He was always the first member of Group 4 to come forward to see who had arrived on any particular day. He seemed pleased whenever I brought strangers along and would completely ignore me to investigate any newcomers by smelling or lightly touching their clothing and hair. If I was alone, he often invited play by flopping over on to his back, waving stumpy legs in the air, and looking at me smilingly as if to say, ‘How can you resist me?’ At such times, I fear, my scientific detachment dissolved.

Like Puck of Group 5, Digit became fascinated by thermoses, notebooks, gloves, and camera equipment. He always examined, smelled, and handled everything gently, and occasionally even returned objects to their owners. His return of these items was not done from any sense of recognition of ownership but only because he did not like the clutter of human belongings around him (182-3).

Again, Fossey ascribes meaning to a gorilla’s actions, going beyond the observer role to that of interpreter. She wryly acknowledges Digit’s ability to disarm her with his warmth and sense of fun but she is certainly far from trying to distance herself from this connection with him. This special bond between them is underscored in the movie version of Gorillas in the Mist during a pillow talk between Brown/Campbell and Weaver/Fossey: “Digit and I have a strange connection,” Weaver/Fossey owns. “He has no peers in his group. He’s alone—I understand that.” She equates his situation to hers; they are both alone, even in the midst of groups of their own kind, because each is special in his or her own way. Their souls see each into each other’s and both find comfort in that.
As he matures, Fossey watches Digit take on guard duty responsibilities and sees his awakening sexuality. These two elements develop in tandem in a male gorilla. As a blackback matures, he begins to mount immature females and respond enthusiastically to young females' growing receptivity as long as the silverback in the group allows it. Simba gave Digit "flirtatious invitations" and Digit was careful to protect those rights against other males in his group:

Simba's cyclical condition affected most Group 4 members, particularly Beetsme, who vicariously began mounting Cleo, Augustus, and Titus. Neither he nor Tiger was allowed to mount Simba on the days she was in estrus. On those days Digit actively protected his potential breeding rights with the young female by staying near her in the group and preventing Tiger or Beetsme from approaching (Fossey, 198).

Digit is also carefully sitting on the periphery of Group 4 on a regular basis "maintaining his guard position" (199), helping Uncle Bert (the Group 4 silverback) protect the group. The older he gets, the more Digit resembles Fossey's male ideal: the "self-reliant" "powerful" men that Hayes noted attracted her. He is physically attractive to her and sexually mature. Digit also fully embodies the combination of strength with gentleness that Fossey so appreciated and needed. And, of course, as a gorilla and not a man, he is incapable of hurting her the way men had done in the past. She has watched this "boy next door" grow up into a warm, strong man and, coupled with their spiritual connections, she cannot help but feel a special bond with him.

That this bond was not only something she felt but also something that Digit understood can be seen in two particular incidents. The first was caught on Bob Campbell's camera in 1973 and made it into a National Geographic television special:
In a [film] sequence which seemed never to end, one experience more meaningful than the next, Digit became involved with Fossey. He didn’t just touch her and then run away. First he took her glove in his hand and sniffed it, and then her pencil, and then he put that down and picked up her notebook and put it back down. Then, nestling in beside her, he rolled over and went to sleep.

Both Fossey and Campbell instantly realized what they had captured [on film]. Without prompting, without encouragement, a wild mountain gorilla had proved what Fossey had been trying to show the rest of the world. He had demonstrated the gentleness and empathy of his species. He had shown his kinship to human beings (Hayes, italics his, 265-6).

Digit was already, literally, a poster boy for the Rwandan tourist trade, his picture gracing posters around the world. This film sequence made him real to the people funding Fossey’s research and it made him even more special in Fossey’s heart. His absolute trust (it has been said that one most truly loves the person with whom one can feel drowsy in comfort) in Fossey, his ease in her presence and his desire for physical contact all show that Fossey is not only accepted by this gorilla but is a special friend.

