THE WORK OF ADELE WISEMAN

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the work of Adele Wiseman, with particular emphasis on the analysis of her novels, The Sacrifice and Crackpot. The Eastern European Jewish background of the writer, with which she identifies strongly, as well as her Winnipeg roots, are a focus of special attention for the purpose of interpreting her work within its appropriate cultural context. The development of similar themes and symbols, and apparent differences in perspective and style in the two novels are examined. Adele Wiseman's continuing social, political, and moral concerns are analyzed, and her ideas and observations about the creative process are noted. An attempt has been made to demonstrate the integral relationship of these concerns and ideas to her literary creativity.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When Adele Wiseman's novel, The Sacrifice, was published in 1956, it received international critical attention. The Manchester Guardian, The London Times, The New York Times, Saturday Review, The Atlantic, The New York Herald Tribune, and Time Magazine, all carried reviews of the first work by the young Canadian writer, which were, for the most part, full of praise. Back home in Winnipeg the press responded with characteristic enthusiasm to the new-found "fame" of one of its daughters. "How proud Miss Wiseman's family must be of her and how grateful we should all be to this gifted and sensitive writer for having glorified our city and country with a really good book," wrote M. F. in the Winnipeg Free Press.[1] (The recognizable prose is that of Max Freedman, a distinguished Winnipeg journalist, who, among other things, became Washington Correspondent for the Manchester Guardian. His article on The Sacrifice was not a review, but a special column which appeared in the editorial page, entitled "Causerie".) In a book review by J. M. G., Wiseman was called "not 'a writer of great promise' but rather a mature writer who has reached fulfillment."[2] Peter Desbarats, reviewing The Sacrifice for the Winnipeg Tribune, stated flatly that, in his opinion, it was "the best novel ever written by a Canadian. But," he went on to say, "it only serves to prove there can't be at the moment any such thing as a Canadian novel . . . The Sacrifice belongs to Jewish literature. There will never be a Canadian novel until there is a uniform Canadian people."[3]

Since 1956 there has been an almost complete reversal in the minds of Canadians as to what constitutes "Canadianism." In place of uniformity, multiculturalism has come to describe what we understand to be the nature of our national ethos; we no longer demand homogeneity, but rather regard the heterogeneity of our tradition as a source of enrichment. This is not a new value, springing spontaneously from our sudden enlightenment, but one which has evolved through a period of decades. In 1952, reviewing The Second Scroll, a novel by Abraham Moses Klein, Malcolm Ross wrote the following: "Perhaps . . . it has dawned on us at last that the tradition native to us is inescapably cosmopolitan and that, actually, our tradition is as much before us as it is behind us. We have lately discovered that we are not just a mixed batch of transplanted Englishmen, Frenchmen, Scots, Jews, and Slavs, but a uniquely structured people with multi-dimensional cultural possibilities . . ..As persons we live by various and separate spiritual inheritances and loyalties and we preserve our differences. But at another level as Canadians, we take our life from a fruitful collision and interpretation of many inheritances. And thus we grow."[4]

It was Malcolm Ross who encouraged Adele Wiseman to write The Sacrifice on the basis of a short story she had written during her student days at the University of Manitoba. Ross obviously recognized the potential of the young writer; his appreciation of Klein's place in Canadian letters illustrates his insight into the cultural significance of the diversity of Canadian experience, and its relevance to the development of a Canadian literature. The prairies have been identified as a region particularly rich in this diversity, to which the work of Adele Wiseman provides a substantial contribution.

Adele Wiseman was born in Winnipeg in 1928. Her parents were immigrants from the Ukraine who had come to Canada in 1923. Their story is told by the novelist in Old Woman at Play, which was published in 1978. They came with little but their skills and the consciousness that the potential for development and achievement was open to their children, if only they could provide the means. All of their children attended University, and pursued professional careers. Adele recalls that early in her life she knew she was destined to be a writer. After graduating from the University of Manitoba she worked for a short time as Executive Secretary of the Winnipeg Ballet before going to England, where, with the help of her close friend Margaret Laurence she got a job doing social work. She worked also as a volunteer at a hostel for Jewish girls in Stepney, where she lived. It was during this time that The Sacrifice was published. Later she taught English at an embassy school in Rome. After returning to Winnipeg, she left for China, armed with an advance from Maclean's, intending to gather material for a non-fictional book. She never reached its shores, however, getting only as far as Hong Kong and Tokyo. She returned home to Winnipeg once more, then moved to Montreal in 1964, where she taught at MacDonald College and Sir George Williams University, and wrote. In 1974, eighteen years after her first novel had been published, Crackpot was released by McClelland and Stewart. She had been "juggling with the pieces of Crackpot" since 1961, according to Adele Freedman.[5] Thirteen years had elapsed between its conception and publication. In 1976 Adele Wiseman became writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto, living in Kleinberg. Later, she moved to Toronto, where she now resides with her husband, Dmitry Stone, and their eleven year old daughter Tamara.

The publication of The Sacrifice, for which she was awarded the Governor General's Medal in 1957, brought Wiseman both national and international recognition, and expectations of a productive literary career. Wiseman became bogged down, however, writing a play called The Lovebound, whose subject was a vessel of Jewish refugees which had set out from Europe in 1939, only to be turned away by every port, with the result that it was forced to return its cargo to certain annihilation. She had heard the story as a child of eleven, and was committed to its telling since that time, but had no success in having it either performed or published. Wiseman began working on this play soon after the publication of The Sacrifice, in spite of the active discouragement of her publishers, and persevered in her fruitless attempts to bring it before the public.

After the spectacular achievement of The Sacrifice, the literary world, especially in Canada, anticipated a repeat performance from Adele Wiseman. At last, in 1974, Crackpot was published, but it was not an easy birth. The novel was rejected by forty-three publishers before Jack McClelland agreed, at the urging of Margaret Laurence, to publish it without revision. Critics were not much more enthusiastic than publishers, however, with the exception of Margaret Laurence, whose glowing review appeared in the Globe and Mail, September 26, 1974. Much of that review was incorporated into the introduction for the New Canadian Library edition of the novel. Time Magazine, then still published in a Canadian edition, gave special attention to the novel, presumably because it was the work of a highly respected Canadian novelist, but the greatest praise its reviewer could muster was that "considered with her first novel . . . Crackpot establishes Wiseman as a writer with a singular voice who can triumph over the most obdurate material."[6] There does not appear to have been any

attention on the international scene. The failure of Crackpot to generate the popular interest it merited won it its only award: The Canadian Booksellers' Association award which is intended to "focus attention on a Canadian book which [it] feels has not generated the popular interest it merits."[7]

In an article published in the Canadian Jewish News, Wiseman explained the business of book publishing as she sees it: "Publishers insist that a writer must market himself by quickly following up a successful novel that is but a variation; only then will the novelist establish a rapport with his reading public."[8] She insists on maintaining her integrity as a writer, writing what she wants to write, and the two major works which she has published testify to her originality. In her two novels we are confronted with two vastly different works of art, although they express many of the same concerns. Her moral convictions, both as they emerge in her work, and as they have affected its production in her relationships with publishers, appear to have had a tremendous effect on her career. Her refusal to compromise her principles recalls the character of Hoda in Crackpot, with whom she undoubtedly identifies very closely. (In Old Woman at Play we learn that her father called her "Oodle", a diminutive, with the "h" dropped, of the more substantial protagonist of Crackpot.) The identity is strengthened by the conviction of both protagonist and author of the preciousness of their Jewish heritage and tradition.

Wiseman's Jewishness not only affects the content of her novels, but also profoundly influences the way in which she sees and projects that content. It is my contention that in order to understand and fully appreciate her work, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the culture from which it grows. As Northrop Frye points out in The Critical Path: "The conventions, genres, and

archetypes of literature do not simply appear: they must develop historically from origins, or perhaps from a common origin."[9] Frye turns to Vico for an elucidation of "how a society in its earliest phases, sets up a framework of mythology, out of which all its verbal culture grows, including its literature." From Vico's theory, Frye demonstrates that "when a mythology crystallizes in the centre of a culture, a . . . magic circle is drawn around that culture, and a literature develops historically within a limited orbit of language, reference, allusion, belief, transmitted and shared tradition."[10] In Wiseman's work is found the expression of what Frye terms a "mythology" of the Jewish experience, which includes that "society's view of its past, present and future, its relation to its gods and its neighbours, its traditions, its social and religious duties, and its ultimate destiny."[11] When Max Freedman wrote of The Sacrifice, he observed: "As the applause of the critics so clearly proves, this book can be read and enjoyed by anyone who likes novels. There is a deeper meaning, however, which can be taken only by Jewish readers."[12] That deeper meaning goes beyond the parochial, and has universal significance, I believe. It is with the purpose of making that meaning at least in part understandable that this thesis is undertaken.

Max Freedman's observation about The Sacrifice may be even more applicable to Crackpot, of which John Moss is critical for its "failure to universalize."[13] It is possible that, in its complexity, Crackpot is less accessible to the reader, but the reason for this is not solely its Jewish perspective. Wiseman herself sees the form of her second novel as demanding more of the reader, but bearing richer rewards.[14] In order to reap these, however, it is necessary to have some understanding of Eastern European Jewish (shtetl) culture, as well as an awareness of Jewish Kabbalistic thought. It may be argued that since Jewish Kabbalism

is a source of fascination for writers of such diverse backgrounds as Jorge Luis Borges and Patrick White, it is a subject of universal concern and interest. A third element which may be an impediment to the understanding of Crackpot is an appreciation of Jewish humour, for, while The Sacrifice is an earnest novel, whose tragedy is realistically relieved by flashes of irony and wit, Crackpot demonstrates a humour which is peculiar and intrinsic to Jewish shtetl culture.

Irving Howe, in his introduction to A Treasury of Yiddish Stories, explains the nature of that humour:

> Jewish folk humour is surely one of the most remarkable products of East European life. That a people at the very bottom of the social scale, upon whom the heaviest weights of history descended, should nonetheless have expressed so much of its ethos through a complicated network of jokes, witticisms, satiric stories, symbolic shrugs and gestures -- this may be explained . . . by the fact that humor was its first and only line of defense, though in a sense an impregnable defense. Only if they took the myth of the Chosen People with the utmost seriousness, yet simultaneously mocked their pretensions to being anything but the most wretched people on earth could the Jews survive.[15]

This, in effect, is precisely what Wiseman does with the story of Danile and Rahel in Crackpot. The circumstances of their "chosenness" and their concomitant suffering are analagous to that of the reality of the Jewish history of "chosenness." At a time in the history of civilization when the question of the value of existence pervades the western world, the story of Danile, Rahel and Hoda has universal implications. In the paradox of Jewish suffering and the defiant affirmation of life lies the secret of human endurance, faith, and survival. Hoda, as the personification of that ethos, is its concrete expression, its manifestation. Howe uses the critic Clement Greenberg's analysis of the Jewish joke to further explicate his thesis:

> It reminded him that his self-absorption, as expressed in a millenial culture, . . . for all its modifications according to time and place, still attempted to perpetuate itself as if in a timeless and placeless vacuum [and] was foolhardy. The Jewish joke criticized the Jew's habit of explaining away or forgetting the literal facts in order to make life more bearable. . . . When religion began to lose its capacity, even among the devout, to impose dignity and trust on daily life, the Jew was driven back on his sense of humor. . . . Invoked to correct a disequilibrium caused by religious preoccupations and the need to preserve self-esteem (the Jewish sense of humor) learned to argue with God and dispute with Him, ironically, those final questions around which generations of sages had spun their reverent dialectic.[16]

Howe's concluding statement on the subject provides a framework for understanding Wiseman's humour in Crackpot: "It is seldom carefree and only occasionally gay. Its great themes are precisely those events which make the Jewish experience so tragic. At times Jewish humor provides a means of indirect social aggression, and at other times it releases the sharpest, most mordant self-criticism."[17]

Wiseman has expressed her disappointment at the cold reception accorded her second novel, both by the general public, and by the Jewish community. Adele Freedman, writing in Saturday Night, tells us that she (Wiseman) "hopes that Crackpot will perforce be contemporary in a few years,"[18] suggesting that she considers it to be avant-garde. Toba Korenblum, in an article in the Canadian Jewish News, quotes Wiseman as follows: "She finds it ironic that Jews would reject a work like Crackpot which shows an honest sensitivity and concern with moral questions at the very heart of the Jewish ethos."[19] Perhaps the complexity of its symbolism, its innovative form, and its peculiarly ironic humour have combined to render Crackpot inaccessible to many readers, regardless of their ethnic background.

Wiseman's close identification with Judaism may, in part, stem from her remarkably strong identification with her mother. In a book entitled Old Woman

at Play, in which the novelist ostensibly explores the creative process as it is manifested and expressed by her mother, the ending affirms what we come to understand soon after the beginning: "Obviously, this book is about me too, about why I write and about my sources and my roots and the complexities of identity. It's true, the thought has more than once occurred to me, that in that last moment, as I lie dying, my mother's life will flash before my eyes."[20] Thus, while Wiseman's novels are set in the Canadian prairie, the first in an anonymous city, and the second in Winnipeg, they take place in a period which reflects the experiences of a woman of Chaika Wiseman's generation, rather than that of her daughter. The identification with that world has its roots in another time and place, however, for Chaika Wiseman's continued attachment to the Eastern European shtetl where she grew up made an indelible impression on her daughter, the budding novelist:

> It was the fulness of this still-living experience which she offered her children in all its dimensions, open for our exploration, like an extension of our own living space. Because of it our own lives have seemed to flow through each other. As a child I haunted my mother's past existence, her generously shared fiefdom, like a ghost from the future. The three towns of her youth, the living source of much of her vision, were the fairyland of my childhood. Hers was another life to play in, an extension of my own through which I could reach into a pre-existence as mysterious and exciting as the ever-redeeming tomorrow in which I would somehow retroactively set everything right. Here I examined clues, discovered correspondences, and listened, hearing, in the shells of her past, the oceans of my future.[21]

Thus, Wiseman makes quite clear her attachment to a sphere of Jewish life which is outside the experience of most Canadian Jews of her generation. The close identity which she felt with her mother, and her mother's ability to recreate Eastern European shtetl life for her children, explains not only the setting of the novels in time and place, but also the pervasive ethos of

the Eastern European Jewish values and perspective which manifests itself in these novels. The transmission to her daughter of a past which could become her "fairyland" confirms indubitably the uniqueness of Chaika Wiseman's legacy to her daughter. For most Jewish immigrants, memories of Eastern Europe were ones which they preferred to leave behind them in a new world which offered them and their children what appeared to be something far superior to what they left.

In an interview with Mark Asner, Wiseman stated clearly her goal: "The fact that I am a Jew has determined my whole professional career. I sold myself, in a sense, early and willingly, into community bondage."[22] Asner points out that "her task, as she sees it, is to capture the truth of modern Jewish experience. She believes that the survival of the Jews is crucial to the survival of civilization."[23] This forthrightness about the moral purpose of her work at once connects her with a tradition in which commitment to a goal is believed to be essential to all human action, and contrasts her with a contemporary view of artists and their work as it is described by Frye: "As a rule the work of art itself is disinterested: there is nothing beyond itself to which it points as a fulfilment of itself."[24] Wiseman's perception of herself, as related by Toba Korenblum, as being outside the cultural mainstream, both as a Jew and as a writer,[25] is realistic and honest.

The novelist recalls, in Old Woman at Play, her innocent childhood dream of being a writer: " . . . I knew that I was meant to be a writer, that my writing was going to bring truth and understanding and love to the world and make everything and everybody happy and perfect."[26] This goal seems to have persevered, at least throughout the writing of The Sacrifice, which ends, auspiciously, promoting love and understanding as a means of creating a better

world. But the more mature description of what, in fact, the artist can achieve, is significantly relevant to her later novel, Crackpot:

> For what the artist creates is consciousness . . . consciousness which extends consciousness. We cherish it because it represents us not as good, but as aware, and lets us feel that we have contributed to the dignity of creation an expression of our awareness of our situation, which enlarges creation and ourselves. This sense of enlargement, of augmented power, helps us, even, briefly, to imagine that we may somehow become "better."[27]

Such expansion of consciousness emerges in Crackpot as we explore what Hoda knows, and in our exploration, come ourselves to know.

Wiseman's preoccupation with technique, with the recreation of that kind of knowledge which is neither solely rational, nor solely emotional, but a fusion of both, is fundamental to her creative being. Her contribution to a 1950 edition of the University of Manitoba students' literary publication, Creative Campus, was an analysis of Hopkins's poem, "The Leaden Echo and The Golden Echo," in which she explicates Hopkins's goal and his innovations. " 'Meaning'," she writes, "in its fullest sense, that is the juxtaposition of emotional and intellectual elements which comprise the poet's 'idea', is only vaguely hinted at by the symbols commonly used. To overcome this Hopkins wrestles with language, trying to tie it more closely to his essential meaning. He tries to surround his ideas, overwhelm them, and tightening, squeeze out emotional connotations which combine with the intellectual suggestions in the words, to come closer to his essential idea than any ordinary word combination could do."[28] A similar idea about the creative process appears in Old Woman at Play, written more than a quarter of a century later: "So the artist, in her trance of concentration, in the intensity of her inner focus, courts vision and revelation, sees new possibilities, explores new forms within form, wrestles with all the changing possible forms of form, and relationship of idea to

particular form, and fixes each captured shape for our astonishment while she continues to engage the ever-changing mystery."[29]

In both Crackpot and Old Woman at Play, her most recent published works, the elaborateness of her metaphors, her apparent indifference to conventional sentence structure, her technique of heaping words and phrases profusely one upon the other in extended, somewhat breathless sentences, reflect this fascination with the problem of projecting the felt meaning of the artist. Her description of her mother's use of words provides a significant example:

> But mainly, in those days, my mother held us near her with words. She kept us on the long leash of an endless rope of language, looping and knotting us as firmly to her as ever she stitched edge to edge in a seam. She lassoed us daily and webbed us and gilded our lives with innumerable threads of prose. Words spun about us; sometimes the very air was afog with words that purled like a fine mist about our ears: stories and persuasions and fantasies and cajolings and adjurations and just plain fast-talking that fogged up your brain with ideas, intoxicated you, led you half-hypnotized where she wanted you to go. Like a conjurer she kept us busy, kept us interested, kept us occupied, kept us fascinated, winding us in endless strings of reciprocal talk, ropes of argument, singing necklaces, bracelets of laughter, looping us with garments of language, bejewelling us with glittering sentences, bubbling and streaming ideas and thoughts and discussions and exhortations and moralizings, and sometimes, when we'd briefly slipped the spell, an anxious crying of our names up and down the block, or a stern motherly shout or two . . . .Even now she counsels tirelessly, "You have to talk to children, you have to tell them all the time, explain to them, entertain them, make them understand."[30]

The words of the description, like those of her mother, seem to gather momentum, taking control of the writer, with the effect of overwhelming us too, demonstrating both intellectually and emotionally the quality of her mother's formidable use of that weapon. Both Wiseman's fascination with language, and her mother's expressed conviction of the power of the word, have their roots in Jewish tradition. The following excerpt from Life is With People, The Culture of the Shtetl

explains the significance of words:

> The emphasis on reason and its corollary, law, is linked with an enormous emphasis on words. It takes endless words to rationalize all of life on earth and in heaven, to bring all within a framework of order, reason and purpose conceived in justice and mercy. Words are required not only to explain how past history and present facts conform to divine Law, but also to interpret and apply that Law. Day-to-day existence can be carried on only to elaborate verbalization.
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> Every act of daily life is related to the words of the Holy Books and their vast body of commentary. Often it is related in words through the many daily prayers and blessings . . . .In this highly verbalized culture words are more than a medium of communication. The word is a force in itself, a tool. More than that, the word itself embodies substance-- the Hebrew root is the same for "word" as for "thing" or "object." Thus, the word endows its referent with existence.
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> The original creation was a verbal act, the world was brought out of chaos by words. "In the beginning God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." . . . The shtetl sets up no sharp dichotomy between word and deed. The word is the threshold to the deed, even the initial phase of it. Or rather, words are deeds of a special order.[31]

As a story teller, Wiseman also belongs to a tradition. The function of the telling of stories was, according to Elie Wiesel, to transmit, for in Hebrew, the word "tradition" comes from the verb root which means "to transmit." "In our history," Wiesel writes, "this need to communicate, to share, comes close to being an obsession."[32] Wiesel's grandfather's exhortation echoes in Wiseman's missionary zeal: "Listen attentively, and above all, remember that true tales are meant to be transmitted --to keep them to oneself is to betray them."[33] Thus, when at the end of The Sacrifice, Moses remembers his legacy from his grandfather as "some crummy stories," he is ironically affirming the value of the tradition. The message reverberates through Crackpot, where Danile's stories, so crucial to Hoda's existence, are central to the novel. The transmission of tradition becomes a part of non-Jewish Canadian literature

in Margaret Laurence's The Diviners, with Pique Tonnerre's legacy of songs from her father, and Morag Gunn's legacy of stories from Christie Logan.

