

IRISH & BIBLICAL MYTH IN JACK HODGINS' "THE INVENTION OF THE WORLD"

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ON FIRST READING Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World* one is not sure whether Hodgins is saying that myth is a swindle or that myth is a fiction which is nonetheless true. I am convinced that *The Invention of the World* must be read mythically because the development of Becker as character-narrator shows that some revelation has taken place and that, in fact, the pilgrimage to Ireland is a sacred journey.¹ Furthermore, events in the story resound with mythic paradigms, both Irish and Biblical: Keneally's conception, the central pilgrimage of Maggie, Wade, and Becker, Keneally's expulsion, the riotous wedding among others. Finally, Keneally and Horseman are truly mythic characters. Horseman, as revealed by the events of the story, is literally supernatural. Keneally is mythic by virtue of the profound dimension he has assumed in the unconscious of the other characters in the novel. Both characters are upheld in their mythic roles by Hodgins' conflation of Irish and Biblical myth and epic in his creation of them.²

In order to answer the initial question — "is myth a swindle?" — it is necessary to come to terms both with "The Eden Swindle," the source of the mythic and heroic materials concerning Keneally, and with its author Strabo Becker. The story read on its own terms is as much an account of Keneally's Lucifer-like fall as it is of the swindle of Carrigdhoun. Taking into consideration the author of "The Eden Swindle," Strabo Becker, this section of the book can be viewed as a history into which unconscious reality has been incorporated.

One could look upon the fantastic story of Keneally's birth as simply a swindle perpetrated by Keneally on Carrigdhoun, and one could view the content of his mother's visions and dreams as his inventions. But this view ignores the testimony of Grania O'Flynn, who witnesses the coupling of Keneally's mother with the bull god, and whose visionary peasant imagination may have intuited his mother's original dream. The reader is asked to accept Julius' vision into the past; why not Grania O'Flynn's? When she denounces Keneally before her death, she does not denounce his fantastic birth, but his intention to take Carrigdhoun to Canada.

Keneally is born with god-like potential, born perhaps to be a saviour of his people. Indeed, Yeats' heroine, Cathleen ni Houlihan, who recruited the Irish youth to insurrection, is the spirit who is chosen to announce his birth. One half of his personality has enough love of a fight, it is later revealed, to want to whip the English out of Ireland. His epic battle in Carrigdhoun is, significantly, with an English bailiff.

But it is as though once Keneally is expelled from Carrigdhoun he ceases to be supernatural and becomes merely manipulative. Like Lucifer, when Keneally makes and destroys the god machine, he reduces himself as well. He convinces no one in Ireland to follow him except a cripple in Kilgorlan. This conscious assault on Kilgorlan's faith is far less devastating than the unconscious effect of the mist on Carrigdhoun. It is not through any demonstration of Keneally's power that the villagers are persuaded to follow him; nor can their conversion be attributed to the villagers being "complacent rubes," as Robert Lecker has stated. Rather, Keneally's conscious capitalization on their unconscious vulnerability causes the villagers to follow him. At this point Grania O'Flynn recognizes the reduction of Keneally's stature: "But she knew, after looking once into the eyes of the returned Keneally, that in the years of his absence the trickster child in him had been nurtured into meanness, the unnatural strength of him had developed into a danger, the immense knowledge of him had twisted itself into a cynicism. The fiery glow in his eyes was more the light of a fanaticism than of the god-qualities in his bull-father she'd seen in her shed all those years before."³

At the end of his life Keneally is reduced to the bestial, like Lycaon. His Celtic surname Keneally or "CINN PÁOLAID" means both "wolf head" and "learned man"⁴ and it is the wolf rather than the sage into which he chooses to metamorphose.⁵ When it is too late Keneally tries to recover the dimension he has lost by corkscrewing himself into the earth; he attempts to redeem his mythic beginning — his birth, as it were, from the earth. When Lily questions him about this, Keneally speaks of Irish "giant circular stone forts, high up on a hump of land, where the people long ago used to live, or hide from invaders. Inside the stone walls and down under the ground there were tunnels, to escape, in case they were surrounded by the enemy." What Keneally is alluding to is the *sidhe* or Land Under Hill in the depths of mountains where the Irish gods were supposed to have retired upon the coming to Ireland of men.⁶ The *sidhe* has remained sacred even while Keneally is corrupted.