Fossey relates another incident in *Gorillas in the Mist*:

Contacting Group 4 one horrible, cold, rainy day, I resisted the urge to join Digit, who was huddled against the downpour and about thirty feet apart from the other animals. It had been many months since he had shown any interest in observers, and I did not want to disrupt his growing independence. Leaving him to his solitude, I settled several yards from the group, a cluster of humped forms barely visible in the heavy mist. After a few minutes, I felt an arm around my shoulders. I looked up into Digit’s warm, gentle brown eyes. He stood pensively gazing down at me before patting my head and plopping down by my side. I lay my head on Digit’s lap, a position that provided welcome warmth (199).

Fossey goes on to say that they stayed like this for more than half an hour. The way she ascribes a deep thoughtfulness to Digit makes him her intellectual equal just as his “warm, gentle” eyes make him her masculine ideal. There are many
other small moments that Fossey relates such as the time Digit stripped a stalk of wild celery and offered it to her on a day when she felt sad, and another when Digit came up to gently stroke her hair. She even relates a tale in which Digit charges through the bush to protect his group from unknown intruders and Fossey puts herself in front of her tracker, Nemeye, to protect him from the charge. As soon as Digit sees her, he breaks off the charge and Nemeye is safe (although quite shaken). Digit is fulfilling his role as group protector and Fossey responds to his conscientious strength while he reacts to his faith in her and drops his guard. To Fossey, Digit has become the perfect blend of animal and human.

All of these communications, interpersonal relationships and connections had bonded Fossey to all of her gorillas, most particularly Digit, and his murder and mutilation on New Year’s Eve, 1977 marked a turning point for Fossey’s character and future:

It was Ian who found Digit’s mutilated corpse lying in the corner of a blood-soaked area of flattened vegetation. Digit’s head and hands had been hacked off; his body bore multiple spear wounds. Ian and Nemeye left the corpse to search for me and Kanyaraganza, patrolling in another section. They wanted to tell us of the catastrophe so that I would not discover Digit’s body myself.

There are times when one cannot accept facts for fear of shattering one’s being. As I listened to Ian’s news all of Digit’s life, since my first meeting with him as a playful little ball of black fluff ten years earlier, passed through my mind. From that moment on, I came to live within an insulated part of myself (Fossey, 206, emphasis mine).

For a number of years, Fossey had exhibited erratic behaviour with other human beings, some of it attributable to excessive drinking (circa 1974, Kelly Stewart contends Fossey was drinking a case of whiskey a week at camp) and some to
isolation (Fossey referred to the effects of isolation at camp as “going bushy”), but the main focus of her misanthropic tendencies were centred on the native people who poached in the Parc des Volcans. Fanatical about conservation, Fossey has been accused of kidnapping, destruction of property, mental torture of captives and firing guns at people in the defense of “her” gorillas and the wildlife in the Parc: “One cannot compromise on conservation goals within established park areas” she contends (36). All sources agree that she tried to use the Rwandans’ fear of black magic against them and styled herself a madwoman/witch. Hayes quotes Frank Crigler, U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda from 1974 to 1976:

“\[I had the extraordinary experience of going to a Batwa village with Dian . . . . And ‘village’ is not the appropriate word. It resembled nothing so much as a gorilla nest. Their dwellings had the most primitive sort of banana-leaf roofs, . . . Dirt and scrubs were heaped up around the edge like walls. The women had nothing on above the waist. They were carrying their tiny little babies, trying to nurse them, or sitting in the dark inside their little huts, or nests, which were filled with smoke. They were just the most primitive people you can imagine, and they were absolutely terrified of her when she came in. She was looking at the time for poachers, but the men had taken off. They were a fragile, frail, frightened people. They waited and waited, ‘Please go away. Please leave us alone’” (274).