The relationship of Adele Wiseman and Margaret Laurence is referred to in Clara Thomas's critical work, The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence: "Among the friendships begun in the Winnipeg years, her association with Adele Wiseman, founded on compatability in talent and temperament, and on the kinship of one who was born to write for another of that ilk, was -- and is -- strongly supportive."[34] The friendship has, no doubt, been as valuable a support for Wiseman as it has for Laurence. Of particular literary interest are the similarities between their two novels, Laurence's The Diviners, and Wiseman's Crackpot. I have touched on these similarities in a cursory way, in my analysis, but believe that a more thorough study of them would be rewarding.

Of their shared convictions the most obvious are social and political. Thomas attributes Laurence's dedication to social reform and "the continued basic social awareness that is part of the foundation of all her work" partly to her western Canadianism.[35] The strong social democratic convictions that Thomas ascribes to Laurence and the group at Wesley College were a part of a wider community which shared those convictions with the same liberal humanist intensity. Wiseman's vision is similar to Laurence's in that it links inextricably social issues and concerns with religion and morality. Arthur A. Chiel, in his history of The Jews of Manitoba, describes the Jewish socialists whose immigration to Winnipeg began in 1905:

> A considerable number of Jewish intellectuals came to the shores of Canada, men and women who had been part of the Yiddish and socialist-cultural movements in Russia. Their approach to Jewish problems was revolutionary, their inquiries about the major premises around which Jewish life centred were critical and thoughtful, and their thoughtfulness created a healthy ferment in the Canadian communities to which they came.[36]

The socialists were divided into a number of camps with different ideologies in various shades of red and pink, but they shared an "educational philosophy . . . which negated traditional Judaism and espoused a humanistic, secular set of values." Their ideology connected loyalty to the Jewish people with the struggle for socialism. This ideology spilled over into Canadian politics, manifesting itself in participation in the left-wing parties of the country.

Chiel's description of this group of Jewish immigrants points out the paradox of Adele Wiseman, in whose work both the "humanistic, secular set of values," and the traditional, religious values are fused. Isaac Bashevis Singer, the Nobel Laureate, shares with Wiseman this view of Judaism. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech he attributed to traditional Jewish learning humanistic values: "They [Eastern European Jews] knew of no greater joy than the study of man and human relations, which they called Torah, Talmud, Mussar, and Cabala . . . .The ghetto was not only a place of refuge for a persecuted minority but a great experiment in peace, self-discipline and in humanism."[37] Both Singer and Wiseman see art as the great synthesizer. "I belong to those who fantasize," Singer said, "that literature is capable of bringing new horizons and new perspectives, philosophical, religious, esthetical, even social. In the history of old Jewish literature there was never any difference between the poet and the prophet. Our ancient poetry often became law and a way of life."[38]

"I don't have the moral stamina to face myself every day," Wiseman told Toba Korenblum,[39] in explanation of why she does not consider herself a professional writer. It is just such a demand on her readers which may explain the limited readership of her work. Both her novels deal with what may be considered "the deepest violations of the Mosaic code--aggression, murder,

sexuality, incest."[40] Although this description is gleaned from an essay linking Sigmund Freud and Kabbalistic thinking, it is significant that these same violations form the focus of both of Wiseman's novels. Thus, her concern is with the entire spectrum of morality, from the highest moral behaviour to its most violent and profound disintegration. It is this breadth and depth of perception and concern which imbues her work with universal significance and elicits from the reader the deepest of emotional responses. Wiseman's subject matter is the raw stuff of existence, in which she discovers beauty as well as pain.

"Sometimes," writes Adele Wiseman, in Old Woman at Play, "as scientific thinkers have pointed out, the answer presents itself readily; the problem is to find the question which makes sense of the answer."[41] It is in this spirit that Adele Wiseman's work must be approached.

CHAPTER II

THE SACRIFICE

Although The Sacrifice was the subject of much attention immediately after its publication in 1956, as Michael Greenstein points out in a recent article in Canadian Literature, "it has been subjected to relatively little critical analysis."[1] In a cursory review of Canadian fiction in The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature, the novel is grossly misinterpreted as being "a good treatment of the danger implicit in self-imposed isolation in which the immigrant broods on prejudices and taboos imported from the old land."[2] It is just such a misinterpretation that Adele Wiseman later satirizes in Crackpot, when Miss Bolthalmsup, the school-teacher, lectures her class after Hoda has told the precious story of her origins: " 'I must say, I've . . . found since I've taught in this school . . . the desire to learn, to adjust to the new world and break away from backward and old-fashioned ways and ideas and superstitions, to get ahead . . .,Each one of us here is lucky to be here and to have this opportunity to be a part of a great new civilization. We should realize and appreciate this, and try not to fight old battles over and over again.' "[3] John Moss, in Patterns of Isolation, calls The Sacrifice "A contemporary novel of human isolation . . . in many ways a garrison tragedy enacted in a modern urban ghette . . . with much of the tension deriving from the implicit remnants of frontier and colonial restraint that characterize Miss Wiseman's anonymous Winnipeg."[4] In fact, the ultimate tension in The Sacrifice derives from the human con-

dition -- the inner struggle of a man who strives for moral perfection and human achievement, only to be thwarted at every turn by what seems to be a hostile and uncaring God. The tension is complicated and intensified by a clash with external pressures which conflict with the protagonist's moral values, and which appear to be rewarded in the new world.[4] It is not the destruction of these new and antithetical values which brings understanding to Abraham, but the realization that the way to God is love of man. The immigrant experience, and social and political comment, form an important part of this novel, but are not ends in themselves. In both The Sacrifice and Crackpot, the deep underlying cultural assumption is that morality is intrinsic to all activities. Wiseman's work, deeply rooted as it is in Jewish culture, reflects the view described by Zborowski and Herzog in Life is With People, The Culture of the Shtetl: "In life, as in the Torah, it is assumed that everything has deeper and secondary meanings, which must be probed. All subjects have [moral] implications and ramifications."[5]

The Sacrifice is the metaphorical story of the Eastern European migration of Jews to Canada. Abraham, Isaac, and Sarah are given no last names, and therefore may be seen as an archetypal family. Like the biblical Abraham, who rebelled against the false gods of Terah, the protagonist of The Sacrifice leaves the false gods of Europe to seek a better life in the new land. He brings with him the matriarch Sarah, and their son Isaac. In the new land Isaac marries the alien Ruth, an orphan, who leaves her own people to become a part of her husband's family. Ruth gives birth to Moses, who, like the biblical Moses, is born in exile and brings hope of redemption to his people. That redemption is implied by the wisdom he finally achieves with the help of

his grandfather, and the promise of creativity in music, suggesting that art transcends all earthly concerns. This strange composite of biblical symbolism brings together ancient symbols to give universal meaning to an ageless story. By ignoring the specifics of historic and geographic detail, a mythical and universal quality is achieved.

This peculiar treatment of time and place is entirely consistent with the culture of the shtetl, as it is described by Zborowski and Herzog: "Space and time, for the ignorant as for the learned, were fluid, vague concepts, always less real than people and God. The geographical data of the Bible were fused and confused with the names of contemporary countries and cities that drifted in from time to time. A few days' drive with the village coachman might bring one to the mythical river Sambatyon, behind which dwell the ten lost tribes who were once visited by a medieval rabbi."[6] Thus, the pogroms of Abraham's town are not particular pogroms of a particular place, but become pogroms which occurred in any town and affected all Jews. Hitler's rise to power is discussed in a historical context, as yet another threat of extinction. Linked with Haman, the villain of the Book of Esther, he is seen as one villain among many in a long history of attempts to destroy the Jewish people.

John Moss's assertion that the setting of The Sacrifice is Winnipeg is contentious. The following geographic description of the city appears in The Sacrifice:

> The city rose about him, planted on an undulating countryside that seemed to have spilled over from the ridge of dark hill in the western distance . . ..In the morning he had wandered around in the flats of the city, the crowded, downhill area in which he lived. The flats scooped down toward the edge of the brown river with a sort of lilting quality, as though the earth had lifted a shoulder and the houses had slid closer together and the factories had slipped and jostled one another to the river bank.
>
> Westward, above the flats, grand houses spread themselves, their rocky gardens and many trees prepared, with an autumnal festival of

> color, for the austerities of winter. Along the edge of the sharp incline which, like a small cliff, separated the heights from the flats, the streets lit up brightly at night were crowded with people. In the day they were filled with traffic and the commerce of the city.
>
> Beyond the river to the east, and beyond the township and truck gardens that dotted its farther bank, was another gradual rise, which gathered breath for several miles and heaved up finally with a tremendous effort to a double-crested hill that dominated the eastern landscape.7

An intimate knowledge of Winnipeg's geography is not essential in order to recognize that this is quite intentionally not Winnipeg, of which the most striking feature is its flatness. Winnipeg is distinguished by having the junction of two rivers; its factories do not crowd its river banks; rather it is its grand houses which line the banks of the Assiniboine. If the term "heights" seems to indicate a particular area, it is common knowledge that this distinctive misnomer is enjoyed by many areas in North America for social rather than topographic reasons.

By using as the principle characters of the novel immigrants from the shtetls of Eastern Europe and their offspring as they settled in the pre-war years, the novelist creates for us a unique environment transplanted into the Canadian west. The imposition of this foreign culture into that of the Canadian prairies provides an unusual setting, for what was characteristic of that shtetl environment was its self-sufficiency and isolation from the outside world. The geographic isolation of urban life in the Canadian prairies was a duplication of their cultural isolation in Eastern Europe, permitting them to maintain many of the customs and traditions that they brought with them from Europe. An explanation and description of Jewish immigrant life in Winnipeg is quoted in a historical study of The Jews of Manitoba: " 'The longing to continue the thread of existence broken by immeasurable distance that separated them from their place

of origin, the subconscious fear that something may happen to each of them if they should break away suddenly and forever, impelled them to provide for themselves a sort of resilient cushion that should soften the pain -- were one to fall . . . '."[8] The "cushion" which is described takes the form of fraternal organizations designed for self-help, also manifested in less formal structures, and explains the continued existence of the self-imposed ghetto in the new land. The maintenance of such a society, while it may appear to conform to Moss's definition of the "garrison society," is more accurately described by his definition of "frontier society": "It is a context in which experience of one reality comes into direct conflict with that of another -- a more immediate and amorphous reality."[9] It is precisely this reality that confronts us in Wiseman's novels. While the desire to perpetuate Jewish values was a conscious goal for some, for many it was more a matter of nostalgia and sentiment. The lure and appeal of the alien culture, and the freedom to pursue the goals of western society had begun to erode the homogeneity of Eastern European Jewish culture even before it was transplanted to North American soil. Zborowski and Herzog provide valuable insight into this subject: "The 'enlightened' ones were known also as 'fence breakers', those who tore down the protecting barricade against transgression, and as unbelievers, apikorsim, a word derived by a logical stretch of meaning from Epicurean."[10] Thus, the relationship between the tendency to abandon traditional Jewish values and the association of hedonism with assimilation is clarified. We shall see that in The Sacrifice this association is crucial. The move to North America no doubt accelerated the process of enlightenment and assimilation, if for no other reason than increased opportunity. In Moss's terminology, The Sacrifice,

as well as Crackpot, are novels of the "frontier," for the conflict between the old and new culture is central to the novel.

Abraham's search for truth, for the right way of life, for the attainment of moral purity, is the substance of the novel. His failure and his suffering are a profoundly moving moral drama of human striving. In him, we see the limits of the capacity of man to understand, to act, and to control their own destiny. He is best understood in the context of the society of which he is a product. Abraham Heschel's description, in The Earth is the Lord's: The Inner World of The Jew in Eastern Europe, provides a perspective within which to view him:

> Their charm came from the inner richness of their being -- from the polarity of reason and feeling, of joy and sorrow, from the mixture of intellectualism and mysticism which is so often bewildering to analytical observers . . . .To be gay, carefree, relaxed, was an art few of them ever learned. A Jewish child would be taught that life was too earnest to be wasted in play. Joy, when felt, was always for a serious reason, the trimming for a happy occasion, justified like a logical conclusion . . . . There was restrained mourning in their enthusiasm, profound sadness in their joy . . . .They did not make the mistake of thinking that the good is attained unwittingly and that hours have merely to be lived in order to arrive at the goals of living . . . .One had to address himself to that goal. . . . They had disdain for the rough, for the coarse, and tried to lend inward dignity to everything they did.11

Abraham deeply senses his responsibility to uphold his part of the covenant with God, which was entered into through the biblical Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and sealed by the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. That covenant is "by definition a twofold agreement. On the one hand the Jews accept God as their only God, accept 'the yoke of the Law' -- refused by all other nations on earth --and undertake to fulfill all His commandments. The Lord, on the other hand, promises to cherish Israel as His Chosen People, carriers of the

Truth, and to reward them in the end if they live up to their obligations."[12] Clearly, Abraham strives to uphold his part of the agreement; we cannot help but sympathize with him in his doubt when the rewards promised by God appear to be substituted by punishment. Like Job, Abraham suffers in spite of his exemplary behaviour and prayers.

The conviction that man has the freedom to choose his way of life is central to Abraham's morality. Early in the novel we are given insight into his perception of the paths that men may take:

> There were those who felt that, with God's mercy, if they stretched their bodies and their souls and created and built and grew, who knew what heights they, or their sons, or the sons of their sons might not reach? And there were those who preferred to go through life in other postures . . ..A man may choose the sunlight, but he has no right to pass casual judgment on the shadows.[13]

Thus, the two divergent paths are introduced: the one, of striving, growth, moral virtue, exemplified by the spiritual, and by learning and study, characterized in the imagery of "sunlight," and the other, more characteristic of the new world, represented by the hedonistic values and goals of the Ploplers, the butcher Polsky and his son Hymie, Chaim Knopp's son Ralph, and the whore Laiah, characterized in the imagery of "shadows." That men may choose "to go through life in other postures" suggests the "upright" bearing of a man like Abraham, as opposed to a horizontal, animal-like posture representative of the earth-bound creatures limited to the pursuit of physical pleasure. Although Abraham gives lip service to the principle of not making judgments, they are implicit in his perception and in the words that express that perception in unequivocal judgment.

This dichotomy forms the process by which the novel is constructed, through which characters are developed, and by which the themes are developed and brought to fruition. There is a bifurcation of paths in the new world, where, ironically,

the seemingly wrong path leads to rewards, while those who take the right, the moral path, meet only failure and punishment, although finally, as John Moss suggests, "the problem of opposing orders ceases to exist and is made irrelevant by the tragedy of Abraham's crime."[14] The mystery remains, the question persists, but the answer, finally, is creativity, and love for each individual human being.

The divergence of the paths is most strikingly personified in Abraham's perception of Laiah, who represents his antithesis: "Almost from the first moment when they had, as though by command, come to this city, this Laiah had been there, moving always in a direction that was exactly opposite to his path in life."[15] The suggestion that Laiah is bovine is first made indirectly, when, after Abraham meets the butcher Polsky, whose affair with Laiah is common gossip in the neighbourhood, he wonders whether Polsky is "dealing in not strictly kosher meat."[16] In a similar association, made in connection with a greedy female customer, Abraham and Isaac discuss the need for a livestock scale at the butcher shop to weigh customers in and out.[17]

From the outset, Laiah is associated with a lower form of life. The first description of her, given from Abraham's perspective, has sensuous animal overtones: "And her hair! . . . that hair is thick and auburn, just like the coat, brown and lustrous. Do you know that at first I could not tell where the hair left off and the coat began?" He wonders, prophetically, "What could she have to do with them, with her body that seemed to have difficulty keeping still inside of the luxurious fur coat, and her hoarse, low voice with its persistent animal call?"[18] In another encounter with her, he observes: "Yet she still made those unseasonable movements that reminded him, in a way, of the

tentative wag of their landlord's shaggy puppy when he tried to make friends with Knobble and Pompishke. On a little dog it was an attractive thing, but she was a grown-up human being."[19] Later, however, the frivolous imagery gives way to imagery of a more sinister nature: "Her full, mobile lips moved caressingly back over strong, predatory teeth."[20] The structure of the novel reinforces the association of Laiah with the animal world. The revelation of the card games and drinking in Laiah's apartment are followed by a discussion between Chaim Knopp and Abraham of Isaac's description of the Darwinian theory of evolution to his father, and the relationship of man to animals.[21]

Abraham's perception of animal traits in humans is not limited to women and sexuality. Man is distinguished from animal for him in his ability to think, learn, make moral judgments, by his sensitivity to others, and by his ability to communicate through language. Thus, his first judgment of sub-human behaviour occurs on the train carrying him to the new city, when the conductor is unable to understand any of the four languages Abraham speaks: " 'Animals here,' muttered Abraham, subsiding and turning helplessly to his son. 'They can only gibber and gesticulate.' "[22] Ignorance, too, is relegated to the animal realm, and a judgment is made on the alien culture.

Violence, hate, and irrationality are also seen by Abraham as characteristic of animals, rather than humans. He describes the pogrom in which his two sons were murdered in these words: "The church doors burst open, and the goyim [gentiles] surge into the street, looking for Jews. Your neighbor is no longer your neighbor. A fiend has possessed him. Is this a man? No. He reveals what is inside of him, a beast."[23] Zborowski and Herzog describe what Eastern European Jewish children were taught to expect of the alien

culture in which they lived: "emphasis on the body, excess, blind instinct, sexual license, and ruthless force."[24] Abraham's vision of animal behaviour in humans includes all of these elements.

The opposing sets of values operate on another level as well. The superior, moral, God-given "human" values are seen as a creative, life-giving force; the "animal," inferior values are seen as life-denying, and destructive. The idea of these opposing forces is most clearly expressed in Abraham's thoughts about Laiah as their relationship develops:

> All her life from the time when he had first heard of her she had used the means and denied the end. She was like a great overripe fruit without seed, which hung now, long past its season, on the bough. How many generations had been denied in her womb? What festered there instead? She had denied creation, and to deny is to annihilate. How was it that he found himself, then, eating at her table, accepting her food? Was he any different from her? It was as though she had said to him, So you had sons, so they're dead . . . and I have never wanted children; they are dead in my womb. Where are we both now? . . . both interchangeable from the beginning. Who are you to say that your way is the real way and mine just an illusion of living? . . . But the difference is in the choosing, he argued. I chose life.[25]

The metaphor of Laiah as "a great overripe fruit without seed" is an inversion of Abraham's simile of idealized womanhood: "A woman waits, rooted in the earth, like a tree, like a flower. Patiently she lifts her face to receive the gift of the wind. Suddenly he sweeps across the earth and stoops to blow the dust. Then she comes to life; she seizes it, clasps it, and works with it the miracle of creation."[26]

Similar imagery is used to convey the feeling that marital love and sex are healthy, productive, creative:

> And when the young ones are a young married couple, such as Isaac and Ruth, it is as when a man has a cherry tree in his

> garden . . ..Weren't Ruth and Isaac like a cherry tree that a man could sit and watch in the springtime? The young buds swell and strain and puff themselves out in the sunshine . . . suddenly the blossoms leap into his eyes, waving their new-released petals so that the whole tree sways with happiness and freedom. So the two of them in their excitement, they too broke forth in his eyes as the cherry tree that blew its blossoms in the sun. And where the blossom is, the fruit will follow.[27]

Conversely, Laiah, whose sexuality is linked with the pursuit of pleasure and material gain, becomes an image of decay, infection, disease, by the suggestion that what lies within her "festers," rather than lives. For Abraham, the loss of all of his sons signifies the same kind of destructive force, expressed in a variation of the same imagery. In his own mind, he sees himself "like the tiller of the soil who worked only so the earth should bloom and finds instead that everywhere where he has passed the earth is seared, as though an invisible destroyer has followed, malignant, in his path."[28]

From this association of plant life and sexuality, the centrality of family life to the novel may be inferred. It is relations between members of the family, and particularly between fathers and sons, which form the nucleus from which all else develops. Thus, the metaphorical use of trees, plants, seeds, fruit, flowers, as well as man's relationship to animals is essential to this novel, which is concerned with creation and survival. Food and sexuality are also an intrinsic part of the structure of the novel, and they are often intertwined in rather bizarre associations, both being essential, also, to survival, growth, and continuation.

The intertwining of sexual and food images is introduced early in the novel, through the young boy Isaac. In his first night in the new city, he dreams he sees a man and a little boy buying bananas: " . . . the little boy peeled one of them and began to gobble greedily. So Isaac had bought and

peeled to take, tentatively, taste . . . Pleasant . . . Floating in to confront his parents. Mother's gasp, 'What are you eating?' Father: 'Raw!' . . . Isaac, enormously sophisticated, wearing no clothes at all, prowling a strange house with raw girls, whispering, 'It's a fruit to gobble greedily in English.' "[29] The banana is a new fruit for Isaac. He has seen it first in England, and wondered what it was. In his dream it is juxtaposed to the herring, the staple diet of Jews in Eastern Europe. Herring, for Jewish immigrants, was a symbol of their poverty and enforced stoicism, a food which gave little pleasure, but served to sustain survival. Food is love in Jewish culture. While sexuality is the source of life, food is essential to nourishment and survival. In Isaac's dream, the banana is a promise of both sexual and gustatory pleasure in the new world.