Another explanation for the fantastic-historic paradox of "The Eden Swindle" is that Strabo Becker, its amanuensis, recognizes the powerful effect Keneally has had on the personal and collective unconscious of the islanders and he attempts to reconcile this psychic phenomena with historical fact. The islanders most notably affected by him are Madmother, Lily, Maggie, Doreen Ryan in her fear and desire for privacy, the paranoid Henry Burke and the alleged son of

Enrico Manani, whose childhood fear evokes such a great ambition to escape the colony that he becomes a "world famous singer." Thus Becker accepts rumour, hyperbole, and mythic stature for Keneally in his "history" because it reflects Keneally's far-reaching influence. Keneally accuses his friend Edward Guthrie of long distance killing, but Keneally's baleful influence extends over time as well as space. In fact, Donal Keneally represents unmeaning, chaos, illusion and obscurity, and he holds such archetypal importance, even among Becker's contemporaries, that his myth must finally be confronted and released to oblivion: " 'Myth . . . like all the past, real or imaginary, must be acknowledged . . . especially when it's not believed. When you begin to disbelieve in Keneally you can begin to believe in yourself.' "

Robert Lecker, however, suggests that Becker is taken in by Keneally: "Hodgins implies that Becker is mistaken in the value he places upon himself and his search for legend. His attempt to reshape Keneally's world by organizing fragmented memories, documents, and details makes him envision himself as a creator. But he becomes a reflection of his deceptive subject: the myth he uncovers in Keneally is not one of truth but one of magic and treachery." Lecker misses the point; for what is crucial is not whether the myth is one of truth or deception, but that Keneally *is* a manifestation of myth.

Lecker also argues that: "Becker's problem . . . is that he takes the warped data he uncovers far too seriously — seriously enough to see Keneally, who is really a brutal, selfish tyrant, as the legendary redeemer of his people." This is never the case. The reader is not allowed into Becker's thoughts, nor even hears much of his dialogue until the "Wolves of Lycaon" and "Pilgrimage." Before that we are introduced to him by the narrator who reveals his pretensions and hints at his limitations — Becker's caretaker rather than creator role. "The Eden Swindle" is, moreover, a collective tale and one which is one step removed from Becker, for the narrator says: "Becker tells you this:." The reader is not allowed to know how or why Becker would tell him "this" and is given no clues as to how his personality has affected the telling. But the Becker who recognizes that Keneally is evil, and that Keneally's myth must be confronted, does not perceive the Irishman as a "legendary redeemer."

BECKER'S PERCEPTION is refined in the course of the book. In the introductory section Becker wants to control, order, and possess Keneally's story, but in "Second Growth" he admits: "His story has returned to the air where I found it, it will never belong to me, for all my gathering and hoarding." The introduction and "Scrapbook" are co-extensive, for in the introduction we are told that Becker already has a hoard of scrapbooks, tapes, and other documents, while the tale of Keneally only has "a certain agreed-upon beginning."

“The Eden Swindle” and “Second Growth” also can be paired together — both having similar opening statements by Becker and both admitting that Becker is not the creator and that the story exists independent of him. As Lecker himself points out, the “agreed-upon beginning” of the introduction is changed in “The Eden Swindle,” from “Donal Keneally’s mother started it all” to “It was Keneally’s mother who started the whole deception.” This change reflects Becker’s realization that it is not his mission to uncover the exact details of Keneally’s extraordinary life, but to perceive what myth he represents and to come to terms with it. Becker acknowledges that Keneally’s story is a deception, but one which offers mythic truth.

Becker, whose mythical counterpart is Charon, leads us from the conscious to the unconscious reality of Keneally. This connection is drawn by Becker himself in his notes about the Irish hawker (for the ferry to the garden island of Garnish) who is anxious to go to the next world. Becker, then, acts as a psychopomp for the reader as much as Horseman does for Maggie and Wade.