Hayes goes on to say that even some members of her own staff came to believe she had supernatural powers: “Feeling as she did, she made no attempt to interact with the locals, or to see their problems, or to try to find some possible solutions. She only wanted to frighten them to keep them out” (274). As

---

Fossey “admits” to all of these charges anecdotally in *Gorillas in the Mist* but reading her version makes everything sound justified. Of the kidnapping of a child Fossey writes “I managed to catch the ten-year-old, son of the leading poacher of the Virungas, Munyurukiko, and carried the boy and his weapons back to my tent” (27) to hold him hostage.
demonstrated in the movie, she would don Hallowe’en masks and perform spur-of-the-moment rituals or stage near-hangings to get information out of captive poachers or to scare them into leaving the Parc for good. If she could be capable of this level of erratic and manipulative behaviour before Digit’s death, the stakes only became higher afterwards when she came “to live within” that “insulated part” of herself, disregarding rational disagreement with her methods. In the movie, Weaver/Fossey becomes understandably hysterical at Digit’s death, much of the hysteria voicing itself at the mutilation of his beautiful body: “They took his head! They took his head! They took his head!” Mowat quotes a long passage of the aftermath and the investigation of Digit’s murder from Fossey’s papers and then continues in his own voice:

Most of this was written well after the event, by which time Dian had somewhat recovered from the initial shock. However, as the first week following the discovery of Digit’s corpse drew to its close, she was not only in a perilous mental state but was again verging on physical collapse (165).

Following the death, Fossey mobilized the local police and they carried out lightening raids on local villages in search of poachers involved in Digit’s death or evidence against them. She was singlemindedly at war with the local Rwandans over the murder.

By this time it was clear to many people that Fossey’s feelings toward the gorillas had gone far beyond professional dedication to their survival. The preservation of the gorillas had become her obsession, the expression of all Fossey’s deepest emotions and fears. She seemed possessed—by love and inexhaustible rage. (Hayes, 295).

Possessed by her love for Digit and consumed by the rage at his death, Fossey continued to make irrational decisions—and enemies—until her murder in 1985.
It could be argued, on this evidence, that Fossey “went bush” and didn’t “go feral”. The characteristics of going bush include erratic behaviour, irrational decisions that no one “on the outside” understands with antisocial feelings and paranoia increasing in direct proportion to the amount of time one spends in isolated conditions. While Fossey wasn’t strictly apart from other human beings—there were plenty of camp staff and, usually, researchers or film crew at Karisoke—she fostered her own isolation and separation from others in the Centre. She was, effectively and quite happily, alone much of the time at Karisoke. Even people who worked with her felt that she had gone beyond “going bushy”:

Six months after Fossey’s return [to Karisoke in 1983], [Richard] Barnes\textsuperscript{66} wrote to the National Geographic (which had paid his salary) to explain why he was leaving his post. “I have some experience of life in the bush and I have worked before with an eccentric recluse in the bush. However, Dian Fossey . . . seems unable to perceive the world as others see it, and one suspects that she may not be able to distinguish between right and wrong” (Hayes, ellipses his, 319).

It is the level of her relationships with her gorillas, coupled with her deteriorating relationships with humans, that indicate her going feral. Going feral is merely going native, with an animal culture involved in place of the new culture, and Fossey’s situation fulfills many of the criteria used to label someone as having gone native. She willingly and diligently learned \textit{and lived} as much of the new culture’s language, social structure, diet, family life, and interpersonal relationships as she could. At various times she fulfilled specific roles as mother, playmate, friend and protector to certain gorillas, making their family her family.

\textsuperscript{66} Director of Karisoke Research Centre in 1983.
She interacted with this society on its terms, shunned contact with her own culture's people as much as possible (she basically dropped her association with the Henrys in Louisville who had been so important to her) and even turned on her own species in defense of her new family. And, of course, the critical issue to the whole question of going native/feral vs. not is not what the person involved feels or knows but how that person is perceived by others. The label is, after all, a judgement from outside.