The fusion of rituals involving food and sex is personified in Abraham's learned friend, Chaim Knopp, whose name appears to have special significance for Wiseman, for it appears in a short story published in the Spring, 1950 edition of Creative Campus, a student literary journal of the University of Manitoba. Its significance - Chaim, meaning life, and Knopp, meaning knot - is symbolic in the context of The Sacrifice, for he is both a "shokhet," ritual slaughterer, and a "mohel," a performer of ritual circumcisions. An explanation of the significance of these two rituals provides added understanding of the novel. Zborowski and Herzog describe ritual slaughter as follows:

> The basic consideration to which a large part of the dietary regulations are ascribed -- namely, the humanitarian one . . . is paramount in these as in all other laws . . . .The principle of "pity for all living things," is applied not only to people and to the animals they keep about them, but also to those animals designed by God to be the food of man . . . .In order to be kosher the "permitted" animals must be killed in a way

> that causes a minimum of pain, and this is the blanket explanation for the rules about slaughtering of food. Hunting is forbidden, since it may inflict death in a cruel way. The "shokhet's" blade must be so keen that there is no brutal tearing of flesh or skin, but only one swift, painless stroke, which must sever both trachea and jugular vein. The constant inspection by the rabbi enforces this ruling and serves as a reminder that although human welfare requires the killing of animals, it must be done with as little suffering as possible. It must be done by one who is trained in the art, and never by a feeble-minded person, a deaf mute, a drunkard or a blind man.[30]

In The Sacrifice, Abraham's sharpening of Laiah's breadknife may be seen as a foreshadowing of his ritual slaughter of Laiah. The use of the word "killer" in association with sex outside of marriage is also significant. When Laiah brings her knife into the shop to have it sharpened, it is Hymie to whom she gives it. At that moment he fantasizes a sexual liaison with her: "Hymie already saw himself stealing the march on Mandelknaidel and the other old boys. 'Always the killer,' his friends would say with admiration."[31] At the end of the novel, when Moses and Aaron meet, Aaron describes his father, Ralph Knopp, as a killer: "There's more than one way to kill . . .,Some kill slowly . . . .My old man . . . has been slowly killing my mother for years . . . .He sleeps with other dames . . . and she knows it, too. Maybe it's not the same as taking a knife, but it's cleaner to take a knife."[32]

As a "shokhet" Chaim performs the ritual of animal slaughter; as a "mohel" he performs the ritual circumcision for Abraham's grandson Moses. Zborowski and Herzog describe the significance of the circumcision ritual as follows: "The ritual is . . . a covenant by circumcision which is renewed with the birth of each male Jew and makes him subject to all the privileges and obligations of the Jewish people, and dedicating him to the study of the Law, marriage, and good deeds."[33]

The personal symbolism of the knot for Wiseman, the daughter of a seamstress and tailor, comes to light in her book, Old Woman at Play. To her mother's riddle, "When does a tailor sew for naught?" the answer is: "When he forgets to knot his thread."[34] (Wiseman's characteristic punning is exemplified in this quotation.) And so, for Wiseman, the knot is a crucial factor, without which no creation can hold together. It is the facilitator of integration, the joining of disparate qualities, which, for her, is intrinsic to life. We shall see that the symbol of the knot is also central in Crackpot, where the nickname of Hoda's illegitimate son, Pipick, means navel, and is derived, in the novel, from his strange umbilicus, the result of Hoda's clumsy knotting of the cord after his birth.

The relationship of Abraham and his son Isaac, and that of his employer, the butcher Polsky and his heir Hymie, illustrates the contrary paths of the two families. The relationship between Chaim Knopp and his son Ralph is, in itself, an illustration of contraries, demonstrating graphically the abandonment by the son of the tradition of the father.

The character of Abraham is developed through the eyes of others, and his perception of himself. Polsky, describing him to his son, ridicules his meticulousness: ". . . his beard . . . he tucked into his collar to avoid contact with the meat. . . ." In Polsky's mind there is an implicit association of Abraham's cleanliness with sexual purity and holiness. "Nine more like him, and he'd have a real high-class minyan [a group of ten men required for a religious service] in his shop,"[35] Polsky jokes. In his mockery of Abraham he provides an example for his son of disrespect and mild contempt for traditional values, contributing, in his ignorance, to his son's grossness and vulgarity. Wiseman implies by their names that the Polskys have abandoned

Jewish values, for Polsky means Polish, and Hymie is the anglicized version of Chaim, meaning life.

Abraham, on the other hand, comes to life as a man who is proud, sensitive, and a man of honour. When Mrs. Plopler brings tales of the pathetic background of Ruth, he spurns her pity: "Abraham would not accept that anything that was attached to him could be called poor, not by an outsider. It was an expression of defeat, a calling for pity." For Abraham, "poorness is a thing of the spirit."[36] His sensitivity is demonstrated by his kindness to Hymie, of whom, ironically, he becomes a victim. Hymie seems to be too pathetically ignorant to understand any abstract moral principles. While Chaim is constantly deriding him publicly, Abraham believes that even Hymie, as a human being, is worthy of respect: "Even a young ruffian can have his feelings hurt . . ..This was no way to do things, to make fun of him in front of people like this, somebody else's son."[37] When Abraham seeks an "object lesson," and finds, in his memory, the disgrace of a cousin who has converted to Christianity, he unwittingly attributes her to Sarah's family; Sarah's reminder that the cousin, is, in fact, from his own bloodline, produces in him profound shame, and he waits up until late at night to set the record straight with Ruth and Isaac: " 'It was my cousin, the apostate, not your mother's,' he stated firmly. 'You should know.' "[38]

Abraham's joy at the birth of his grandson, Moses, is an expression of his affirmation of life and commitment to the future. With the birth of the child, and the mothering role taken over by Ruth, Sarah begins to die, thus demonstrating, perhaps rather too schematically, the cyclical nature of life. "Death is not such a sudden thing," Abraham tells Chaim Knopp, " . . . I think that death is a seed that is sown, like life, inside of a person, and comes to

fruition from within . . . .You may think I am mad, but I could see it growing in her, like a weed, like a fungus."[39] The destructive nature of man is for Abraham an expression of evil, and is defined by him in this way: " 'Every man carries his own death in him, but in some men death is so strong, so evil, that it must feed itself on the conquest of other lives besides its own.' "[40] In The Sacrifice it is just such a death that begins to grow in Abraham after Isaac's death, foreshadowing his murder of Laiah.

Sarah's death, Abraham's apprehension of the affinity of evil and death, and his discussions with Chaim on the subject, are juxtaposed to the celebration of Polsky's success in business, manifested in his purchase of the building which contains his butcher shop, as well as the barber shop and jewelry store. The concurrence of Laiah's return to the city at this time suggests that in the new world the forces contrary to life are those which flourish. On the occasion of the celebration, Polsky's values are illustrated by his standard of judgment of manhood in his son, measured by the quantity of shnapps the boy can consume. His pleasure at his purchase of the building is enhanced by the degree of pain he knows he is causing his new tenant, the jeweller, who is fully aware of Polsky's intention to evict him. The celebration of Polsky's business success, and Laiah's return achieve a fusion in the reader's mind of the ascendancy of forces inimical to Abraham's world. The barber's toast, "Lachaim," the traditional Jewish toast, meaning "to life," on Laiah's lips becomes "Good times,"[41] succinctly juxtaposing the traditional and the hedonistic. Significantly, the chapter ends with Abraham cleaning up the effects of Hymie's self-indulgence, an activity which increasingly becomes a part of his duties.

Hymie Polsky's growing effectiveness as an evil force is demonstrated by a scheme for passing his high school exams: he pays a bright young man who cannot afford university tuition to sit the exam for him; the poor student is discovered, and both students are expelled. For the student who had hoped to go to university, it is the end of his future, but for Hymie Polsky, the expulsion from school is the beginning of a successful business career. Hymie's values are indicators of the changing goals of a society which is adapting to the pleasure principle of the new world: the poolroom, the kibitzarnia, the restaurant, all contribute to the expansion of the Polsky fortunes.

The association of immorality and ignorance with success in business pervades the novel. An allusion to the Slutsky family (again a punning name) seems to have no other function than the underlining of this concept:

> Do you remember the Slutskys from the old country? Sure you do. He used to speculate. 'Slutsky the foolish thief,' they used to call him. Couldn't read a page of Hebrew. They used to say he had to get someone else to count the money he stole. His father was a fine old man . . . ..How he could have such a son! . . . ..Well, in Canada he's not such a fool. He's got a big family. His wife is dressed in honey and in butter 42

Ralph Knopp is also an important figure in illustrating this association. In choosing the path antithetical to his father's, he has become a successful businessman, and expresses his acculturation in infidelity to his wife, irresponsibility to his family, insensitivity to his parents, and, in general, the pursuit of pleasure through such decadent activities as drinking, gambling, and womanizing. As a decision maker on synagogue and Jewish school boards, Ralph Knopp personifies the ascendant power of money and alien values in the Jewish community. The plan to rebuild the burned synagogue in a section of

the city which is inaccessible to traditional Jews because of its distance from their homes illustrates the perversion of modern Judaism. The discovery, by Isaac, that the Torah he has saved was purchased by a businessman, Schwarzgeist (Black Spirit), whose money has been made by taking advantage of the losses of the poor, is a further expression of this perversion. Wiseman's deep continuing concern about this issue is expressed in a play entitled Testimonial Dinner, published privately in 1978.

Isaac's experiences in the garment factory most clearly reveal the writer's social views. There is realism in Isaac's employment as a sewing machine operator in the needle trade, for it is traditionally an occupation for immigrants to North America. Working in a factory as part of the assembly line production method arouses an aversion to the machine age in Isaac. He sees in the system the destruction of individual pride in craftsmanship and creativity. For him, learning, work, creativity, are the bases for entry into Heaven. In his imagination, he answers to God for the work he does on earth. His experiences in the factory provide the material for revealing the deleterious effect of the competitive system on human behaviour. In a scene in the factory, two women fight over a bundle of piece goods, each vying for more work and higher wages at the expense of the other. The race culminates in physical violence and the eruption of chaos in the shop. Rusen, an old man whose craftsmanship is admired, but whose work is slow, is the victim of the eruption. Isaac resents the exploitation of this man, who, ironically, is used by the boss to demonstrate the valuing of quality over quantity in his shop. Isaac is aware of Rusen's fear of losing his livelihood. His passivity, and his persecution by both boss and foreman move Isaac to his defence, an action which costs him his job. The exploitation of the old and the weak arouses in

Isaac a sense of outrage with which material considerations do not interfere. There is never any question for either Abraham or Isaac of the rightness of Isaac's act. Morality takes precedence over expediency for both, and while there are some disagreements between father and son, their agreement on this fundamental issue indicates that Isaac is the perpetuator of Abraham's tradition.

Abraham's youthful dream of becoming a "learned man", and his abandonment of that dream because of his father's death with the necessity of becoming a "mere tradesman" in order to support his mother and five sisters, is revealed early in the novel. He has taken on dignity from what his sons might have been, from his aspirations for what Isaac may become. Abraham sees himself as a man with a "powerful voice" and an "upright bearing." His image of himself is coloured by his lofty goals. It is important to understand, however, that implicit in the aspiration to be "learned" is the conviction that the pursuit of knowledge takes place in order to achieve a moral life. It is assumed that sin is a result of ignorance, and that it is the nature of man to do what is right providing he has the requisite understanding. It is just this striving for knowledge, and its concomitant effect on the capacity to make moral judgments which distinguishes man from beast.

Thus, although Isaac's preoccupation with ethical questions leads him to seek answers in the English books in the public library, rather than the traditional holy books, his search for knowledge is an intrinsic part of a tradition. Isaac belongs to that group of self-educated workers aptly and eloquently described by Irving Howe in <u>World of Our Fathers</u>:

> The self-educated worker was by no means unique to the Yiddish-speaking world, but as he came to the forefront in the Jewish quarters of Warsaw and Vilna, London and New York, he seemed a peculiarly intense figure, indeed

> a peculiarly Jewish figure -- who brought with him yearnings and capacities, aptitudes and inclinations that had been honed to sharpness by the pressures of ghetto life. It could not be said about the Yiddish speaking worker, as it could about many of his European equivalents, that he had just emerged from centuries of illiteracy and muteness; his transformation was from a narrow but coherent religious culture to a quasi-secularized culture at once vibrant and amorphous. And not only was he a proletarian searching for articulation and dignity, he was also a Jew who had come to hope that by approaching Western thought he would both satisfy his own blossoming needs and help to remedy the disadvantages of the Jews as a people. All through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, learning came to seem an almost magical solution for the Jews, a people that has always placed enormous faith in the sheer power of words. Learning in its own right, learning for the sake of future generations, learning for the social revolution, learning in behalf of Jewish renewal -- all melted into one upsurge of self-discovery.[43]

The possibility of "new thoughts in English" is introduced early in the novel,[44] and is associated in Abraham's mind with the potential achievement of Isaac in the new culture. Soon after the family settles into the city, Isaac, looking out onto the snow covered city, apprehends that he is "on the edge of many worlds."[45] Isaac's introduction to Abraham of the Darwinian theory of evolution, and his rational approach to the biblical story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac demonstrate the effect of western culture on the young man, but although Abraham has difficulty understanding Isaac's ideas, he takes pride in being more modern than his friend Knopp because his intellectual son exposes him to new ways of thinking: "A man must keep up with the ideas of the times. He himself was lucky that he had a son like Isaac to discuss them with."[46] He sees Isaac's rationalism as "taking the strangest meanings out of a beautiful idea. He was never content to examine merely the beauty of the flower. He had to find its very roots."[47] The plant imagery of the novel is thus used also as a metaphor for mental processes.

Isaac does not lose faith, as Mullins suggests.[48] After his son is born, he and Abraham discuss the notion of Jews as a chosen people. "What secret message is it that God has written on his forehead," Abraham wonders. Isaac's argument, "We have as many thieves as they. . . . Aren't our exploiters, sinners, and hypocrites as bad as theirs?" is countered by Abraham's assertion: " . . . as the villainies of a few may stand out, so will our faith, our grand desire. It is for this that we are chosen."[49] This is followed by Isaac's silence, denoting agreement. Although Isaac suffers the doubts of the enlightened western intellectual, beneath that suffering is rooted a sure sense of faith. His second heroic act of saving the Torah is a testament to that faith.

In order to fully understand the symbolism of Isaac's act, it is helpful to know the significance of the Torah in Jewish life in the shtetl, a significance that persisted in the new country. Zborowski and Herzog's explanation demonstrates quite clearly the centrality of the Torah to the Jewish mind:

> Eventually Torah came to mean the whole of Jewish lore, which embraces the whole of Jewish life. The Truth it contains is the only possible and acceptable truth for the shtetl.
>
> The attitude toward the Truth is expressed in the physical treatment of the Torah which contains and symbolizes the essence of the Law. It is not a dead doctrine to be embalmed in books and stored away on shelves, but is a living thing, and accordingly, the Holy Scroll of the Torah is treated almost as a live being. It occupies the most honored "seat" of all, on the East Wall of the synagogue. [If there is a fire in the synagogue -- and fires are frequent in the shtetl--young and old will plunge into the flames to save the Torah from "death."[50]]

The image of the burning synagogue and the rescue of the Torah is a major symbol of the Jewish imagination. In a talk for the B.B.C. Third Programme, Isaac Deutscher describes the image in the painting of Marc Chagall: "The Jew, clasping the sacred Scrolls in his arms and rescuing them from flames

becomes a constant motif in Chagall's pictures . . .,"[51] and he refers us to "The Revolution," which Chagall painted in 1937. Deutscher ascribes the image in Chagall's painting to an expression of fear of the annihilation of the Jewish people keenly felt by Chagall in the thirties, when he saw that the Russian revolution had not only "liberated the shtetl from oppression, but had also doomed its way of life, its religious tradition, its small traders and artisans, and its Luftmenschen."[52] As Hitler's rise to power in western Europe threatened physical annihilation, Jewish fear continued to express itself graphically in this image. Isaac's rescue of the Torah, therefore, serves as an affirmation of his faith and his deeply rooted identification with his people. The responsibility to act in order to save the tradition is, in Isaac, unconscious and therefore unquestioned. His action must be seen not only as the action of an individual character, but as a symbolic dedication of a people to the Word, the Law, and to a force perceived as of greater significance than individual man. In Isaac's performance of two heroic acts, one social, in the garment factory episode, and the other religious, the concepts of social justice and religion are fused, suggesting that in this tradition serving man and God are inseparable.

It is a mistake, I believe, to judge the father-son relationship in the novel from a post-Freudian point of view, as John Moss does in his critical work, Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel. To suggest that Isaac is "a sacrifice to what his father thinks he should be"[53] is to place the burden of guilt on the father for making unreasonable demands on the son. In the context of Wiseman's novels, this kind of psychoanalytic analysis is irrelevant, imposing causal relationships which cannot work. In the relationship of Abraham and Isaac it is essential to recognize the close identification between

father and son, and to see the son as the father does, as a responsibility to God. "My mission," Abraham tells Chaim Knopp, "was my family, to bring up my sons. And what sons they were! What could not a great singer and a great scholar have done for our people?"[54] In a culture where life is the greatest good, the creation of children is a responsibility which extends to the moral education of the child, who will be a purveyor of the family, the race, and mankind. Thus, in the culture of The Sacrifice, it is accepted and condoned that the child is not only a reflection of the parent, but also an extension of him.

Wiseman's description of her relationship to her own parents illustrates this point. In Old Woman at Play, she explains: "When they dedicated their years to earning, for their children, a choice of futures, we accepted it as our due and our destiny that we were to study and learn and become, and were convinced that not only our own lives, but life itself would be enhanced thereby."[55] Her description of the felt racial responsibility and guilt is true not only for herself, but for an entire generation: "Our faith was the more acute for our awareness of the alternate, simultaneous fate of our helpless counterparts, the Jews of Europe. The gift of choice, under these circumstances, takes on an almost religious significance."[56]

In The Sacrifice, the balancing of the loss of the two promising sons against the expectation of Isaac is carefully built up, through the thoughts and words of the father, as well as the consciousness of the growing boy. The expectations and demands of the father are not imposed from without; rather they become internalized. There is a shared understanding between father and son that require no articulation. Just as Wiseman perceived her own good fortune at having survived, escaped persecution and death, and having the

opportunity and freedom to "study and learn and become," so Isaac harbours no resentment against his father. The duty and the opportunity are imposed by a force far greater than the father. When Isaac thinks, "Sometimes the very thought that it was he who still lived frightened him,"[57] it is this great burden of responsibility which he fears; he has doubts about his ability to carry out what he deems necessary.

Isaac's rescue of the Torah is the climax of Abraham's pride in his son, and marks the beginning of the degeneration of his own life. During the period of Isaac's convalescence, Abraham is reduced to borrowing money from Polsky in order to care for the family. Just as Abraham's self-esteem and dignity have been built up in the first half of the novel in association with his faith and hope for the future, they are diminished in the second half, until, in utter despair, Abraham symbolically tries to destroy evil as it is personified in Laiah.

After Isaac's death, Abraham, "in a sort of dream," sees his family merged together in their coffins, and one by one tries to enter them, to be one of them. In this vision Abraham assumes an animal posture: "Like some four-footed creature he scuttled from one to the other, calling out their names."[58] Abraham becomes a creature associated with death, in his own mind, and in the mind of the reader. The descent into that negative world has begun.

As Hymie Polsky assumes increasing authority over his father's business, Abraham is called upon to do work which is inappropriate, difficult, and degrading for a man of his age, skill, and intellect. His becoming a "delivery boy," trudging up the flights of stairs to deliver Laiah's meat, inevitably decreases his self-esteem, making him an object of pity for other characters in the novel, and for the reader. We can identify with Abraham's rejection of

pity for himself and his loved ones, knowing that for him "it is an admission of defeat," and that in his judgment, "poorness is a thing of the spirit," and consequently the feelings of pity his declining status arouses contribute to our perception of his degeneration in his own eyes. It is not that Hymie does not appreciate Abraham's innate decency; his strategy is to exploit it for his own purposes by sending him to Laiah as an emissary of peace. The objective reality of the world which Abraham sees leads him to question, quite logically, the existence of justice in the world. "Where is God?" he asks his friend Chaim, looking about him in a world where Hitler appears to be achieving his goal while the world stands by silently, and where his own personal life is a reflection of this cosmic chaos. For the reader, Abraham's expression of paranoia also seems justified, although it must be recognized as the beginning of a pathological state. Although he tries to reassure himself that "God sees," he suspects that "everything that happens seems to be trying to say something else . . . like a whispering around you."[59]

Laiah's friendship with Jenny, her gentile neighbour, intensifies the association of the contrary, hedonistic path of Laiah and the alien culture. Jenny's perception of Abraham as "Father Christmas" throws into vivid perspective the image of Abraham as an anomaly. For Abraham, Christianity is responsible for the murder of his two sons, and the association can only be denigrating and humiliating for him. Jenny's misinterpretation indicates the absence of understanding of the Jew in the Christian world. She finds her new friend Laiah "exotic," and wonders if the delivery of the meat could be a "code" word.[60]

Jenny's reading of the teacups associates her in Abraham's mind with the pagan world. Enraged by the presumptuousness of the belief that she can read the future in tea leaves, Abraham protests that "only God can tell him his future." For Jenny, there is "something sinister" about the invocation of God,

in the same way as there is something sinister to Abraham about the women's belief in magic. Jenny's thought foreshadows Abraham's murder of Laiah.