The marriage that Becker records in “Second Growth” reflects the psychic healing that has taken place in the community after the pilgrimage. The marriage is a communal event and in its disorder akin to primitive rites which invoked chaos in order to regenerate the world. In primitive cultures this creation or invention of the cosmos recurred each year, the new year arriving with the harvest.⁷ The new year in Irish pagan culture coincided with the festival of Samhain on the first of November where the dead were able to rise and mix with the living. Ella Young, an Irish folklorist, attests to the visionary significance of Samhain: “Samhain is, I think, the greatest of the Old Celtic Festivals, this Feast of Nuts — the Nuts of Knowledge — and of apples — the Golden Apples of the Tree of Life — since in it, symbolically, the Shaper of the World, the Smith of the Stars, of Hades, and of the Nether Hell grants to those who can drink of his cup, immortal life and power to know the true from the seeming.”⁸

The reader is not told the date of Maggie’s wedding, but the first Saturday in November is close enough for one to suspect that it is also intended to be Samhain, the first day of November. The presence of the dead (Keneally and his three wives); the combat between two opposing groups (the loggers and the townspeople); and the presence of the erotic element in the food orgy and in the passionate embrace of Wade and Maggie (which dispels the fight and from which they emerge “the new man and the new woman”) are all characteristic traits of primitive new year festivals.

Unlike Keneally, Maggie is known to the entire community and her marriage unites the community in a desire for celebration and then in a desire for peace. The list of presents offered the couple ranges from plausible items to odd concrete objects to utter abstractions. These abstractions are unconscious hopes, wishes, and fears which have been allowed to rise like the dead on this heiro-

phanous occasion. This abstract category will not help Maggie and Wade set up housekeeping, but it will present a vision of the future of equal parts good and evil. It is with these gifts of vision that "the fine and important couple" will be able to maintain an ecological balance in the larger world which they have uncovered.

THIS MYTHIC READING OF *The Invention of the World* is supported by the book's allusion to Irish paradigms of myth, epic, and legend in Keneally and Horseman. For if one examines The Mythological Cycle, Keneally appears to be modelled after Balor, a King of the Fomorians, the elder of the two races of gods venerated by the ancient Irish. The Fomori incarnate the forces of death, night, storm, and ignorance (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 79). They were the enemies of the Tuatha de Danann, the good gods of light, knowledge, and dawn. The Fomor were also known as the gods of the men of Domna (or Domnand), the men of Domna being the traditional foes of the Ulster heroes, Cuchulain and Conchobar. Donal is written "DOMNAL" in Irish and is derived from the Celtic dumno-valos "world mighty" or dubno-valos, "mighty in the deep."⁹ "DOMNAN," the word which is the name of the people who worship the Fomor, means "a little world" or "microcosm,"¹⁰ suggesting both the Fir-Domnan's human limitations and their limited vision: the Fir-Domnan have "all manner of vices and defects" (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 72). Thus, in his very naming, Keneally has the potential both for dominion and petty dominance.

Balor's lineage confirms Keneally's identification with him. In Celtic legend the moon is a horned creature, a bull-headed god named Buair-ainech and like Keneally, Balor, the god of Night is born from this bull-headed god (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 114). Balor has an evil eye which when opened strikes like a thunderbolt (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 115) and he is sometimes referred to as god of the Thunderbolt. Similarly, Keneally's dogs, both called Thunderbird, are symbolic of his power and instrumental to the fear he arouses. At his greatest performance Keneally appears to call up a thunderstorm which reduces even the most sceptical witnesses to doglike servility.

Balor is destroyed when Lugh his grandson puts out his evil eye. Keneally is broken when Thunderbird is killed by Paddy O'Mahony, who Lily says could be Keneally's son. Furthermore, in popular Irish folklore, the father of Lugh, who begins Balor's downfall, is named MacKineely (son of Kineely) just as in a sense O'Mahoney is Keneally's son.