There is a situation in *Gorillas in the Mist* in which the movie makes its statement on this issue. Weaver/Fossey and her tracker, Sembogare, stumble upon a Batwa burial ground and Dian leans over to move a few of the stones ringed around a grave. Oh, no, Sembogare tells her earnestly, the ring of stones keeps the soul in place after death. The stones are replaced and Dian sees a pair of graves with a single ring of stones around them both. When questioned, Sembogare tells her that those stones keep the two souls together forever. At the end of the movie, after Dian's Christian burial next to Digit and after all the mourners have left, Sembogare soberly and systematically connects Dian's stones and Digit's stones into a single ring, signifying the connection of those two souls throughout eternity. Fossey and Digit were not and are not simply scientist and subject. They are not pet and owner, animal and human. Their relationship was and remains a romantic one, a romance in which Fossey finally found the strength and gentleness she sought and Digit found a champion and a friend. It was a cross-species love affair that motivated Fossey in her life and fascinates her readers after her death. A key element of going native is often falling in love
with a member of the new culture and establishing a family life there. Fossey did just that with Digit and her other mountain gorillas.

87 Played by John Omirah Miluwi.
Conclusion

In the case of the term "going native", which is British in origin, its original undercurrent was the racism of the colonial period. It was a given understanding that the British were superior in character, firepower, religion, commerce and governance: those under their influence must, therefore, be less so in every area and these people were usually people of colour. Outsiders (those observing the new native) saw the process of going native as an escape from, often a rejection of, one's proper responsibilities and loyalties in one's home country. Those susceptible to going native usually shared a number of characteristics including romantic notions of adventure, flexibility in dealing with other cultures, a socially-conscious morality, an intelligence beyond that of the people around them, and a qualified respect for authority. 88

From these beginnings in imperialism, how did the worry about going native become so much less emotionally charged as the century progressed? At the turn of the 20th century, colonialism in Africa and mass western migration of whites in North America were both still providing significant possibilities for liaison figures or contact zone inhabitants to desert their own heritages and join the "other" side. As the century—and technology—have progressed, the spheres of influence of colonial power have shifted. Fewer people are now physically in the contact zone and those who are there are mostly businessmen, the classic

88 By that I mean that these people respected authority because it engendered a certain order and morality in their society and the world. That respect could end abruptly, however, if those in authority acted unreasonably or immorally.
mediators of transculturation rather than crossing over. Even though there is a tangible contact zone, many of the contacts within that zone are via technology (telephone or e-mail, for example) rather than through interpersonal contact. There are many texts written for those in the contact zone to help them negotiate foreign customs and mores and, paradoxically, this leaves them feeling less engaged in the relationships because they are not working out the cultural differences personally. With fewer chances for meaningful day-to-day contact come fewer chances to go over to the other side.

In dealing with the term “going native”, the main opposition, in its most basic form, is that one society is good and civilized and another society is bad and primitive. In the most extreme case of going native this opposition totally flip-flops: in the mind and soul of the new native the home society loses its moral superiority and the adopted society gains dimensions in virtue and honour at the home society’s expense. The current liberal interpretation of multi-culturalism, however, lessens the negativity of the idea of going native and also blurs the clear opposition of the two societies involved. If one takes the view that all societies are inherently good and valuable in their own ways, going native cannot be seen as a deterioration or descent into the wrong society. The new native cannot be bad, only different. There is, however, still a gap between this attitude in theory and the way it works in fact (i.e. some people would still see someone like Randy Borman as a social dropout) but overall it is safe to use the term without insulting someone.
Every person who goes native is reinventing himself or herself in some fundamental way. This means, of course, that everyone who goes native is, on some level, a con artist.\textsuperscript{89} Inherent in any con is the artist's ability to collect some payoff that is of value to him or her: for Conrad’s Kurtz, it is the cooperation of the natives to boost his ivory collection; for Grey Owl it is the fulfillment of a childhood dream; for St. John Philby it is fame and a certain amount of wealth. It is the con that may now anger observers and make them feel that going native may be wrong, not the colonial derision over a drop in personal integrity. Even so, the term has lost most of its sting—except for in the fields of anthropology and ethnology—and survives mostly as a colourful idiom of the English language.

\textsuperscript{89} I am grateful to Dr. Faye Walker for offering this insight.
Works Cited