As Abraham's deliveries to Laiah's apartment become more frequent, and their relationship develops, her manipulations become more devious. She sees him as a prospective husband who would give her much needed respectability and security. In so doing, she resorts to the further diminution of his self-esteem by suggesting that he may become a burden to his daughter-in-law Ruth, an impediment to a possible marriage that she may be contemplating.

It is this deep-seated fear, a loss of self-respect at his growing relationship with Laiah, as well as the loss of purpose and hope in his life, that sets the scene for the devastating argument between Ruth and Abraham. The argument, in which father-in-law and daughter-in-law express all of their repressed anger and frustration at the injustice of each one's suffering, blaming the other irrationally for the misfortune that has befallen them, leaves Abraham broken and empty. "Never before had he felt this way, this internal accusation that he himself was not worthy, that it had all been his fault: 'I wanted everything for the best,' he tried to reassure himself distractedly, aloud, 'not just for myself, for them, for the world.' "[61]

It is in this state that he finds himself in Laiah's apartment, where he sees her as the incarnation of evil, both in herself, and within him. Her destruction becomes for him the purging of evil and death from his world. There is a foreshadowing of the fear of his association with her as a final submission to evil. To succumb to her, to become "like one" with her would, for him, be to "agree that her way has been right all along."[62] The irony and pathos of the scene in Laiah's apartment, when she mistakes his need for spiritual and moral support for physical, sexual need, vividly portrays the division

of the contrary paths. His revulsion at the possibility of becoming "one" with her signals his complete breakdown, and leads to the murder. Abraham's repeated cry to Laiah to " 'live!. . . live! . . . live!' "[63] is a metaphorical cry, implying that by killing death and the evil which she represents, he is symbolically trying to bring her to life.

Wiseman's use of The Sacrifice as a title, and the recurrent symbolism of sacrificial acts within the novel are an important part of the structure of the novel, as Mullins points out.[64] The first sacrifice takes place in Chapter Two of the novel, in the account of Abraham to his friend Knopp of his illegal performance of a ritual slaughter as a youth in Europe. He describes the circumstances under which the slaughter took place, and admits that the evil deed was motivated by his master's greed. Although he wanted to reveal his master's transgression to the community, his mother's fear of retribution and of losing their livelihood prevented him from doing so. Abraham explains his response to Knopp in this way: "I was afraid of my master, afraid to look back to where his eyes threatened and his fists clenched against his hips. I was afraid of his voice that commanded me."[65] In this repetition of the biblical phrase is an echo of God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

In Abraham's telling of the story, the cow becomes a sacrificial object: "Not until I saw that the creature was dead did I realize that I was still alive. I have wondered since if that is what our forefathers felt when they made the sacrifices to renew their wonder and their fear and their belief, before they were forbidden to make them any longer. It is a mystery too deep for man."[66] Just as Laiah was described in animal imagery throughout the novel, so the cow, as it is about to be slaughtered, takes on human characteristics:

" 'In front of me the cow was looking downward in a sort of modesty, with her eyelids covering her eyebulbs, which seemed so fine and large under the veil . . . she looked up at me. Her eye was large and brown and moist, and very deep . . . .I closed my eyes and fell upon her.' "[67] Thus, the slaughtering of the cow foreshadows the slaughtering of Laiah, fusing ritual slaughter and sexual imagery.

The trauma of that experience of his youth leaves a deep and lasting impression on Abraham: "Not only did I see in that moment the depths of baseness in a man, but when I turned, trembling, to face the beast, I approached another mystery. Who has to take a life stands alone on the edge of creation. Only God can understand him then."[68] This apprehension of the power of creation and destruction, of life and death, are inextricably linked in the vision of Abraham. Although it is God who is ultimately creator and destroyer, Abraham apprehends that these contrary powers also lie within man, and that it is only by virtue of his religion that the forces necessary for the harnessing and direction of these forces may be achieved.

The biblical story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, as it is told by Abraham to his grandson Moses, is a variation on the same theme. At the core of the story is the same apprehension of the mystery of creation and destruction: "In that moment lay the secrets of life and death, in that closed circle with just the three of them, with Abraham offering the whole of the past and the future, and Isaac lying very still, so as not to spoil the sacrifice, and the glint of the knife and the glare of the sun and the terror of the moment burning into his eyes . . . .It is the point of mutual surrender, the one thing He cannot resist, a faith so absolute."[69]

The story functions also as a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Isaac, brought about by his death as a result of the saving of the Torah from the burning synagogue. In the biblical story of Abraham, he is thrown into the flames by his father as punishment for his heresy in destroying the idols and proclaiming his belief in one God. "But [he] walked through the flaming furnace and was not destroyed. And when the people saw this they knew that the man was a prophet."[70] It seems reasonable to speculate from this parallel that Isaac's trial by fire casts doubt on the nature of Abraham's God, a God who demands the sacrifice of children. When Isaac enters the synagogue to rescue the word of God from flames there is, in the story of Abraham, a precedent on which to base the faith that he will survive. Abraham's pride in Isaac's heroism is a sign of his willingness to sacrifice his only son for the glory of God, and Isaac's spontaneous response of plunging into the flames to save the Torah is an action which expresses his filial complicity, just as the biblical Isaac does with the words: " 'Then bind me tightly lest I struggle and spoil your sacrifice.' "[71]

Both father and son see this story in circular imagery. For Isaac, the biblical story of God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son, and Abraham's obedience, is bitterly ironic: "And so," said Isaac, "as a proof of his faith his one God asks him to do the one thing that all of his life has seemed most dreadful to him. What had turned him from idol worship? What had he fought against all his life? He finds himself near the end of the circle of his days with his own God asking him if he is willing to make even this surrender."[72]

Abraham sees the circle in another way: "You are right when you say that it is like a circle -- the completed circle, when the maker of the sacrifice and the sacrifice himself and the Demander who is the Receiver of the sacrifice

are poised together, and life flows into eternity, and for a moment all three are as one."[73]

In both these metaphors the circle has a positive connotation of completeness and wholeness. As the process of Abraham's disintegration takes place, he sees the circle in a negative way: "But a man's life moves in a circle. Though he thinks he's moving upward, he finds he's back where he started, not knowing, not understanding, waiting for a word."[74]

The symbol of the circle is also made manifest in the circularity of the structure of the novel, as is pointed out by Mullins.[75] Thus, Abraham, in confronting Laiah, returns, in his psyche, to the scene of his enforced animal slaughter:

> Looking at her then, he was lifted out of time and place. Lifetimes swept by, and he stood dreaming on a platform, apart, gazing at her with fear growing in his heart, and somewhere his Master, waiting. As in a dream, the knife was in his hand, the prayer was on his lips . . . .

The image of Laiah is fused with his memory of the animal:

> And yet there was something in him that ached to see how under her eyelids her eyebulbs were large and fine. Her forehead wrinkled and was somehow sad, like that of some time-forgotten creature that had crept out to seek the sun . . . .Now, now was the time, in the stillness, as he stood once again, terrified, fascinated, on the brink of creation where life and death waver toward each other, reiterating his surrender; now was the time for the circle to close, to enclose him in its safety, in its peace.[76]

Here, the closing of the circle is, for Abraham, the release of death, the completion of his life.

A fourth, more subtle sacrifice, takes place within the novel, in Abraham's account of the death of his two sons, Jacob and Moses, which assumes an understanding on the part of the reader of the background of such pogroms as they were carried out against the Jews of Russia and Poland. We know from

the account that the pogrom took place on Good Friday and was carried out by Russian Cossacks and the villagers. The blood libel stories which provoked these pogroms had at their root the archetypal sacrificial figure of Jesus, who, according to Christian theology, died for the redemption of all men. It was traditional for Christians, first in Medieval England (as recorded in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale), and later in Eastern Europe, to hang Jews in vengeance against their purported crime of blood libel.[77] In these stories, Jews are accused of having crucified a Christian, usually a child, in mockery of the martyrdom of Christ, and of using the blood for ritual purposes. Since the alleged ritual purpose was mainly the use of Christian blood in the preparation of the Passover matzoh, the time of the pogroms, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Passover, is highly symbolic. Thus in Abraham's "Christ is sated"[78] lies a bitter racial memory. There is circularity in the implication that the hanging of his sons has taken place as a sacrifice to the Christian deity. The irony of Abraham's words is significant in terms of a broader view of the symbol of sacrifice in this novel.

Isaac Deutscher's description of the Christ figure in the painting of Marc Chagall, and in the Jewish imagination has great relevance:

> Chagall's Christ, as Meyer points out, is not Christian; he is the epitome of the Jewish martyrdom. He is 'stretched in all his immense pain above the world of horrors. Around him men are hunted, persecuted, murdered.' . . . Always wrapped in the Jewish prayer shawl, he sometimes wears the cloth cap and the ragged trousers of a poor Vitebsk Jew; below him, on the earth, are crowds of terror-stricken and fleeing Jews; synagogues and sacred Scrolls are going up in fire and smoke. And while in Christian representations all suffering is concentrated in Christ and is overcome by His sacrifices, in Chagall's Crucifixions Christ does not vanquish suffering. 'Chagall's Christ figure,' Meyer writes, 'lacks the Christian concept of salvation. For all his holiness he is by no means divine. He is a man who suffers pain in a thousand forms . . . who is eternally burned by the fire of the world and yet . . . remains indestructible.'[79]

Chagall's vision of persecution, suffering -- of sacrifice -- provides a visual conception of Wiseman's novel. Beneath that vision lies the profound realization that a rational explanation for this reality is not to be found. Nor does there seem to be hope of any progress. In the resolution of the novel, Aaron and Moses, fulfilling the dreams of their grandfathers, Chaim and Abraham, in a friendship which repeats the cycle of their progenitors, engage in similar philosophical discussions. Aaron expresses the hope of building a new nation in Israel, avoiding the mistakes made by men in ancient times. "In those days the people were still pretty evil," he says. Moses repeats: "In those days the people were still pretty wild . . ..They used human children for their sacrifices."[80] In the irony of his reply is the observation that the sacrifice of human children is, and remains, universal. In Abraham's words, "It is a mystery too deep for man."

Michael Greenstein, in "Vision and Movement in The Sacrifice," concludes that "finally Abraham understands that he must subserve God's will instead of deifying himself,"[81] following an analysis which includes many examples of Abraham's effort to control his own life, beginning with his decision to leave the train and strike roots in the prairie city. Greenstein states: "Though he retains the strength of a young man, deterministic forces work against him: 'What did it matter to destiny, the age of a man. A God who could pluck the fruit of a man's desire when it was scarcely ripe and strangle such seed as could have uplifted the human race did not think in terms of days and years.' "[82] In my opinion, Greenstein oversimplifies in invoking determinism in The Sacrifice. Throughout the novel the interaction of free will and determinism are affirmed, from Chapter I, when Abraham sees his decision to leave the train as one which has been made "with God's help"[83] to the closing

of the novel, when in his reunion with his grandson Moses, he takes responsibility for the murder of Laiah: " 'I could have blessed you and left you. I could have loved you . . . .When a human being cries out to you, no matter who it is, don't judge him, don't harm him, or you turn away God himself!' "[84] His final comment to his grandson is a judgment which applies equally to all the sacrifices of the novel: " 'I took what was not mine to take . . . what was given to me to hold gently in my hands, to look at with wonder.' "[85]

A problem in the credibility of this ending is the conception of Laiah, who is bereft of any admirable, or even appealing human qualities. In her, Wiseman has created a woman who is selfish, devious, manipulative, promiscuous, and self-indulgent. Although we know Laiah is the victim of childhood deprivation and masculine lust, she does not succeed in evoking sympathy. Thus, after Laiah's murder, there is no sadness at the loss of her life, but only a profound sense of the tragedy of Abraham's disintegration and his senseless taking of a life. For this reason, his statement about the other choice he had in relation to her is unconvincing. Given the nature of Abraham and the nature of Laiah, it is difficult to believe that such a blessing and love could have been shared by them. Because of this, the notion of love as a solution is intellectually unsatisfying.

Wiseman is, however, operating at another level. In closing the novel with the unity of the contraries, the joining of hands of the musician -- artist, creator -- and that of the murderer-destroyer, the apprehension that "they are not really different in shape," appeals to "a different kind of understanding," one that is achieved by the grandson Moses in an image of unification.

CHAPTER III

CRACKPOT

The eighteen year gap between the publication of *The Sacrifice* and *Crackpot* was filled, for Adele Wiseman, with teaching and writing. The play, *Lovebound*, which took a great deal of time and energy, never reached the public. Wiseman wrote criticism,[1] delivered lectures,[2] and wrote the text for *Old Markets, New Worlds*,[3] as well as short stories, one of which, "Duel in the Kitchen," was published in *Maclean's* in 1961. In the two latter works she dealt with the same people and places that characterized her novels: the immigrants whose struggle to survive and achieve in the new land gave dignity to their lives. Apparently, Wiseman discarded her ambition to write of other worlds. Gerard Fay, interviewing the young novelist in London after the publication of *The Sacrifice*, reported in the *Winnipeg Free Press* that she was "soaking up the atmosphere and character for future writing . . . about the East End . . . .She says it may be a long time before she can put finger to key because she rightly thinks the exact turn of speech a most important quality in a novelist's characters . . . ."[4] Years later Adele Wiseman wrote: "We're all turtles, and carry our earliest shells wherever we escape to. I'm stuck with you, Manitoba."[5] The idea is repeated in *Old Woman at Play*: "We end up selecting, mysteriously, again and again, in whatever disguise, the emotional shape of the world in which we were first moulded."[6] In *Crackpot* Adele Wiseman comes home to the north end of Winnipeg, mythologizing the people and places of her first world.

The creation of myths from "the real lived-in world" is defined by

Wiseman as an essential part of the creative process, upon which "the sense of [one's] own vitality," and "the validity of [one's] own existence" is contingent. We are constantly creating myths, she believes, which function as mediators between us and the "large abstract and often rigidified myths of our culture." Her description of the myth figures of her mother's world as "living legends . . . the kind who bring light and warmth and laughter and even fear, those outraging, outrageous and outraged livers, riders defiantly athwart their own lives, grasping convention by the cold balls, demanding a life larger than life, those heroes persistently and self-destructively and yet somehow redemptively askew, "[7] applies to her own protagonist in Crackpot, for in Hoda she has created just such a myth figure. Hoda, who epitomizes "defiance and dignity," characteristics Wiseman defines as a "birthright,"[8] is seen by Mark Asner as a "fascinating study,"[9] and by Margaret Laurence as "one of the greatest characters in our literature."[10] She is indeed a highly symbolic, complex figure who must win our sympathy and love in spite of her grotesqueness.

The title Crackpot has many implications. At the simplest level it is an idiomatic expression of the neighbourhood opinion of Hoda, which is, as Laurence suggests, "both funny and cruel."[11] The word is, however, not entirely contemptuous, although it expresses in a somewhat humorous and affectionate tone a perception of someone as not quite whole, flawed in a strange and amusing way. The title sets the tone for the novel, signalling that it is to be read in the same humorous and affectionate spirit. Although Hoda suffers deeply, it is her ability to laugh at her own absurdity and the absurdity of others that sustains her, and permits her to enjoy and affirm life.

A cracked pot or bowl is one of the repeated images in the novel, as indicated by its epigraph:

> He stored the Divine Light in a Vessel,
> but the Vessel, unable to contain the
> Holy Radiance, burst, and its shards,
> permeated with sparks of the Divine,
> scattered through the Universe.
> Ari: Kabbalistic legend of creation.

This epigraph directs us to the Kabbalistic level of meaning of the novel. Kenneth Sherman, writing in Waves,[12] has demonstrated how Crackpot is a structural and thematic reflection of this Lurianic myth. Essentially, the myth is a theory of creation which attempts to explain the apparent contradictions of the world. "Ari" was a name given to Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, a central figure of the new Kabbalah, and the most important Kabbalistic mystic after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. The skepticism and doubt of the Jews in the sixteenth century resulting from their persecution and suffering during the Spanish Inquisition, has been compared with the questioning which has necessarily followed the holocaust of our own time. As Sherman points out, the Lurianic myth has taken on new significance in the second half of the twentieth century.[13]

The three stages of creation in the myth are the self-limitation or exile of God, or contraction, which is explained as a necessary prelude to creation. In this stage, vessels are created which receive the divine light of emanation. At first this occurs in "primordial air," but later assumes a clearer form in the vessel called "primordial man," or, in Hebrew, Adam Kadmon. Thus, we see Hoda, in Crackpot, as a vessel, though female, who contains the sparks of divine light. In this view, man's place in the universe is symbolized by his rank as the first being to emerge after the contraction has taken place, and, as Gershom Scholem states, "accounts for the strong anthropomorphic

colouring that accompanies all descriptions of the process in the Lurianic systems."[14]

It is interesting from the point of view of the symbolism of the novel that of the lights which shone forth from the head of Adam Kadmon, some assumed the form of letters, and others assumed all other aspects of the Torah or Holy Tongue -- the vowel points or scribal affixes, which are also components of Holy Writ. Thus, in Kabbalah, two essentially different symbolisms are joined: light, and language and writing. In the Lurianic myth, the light should have shone forth from the navel, but the place of its appearance was deflected. The name Pipick, which is Yiddish for navel, one of the names given to Hoda's child, therefore takes on special significance.

In the second stage of development the vessels break because they are unable to contain the divine light. Their pieces scatter and fall, causing a cosmic catastrophe. While some of the light is able to return to its source, the remainder is hurled down with the vessels themselves and from their shards the dark forces take on substance. In this way, the displacement of all parts of the universe occurs, explaining the flawed world we see in Crackpot. But, although the world is flawed, it retains the potential to restore itself to perfection.

This is what occurs in the third stage. The restoration, or redemption, is the ultimate aim of creation. The crucial point in the Lurianic discussions of these developments is that, although the redemption is almost completed by the supernal lights and the processes stemming from their activity, certain concluding actions are reserved for man. The completion of redemption, therefore, depends on the actions and prayers of man. By appropriate activity,

The vessel image evoked by the title suggests the literary symbol of the Golden Bowl, an image of perfection and potential, which has its literary origin in Ecclesiastes. While Geoffrey James in his Time Magazine[16] review suggests that the word "biblical" is evoked by the reading of Crackpot, in particular The Book of Job, it is, rather, Ecclesiastes which contains many of the motifs of Crackpot, culminating in the image of life as "a Golden Bowl," so fragile that it is connected to the source of life by only "a silver cord."[17] Crackpot can be seen as an inversion of this image of a perfect vessel. Earthy, rough, and flawed, it is an image which demands that we deal honestly and directly with the reality of life, discarding our illusions and fantasies of perfection. Like Crackpot, Ecclesiastes is an enigmatic book, whose meaning has been the subject of much study and speculation over the centuries. In it, the poet is concerned with the nature of wisdom, and his experiences in his quest foreshadow those of Hoda: "And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly -- I perceived that this also was striving after wind / For in much wisdom is much vexation; / And he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."[18] However, he affirms the value of wisdom: "Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness."[19] He calls into question the many apparent contradictions of life, specifically seeking solutions which nevertheless remain elusive. Crackpot reflects Ecclesiastes in its evocation of the seasons and the cyclical nature of life, hinting that in the physical order which we see about us is the assurance that there is, at the beginning, an orderliness that we are perhaps incapable of understanding. It affirms life's pleasures as being worthy, and the perpetuation of life as being essential, demonstrating also a conviction that, in spite of apparent evil in the world, God does exist.

Like Henry James's novel, The Golden Bowl, Crackpot is a work of paradox, irony, and contraries. It is arguable that Crackpot is in part a parody of The Golden Bowl, an obese Jewish whore being substituted for the beautiful and perfect Maggie Verver. Although Hoda only dreams of marrying a prince, Maggie Verver actually does so, and both women give birth to princes, in one way or another. The heroines of both novels are concerned with the care and well-being of their widowed fathers; both contain incestuous, or nearly incestuous relationships; both seek solutions to moral problems, and both demand a great deal from the reader if understanding is to be achieved.