Keneally's treatment of the Colony people as if they were slaves evokes another Fomor, Bress, of whom Arbois de Jubainville writes: "He exacted oppressive tributes from the people and gave nothing in return." The Fomor were known as a race of tyrants who exacted tributes of corn and milk and the sacrifice of

two thirds of the children born in the year (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 57). Keneally, before the dedication of *The House of Revelations*, proclaims that there will be no sacrifices of children "because they were civilized men and saw no evidence at all of any god to worship." Ironically, many of the children of the Colony are sacrificial victims to Keneally's omnipotence, most notably Mad-mother Thomas, who is molested by him.

In physical appearance the Fomor were monstrous: either dwarfs, giants, men with goats' heads or deformed beings (Arbois de Jubainville, pp. 52-54). In the *Book of Invasions*, among the deformed Fomor, are those with only one hand and one foot. Thus one recognizes Jems the Cripple, Jerry Quirke, Grania O'Flynn, and even the grotesque Keneally with his "sack of turnips." Moreover the huge trees which surround the Colony are dark giants.

Keneally is, then, a manifestation of the archetype of death, darkness, and evil. He is associated with mist, which symbolizes a sinister unknowable quality. Becker comments that the islanders "don't have any idea what to do with Keneally. As long as he was out there, unreckoned with, unlabelled, he was a fascination and a threat. You couldn't be sure how much reality to grant him. Evil is always like that."

Keneally upsets the paradise of fearlessness in Carrigdhoun even before the coming of the mist. He plays great deceptions on the people and disturbs their sense of time. Indeed, Keneally's great knowledge is mistlike: "Donal Keneally absorbed knowledge as it came down the mountain in the mist and clung to him like the moisture of his hair." Keneally's sense of "fifty different ways you could come at a word like 'truth' and arrive at a separate meaning every time" speaks of the plurality rather than the unity of his vision. It is shortly after Keneally's departure from Carrigdhoun that the terrible mist does descend,¹¹ as though with his expulsion paradise ceases to exist.

Fear invades Carrigdhoun and the villagers are no longer able to distinguish the real world from the imagined, truth from unmeaning. Here, the Biblical myth of the fall and *Paradise Lost* echo in the Irish mist. One interpretation of the Biblical fall understands the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge as the same tree. The serpent offers Adam and Eve a hitherto untasted experience "of fragmented unity, of things unreferred to the center and valued for their own sake as if they were self-sufficing entities."¹² When they partake of the fruit, Adam and Eve are allowed to know a partial truth in scientific exactness and detail, the trees are separated, and Adam and Eve lose the ability to know the whole or perceive the unity. While the Samhain wedding restores the two trees (of Apples and of Nuts) to visionary wholeness, the people of Carrigdhoun with the expulsion of Keneally and the descent of the mist are synonymous with the Fir-Domnan who worshipped the Fomor and exchanged macrocosm for microcosm, the Tree of Life for the Tree of Knowledge.

The explicit reason for Keneally's expulsion and the concomitant descent of the mist is his fight with the English bailiff. Here epic allusions to both Irish legend and *Paradise Lost* signal a mythic fall. For "Donal" may also allude to "Donnataurus," the name of the dun-coloured, prize bull in the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* of the Heroic, Ulster or Red Branch Cycle (Lecker, pp. 95-96).¹³ Near the end of this saga the dun bull fights and wins an epic battle with the white bull of the opposing side. In a direct parallel Keneally's battle with the Englishman marks the countryside with "The Bailiff's Retreat," just as Ireland's place names according to the *Cuailnge* were changed by the bulls' fight.¹⁴ This fight is later re-enacted when Keneally confronts the Island town's mayor. The Island fight begins with the Irishman "springing up surprised from the mayor's bed roaring like a bull. . . ." ¹⁵ Their final battle also has a devastating effect on the landscape, and Keneally again whips his opponent yet is forced to leave.

In the *Cuailnge* after winning his fight the dun bull rampages across Ireland. Significantly, when the bull reaches the sea his heart bursts and he dies, just as Keneally suffers the ritual death of expulsion. In Keneally's temporary victory, then, one can see the dun bull's last hurrah and Lucifer's initial brave stand against God. This is not to say that the English bailiff is God, but that he is what Keneally mistook for dominion; he is tyranny rather than divinity. In other words the white bull is the bailiff's more apt alter-ego.

Keneally's character also corresponds to Partholon, the chief of the first race in the Mythological Cycle to settle in Ireland. Distinguished by their folly, Partholon and his people preceded the divine Tuatha de Danann. Partholon delivered his people from their enemy by successfully leading them to victory over the Fomor (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 18). Keneally appears to deliver his people from the enemy: literally from their English oppressors, and figuratively from their mistlike fear. After Partholon's death, his colony is wiped out by a plague which is understood as an act of divine vengeance: "When Partholon left his country to come into Ireland, it was not of his own accord; he had been condemned to exile for having killed his father and his mother — a double parricide for which banishment was not deemed a sufficient punishment" (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 20). Similarly, Keneally's mother dies giving birth to him, his foster father Quirke dies of shock when Keneally returns to Carrigdhoun and Keneally outright murders Grania O'Flynn, his foster mother. (Lucifer's attempted parricide is also evoked here.) Both Partholon and Keneally are false saviours for their people; their journey to "promised land" is compromised from the outset.

Keneally also is like Partholon in the modern legends, in having an unfaithful wife. Partholon catches his wife in an adulterous situation with a young man (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 18).¹⁶ When confronted, the wife blames Partholon, suggesting that he is a less than adequate or desirable husband. In great anger

Partholon kills his wife's dog — "the first act of jealousy in Ireland." Keneally's jealousy is much more ferocious, for the implication in the text is that he kills Nell and her lover. Because of his illegitimacy as leader Keneally reacts especially violently to criticism. Since in the end his self-deceiving notions of his god-like origins and his god-given rights are closely tied to his sexual potency and prowess, he is especially vulnerable to attack in this area. Hence his despicable treatment of Hattie Scully for her and her mother's "treachery"; hence the alleged murders of his wife and Christopher Wall. Significantly too, when Paddy O'Mahony challenges Keneally's *droit de seigneur*, Keneally's power base begins to crumble. The death of Keneally's child by Mary O'Mahony at Easter acts as a reminder of his loss of power.

IN CONTRAST TO KENEALLY, Horseman is a truly recognizable supernatural character. His counterparts in Irish myth are the Tuatha De Danann. In pagan belief the Tuatha De descended from heaven and evidence in the Irish annals reveals that these Irish gods travelled in air ships.¹⁷ Hence Horseman's association with a car "paler than sky, a silver-blue sedan," space ships and reflections. The name "Horseman" may allude to a number of Irish myths in which the hero, on returning from the Land of the Dead or the Land Under Wave, "cannot alight from his horse without exposing himself to certain misfortune . . . their chariot and horses, which the mode of warfare of the primitive Celts associated so inseparably with them — have something superhuman about them, and are in many respects exempt from the general laws to which the rest of nature is subject" (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 207). "Horseman" is also undoubtedly an allusion to Yeats' epitaph and "Under Ben Bulbin," his last poem. Yeats' use of horsemen was based upon the peasant belief, researched by Lady Gregory and himself, that supernatural horsemen rode between the mountains.¹⁸

Horsemen cannot be understood simply as Wade Powers' double because he is seen by Anna Sterner and Maggie, and Anna also notices his resemblance to Wade. Horseman's teasing statement that he is, in a manner of speaking, a "man of God," and his feat of being able to release himself from the locked fort, attest to his super-nature. One also senses about him that he moves beyond the limits of life. To Maggie he is Yeats' cold horseman, bringing her anxiety about mortality: "This damn wind . . . it makes me cold right to the bone — I half expect to see your friend Horseman sneaking around behind the stones, he had the same kind of effect on me." Once men drove them out of visible Ireland, the Tuatha de Danann and Fomor became the Sidhe, which means "wind."¹⁹ In Yeats' mind the horsemen were also associated with powers of final destruc-

tion; the horsemen of Revelations are also alluded to in Hodgins' book. In Wade's dream, Horseman in his space ship tries to suck him in just as Keneally seems to suck Lily into his obsessive digging. Wade and Keneally are both moving towards a recovery of the true self: both fear death and apocalyptic emptiness.