The Golden Bowl is also an important symbol in Blake's "Book of Thel":

> Thel's motto
> Does the Eagle know what is in the pit?
> Or will thou go ask the Mole:
> Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?
> Or Love in a Golden Bowl?

Thel's motto casts light on the kind of sexuality which is personified by Hoda, a sexuality which, in my opinion, adds an important dimension to the character of Hoda. As the contrary figure of Thel, much as she is of Maggie Verver, she embodies Blake's ideal of female sexuality as being essential to the affirmation of both life and creativity. Her acquisition of knowledge through growth from innocence to experience suggests a strong Blakean influence.

There is, in the complexity of these literary, philosophical, and religious allusions, an incongruity in the choice of the simple, earthy, and grotesque Hoda as protagonist. How, then, does the novelist achieve credibility for Hoda, enlisting our love and sympathy for the title character of the novel?

The iconoclastic portrayal of Hoda, the obese harlot, as a life-affirming, positive figure demands a re-examination of accepted stereotypes, and shocks the reader by creating a world which is antithetical to many of his most cherished values. Through Hoda, we are permitted to see more clearly; through her quest for knowledge we, too, may achieve a measure of understanding.

"For what did Hoda know," are the words that introduce us to the chief character of Crackpot, and the remainder of the novel is a literary exploration of what she comes to know. We are introduced to Hoda as a young child, who is distinguished mainly by her obesity and her loud insistent voice. These are two attributes which persist throughout the novel, thus establishing two salient features of her personality, characteristics which in the North American scheme of things do not endear her to the reader. Rather, they are two stereotypical characteristics often attributed to Jews by anti-semites. But Hoda soon wins our sympathy. She is a young child who is expected to sit quietly while her mother cleans the houses of other women. Hoda's mother, Rahel, is also somewhat unusual. She is a hunch-backed Jewish cleaning woman, cleaning Jewish houses. "People did not like the idea of a Jewish woman hiring herself out to do what they considered to be demeaning tasks."[20] In other ways, Rahel is a stereotypical Jewish mother. She feeds her child constantly, not only because it is the most effective way to keep her quiet and still, but also because she sees this continuous nourishment to be fundamental to her maternal role. What does endear Hoda to us from the outset is her refusal, even as a young child, to be bullied by those who are richer, stronger, and more powerful than she. When her mother's employers tease her and bully her,

she is defiant, and strikes back in any way possible: "With a lunge surprisingly swift in one who was almost wider than she was tall, Hoda clamped her teeth on her tormentor's nose . . . ."[21] While most of these women disapprove of Rahel's constant feeding of the child many view her with amusement, and join in as if in a game. Although Hoda takes their food willingly, it is always on her own terms, and the analogy to the way in which zoo animals are fed and accept food, "with something of aloofness, even of condescension," provides an image which is pathetic, yet paradoxically retains a measure of dignity.

For Hoda, even as a young child, "real things" consist of not the workaday world of her mother, but the bedtime stories of her father, Danile, whose nightly tales of her miraculous creation imbue her with a sense of worth, a confidence in her own roots, and a reverence for life which are the core of her being. Like Christie Logan in Margaret Laurence's The Diviners, Danile transforms a childhood of poverty and degradation to one of dignity and pride. This sense of worth, which is a contingency of survival, is Hoda's defence against despair. Implicit in this is the importance of history and myth as a means of knowing ourselves, and the conviction that fundamental to all other knowledge is the sense of self-respect. In Danile's tale, his marriage to Rahel has taken place in a strange superstitious rite, designed to ward off the plague which had infected the area in which they lived. The rite has its basis in fact; it is described in Life is With People as follows: "If an epidemic strikes the shtetl, prayers are of course offered up. Other steps consist chiefly in marrying off two orphans or cripples, so that God will be mollified by the good deeds of his worshipers."[22] In Danile's words, the rite requires that "the two poorest,

most unfortunate, witless creatures, man and woman, who exist under the tables of the community [be dug] up, he out of his burrow in the woods, she from the heap of rags in which she crouches, and [be brought] together in the field of death."[23] There the marriage takes place. In Hoda's words, as she tries to explain the miracle of this marriage in the schoolroom: "You have to start a life thing happening instead of a death thing."[24] And so, from the field of death emerges the "life thing" of which Hoda is the happy product. Moreover, in Danile's account, through this union the plague is, in fact, stopped. Thus, in the most graphic of descriptions, life destroys death, and evil is turned into good. Danile's honest and hideous description of the rite demonstrates the subjectivity of our perception. In the eyes of the blind Danile, what appears grotesque and repulsive by the accepted norms of society is ironically beautiful and good. It is this discrepancy of views that Hoda takes with her into the world that marks her as an original, indeed, singular figure in our literature, and her perceptions provide us with a new, enriching dimension.

Danile's stories reveal that Hoda's existence is itself an act of defiance against a society which seeks to prevent the "imperfect" from having children. Danile's relatives, unhappy that the young couple have defied them by having a child, and eager to rid themselves of a responsibility that threatens to become weightier, send them to Canada where, it is hoped, other relatives will take care of them. Zborowski and Herzog's description of family obligations provides a perspective for what occurs: "Nothing so strongly demonstrates the sense of family cohesion as the assumptions about the help one can count on as a matter of course from relatives."[25] This does not guarantee that help will be given with joy,

however. Uncle Nathan and his wife Gusia are no happier at the prospect of providing for their needy relatives than is the European branch of the family. Nevertheless, in Danile's vision the coming to the new world remains a part of the happy miracle of their existence.

The constant reiteration of this innocently optimistic point of view, and its concomitant emotional impact, are an important part of the life view of Hoda, which endears her to the reader. The novelist leads us with Hoda from innocence through knowledge, a knowledge which deepens with experience; throughout this acquisition of knowledge, no matter how profound her suffering or grave her doubts, she never loses her faith in the essential goodness of life. Hoda stands, in her girth, as an embodiment of the complexities of human experience, and a positive commitment to life, in spite of its inherent contradictions.

As she grows, she takes her innocence and hope with her into the wider world. At a simple level, Hoda's childhood follows the pattern of all North American childhoods. The school begins to take on a significant function in terms of her social awareness and self-image. Hoda's school experiences are a satirical description of the real experiences of Jewish children of her generation, who attended the English school with their neighbours, and then went on to Jewish school afterwards. The daily attendance at these schools demonstrates the dual polarities of Hoda's world: the English, wider world of the community, the nation, indeed the Empire, and that of her own roots, where she learns to appreciate her differentness through Jewish history--"learning about one's roots and origins," and to read and write the Yiddish language. The Jewish school also functions as a "workers" school, indoctrinating her in socialism, "the next best thing"

to Judaism. In this way Hoda learns a close identification between the poor and the persecuted which persists for the rest of her life. The most striking distinction, however, between the two schools, is their emotional tone. In the Jewish school atmosphere, that tone is set by the teacher, whose passion runs high as he preaches to the young boys and girls "about the workers and suffering and heritage and responsibility."[26] The behaviour of the children is uncontrolled; here they give free rein to their emotions, thereby creating a chaotic, but nevertheless vital atmosphere.

By contrast, the English school is highly disciplined. Speaking in the classroom is prohibited. The identification is made, not with the downtrodden, but with the strong: " . . . unloving voices . . . told proudly how westerners had beaten down the wild Indians and crushed the treacherous half-breeds and made the great new continent a place fit to live in."[27] Here the teacher is in control, not only of the children, but of herself, as well, producing an atmosphere of discipline and order. Hoda's understanding of the teacher's contempt for the immigrant children is revealed through her thoughts: "There was that subtle something in her teacher's expression that Hoda had learned to know so well, a certain sucking in and holding away of the self which showed, more clearly than words, that some immigrant children imposed a considerable strain on Western hospitality."[28]

John Moss, writing in Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel, draws a distinction between Mordecai Richler's Cocksure and Crackpot, stating that "Cocksure, at least, is satire."[29] It is difficult to understand why, in his opinion, Crackpot does not qualify as, at least in part, satire.

The descriptions of Hoda's English and Jewish schools are clearly satirical. In an article in Mosaic, Wiseman's perception of the attitude of the Anglo-saxon minority during her childhood in Manitoba is strikingly similar to Hoda's. The satiric intent is patently obvious:

> Everybody knows Midwesterners are a friendly, hospitable lot. They're notorious for it. You will find, for instance, that about the only people Manitobans could not stand in those days were those who got there before them: Indians and Métis (they drink to excess, publicly, and are so tubercular!) and the people who got there after them (twenty-seven other ethnics).
>
> The sign said:
>
> WELCOME TO MANITOBA
>
> The fine print read something like this:
>
> Taking care not to offend by appearing too noisy or too pushy or too comfortable, by all discreetly unobtrusive and legally inoffensive means, make yourselves almost at home.[30]

For Hoda, "it was not hard to learn things, but something always made you feel bad."[31] With the exception of one teacher, the attitude of the school is seen as an impediment to learning. As a major part of Hoda's childhood world, the school fails to provide for Hoda the acceptance and understanding that she needs. Rather, it rejects, through Miss Boltholmsup, her offer "to trade unqualified love for love at last."[32] Misinterpreting for a genuine interest Miss Boltholmsup's scheme for learning about the children in order to maintain control, Hoda, in recounting the precious story of her origin to her classmates, receives the first blow to her innocence: she learns that those things which are of supreme value to her may be misunderstood and deprecated by others, particularly those who have power over her and society, and that her own love and trust are not qualities common to all. What Miss Boltholmsup anxiously replaces for the

end of Hoda's story is the singing of patriotic songs, thus substituting her own values for the alien ones of Hoda. In choosing "The Maple Leaf Forever" as a song with which to end the class day, the teacher demonstrates her colonial attitude, revealing also the hierarchical ethnic structure of Canadian society. The song is symbolic also in The Diviners as an expression of an earlier colonial Canadian society. Morag Gunn makes this observation as a schoolgirl in Manawaka:

> Morag loves this song and sings with all her guts. She also knows what the emblems mean. Thistle, is Scots, like her and Christie (others of course, too, including some stuck-up kids, but her, definitely, and they better not forget it.) Shamrock is Irish like the Connors and Reillys and them. Rose is English, like Prin, once of good family. Suddenly she looks over to see if Skinner Tonnerre is singing. He has the best voice in the class . . ..He is not singing now. He comes from nowhere. He isn't anybody.[33]

For Hoda its meaning must be as negative as it is for Skinner Tonnerre, the Métis boy who becomes the father of Morag's child.

In Hoda's juvenile world, where people are either "mean" or "nice" she manages to retain her "niceness" in the face of the overwhelming cruelty of other children. She learns that her "good feelings" for others are no guarantee of reciprocation when her gesture of giving of herself by telling "who she is" is greeted with ridicule, rather than admiration. Hoda has difficulty in understanding the values of the English school environment in the face of constant misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Her feelings of alienation, her innocence, her natural loving disposition, and her inability to feel hate, contribute to the sympathy which the reader feels for the child Hoda. Nor is the emotion maudlin. Using the language of childhood to reproduce the prairie setting and childhood pain, Wiseman recreates authentic and recognizable childhood

experience:

> Hoda cared about their good feelings. Why didn't her good feelings mean anything to them? They shouldn't be that way. Someday they'd see. Then they'd come to her. And she wouldn't be mean. She wouldn't push them off the snow castle, playing rough, no fair, all of them against one, jumping on her and rolling her all the way down, shoving her face in the snow, tearing her toque off and rubbing snow all over her cold ears and down her neck . . . .Alone when they had gone at last she climbed, her exertions punctuated by sobs and sudden bursts of laughter. "You said you wouldn't let me but I am," she crowed. And sobbing, "I hate you fuck you I won't play with you either."[34]

Hoda's childhood fantasies blend the fairy tales of ugly princesses turned beautiful with a mythologized British royal family, who are the subject of much discussion at her "English" school. The functions of both of these are later taken over by the movies. The North American mythology, which creates hope and expectation of eventual blissful happiness in conjugal love in a world where all are beautiful and good, contains its own irony within the context of the novel. The humour and pathos of the ugly duckling Hoda, and her "naked hope," cannot fail to enlist the sympathy and support of the reader.

The death of the child's mother, Rahel, seems an obvious ploy for achieving sympathy, yet the novelist does not fall into bathos. The child's response of fear of the unknown and of aloneness supersedes the sense of loss of her mother. The mixture of tragedy and comedy contained in the image of the fat child stuck beneath her bed in her futile struggle to escape fear, and the absence of an immediate deep emotional response in the child, create a realistic picture of such a loss without resorting to sentimentality. It is Danile's response of anger and tears which sets the tone for the child's acceptance of death.

Each experience Hoda undergoes contributes to her knowledge. After her mother's death, during the seven day period of "shiva," when all members of the family, neighbours, and friends, are expected to visit the family, she learns from the interaction of the adults important lessons about human relationships. The response to her rich uncle and aunt by their former friends, whom they have outgrown by virtue of their success and wealth, demonstrates for her that there was "something real that they represented" which "really worked in the world."[35] Later, when she has grown and matured, she is able to articulate what that "something" is -- the power which success and money hold over people. Such knowledge is essential to those who wish to resist that power, and retain control of their own lives. As a young adolescent Hoda refuses intuitively to become a pawn in her uncle's strategy for achieving honour and distinction in the community for his philanthropy, clinging to her father, her home, and her independence, as her most precious possessions. The strength of her inner life is what sustains her throughout this period -- "her special knowledge" about herself -- which sets "her apart from [others] inside, where she could get away from them all whenever they were mean."[36]

Undramatically and matter-of-factly, Hoda responds to her own needs and those of her father by whatever means are at hand, peddling her father's baskets and taking on some of her mother's cleaning jobs. Some people find Hoda's presence irritating, for "there was, perhaps, too much naked hope in her glance. People recoiled, and sought and quickly found, in her looks and manner, justification for their uneasiness."[37] Here the authorial voice provides for us the kind of astute insight into human interaction which distinguishes Hoda as a literary figure. She becomes a symbol of the human

spirit, bruised and battered by the vicissitudes of life, and yet continually exposing herself for more, without losing hope that the dreams and wishes which she nourishes may be fulfilled. Hoda has the courage to hope, and the strength to bear the disappointments that may follow. During this period she is an adolescent with a "consciousness of the boundless good-will that was ready to flow in the universe, and of herself as a direct tap to the source, just waiting to be turned on."[38] Her energy, her warm and loving spirit, and her ability to cope with whatever problems she faces with an uncomplaining and positive attitude, all serve to build up in the reader a love and admiration for the character who represents what is best in the human spirit.

Hoda's first sexual experience occurs after the shattering rejection of her story by Miss Boltholmsup. Having failed to win the love and attention for which she yearns, she substitutes physical love and attention from her peers. Her friend Morgan becomes her first sexual partner in an act that is innocent in its fulfilment of the needs of the two outcasts. What begins for Hoda as a bid for love by revealing and sharing her inner life, a bid which fails, ends by a bid for the sharing of her body in physical love, which for her has some limited success. Her innocent, ironic definition of her new status amongst her peers as a girl who is willing to give sexual favours for money: "It was fun to be popular,"[39] is humorous, while it might have been pathetic. Hoda <u>is</u> enjoying her new status, and the intimacy which she is sharing with her male school friends provides her with physical warmth and new physical pleasure. The statement satirizes those supreme values of adolescent girls--fun and popularity. Hoda's direct and unequivocal brand of prostitution is not acceptable in respectable society, whereas perhaps other kinds are.

Her release from the constraints of school, and the new relationships she develops with her male peers imbue her with a sense of freedom which reflects, and is reflected in, the prairie landscape. Her sense of well-being gives her an apprehension of some force for good, which is a part of her:

> For long days she wandered about, pacing the flat platform of earth under pouring blue sky, smiling into the air, her mind so filled with pleasant snatches of thought and feeling that she hardly knew she was alone. Wherever she turned the horizon was low, just at the bottom of the street, and she fancied herself walking off into the air, heavy Hoda, lighter than air. But she didn't have to walk off. Most of her was in the sky already. Only the soles of her feet kept contact with earthly things. While they plodded dutifully along wooden pavements, mud walks, gravel ways, and sometimes even got so far as the newly paved streets of the rich, with their clean, hard cement sidewalks and asphalt roads, the rest of her swam through oceans of friendly sky, crisp and autumnal smelling, and faintly cloudy with her breath.[40]

There is, in this sense of oneness with the universe an expression of wonder and joy: "It's a sin and a shame to turn someone away from a celebration,"[41] Hoda knows, and in her happiness she becomes a legendary figure at weddings. The prairie landscape reinforces and reflects her feelings of jubilation and festivity: "Sometimes she hurried along by herself, late in the evening, pausing to be humbled, briefly, by the cool green, hot green, shifting green celebrant dance of the northern lights, in the depths of velvet blue synagogue sky."[42] At these times Hoda herself seems to be a manifestation of some larger cosmic celebration of life. The extremes of the prairie climate, and the vividness with which they assault the human senses underline the intensity of Hoda's feelings:

> Nothing could keep her away from a wedding in those early years, whether there was a blizzard snowing over the whole world in great drifts of white, and she had to labour through

> thigh-deep mounds that grunted as she panted, and when she finally reached the hall she was all caked over, and had to shake herself off and stamp on the stairs before she could even go in, and then when she was in it took her half an hour to climb out of all the layers of woollen things that melted and got soggy as she undressed and made the little cloakroom smell even more rancid and doggy; or whether it was too hot a summer night for even Daddy to consider sleeping indoors, and he dragged his mattress onto the verandah because, he claimed, though he was wrong, that not even the mosquitoes could be very energetic tonight.[43]

Here the passage of time is indicated by the passing of the seasons, of which Hoda is a part.

Her search for a means of keeping Danile and herself fed, sheltered, and warm, leads her to explore the possibility of getting a job in one of the garment factories of the city. However, while she is willing to sell her body under her own terms, she refuses to sell her spirit. Hoda has principles. She repays the demand of the factory manager for an attitude of submission and deference with a loud Marxist harangue on exploitation and slave labour, which succeeds in upsetting and slowing down the entire shop. "Once or twice she wondered, briefly, whether she had behaved wisely. But slavery? Nuts to him! There must be other ways to earn a living."[44] Hoda's observations echo those of Isaac in The Sacrifice.

Thus, Hoda's prostitution takes on the cloak of a private, small business over which she maintains control, and in which she is subject only to her own principles. This notion of the nature of freedom and slavery is antithetical to popularly held views of prostitution as opposed to labour, and as such, it marks Hoda as an original, independent thinker, whose sense of freedom relates as cogently to her opinions as it does to her sense of self, and is yet another reinforcing thread in the texture of irony and paradox which is so central to the novel.

Her strong identification with the downtrodden leads her to take part in what appears to be the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Hoda believes in the workers' cause and must therefore take some personal action to express her conviction and to effect change. She achieves some measure of recognition for her heroism when she intercedes with a mounted policeman who is about to club her friend and former Jewish teacher cum revolutionary, Mr. Polonick, thus demonstrating not only her loyalty, but also her physical courage, her intuitive sense of timing, and at the same time, enhancing her already growing self-esteem. Her experience in the strike confirms her anti-establishment thinking, expends her knowledge of evil, and reinforces her confidence in her ability to act effectively in the interests of justice. This kind of limited success serves to justify her life and her inner sense of the miracle of her existence.

The loss of Hoda's innocence and the growth of her knowledge is interwoven simultaneously in time with the growth of the foetus within her. Just as she is beginning to believe that she has some control over her life, she has an overwhelming experience which she does not understand, and over which she has no control. In the climactic birth scene, Wiseman elicits shock, fear, and horror in the reader. Throughout Chapter Five there is a foreshadowing of doom in Hoda's fear that a malignancy is growing within her. Nothing, however, prepares the reader for her nightmare experience. The passage which recounts the birth process describes the power of creation as a sundering of worlds:

> Hoda was ripped out of sleep by a pain sharper than any she had ever known before, and another and another, in a world that had shrunk, while she slept, to contain

> nothing but her body, awash on her bed, a world that was her body . . . trying to turn itself inside out, struggling with a bowel movement that was the evacuation of continents. The ocean had already burst forth.[45]

The striking realism of this birth scene includes an equally effective description of the newborn infant, when Hoda discovers she has unwittingly produced a child:

> But there was something still going on down there, that wouldn't let her keep her eyes closed, something else beyond her own panting, a small rustling sound she imagined she heard from the mass of her own wet guts that she dreamed lay between her sprawled-apart legs. Vexed, she heaved herself up and peered in the dimness, at the warm, smelly dark mess that squirmed there . . . Fearfully, Hoda nerved herself, laid hold of the sticky thing with one hand, poked with a forefinger of the other, shook the thing that took on a frighteningly familiar shape in miniature between her fingers, and poked again . . . It squawked. The lump was alive.[46]

This passage epitomizes the method of the novel. Like Hoda and her life, the description is not pretty; rather, the senses of smell, touch, and sound which are evoked are ugly, grotesque, and distasteful, yet Wiseman succeeds in creating with this vivid, uncompromising realism, a spirit that is exhilarating in its vigour and boldness, and in the clarity and honesty with which the images emerge.