Keneally betrays curious similarities to Horseman. Keneally's high boots were polished "till you'd see the sky in them. . . ." After Keneally's failure to convert Kilgorlin and other villages and his encounter with the sexually intimidating Meg Delaney, he *steals* a horse. It is with this horse his luck changes: he miraculously finds Nell MacGuire and returns triumphantly to Carrigdhoun. When he plays "Superman" at the Colony his horse, usually a black stallion, symbolizes his sense of his own god-like sexuality. Keneally in "Wolves of Lycaon" is like a black hole sucking *in* Lily (and removing her soul) and in "Wade" Horseman in a dream warning acts like a vacuum trying to suck in Wade. These parallels suggest Keneally's non-identity or rather his parasitic identity. This relationship between Keneally and Horseman has its paradigm in that of the Tuatha de Danann and the Fomor: "The Fomoiri are normally pictured as unpleasant spirits dwelling overseas to the north of Ireland. There is a vagueness, however, in Irish tradition concerning them which is in marked contrast with the clear characterization and wealth of detail about individuals which has been handed down concerning the Tuatha de Donann. Indeed the vagueness is such that it has permitted so great an expert as T. F. O'Rahilly to suggest that between the Fomoiri and the Tuatha De 'there are at bottom no real distinctions.'"²⁰

Unlike Keneally, who affects the lives of others randomly and gratuitously, Horseman causes psychic disturbances at crucial moments. In Maggie's case, she is stewing over the appearance of Danny Holland at their son's wedding. It becomes apparent that she fears Holland's "shadowy presence" because he reflects a side of herself she would like to bury — her bush or Zulu self. While she is fretting over Holland, Anna Sterner appears at the window to tell her about Horseman. Through the same window Wade appears to Lily Hayworth as her former husband Donal Keneally. Lily fears Keneally for much the same reasons that Maggie fears her first "husband" — for the influence he had over her. When juxtaposed with the disturbing trio of Horseman, Wade, and Keneally, the threat of Holland is diminished and Maggie's fear of him dissolves.

Horseman appears to Wade shortly after he denies ever having loved Maggie, his anima figure. Wade is a milder version of Keneally, or at least someone who has caught a residual dose of Keneally's emptiness. Wade's fort is a small counterfeit world like Keneally's Colony. Wade is the black sheep of his family, just as Keneally was of his village. Both men have a weakness for women. Wade reflects, suggesting his resemblance to Keneally: "Without even making a show of it they [women] led you around like a bull with a ring in your nose. . . ."

Horseman disturbs Wade's sense of reality before he is sucked into the void as Keneally is. Wade's anxiety about reality is reflected even in his first feelings about Horseman's sedan: "Wade felt like someone who had just come through a museum where he'd admired everything there was, and then realized that he hadn't the slightest idea what any of it meant." In this state of mind Wade becomes hostile to Virginia Kerr's art because it does not conform to what he can see with his eyes. Wade, like Keneally, has become a materialist and, as Virginia Kerr tells him, has lost the ability to perceive truth. He destroys the vision of her art and sends her away as surely as one suspects Keneally killed his first wife and her lover for the way they challenged his world.

Horseman enlightens Wade in two ways. He tells him that he has buried his true self, perhaps symbolically in his fort. Wade is once more tied to Keneally who in the end is obsessed with the ancient circular forts and what is beneath them. He also tells Wade, by means of the story of the woman grieving over her dead children in the one remaining room of her house, that he too has chosen to accept a small space for the whole world. It is this smallness of vision which has made Wade resist the loggers' life as well as the life of his parents — his mother ends up in a booth selling tickets.

Horseman invades Maggie and Wade's consciousness on two significant occasions on the pilgrimage. At Carrigdhoun in the ruins of a stone house Maggie persuades Wade how little is needed to domesticate and swindle people from a larger vision of the world, suggesting how easily people are fooled: "The stones,' she said, 'these walls. Can you imagine these being all that separated inside from outside? All that made *home* separate from world?" Just after this remark Maggie chooses for the first time to confront Wade with Horseman's revelations.

Horseman is also present at the stones above Kilkeal, the high point of the Maggie-Wade-Becker pilgrimage. He breaks in on Maggie's thoughts following her anxiety about finding her position on the map. Horseman has appeared to counteract the influence of maps before this event. Maggie was studying her maps and planning road blocks for Danny when she first heard of Horseman. Fighting over the road with Holland she realized she has been drawn into a petty battle while Lily might have been dying and also realized the non-reality of any fear of Holland.

Keneally and his small sense of dominion are from the beginning associated with maps. When Keneally makes his own pilgrimage to the stones after his expulsion from Carrigdhoun "in the course of the long night he heard the soft voice of his mother laying out for him the direction of his life like a complicated map of roads." In Maggie's dreams, which arise from the enslaved and befouled world as represented on her maps, Keneally appears. While Maggie in her dream tries to open up the locked-up world of her maps, a Keneally-like figure

harasses and scares her: "And always, always from behind a mileage number on a boundary line an upright man-like shadow would appear and pursue her running down the broken lines and twisting roads, down blue-vein streams and narrow inlets, his laugh a thunderous roar that made the paper ripple beneath her feet." Indeed, Keneally allies himself with surveyors and land-developers in his vision of the Island being settled and developed by what would be prison-like colonies much like his own.

Wade also shows a reluctance to trust his instinct and relinquish signs. He wishes to place Horseman on a map as a test of Horseman's reality. Driving in Ireland Wade is hesitant to trust any roads not on the map. Yet it is Wade, in his instinctive movement to cover her map, who releases Maggie from her obsession. Her recognition of the childlike quality of Wade's foot makes her map a small and invented reality by comparison. Maggie sees Wade as her destiny rather than the complex and duplicitous map that was presented to Keneally by his mother at the stones. Her recognition is also an acknowledgement of her truly feminine role as the mother — a role which for much of her life she has tried to avoid. At crucial moments the mother in her emerges: with the young girl at the commune after the murder; in her concern for Lily in the heat of her battle with Holland; and her sheltering of misfits, including Madmother Thomas.

With Maggie's recognition of her self-evasion, she moves to confront Wade finally with his. Becker tells them that they should not simply feel shame or self-loathing for their evasion, rather, they should rejoice in what they have uncovered: the living roots below the frozen ground. In fact Maggie's response to the car of vandals, a machine with arms, is a kind of rejoicing: " 'Look at them go down, look how high we've come, look at how high we've come.' " The monstrous car alludes to the Fomor, and thus to the forces which Keneally represented. The fact that the pilgrims have confronted Keneally and the duplicitous forces he represented in themselves and ritually cast them down the mountain or rather consigned them to oblivion, is emphasized here.

The movement of the book is then, from night to day, from dark to light as the dark, unknowable Keneally gives way to the known and radiant Maggie. "Second Growth" also alludes to the second growth of Celtic Irish mythology where the dark Fomor fathered by Buarainech, a dark god associated with the moon, gives way to the Tuatha de Danann: the gods of light who are the sons of the Goddess Danu (Arbois de Jubainville, p. 73). Thus, in moving from Keneally to Maggie, from masculine to feminine, the novel echoes the levels of cosmogony in Irish myth. Similarly, there is a general healing movement in the book. Becker's investigations are a means of healing the psychological wound inflicted by Keneally to Becker's father. Maggie is the central healer and Madmother the central victim. It is Madmother whom Maggie instinctively seeks out

on her pilgrimage to the bush and whom Maggie brings back to the Revelations House, Madmother's true home.

Hodgins' characters in *The Invention* — Maggie, Holland, and Madmother to name a few — appear at first to be from the small world of an Al Capp comic strip. In *The Invention of the World* Hodgins attempts to set up and break these cartoon clichés reminiscent of pastoral Dogpatch and to invent or uncover the larger world hidden beneath them.²¹ Jack Hodgins' use of Irish myth and of Biblical and classical myth, too, are intended to alter and enlarge the reader's vision and thus to incorporate the primitive, mythic, and unconscious into it. Hodgins in *The Invention of the World* uses myth to metamorphose snails into sparrows.