The night of mysterious and unexpected birth in the dark solitude of Hoda's room parallels the night of unexpected death when her mother is taken, screaming, to the hospital. Thus, one cycle of death and birth is created in the novel, and a new phase in Hoda's development begins. In terms of the structure of the novel, the birth occurs at the middle, bringing it to a climax.

In Hoda's intuitive action of taking the child to the Jewish orphanage, another cycle is completed. Uncle's misguided philanthropy now justifies

itself for Hoda, in that it provides for her offspring both care and shelter. Thus, she and her offspring are ironically the ultimate beneficiaries of a gesture designed to help her, but which she has rejected.

The birth of the baby, and Hoda's response, brings into focus the fundamental paradoxes and ironies of the novel. In Hoda's life view, the conviction that her own birth was a miracle sustains her. For her parents, who had been discouraged from having children, her birth was the result of an act of defiance, testimony of their love for each other, and an affirmation of the right of all people to produce children. For Rahel, the cripple, and Danile, the blind man, the birth of a healthy child was also a demonstration of their potency and their ability to create and survive. Since the miracle of her birth is so crucial to the development of the character Hoda, and indeed to the novel, one must ask why Hoda should view the birth of her own child as an act of punishment or retribution. The circumstances of the birth, shrouded as it is in mystery, and the fact that it is not the result of a loving relationship, but of a business arrangement, may account for this discrepancy. Hoda, who sees life as a series of fragments, has imagined that a baby is a synthesis of parts which results from an enduring marital union. The physical pain, which is a corollary of birth, evokes a feeling of sin and evil, thus illustrating the contraries of life. Hoda's decision to take the baby to the orphanage is unconscious and spontaneous, for: "She mustn't have a baby. Not now. It wasn't time yet. The good things hadn't come yet!"[47] Having a child is associated with "good things"; it is not to be seen as punishment for sin. The primary consideration is survival -- for the child, her father, herself. Nevertheless, despite her rationalizations,

a feeling of guilt persists.

The note which she attaches to the baby bears analysis: "TAKE GOOD CARE. A PRINCE IN DISGUISE CAN MAKE A PIECE OF PRINCE, TO SAVE THE JEWS. HE'S PAID FOR."[48] Both Kenneth Sherman in his article in Waves,[49] and Margaret Laurence in her introduction to the second edition of the novel,[50] suggest that there is a messianic implication in the word Prince, with "piece of Prince" suggesting Prince of Peace. At a simpler level, Hoda's child is seen by her as a prince, for her own self-image is one of great importance. Like Abraham in The Sacrifice, who, upon seeing his newborn grandchild exclaims: "Who can be my equal now!", Hoda's reverence for life and for the value of each individual, renders her offspring "a prince!" "A piece of Prince" echoes the fragment imagery of the novel, and expresses the conviction that within each human being is locked a "heroic dimension," a belief that Wiseman expresses in Old Woman at Play.[51] Among the names which Scholem catalogues for describing the Kabbalists, "children of the king's palace"[52] is mentioned, linking Hoda's princely issue with Kabbalistic thought. Literally, Hoda believes that the large sum of money which her uncle has donated to the orphanage in lieu of providing help for her and her father justifies her statement that "HE'S PAID FOR." He has also been paid for through sheer physical pain, as well as by Hoda's struggle to survive independently. He is paid for by the deep psychic agony which follows immediately after the birth and continues for many years after.

While it is possible to deny realities, ignoring or repressing them, the realities of existence in their concrete physical form are imposed on Hoda in the form of her child, and the demand of dealing with her situation

cannot be ignored, but must be faced and dealt with if she is to survive. Hoda's action in the face of this challenge permits her to continue to care for her father and preserve her family unit intact, but leaves her tormented by feelings of guilt and remorse. It is difficult to understand Kenneth Sherman's judgment that Hoda's ignorance of "how babies are made" is an example of her imperfection.[53] James, in his Time review, makes a similar judgment when he describes Hoda as "a woman so ignorant . . . that she does not know she is pregnant until her baby is born."[54] Hoda is little more than a child when her baby is born, and her ignorance of the birth process has no moral significance whatever. It is merely a result of lack of information. Her ability to use her new knowledge is demonstrated in practical terms when she learns about contraception, thus bringing more of her life under her own control. Her feelings of guilt stem rather from an abdication of a responsibility that is rightly hers, and a failure to reveal the truth. With the birth of her child Hoda is faced with a moral dilemma, which is an essential part of her loss of innocence, and the development of knowledge.

This kind of knowledge and experience is juxtaposed in Hoda's mind to her father's apparent innocence: "Daddy always said it was good to know things, but did Daddy mean it was good to know the things you want to know?"[55] The emergence of doubt as to the genuineness of Danile's innocence and some trace of bitterness at his naivete about her own struggles and actions to keep them alive occur soon after Hoda's experience of giving birth. Danile's credo that "study is sweet, knowledge is good,"[56] and the ironic play on words that her customers find so hilarious -- "Study, study, pig, pig!"[57] -- contrast sharply with Hoda's increased understanding.

The mixed message which Wiseman puts into the mouth of the blind innocent suggests that beneath the facade of innocence, knowledge does exist. Like Abraham in The Sacrifice, who sees that the peasant Nikolai has stolen his samovar even as he has given him refuge in his home, yet averts his eyes, so Danile too, averts his eyes from evil. Isaac's description of his father's innocence and faith anticipates that of the blind Danile: "Why couldn't he be like his father, keeping his eyes fixed somewhere, at a point, so that everything he saw had to mold itself to his perspective? . . . Was this what his father knew -- that there was a purity somewhere, in spite of Nikolai, in spite of himself and his degrading thoughts?"[58]

The problem of Danile's innocence is shared and discussed by his cronies at the synagogue, who provide this analysis:

> [He was] perhaps not so simple, . . . he was not necessarily restricted by nature, but that his blindness made him more delicately selective of those, among the super-abundant facts of existence, that were truly significant to man and to his God. They came close to hinting that [there] was something perhaps of holiness in him . . .The questions which he propounded, granted that he was not much help with the answers, but then neither were the wisest, sometimes, were not the questions of a fool.[59]

Hoda herself, goaded by the pragmatic Marxist, Polonick, into facing the probability that Danile does, in fact, know how she makes her living, is able to describe his knowledge through metaphor:

> It was as though he had spun his last new thread, and somehow thought he had completed his net to hold his life in, and just kept running back and forth and to and fro over the parts of the pattern he remembered, and what Hoda did to earn their living was a part of the dark abyss which he swung through but could not know. Let it be so.[60]

This insight into the nature of Danile's innocence is an important

part of the growth of Hoda's knowledge, and as such of the development and expansion of her personality. The ability to comprehend what appear to be paradoxical phenomena is essential to a genuine understanding of life. As an example of the contrary, the inability to comprehend incongruities, Mr. Polonick stands out in sharp contrast. His faith in simplistic solutions to all of life's problems illustrates for Hoda the folly of a linear view: "He always looked straight ahead and never saw anything coming at him from left or right."[61] Polonick's tunnel vision is associated in Hoda's mind with his inability to experience spontaneous joy that requires the capacity to feel rather than think. His exclusively rational approach precludes a grasp of the realities, thus preventing him from achieving a total understanding; his political solutions to all of the problems of mankind are seen as doomed to failure.

In Old Woman at Play, Wiseman is openly critical of this kind of thinking, placing the blame for its pervasiveness in our society on the school system: "Thank you, formal education . . . but no thank you . . . . Long is the unlearning of your learning, glad the return to vision."[62] She suggests that our "wistful attachment to the idea of 'reason', of a logically sequential, consciously controlled, linear existence in time" is illusory.[63]

Hoda's practical and fertile mind are instruments of her own salvation, and she uses whatever bits of information she gathers to enhance Danile's and her life. Her horizons are enlarged with the expansion of her geographic boundaries, providing her with a greater awareness of her opportunities. The discovery of the Broom Shop at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind not only gives Danile an outlet for his work, but also

provides for Hoda an experience which is crucial for her development. For the first time since the beginning of Hoda's and Danile's struggle for survival, help is offered. The confidence and independence which she has achieved through her ability to cope enables her to refuse that help. For Hoda and Danile, this achievement is a new plateau in their development, an achievement worthy of celebration. No gesture could be more celebratory for them than the giving of a gift to Uncle Nathan, who has anonymously been celebrating his own self-respect by sending them gifts each time he is honoured for some philanthropic achievement.

The nature of charity, its concomitant effects on the giver and receiver, as well as on social relations as a whole, are of major concern in the novel Crackpot. It is characteristic of both the socialism and the Judaism of the world of the novel that, while charity and giving are viewed as among the greatest goods, the abolition of the need for charity is viewed as the supreme value. Zborowski and Herzog describe the nature of charity in the shtetl as follows: "The most popular word for it [charity] is tsdokeh. This is one of the Hebrew words which has been incorporated into the Yiddish vocabulary, and its real meaning is not charity but justice--'social justice' would be more accurate in this context . . . .Life in the shtetl begins and ends with tsdokeh . . . .At every turn during one's life, the reminder to give is present . . . .If something good or something bad happens, one puts a coin into a box earmarked for charity."[64] Maimonides, the great Jewish philosopher of the twelfth century, described the ultimate level of charity as that which anticipates the prevention of poverty, by the offering of a gift or a loan, or

the provision of work for the needy person, so that he may become self-sufficient.[65] Blake's lines from "The Human Abstract" capture the essence of this view:

> Pity would be no more
> If we did not make somebody Poor;
> And Mercy no more could be
> If all were as happy as we.

It is this attitude to pity which is, as we have seen, crucial to an understanding of Abraham, in The Sacrifice. A description of the underlying cultural context of the significance of charity further illustrates this point:

> The patterns of giving and receiving represent a key mechanism in the shtetl basic to individual relations and community functions, and paramount in the ethical system to which all functions and all relations are referred. Giving is both a duty and a joy; it is a source of heavenly approval and also a source of earthly prestige. The fortunate man is the one who is in a position to give. The unfortunate one is the one who is under pressure to accept. Granted the correct situation, accepting is not necessarily painful -- but under any circumstances, giving is counted among the great gratifications of life.[66]

The elevating gesture of giving has among its rewards for Hoda her first encounter with her son. Making her way into the forbidden territory near Uncle's home, the boy becomes the agent of delivery of the gift from Hoda and Danile to Uncle Nathan. Thus, all three generations are joined in an act which is redemptive. Hoda's delayed response of acute emotional distress implies an intuitive, unconscious knowledge of the experience of which she has been a part.

Hoda's and Danile's act of giving serves to reunite the fragments of their family. The return of Uncle Nathan into their lives brings him back to what he considers "his own," not only to kin, but also to a world in

which he is comfortable. Although there is a somewhat silly dimension to the descriptions of Uncle's visits to his family (Chapter 8), they are realistic in their illustration of the intimacy of the family circle providing a forum for unselfconscious expression, permitting individuals to divest themselves of the superficial personae they develop in order to face the world. Uncle's charades serve structurally to bring the world of the orphanage to Hoda, providing for her a share in her son's life. Through Uncle Nathan's graphic recreation of the characters and the world of the orphanage, Hoda experiences new dimensions of understanding, an apprehension of the sensations and feelings of others that may be defined as mystical:

> Something funny happened to Hoda then. In the middle of her laughter she was jerked through her own skin and found herself, suddenly illuminated, clawing the wall in the roomful of screaming children . . ..She cried out against expanding suddenly into another's world, experiencing another's flesh, another's senses, comprehending another's anguish; why should she have to know that? . . . I know, I know, I know. The very words expanded, vibrated with inexpressible meanings and dimensions of pain and exhilaration.[67]

Thus, Hoda's knowledge grows to include a feeling of oneness with people as well as with the universe. There is a conscious growth of understanding on Hoda's part, yet one over which she has no control. Like the birth process, she is an instrument by which the phenomenon takes place, yet she is capable of using what she learns to achieve further understanding and knowledge: "Hoda's experience . . . opened her up to the possibility of further inner expansion into other worlds . . ..Could a human being bear the pain of so much growth and such fierce illumination?"[68] There are echoes here of Danile's blindness, which, according to his stories, has resulted from looking "too boldly at the sun." Set against this kind of knowledge is another kind of understanding expressed by words, which in

Hoda's thoughts are "merely a pretty game you played compared to real knowing." She imagines that if she discussed her revelation with her friend Polonick, the discussion would end by "his reasonings . . . standing triumphant over the corpse of her real experience."[69]

Hoda's apprehension of her mystical experience leads her further afield into philosophical speculation. Wiseman distinguishes through her the metaphysical from the mystical: "You could spend your whole life just thinking around, if you had to, though it was not like knowing, and anyway, who had the time to think much or to know much for that matter, the way things kept happening, and changing the whole basis of your thoughts, just when you thought everything was more or less in its place for the time being."[70] Since a good deal of the novel is an expression of Hoda's thoughts, James's judgment that she is a woman "with little taste for introspection"[71] is rather startling.

Hoda's growing knowledge brings increased awareness and understanding of her own life. She begins to see clearly the evil forces that have been around her, and, with some detachment, how she had been exploited as a young child by those who should have known better.

The expansion of her world by the return of Uncle Nathan brings with it from the so-called respectable world a dimension which is ironically sordid and violent, just as her brief foray into the downtown night-life and the wider world of prostitution exposed her to violence when she ventured beyond the pale. Hoda's world and the business she conducts from her home are innocent and gentle, free from perversion or violence. There is a direct, unequivocal exchange of simple, natural service and money. She demands and elicits respect from her customers, providing love and warmth

without complexity. Yet from Uncle's more sophisticated affluent world come the reports of the perversion of the orphanage director and his wife's subsequent suicide. Hoda's world is a reflection of the innocence with which she views it; the evil side of life, however, holds a certain fascination for her:

> But as soon as Hoda realized that he was going to imitate the face of the strangled Mrs. Limprig she jumped up and turned away from him, yelling, "I'm not looking! . . . Was the punishment for wanting to know too much that you got your wish? Something reckless and crazy in her kept rearing up and saying, All right show me Uncle, show me![72]

The human need to confront horror is a problem tackled by the novelist in Old Woman at Play, in analyzing the creative process as it is expressed by her mother. Among Mrs. Wiseman's creations are a pair of deformed dolls whom she identifies as thalidomide babies. In discussing the reason for the creation of these dolls, Wiseman concludes that they are an expression of a need "to make bearable in the process of confrontation and recreation, those realities which have given pain."[73]

Thus, in Hoda's wish to confront the horror of the face of death the novelist expresses the human need to come to terms with such realities. It is this need, as well, which may explain the magnitude of the themes with which Wiseman chooses to deal, and which she so ably masters.

From involvement with the most profound experiences of human existence, Hoda characteristically turns to problems of social significance. From her expansion into mystical knowing and understanding of the deepest psychological experience, Hoda moves to the expansion of political and social awareness. An important part of her ability to maintain control of her life is the knowledge of how to care for her physical well-being; given the nature of her business, this care takes on a social responsibility

as well. Hoda's regular visits to the Public Health Clinic provide her with new observations and knowledge through her experience with bureaucrats and functionaries; her astuteness provides her with insight into the functioning of society and her place in it.

Hoda's walk from her home to the Public Health Clinic at City Hall brings sharply into focus the realism of the novel's setting. No fictional setting could provide a more graphic illustration of the various levels of society and their interaction than this area. Wiseman's description emerges with photographic precision, projecting an image which exists now only in memory:

> Past the big railway hotel she trudged, where strangers and the rich hid behind long windows with thick, velvet curtains . . . . Past the beer parlours, where, even at this time of morning, the half-breeds lounged patiently, waiting for opening time to cut the glare of their days. . . . Grim reflections were followed by considerations more tender, as Hoda passed three movie houses, one after the other, slowing down to go over, frame by frame, the stills of six not quite current movies.[74]

Although throughout the novel the many geographic references are obviously to Winnipeg, it is this passage (pp. 204 - 206) in which it is most brilliantly brought to life. The special significance of this area is that it was traditionally the place where newly-arrived immigrants made their homes, before moving northward, and then south, if and when their fortunes improved. Stopping short of the financial district and the more prestigious downtown shopping area, Hoda takes us on a walking tour of a place that has obvious deep associations for Wiseman.

The old City Hall of Winnipeg, now extinct, serves as a symbol of the Victorian values of the society it represented. In Hoda's mind, it is the locus of the betrayal of the workers by the city fathers in the

1919 General Strike. A statue of the unknown soldier, surrounded by down and out old soldiers, symbolizes their betrayal by a society which praises patriotism on the one hand, but fails to reward it justly, on the other. Hoda's feelings for the City Hall are ambivalent:

> Not that Hoda minded the City Hall itself. In a way she liked being somehow connected to a nice, big, ugly old building, and this one was maybe as big as a palace, the crazy, haunted kind you sometimes saw in pictures, gloomy but impressive, the way those broad, double-armed stairways led up to the front entrance, and all those bumps and protrusions and separate cockeyed little constructions rising up and up all over the place, with hundreds of little windows set into masses of stale old genital-coloured brick.[75]

In Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel, John Moss states that one of the problems of Crackpot is the identification of the narrative voice. "Is it Hoda or Wiseman or an indeterminate colloquial voice between the two?"[76] he asks. Adele Freedman asks the novelist, in an interview published in Saturday Night, if there is, in the character of Hoda, an element of the autobiographical.[77] These questions would seem, in my opinion, to be irrelevant. Although vision and imagination are the stock in trade of the artist, it is common knowledge that the imagination is nourished by experience.

Writing in the Manitoba Centennial Edition of Mosaic, Margaret Laurence quotes from Graham Greene: "The creative writer perceives his world once and for all in childhood and adolescence, and his whole career is an effort to illustrate his private world in terms of the great public world we all share."[78] In the same issue, James Reaney, in an article entitled "Manitoba as a Writer's Environment," makes the following comment: "At first I found very few other people who cared about their place the way I wanted to care, Adele Wiseman proving the exception."[79] This kind of caring is most apparent

in Crackpot, reaching its climax in Hoda's walk down Main Street.

Wiseman's own analysis in Mosaic of her relationship as an artist to the environment is somewhat cynical, even bitter. She is satirically critical of the social structure of the city, and is wary of expressing an emotional attachment to the physical surroundings of her youth:

> Logically or no, there are things which I feel about myself as a writer which feel like the feel of the look of the prairie. Certain qualities have analagous visual shapes for me. I see the landscape of my youth in a certain predilection for epic themes, a certain relentlessness, a stubborn disinclination to compromise, to cooperate even, to accept any other terms by my own. It is difficult to temporize or to evade or to hide when you live in my prairie feelscape. Where is there to go with the whole sky looking?[80]

Yet the clarity and emotional depth of her description of the Winnipeg north-end, from one extremity to the other -- City Hall to the farthest north of the Jewish cemeteries where Hoda spends so much time toward the end of the novel--attest to her close identification with this territory. By 1979 Adele Wiseman had come to terms with this affection for the Winnipeg landscape. She no longer describes it as a "feelscape." Her contribution to a Chatelaine edition featuring "Winnipeg Warm and Wonderful" was an article describing the "Winnipeg Cityscape": "Winnipeg is not just another pretty place," she begins, "but a special, almost legendary experience."[81]

While Margaret Laurence describes the setting of many of her novels, Manawaka, as a fictional Manitoba town, many of whose elements have been fashioned from the realities of her birthplace, Adele Wiseman moves from such an imaginary setting in The Sacrifice to a meticulous realism in the setting of Crackpot. Perhaps this is because the imagination could not have improved on the reality of the urban landscape of Winnipeg, for in the stretch

of the authentic Main Street that Hoda walks is an area which is a concrete visual expression of the highly complex values and relationships of that veritable urban village. Here stand sharply juxtaposed the opulent railway hotel, a monument to Sir John A. MacDonald, and the vanquished heirs of Louis Riel, seeking solace in the white man's alcoholic medicine. The conflict between these two historic forces and their effect on Canadian and Jewish society are of consummate concern to Wiseman, whose play, Testimonial Dinner, has this subject as its theme. "Not until I was seventeen did I realize that one of the villains of our local textbooks had fought and dreamed that there might be a different Prairie Way; he was a madman of course. And they strung him up. Of course. What good is a live culture hero anyway? They spoil. So much for the Dream of Exovidate," she writes in Mosaic.[82]

It is with an intuitive sense of defiance and dignity, no doubt fortified by the unfolding of life which she has witnessed on her journey to the Public Health Clinic, that Hoda refuses to be silenced or ignored. Her self-assertiveness and her refusal to be cowed into silence attest to her deep feelings of self-respect, and honest acceptance of who she is. Hoda's performance in the Public Health Clinic is a conscious demand for the respect to which she believes each individual is entitled. From her honest and vocal exposure of hypocrisy as it permeates the society around her, it is difficult not to deduce a powerful identification of the novelist with her protagonist. The following description emphasizes that identification:

> But sometimes she gave way to the pressure of her thoughts, and went off, after a light-hearted beginning, into long, discursive monologues, noting the restiveness of her captive audience, after a while, but unable to stop herself

> just yet from trying to hunt down and capture the truth towards which her unwinding words seemed to beckon, perenially teasing her to the perenially incomplete revelation of words, and yet more words.[83]

What Hoda reveals in the waiting room at the Clinic is perhaps a self-indulgence of the author, showing specifically her understanding of the inherent paradoxes of prairie life. Using the Victorian motto, "Commerce, Prudence and Industry," as a jumping off point, Hoda demonstrates the irony of this motto as it relates to her own experiences. Her speech includes references to the realities of Manitoba History: her friend Hymie's fairy tale success through the "booze pipeline people" is an obvious allusion to the Bronfman dynasty, now immortalized in print by Peter Newman;[84] there is an allusion to Rodman P. Roblin, whose Conservative government fell in 1915 after it was discovered that he and a number of his ministers had absconded with funds intended for the erection of the Manitoba Parliament Buildings.[85] Nor are the sins of the fathers visited upon the sons. The wary reader knows that during the writing of this novel another Roblin occupied the seat of first minister in Manitoba. Hoda's reference to these different varieties of "Commerce, Prudence and Industry" are meant to demonstrate her understanding that the propounded motto is simply a screen by which the successful hide their real standards of expediency.

Wiseman's personal associations with City Hall and the Public Health Department are revealed in Old Woman at Play:

> We had been evicted from our original shop, when the city health authorities, coincident with the desire of our landlord to break our lease, suddenly discovered that we had been living, for the past six years, in conditions detrimental to our health and welfare. Frightened that with the move we'd lose most of our customers, for poor people wouldn't want to add carfare to the cost of minor alterations, my dad took my adolescent brother Harry, a weightlifter in glowing health, superb of chest and thew,

> along with him to City Hall to plead our case in English. Of his first vain encounter with officialdom, Harry told me years later: "I'll never forget the expression on his face when I tried to explain; the way he looked at me . . . that was when I decided I was going to do something with my life that would make it impossible for his kind ever to have power over me again.[86]

The reintroduction of David into Hoda's life is anticipated by the reports from her father of the boy's participation in the synagogue services. The significance of the boy's names, Pipick and Prince, have already been briefly considered. The third name, David Ben Zion (David Son of Zion), has many implications. As both a historic and a legendary figure, David, King of the Jews, is a folk hero, as well as being a poet, musician, and a "sweet singer." It is through King David's dynasty that the messiah is promised. All of these associations are contained in Danile's description of the boy: "Through all of these indefinite and unaccountable imaginings, these untonguable questionings that are roused up in us by the noises of life, The One Above sends down to us, every now and then, to reassure us, one pure note."[87] David, as the third generation, is a personification of hope for the future, a hope which persists in the face of doubt and objective reality.

David's need for love, as demonstrated by his somewhat incestuous relationship with the orphanage housekeeper, Mrs. Tize, foreshadows his subsequent union with his mother. In her introduction to the second edition of Crackpot, Margaret Laurence suggests that Hoda's discovery that the boy who has come to her as a neighbourhood whore leaves her with two choices: if she refuses the boy, "he will feel that he is unacceptable as a man, or he will have to be told who he is."[88] This clear definition of the problem captures the essence of the confrontation, discarding the layers of moral

questions which must attend the breaking of so formidable a taboo. Here, Hoda's morality emerges unambiguously. The choice must be the action which will be most beneficial to the boy; her own feelings and abstract principles must be judged irrelevant. The wish to reveal herself as his mother, to assume a relationship which she has fantasized, must also be rejected with an honesty and intelligence that apprehends the nature of such a relationship. Hoda knows that social and psychological implications must supersede wishful thinking.

This standard of moral behaviour is the ultimate expression of the paradoxical vision of which Crackpot is a manifestation, for it permits Hoda to commit, knowingly, an act which in the Mosaic code, is considered one of its deepest violations. Freud, in describing Oedipus as "That mythical lawbreaker," suggests that the Oedipal crime is prototypical of all lawbreaking.[89] On the other hand, in Kabbalistic thought, the source of evil is identified as "the superabundant growth of the power of judgment [away] from its customary union with the power of loving-kindness."[90] In her simplicity, it is "lovingkindness" which Hoda understands, and which can be her only choice, for she must fortify her son with self-respect for himself as a person and as a man.

In tackling the subject of incest, Wiseman takes on perhaps the most difficult of all human relationships. Her comments about art and creativity are of particular relevance, both to her treatment of incest in Crackpot, and to the pseudo-sacrificial murder in The Sacrifice:

> What is possible is always more fascinating to the artist than what is permissible. Indeed, much of our most powerful literary work is centred on the confrontation between what is naturally possible and what is socially permissible. The artist is drawn toward the dreaded, fascinating frontiers of the possible. For it is here that he works out optimally the potentialities of his being.[91]

Love is the subject which preoccupies Hoda and David in their early discussions. In The Sacrifice, love emerges quite suddenly and without warning as a solution to the world's ills. In Crackpot, sex as a metaphor for love is implicit in the novel, although it is verbalized only in relation to Hoda and David as they come together. David's cry of "I love you" to Hoda, as he reaches his first sexual climax, foreshadows her description of the function of the work she does:

> I've been thinking about it for a long time, you know. . . . You have to. If its your profession, what you do all the time for a living . . . [Sometimes people] try to pretend they know how to make more than just a little love at a time. It's a lie. Nobody knows that; well, God, maybe. Sometimes all the love you get even though you're making like crazy is just a shiverful, a flash of feeling between you. You know that radium stuff that you hear so much about? How hard it is to get . . . in all them rocks up North. But look how worthwhile it is. With that little bit you can see right through everything.[92]

The preciousness of love, both of God and of man, is expressed in these words from mother to son, thus giving this ostensibly physical encounter a spiritual dimension.

Hoda, like Isaac in The Sacrifice, answers to God for the work she does on earth: " 'Well, Lord, I made a little love!' and He'll say, 'Not bad, Hoda, I ain't done much more myself.' "[93] As a source of love and life, Hoda identifies herself as an agent of God. Obviously, Hoda's God is not Blake's conception of the Old Testament Nobadaddy, but a loving, caring, humanitarian God. The association of love with the transmission of warmth, light, and the physical and spiritual communication of one human being for another conveys a positive feeling for this mother-son relationship which is complicated by their physical union. David's strangely knotted navel provides a symbol for this complexity, for Hoda suffers not

only from the commission of a forbidden act, but also from a detachment which permits her to see her own son having relations with a whore: "I could tell even by the way you acted that something inside of you was against it all the time, because deep down you knew there was something better in store for you in life."[94] The situation is further aggravated by his confession of the sadness and alienation he has felt because of the knowledge that he was an unwanted child. The description of his unhappiness forces Hoda to agree to have sexual relations with him. Having rejected him as her child, she cannot in conscience reject him once more as a man. The dilemma is great, and seemingly insoluble, but a choice must be made.

The convergence of the imagery of the novel at this particular point effectively prevents this situation from appearing contrived and melodramatic. It is indeed a formidable achievement that Wiseman is able to succeed in raising this bizarre confrontation to a level of tragic intensity. That the lives of two human beings of humble origin may be fraught with such profound and significant experience demonstrates that tragedy is as much a part of the lives of ordinary men and women as it is of figures of ostensibly noble origin. Hoda, the crackpot whore, and Pipick, the orphan prince, have the same capacity for suffering as Oedipus and Jocasta, and the urban ghetto of Winnipeg in the 1930's is as valid a setting for such action as is ancient Greece.

In this section of the novel the metaphorical use of the Kabbalistic vessel and shards imagery introduced in the epigraph, the recurrent knot symbolism, and the symbolism of eyes and blindness are fused together, uniting the vision of the artist in a climactic whole. The limitations of Hoda's

life are suddenly seen by her as characteristically contained in a vessel: "All her life she had spent bottled up in this room, and she would never escape it, and every now and then someone picked up the bottle and shook it and shook it and she was flung to and fro, drowning and gasping and clutching at her life."[95] Here, Hoda's life is seen as beyond her own control, at the mercy of some unknown power, against which she must struggle to maintain herself.

The shards imagery appears as Hoda tries to make some meaning of the events that have taken place on that fateful evening: "Her mind stumbled back and forth over the fragments of the evening, and tried to comprehend some enormous connection with the rest of her life."[96] The "enormous connection," of course, is precisely what is taking place. The boy is returned to her, in need of love and encouragement; he is a living symbol of Hoda's own unhappy life, the ignorance and innocence with which she has given herself, her own need for love and attention, and the failure of society to provide it for her. On the positive side, he is an able, caring, productive human being, a contribution that Hoda's suffering has made to the world. Her note describing him as a Prince is echoed in the boy's identification of himself, and finally, his proof of who he is is in the notes that she herself has written to the orphanage, enclosing the money with which she had hoped to help him, and which now provides the means by which he has come to her. The complexity and irony of this situation are reflected in the many knots of the boy's navel, the means by which Hoda has been able to identify him as her son. The motif of the knot is repeated in the knot of her kimono cord, which she tries to keep tightly tied as a defence against committing an act of incest.

Unlike Danile, whose blindness permits him to escape the perception of evil, the confrontation is inescapable for Hoda: "They felt funny in her head, her eyes, as though they had been frozen open wider than she could bear."[97] When Hoda at last acquiesces to David, he insists on leaving the light on, "denying her even the darkness in his innocence." The burden of guilt remains always with Hoda, for she shields him even from the knowledge of his sin. For her, the relationship with David signals the end of her innocence: "Until this moment, though she had suffered some, she had been innocent."[98] It is a culmination of the irony that Hoda ascribes her act to God's will:

> But in the end she knew, in a curious, distant way, that if God so willed, it was within the range of her sense of humour to bear that too. Into how many pieces does one break and still bother to count the pieces? Enough that he was fragile and she held him tenderly, and tried in the only way she knew how to make up for all the harm she had done.[99]

During the course of her relationship with David, which lasts over a period of time, Hoda finds solace for her suffering in the repetition of the stories of Danile. Her lost innocence, and her new knowledge change her perception of these stories. With keen insight, she understands the ambiguity of her response:

> That was something the nicey stories never told you about, how with pain and tenderness and all those other goody nicey things went a savage desire to destroy what you loved, and a terrible fear that somehow you would succeed, or even that you would discover that you had already done so.[100]

In spite of this ambiguity, Hoda believes that the stories are of great value, and therefore wishes to hand them down to David as a family legacy. This she does, although in the course of the novel there is no suggestion

that David has any appreciation for them beyond their strangeness.

In her desire to transmit the knowledge of her roots to the next generation, Hoda bears a strong resemblance to Morag Gunn of Laurence's The Diviners. In that novel, the third generation is represented by Pique Tonnerre, whose legacy from her father is "some songs" which describe her Metis heritage, and whose mother, Morag Gunn, tells her the tales of her Scottish ancestry as they have been recounted to her by her father, Christie Logan. There is a difference, however, in that Pique values her songs and stories because they are meaningful to her, whereas David's stories seem unrelated to him.

The changes wrought in Hoda's life by the Second World War reflect the reality of social change as it was experienced in North America, and specifically in Winnipeg. Here too, irony is implicit in the evolution of her life. Hoda's concern for what was happening to the Jews of Europe is expressed in her refusal to consider her first offer of marriage from a Ukrainian customer, yet the quality of her own life in Canada improves significantly because of the war: "True, everybody complained of rationing and of shortages, and Hoda complained patriotically, like everybody else, though most of the things that were short she was getting more of than she'd ever been able to afford in her whole life before, thanks to Limpy's connections."[101] Partaking of the economic prosperity which the war brings to the Canadian prairies, Hoda's career takes a change for the better. Through her childhood friendship with Limpy, Hoda gradually relinquishes her own business to become a hostess-manager of Limpy's delicatessen-kibitzarnia, where she is a purveyor of pleasure and fun, reflecting and creating a carnival atmosphere through the radiance dif-

fused by her spirit and style:

> She allowed herself to indulge a late-blossoming urge to elegance. Though new clothing materials were almost non-existent nowadays, she was nevertheless able to blaze forth in dresses which for sheer yardage and swoopage and colour once moved Limpy to leap from his chair and cry out as she swept, all adazzle, into the back room, "Gentlemen, here come the Northern Lights! All of them!"[102]

In Limpy's metaphor, Hoda becomes the Northern Lights she has paused to enjoy as she hurried to weddings. But the paradox of Hoda's celebration of life at this time is her predilection for funerals; even as her nights are spent in promoting pleasure, her days are spent in mourning:

> Somehow, wherever and whenever a funeral was to be held, she got wind of it, and came and hung around in the yard, or sometimes even came right into the house and mingled with the other mourners, and marched with them after the coffin, and boldly asked from car to car for a lift out to the graveyard, and usually got one, eventually, from someone who still knew it was a sin to refuse.[103]

For Hoda, the intensity with which she feels and responds is the true measure of her knowledge, a knowledge which is concrete, physical, and whole: " . . . what she sought and sometimes found out there [in the cemetery] was the feeling of her own aliveness, an in-spite-of-herself accountable aliveness, that the spangled dresses and the black-market chocolate bars and the plaudits of her admirers and the knowledge that she was a woman of taste and sophistication and something of a success in the world at last, had not, somehow, been able to make her feel."[104]

"There is, needless to say, no happy ending," Geoffrey James observes in his Time review.[105] James quotes from Hoda's observation about happiness: "What was this 'happy' anyway? She doubted if she'd know how to recognize it if she ever got an attack of it . . . .From what you heard it was so delicate you'd have to spend the rest of your life pampering

it."[106] The notion of "happy ending" as it occurs in fairy tales and vintage Hollywood movies seems antithetical to the content and philosophy of Crackpot. However, within the context of the novel its resolution is unambiguously positive and life-affirming. In the Jewish tradition, the completion of the individual can occur only through marriage. According to the Talmud, the original human being was androgynous until he was separated by God into two distinct entities, neither of which is complete without the other. Hence, the constant seeking of one sex for the other in order to achieve completion. Sherman explains the significance of marriage in Kabbalistic terms. In the second stage of the Lurianic creation myth, when the vessels are broken, the Shekhinah (the Divine Presence), which is thought of as feminine, is torn away from the Godhead, Ze'ir, which is masculine. Thus, in order to achieve restoration, it is essential that female and male be united.[107] In the concluding chapter, which appropriately deals with death and funerals, just as the first chapter deals with marriage and birth, Lazar, arising from the dead of his family in the European holocaust, finds his way back to life and to a marital union with Hoda. Thus, in cyclical fashion, the beginnings of Hoda's life are re-enacted. Hoda herself has arisen from the grave-yard of her parents' enforced marriage, which has come about because of the plague. Unwittingly, she gives to Lazar the name of the plague. In the word "Mocky," which is a euphemism for refugee, Lazar finds the meaning "plague" in translating it from the Hebrew. "Why had we clawed our way free to come and squat in imitation of life among you?" Lazar asks.[108]

Wiseman's handling of the relationship of Lazar to the native

Canadian Jews and the deep psychological revulsion which his presence elicits is a penetrating perception of the natural human desire to turn away from the reality of horror, combined with the guilt of having been spared. The acceptance of this reality is seen as a necessary part of living: "She had wanted to know what had happened to him, and now she knew. Had she thought she would escape the responsibility of knowing?"[109] In this culture James's notion of "happy ending" seems trivial.

Lazar's words, " 'You'll have your ring,' "[110] echo and intensify the idea of circularity, which culminates in the "magic circle" of Hoda's dream. To suggest, as Kenneth Sherman does, that "the fact that the vision takes place in a dream may disrupt the strength of the vision,"[111] is to misread the novel. The entire world of the novel comes to us as it is filtered through the consciousness of Hoda; it is a world where reality is no less strange than dream. That world, as it is presented to us, is a vision coloured by imagination and emotion. In Hoda, the inner world is no less real or valid than the outer world. As dreams reveal to us essential truths about ourselves and mankind, so Hoda's dream combines for her and for the reader all that is significant in her life, past, present, and future: Danile, David, Lazar, the orphanage in the process of being torn down; the corpses she has mourned at funerals; the parody of the Winnipeg motto--"Condoms, Prurience, Incestry"; the feared, and ultimately inevitable death of her father, and a son who bears his name--all of these elements become the ingredients in the "brimming pot" that is Hoda's life. The "muddy waters" symbolize the Winnipeg setting, for that is the English translation for its Indian name. It reflects also the intricate complexity which is Hoda's knowledge of life. Our final image of that life is appropriately

domestic - the brimming pot of life filled with its disparate elements, with the catalyst in the brewing of that concoction the circular movement of Hoda and her loved ones.

Structurally, Hoda's final dream provides the contrary of her three nightmare experiences. The first has been the night of her mother's death; the second, the night of David's birth, from which she is sure she will awaken to find she has been having a nightmare; the third is the night she discovers she has had intercourse with her son, and is forced to do so knowingly again. In ending with a dream, the novel affirms the subjectivity of human experience, needs, and desires, and demonstrates that dreams and vision are an intrinsic part of our knowledge of life. The novel begins with a vision and ends with a vision. Its epigraph evokes the historical figure of Isaac Luria in the context of his legendary, mythical name, Ari. The work is seen by the novelist as a metaphorical prayer, as indicated by its dedication, "A Kaddish for Esther." The Kaddish, known as the mourner's prayer, significantly says nothing about death. It is an eschatological, messianic prayer about remembrance and continuity, an affirmation of the existence of God and the value of life.[112]

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Wiseman ends her book Old Woman at Play listing what she has learned about the nature of art through her mother's life and work. The list includes a definition of:

ART AS COMMUNICATION
ART AS IMITATION
ART AS MEDIATION
ART AS REORGANIZATION
ART AS RE-CREATION
ART AS INTEGRATION
ART AS INNOVATION
ART AS INTERPRETATION
ART AS RECONCILIATION
ART, above all, as CELEBRATION.[1]

She continues in more traditional form: "And more, mama and her work have confirmed in me that knowledge that art, uncapitalized and unshunned, is our human birthright, the extraordinary right and privilege to share, both as givers and receivers, in the work of continuous creation."[2] Implicit in this conception of art is the idea of the interaction of the individual with a universal creative force, an idea which is expressed in both her novels. Isaac in The Sacrifice and Hoda in Crackpot look upon the work they do on earth as a responsibility and privilege of life for which they answer to God; Moses in The Sacrifice and Danile in Crackpot seek and find a measure of redemption in creativity. In Wiseman's dedication to Crackpot as a prayer, the "Kaddish," she demonstrates this view, and the religious intensity with which she is committed to her work.

While the number of Wiseman's publications are few, the substance of her work, The Sacrifice and Crackpot in particular, has made a significant

contribution to Canadian literature. Recently, discussing the status of Canadian literature in Europe, William French reported in the Globe and Mail[3] the existence of a "fan club" in Holland for Adele Wiseman, indicating that she is probably better known and appreciated abroad than at home. It suggests, also, that her work is of universal interest, and is not confined to the regional and parochial of which it has been accused. Tom Marshall, writing of "The Third Solitude: the Jew as Canadian," describes well the relevance of the Jewish experience in Canada: "There is a sense in which the Jew is the most Canadian of Canadians; history has forced them to experience the conflicts and tensions that all sensitive Canadians experience, but to an intense degree. The search for honour and for dignity in a world of flames, the prophets searching for vision in the desert of a new country; these themes are Jewish and Canadian and universal at once."[4]

Toba Korenblum reports that Wiseman "described herself as quite a naïve kid when she wrote her first novel, 'well within established tradition.' "[5] In The Sacrifice the simple linear structure produces a traditional nineteenth-century novel, in which the narrative makes clearly apparent to the reader the action that is taking place. In Crackpot, however, there is a complex interweaving of many different levels of meaning, reflecting Hoda's view of the world in its synthesis of the many disparate and contradictory elements of Kabbalism, satire, slapstick, and allegory, expressed in a language and form which is also flexible, varying within the novel. Wiseman's earlier naïveté is nowhere more apparent than in the contrast between the main female characters of her two novels. Her predilection for whores as heroines

is expressed by Laiah in The Sacrifice, and by Hoda in Crackpot.

Adele Freedman's observation in Saturday Night that The Sacrifice is patriarchal, while Crackpot is matriarchal is certainly accurate.[6] As we have seen, there is, in the first novel, an implicit judgment of Laiah's unworthiness. She personifies all that we associate with evil -- materialism, hedonism, manipulation of others in order to achieve her own goals--while at the same time she demonstrates no redeeming qualities. In fact, none of the female characters of The Sacrifice achieves the stature of such male figures as Abraham, Isaac, Chaim Knopp, or Moses. Pragmatic and superficial, they conform to the shtetl image of women as facilitators, wives and mothers who provide sustenance for their families, and, as in Ruth's case, are capable of earning a living to enable their men to achieve goals that are beyond the scope of women. Thus, through her small business, Ruth is able to support her son Moses, and provide him with the violin lessons which lead to a career as a virtuoso. The image is one which conforms, also, to the period in which it is written, for in the aftermath of World War II the notion of female warmth and support for men who had proved their heroism in the battlefield was a part of the North American ethos.