NOTES

- ¹ Hence this paper disagrees with Susan Beckmann, "Canadian Burlesque: Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World*," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, No. 20 (1980-81), pp. 106-25; and with Robert Lecker, "Haunted by a Glut of Ghosts: Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World*," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, No. 20 (1980-81), pp. 86-105.
- ² Although the book makes many classical allusions, space does not allow a discussion of them here.
- ³ This and subsequent references are taken from Jack Hodgins, *The Invention of the World* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977).
- ⁴ Patrick Woulfe, *Irish Names and Surnames* (Dublin: M. H. Gill & Son, 1923), p. 465.
- ⁵ There is some evidence of a belief in lycanthropy among the pagan Irish. George Brandon Saul, *Traditional Irish Literature and its Backgrounds: A Brief Introduction* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1970), p. 35.
- ⁶ H. D'Arbois de Jubainville, *The Irish Mythological Cycle and Celtic Mythology*, trans. Richard Irvine Best (Dublin/London, 1903; rpt. New York: Lemma Publishing, 1970), p. 150. All further references to this work appear in the text.
- ⁷ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1954), p. 51.
- ⁸ Ella Young, *Flowering Dusk: Things Remembered Accurately and Inaccurately* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1945), pp. 78-79.
- ⁹ Patrick Woulfe, *Irish Names and Surnames*, p. 180.
- ¹⁰ "DOMNÁN," *An Irish-English Dictionary* (1927).
- ¹¹ The illusion or the truth of fiction created by the eleventh-century Irish annalists, depending on one's point of view, in recording early Irish history is described by the villagers of Carrighdoun: "But in the early Irish history, what one solid and irrefutable fact appears upon which we can put foot or hand and say, 'This at all events, is certain, this that I hold is not mist; this that I stand on is neither water or mire'? Running down the long list of Milesian kings, chiefs, brehons, and bards, where first shall we pause, arrested by some substantial form in this procession of empty ghosts — how distinguish the man from the shadow, where over all is diffused the same concealing mist, and the eyes of the living and the dead look with the same pale glare?" *The Heroic Period*, vol. I of *History of Ireland* (London, 1878; rpt. New York: Lemma Publishing, 1970), p. 20.

- ¹² Marco Pallis, "Is There a Problem of Evil?" in *The Sword of Gnosis: Metaphysics, Cosmology, Tradition, Symbolism*, ed. Jacob Needleman (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin, 1974), p. 237.
- ¹³ Lecker is quite wrong when he says: "In the *Cuailnge*, the Donn's rage defeats all, and he triumphs in the end." For the dun bull dies at the end of the saga.
- ¹⁴ Douglas Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland: From Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. Brian O'Cuin (London: Ernest Benn, 1967), p. 340.
- ¹⁵ In a short auxiliary saga to the *Táin* it is revealed that the bulls were "really rebirths of two men who hated each other during life, and now fought it out in the form of the bulls." Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland*, pp. 339-40.
- ¹⁶ The tale of Nell and Christopher Wall's first meeting as related by his brother, bears a resemblance to the *Táin Bó Froich* which is "famous for its description of the beauty of Froech as he swam in the pool" where he is watched and admired by Findabair, the heroine. Eleanor Knott and Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 130. A translation of this passage appears on pp. 130-31.
- ¹⁷ Ella Young, *Flowering Dusk*, p. 33.
- ¹⁸ John Unterecker, *A Reader's Guide to William Butler Yeats* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1959), p. 277.
- ¹⁹ Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, "Yeats and Ireland," *English Journal*, 54 (1965), 449.
- ²⁰ Eleanor Knott and Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 108.
- ²¹ It is obvious from the importance Hodgins places on the "Dog Patch" comic strip as an influence on him that he found deep, even mythic meaning in its stories. Jack Hodgins, "Beginnings," *Today Magazine* (28 Feb. 1981), p. 3.

SPRING WALKS

Robert Gibbs

I

I wake to robins and redwings that
 stake their ground The Nashwaak claims
 a kingsize bed over the whole interval
 The farmer's dump's afloat and his manure
 pile's wider than his farm I walk

to the river to see in the grey red
 marks laugh out loud two
 mailboxes and a coca-cola sign
 Joe's Diner where I count seven
 bunched over dim-lit breakfasts

A mother waves and two kids in pajamas
 half wave and keep their hands
 half open till their van blunders off