In contrast to Laiah, Hoda is the personification of love, warmth, generosity, honesty. Sex, in Hoda, becomes a metaphor for love and giving. In Crackpot the father figure is a blind innocent, an incarnation of gentleness and wisdom, and the female figure of Hoda expands into a figure of power, strength, and understanding. However, it is interesting that she does not surrender her traditional domestic nurturing role; it is essential to herself and to her men for survival in the world about her.

"The tone of the culture," which Wiseman discusses in Old Woman at Play, is relevant to the creation of the two major female characters of the novels. In that book, she reveals a discussion she has had with her aunt concerning the childhood death of a young brother, which was ostensibly the result of "the evil eye," transmitted through a woman who did not realize that she possessed this demonic power. What Wiseman marvels at in the recounting of the story by her aunt is the "non-punitive tone, the essential compassion of the interpretation."[7] It is just such a tone which the mature Wiseman achieves in Crackpot, imbuing it with a strange blend of innocence and knowing. That tone, however, is not achieved in The Sacrifice, although its essence is expressed verbally in the resolution of the novel.

In 1978 Adele Wiseman published privately a play called Testimonial Dinner, which, like Lovebound, she had been unable to bring before the public. The play contains many of the themes of her novels. Among these, her preoccupation with the three generational family is most apparent. In The Sacrifice, the first generation, represented by Abraham and Sarah, are the exemplars of tradition. A modification takes place in the second generation with the union of Isaac, both spiritually and physically, with the new land, expressed in his marriage to Ruth, a young woman born in Canada. As the representative of the third generation, Moses promises a redemptive future, through art and creativity, and through the achievement of wisdom and understanding with the help of his grandfather. In The Sacrifice, traditional concern and respect for the old are demonstrated by Isaac in his wish to provide care and comfort for his father in his old age. The "miracle" of Moses's and Chaim Knopp's grandson Aaron's friend-

ship comes about because of their respect and consideration for the old man, for it is their visit to the Old Folks' Home which brings them together. "You two boys bring life," Chaim tells them,[8] and that is precisely their function in the novel, ending it on a note of hope for the future. In Crackpot, Hoda's son, as representative of the third generation, performs a similar function as the tenth man in the "minyan" of old men who pray at the synagogues. For Danile, his presence in the group is seen as a signal of hope: " . . . The One Above sends down to us every now and then, to reassure us, one pure note."[9]

There is, in Crackpot, a crucial difference, however. In Hoda's commitment to her blind father, which becomes her reason for living, may be seen a commitment to a tradition, as well as to parents. The notion of suicide arises within the novel, and each time it presents itself to Hoda as an option, she dismisses it on the basis of responsibility-- the need to care for Danile. However, Hoda, as the mother of David Ben Zion, does not have the same hold on her son. To begin with, from birth, she surrenders his care to the community, to society. Danile also gives lip-service to the idea of giving freedom to his daughter: "I didn't want to interfere, Hodaleh . . . it is your life. That's what it means when we say that parents give their children life, isn't it? We give them life and we lead them a few steps along the way, and then they say to us, 'It's mine. You gave it to me. You can't control it any longer', I learned to keep quiet a long time ago.. . ."[10] Within a very limited sphere, Hoda has choices and is permitted to exercise them, suggesting Wiseman's view of the limits of free will,

determinism, and responsibility. By denying her son the knowledge that she is his parent, Hoda releases him from responsibility. While she gives him all that she is capable of, she expects nothing in return. Hoda, as a parody of Jewish motherhood, even goes through a phase of saving coins to send David to Medical School. She realizes her goal of transmitting the family stories to him, without revealing to him their relevance to his own life. It is only in Hoda's dream at the end of the novel that we are permitted to understand the fantasy she has for their relationship --that of understanding and appreciation for what she is and represents, quite apart from any blood tie which may exist between them.

In her play, Testimonial Dinner, Wiseman also presents three generations: the first generation represented by a dying man who had been an immigrant; his sons, one a college professor, and the other a consultant to the federal government, represent the second generation; and finally, in the third generation, a grandson Kent, and his girlfriend Ellen, who is pregnant with the fourth generation.

Wiseman's fascination with language, graphically demonstrated by her predilection for puns, is epitomized in Testimonial Dinner, with Loksh's speech about his grandson: "I call him Kent, I feel strange; I call him Chaim. He feels strange. Ken I ken Kent? How ken I? I Kent."[11] The quotation combines not only puns, but a parody of Yiddish accent, as well as Yiddish language, in which ken and Kent are actually verb forms of "to know," and also satirizes the extreme anglicization of third generation names.

The recurrent symbol of the knot appears also in Testimonial Dinner, after the two sons of Loksh attempt to analyze their father's character and life. They are warned by the Poet Rose that "If we try to unravel him further we will be left with so many knots."[12] The knot symbol becomes the basis for a pun: "There are many knots in your truth. Poets do NOT love their garrets. They do NOT love their loneliness. Your father was NOT a poet. He knew it. It does NOT matter."[13] Appropriately, it is the poet, expert in the manipulation of words, who speaks these lines.

Speaking of his father and uncle in Testimonial Dinner Kent tells Ellen: "I learned from them . . . why those mad scientists who spend their lives trying to put together a monster never make it. To create a real monster you don't put together, you take apart, preferably someone you love."[14] His observation follows a family dinner during which his grandfather and great uncle, the family "ancestral figures" have been analyzed. It is just such an analysis which has occurred between Ruth and Abraham in The Sacrifice that serves as the preamble to Abraham's murder of Laiah. This kind of thinking represents the culmination of the rationalism to which Isaac is exposed, and which influences him in The Sacrifice, as well as the tunnel vision of Polonick in Crackpot.

In both The Sacrifice and Crackpot the nature of charity and social justice are explored, and the question of community recognition for philanthropic acts is dealt with. Uncle Nathan chooses public recognition for public charity over the performance of private acts of kindness. In Crackpot, Wiseman handles masterfully Uncle Nathan's mental processes as he plans to make the grand charitable gesture, anticipating the response

of others to his generosity.[15] In The Sacrifice the contribution of the Torah by a man who has made his money in much the same way as Jake and Laib in Testimonial Dinner is a source of disillusionment for Isaac. In Testimonial Dinner, Freddy and Hank choose for their father public recognition and accolades for questionable community contributions over an honest sharing between father and sons of the real meaning of a man's life.

What Wiseman calls "the dominant ancestral figures" are represented in her play by Riel and Sir John A. MacDonald, who are seen as opposing forces in Canadian life. Fused on the stage in the scenario of Testimonial Dinner are the preoccupations which permeate Crackpot, and are a part of The Sacrifice: specifically, the conflict of values in what these two historic figures represent in our national ethos. The writer's own description of her intended meaning most clearly elucidates her point:

> In the body of the play I deal with a family of immigrant Jews, and examine how living pre-history has shaped three generations. The arriving immigrant appears like a child, newborn into possibility. He carries with him as endowments his previous cultural baggage, and whatever mysteries of personal gifts, predispositions, affections, scars, possibilities or as yet untapped resources from his "previous existence." Success in this new world is going to depend on his development of whatever potential he has which best fits in with the dominant thrust of the society. There is much which may be of great value which he may have to discard as useless here, including the language of his previous thoughts and dreams, and the moral song of his being. If, for instance, real estate rapacity is the route to the top, as it has always been, traditionally, in this country, what if you have the mysterious gift, (and gifts and the various forms of felt-intelligence are always mysterious, at root,) to divine real estate values, and what if your initially innocent but energetic and ambitious brother is capable of selecting and developing, of all his

> inherent possibilities, the kind of ruthlessness required to create a real estate empire during the depression? And suppose you are fated to comprehend but not strong enough to resist playing your part, considering the alternatives? Then you are a credit to Sir John, for he did the same in the name of Queen and country some time back. But what if you carry, as Sir John still does Riel, unassimilated on your spiritual back, the intuition that perhaps those gifts of yours, in a different setting, might have found a different fruition? What if Sir John and Riel could somehow, at some time, have been integrated, and Riel given his place in the land instead of endlessly suffering the same apparent defeat, and your new country had provided a different setting for the development of what was your real poetic gift? Would your brother also not then have found a more positive outlet for his vitality? And would not this legacy have made some positive difference in the lives of your sons and daughters?[16]

Clearly, the patterns established by Canadian society are implicated in the deterioration of traditional Jewish values, and the failure of the immigrants and their progeny to uphold those values in a way which would be life-giving for all concerned. Characteristically, Wiseman poses questions which are arguable, provocative, and unorthodox. It is this boldness, originality, and honesty, and her ability to project these qualities with vitality and energy that renders Adele Wiseman a Canadian writer whose work merits attention and study.

FOOTNOTES

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1]M. F., "The Causerie," Winnipeg Free Press (September 29, 1956).

[2]J. M. G., "Book Review," Winnipeg Free Press (September 29, 1956).

[3]Peter Desbarats, "Book Review," Winnipeg Tribune (September 23, 1956).

[4]Malcolm Ross, "Review of the Second Scroll" (reprinted from The Canadian Forum, 1952) A. M. Klein, ed. Tom Marshall (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1970), p. 91.

[5]Adele Freedman, "The Stubborn Ethnicity of Adele W.," Saturday Night (May, 1976), p. 28.

[6]Geoffrey James, Time Magazine (October 28, 1974), p. 11.

[7]Adele Freedman, "The Stubborn Ethnicity of Adele W.," Saturday Night (May, 1976), p. 28.

[8]Toba Korenblum, "Canadian Author Adele Wiseman Cannot be Pigeonholed," Canadian Jewish News (December 9, 1977), p. 7.

[9]Northrop Frye, The Critical Path (Don Mills: Fitzhenry and Whiteside Ltd., 1973), p. 34.

[10]Ibid., p. 35.

[11]Ibid., p. 36.

[12]M. F., "The Causerie," Winnipeg Free Press (September 29, 1956).

[13]John Moss, Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 47.

[14]Toba Korenblum, "Canadian Author Adele Wiseman Cannot be Pigeon-holed," Canadian Jewish News (December 9, 1977), p. 7.

[15]Irving Howe, Introduction to A Treasury of Yiddish Stories, edited by Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg (New York: Fawcett World Library), p. 32.

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[18]Adele Freedman, "The Stubborn Ethnicity of Adele W.," Saturday Night (May, 1976), p. 28.

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[26]Adele Wiseman, Old Woman at Play, p. 47.

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[28]Adele Wiseman, "Reverberations, 'The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo' ", Creative Campus, published by the students of the University of Manitoba, undated, p. 44.

[29]Adele Wiseman, Old Woman at Play, p. 18.

[30]Ibid., p. 28.

[31]Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, Life is With People (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), pp. 412-413.

[32]Elie Wiesel, Souls on Fire (Toronto: Random House, 1973), p. 7.

[33]Ibid., p. 7.

[34]Clara Thomas, The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 14.

[35]Ibid., p. 14.

[36]Arthur A. Chiel, The Jews of Manitoba (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 102-3.

[37]Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech," New York Times (December 9, 1978), p. 4.

[38]Ibid., p. 4.

[39]Toba Korenblum, "Canadian Author Adele Wiseman Cannot be Pigeon-holed," Canadian Jewish News (December 9, 1977), p. 7.

[40]David Bakan, Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition (Toronto: Van Nostrand Co. Inc., 1958), p. 156.

[41]Adele Wiseman, Old Woman at Play, p. 119.

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[3]Adele Wiseman, Crackpot (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 99.

[4]John Moss, Patterns of Isolation in the Canadian Novel (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 13.

[5]Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, Life is With People (5th ed.; New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 121, henceforth referred to as Life is With People.

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[7]Adele Wiseman, The Sacrifice (Toronto: Laurentian Library, Macmillan, 1977), pp. 12, 13, henceforth referred to as Sacrifice.

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[9]John Moss, Patterns of Isolation in the Canadian Novel, p. 13.

[10]Life is With People, p. 162.

[11]Abraham Heschel, The Earth is the Lord's (New York: Farrar, Straus,Giroux, 1978), p. 15.

[12]Life is With People, p. 105.

[13]Sacrifice, p. 26.

[14]John Moss, Patterns of Isolation, p. 83.

[15]*Sacrifice*, p. 245.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 20.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 89.

[18]*Ibid.*, pp. 25, 26.

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 93.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 188.

[21]*Ibid.*, Chapter 5, pp. 74-79.

[22]*Ibid.*, p. 4.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 56.

[24]*Life is With People*, p. 152.

[25]*Sacrifice*, pp. 261-262.

[26]*Ibid.*, pp. 261-262.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 110.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 259.

[29]*Ibid.*, p. 10.

[30]*Life is With People*, pp. 367, 368.

[31]*Sacrifice*, p. 182.

[32]*Ibid.*,p. 338.

[33]*Life is With People*, p. 107.

[34]Adele Wiseman, *Old Woman at Play* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co. Ltd., 1978), p. 108, henceforth referred to as *Old Woman at Play*.

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[36]*Ibid.*, p. 95.

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[43]Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1976), p. 246.

[44]*Sacrifice*, p. 11.

[45]*Ibid.*, p. 29.

[46]*Ibid.*, p. 112.

[47]*Ibid.*, p. 110.

[48]S. G. Mullins, "Traditional Symbolism in Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice*," *Culture* 19 (Summer, 1958), p. 292.

[49]*Sacrifice*, pp. 132, 133.

[50]*Life is With People*, p. 111.

[51]Isaac Deutscher, "Marc Chagall and the Jewish Imagination," *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 161.

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[53]John Moss, *Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 98.

[54]*Sacrifice*, p. 59.

[55]*Old Woman at Play*, p. 34.

[56]*Ibid.*, p. 34.

[57]*Sacrifice*, p. 15.

[58]*Ibid.*,p. 226.

[59]*Ibid.*, p. 233.

[60]*Ibid.*, p. 239.

[61]*Ibid.*, pp. 292, 293.

[62]*Ibid.*, p. 277.

[63]*Ibid.*, p. 304.

[64]S. G. Mullins, "Traditional Symbolism in Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice*," p. 288.

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[66]*Ibid.*, p. 38.

[67]*Ibid.*, p. 38.

[68]*Ibid.*, p. 37.

[69]*Ibid.*, pp. 177, 178.

[70]*Ibid.*, p. 175.

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[79]Isaac Deutscher, "Marc Chagall and the Jewish Imagination," p. 162.

[80]Sacrifice, p. 339.

[81]Michael Greenstein, "Movement and Vision in The Sacrifice," Canadian Literature, (Spring, 1979), p. 35.

[82]Ibid., p. 35.

[83]Sacrifice, p. 5.

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[85]Ibid., p. 344.

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[19]Ibid., 2:13, p. 1103.

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[22]Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, Life is With People (5th ed., New York: Schocken, 1967), pp. 223-224, henceforth referred to as Life is With People.

[23]Crackpot, p. 17.

[24]Ibid., p. 97.

[25]Life is With People, p. 304.

[26]Crackpot, p. 30.

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[29]John Moss, Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 46.

[30]Adele Wiseman, "A Brief Anatomy," Mosaic (Spring, 1970), p. 100.

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[35]*Ibid.*, p. 51.

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[37]*Ibid.*, p. 86.

[38]*Ibid.*, p. 89.

[39]*Ibid.*, p. 108.

[40]*Ibid.*, p. 113.

[41]*Ibid.*, p. 123.

[42]*Ibid.*, p. 123.

[43]*Ibid.*, pp. 123, 124.

[44]*Ibid.*, p. 116.

[45]*Ibid.*, p. 146.

[46]*Ibid.*, p. 147.

[47]*Ibid.*, p. 150.

[48]*Ibid.*, p. 154.

[49]Kenneth Sherman, "*Crackpot*: A Lurianic Myth," p. 8.

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[52]Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 7.

[53]Kenneth Sherman, "*Crackpot*: A Lurianic Myth," p. 7.

[54]Geoffrey James, *Time Magazine* (October 28, 1974), p. 11.

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[56]*Ibid.*, p. 168.

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[60]*Ibid.*, p. 175.

[61]*Ibid.*, p. 178.

[62]*Old Woman at Play*, p. 24.

[63]*Ibid.*, p. 128.

[64]*Life is With People*, p. 193.

[65]*Union Prayer Book of Jewish Worship* (New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1962), p. 118.

[66]*Life is With People*, p. 194.

[67]*Crackpot*, p. 192.

[68]*Ibid.*, p. 193.

[69]*Ibid.*, p. 194.

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[71]Geoffrey James, Time Magazine (October 28, 1974), p. 11.

[72]Crackpot, p. 201.

[73]Old Woman at Play, p. 125.

[74]Crackpot, p. 205.

[75]Ibid., p. 208.

[76]John Moss, Sex and Violence in Canadian Literature, p. 46.

[77]Adele Freedman, "The Stubborn Ethnicity of Adele W.," Saturday Night, (May, 1973), p. 28.

[78]Margaret Laurence, "Sources," Mosaic, (Spring, 1970), p. 80.

[79]James Reaney, "Manitoba as a Writer's Environment," Mosaic (Spring, 1970), p. 96.

[80]Adele Wiseman, "A Brief Anatomy," Mosaic (Spring, 1970), p. 105.

[81]Adele Wiseman, "Winnipeg Cityscape," Chatelaine (July, 1979), p. 34.

[82]Adele Wiseman, "A Brief Anatomy," Mosaic (Spring, 1970), p. 101.

[83]Crackpot, p. 211.

[84]Peter Newman, The Bronfman Dynasty (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978).

[85]Norah Story, The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature and History, p. 508.

[86]Old Woman at Play, p. 84.

[87]Crackpot, p. 226.

[88]Margaret Laurence, Introduction to Crackpot, p. 7.

[89]David Bakan, Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition (Toronto: Van Nostrand, 1958), p. 317.

[90]Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah, p. 124.

[91]Old Woman at Play, p. 48.

[92]Crackpot, p. 237.

[93]Ibid., p. 237.

[94]Ibid., p. 244.

[95]Ibid., p. 242.

[96]Ibid., p. 242.

[97]Ibid., p. 243.

[98]Ibid., p. 246.

[99]Ibid., p. 249.

[100]Ibid., p. 255.

[101]Ibid., p. 275.

[102]Ibid., pp. 275, 276.

[103]Ibid., p. 277.

[104]Ibid., p. 280.

[105]Geoffrey James, Time Magazine, p. 11.

[106]Crackpot, p. 283.

[107]Kenneth Sherman, "Crackpot: A Lurianic Myth," p. 9.

[108]Crackpot, p. 297.

[109]Ibid., p. 298.

[110]Ibid., p. 298.

[111]Kenneth Sherman, "Crackpot: A Lurianic Myth," p. 10.

[112]Union Prayer Book of Jewish Worship (New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1962), p. 323.

Translation of Kaddish:

> Extolled and hallowed be the name of God throughout the world which He has created according to His will. And may He speedily establish His kingdom of righteousness on earth, Amen.
> Praised be His glorious name unto eternity.
> Praised and glorified be the name of the Holy One, though He be above all the praises which we can utter. Our guide is He in life and our redeemer through all eternity.
> Our help cometh from Him, the creator of heaven and earth.
> The departed whom we now remember have entered into the place of life eternal. They still live on earth in the acts of goodness they performed and in the hearts of those who cherish their memory. May the beauty of their life abide among us as a loving benediction. Amen.
> May the Father of peace send peace to all who mourn, and comfort all the bereaved among us. Amen.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1]Adele Wiseman, Old Woman at Play (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1978), p. 145.

[2]Ibid., p. 146.

[3]William French, "CanLit: Gathering Groupies all over the World," Globe and Mail, April 15, 1980.

[4]Tom Marshall, "The Third Solitude: The Jew as Canadian," The Canadian Novel Here and Now, ed. John Moss, (Toronto: New Canada Publications, 1978), p. 155.

[5]Toba Korenblum, "Canadian Author Adele Wiseman Cannot be Pigeon-holed", Canadian Jewish News (December 9, 1977), p. 7.

[6]Adele Freedman, "Stubborn Ethnicity of Adele W.," Saturday Night (May, 1976), p. 28.

[7]Adele Wiseman, Old Woman at Play (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1978), p. 68.

[8]Sacrifice, p. 334.

[9]Crackpot, p. 226.

[10]Ibid., p. 291.

[11]Adele Wiseman, Testimonial Dinner (Toronto: Prototype Press, 1978), p. 35.

[12]Ibid., p. 50.

[13]Ibid., p. 51.

[14]Ibid., p. 52.

[15] *Crackpot*, p. 55.

[16] Adele Wiseman, Introduction to *Testimonial Dinner*.

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