CHAPTER 5:
WAMPUM AND SOCIAL CREATIVITY AMONG THE IROQUOIS

In this chapter, I'd like to say a little bit about wampum, the white and purple shell beads which became a currency of trade in early colonial Northeast North America. Among "primitive valuables"—a category that includes such things as kula necklaces, Kwakiutl coppers, or the iron bars used in bridewealth exchange by the West African Tiv—wampum holds a rather curious place. Simply as an object, it's by far the most familiar. The average reader is much more likely to know what wampum looks like, or to have actually seen some in a museum, than any of the others. Nonetheless, unlike the others, wampum has never been treated as a classic case in anthropological exchange theory.

There are probably several reasons for this. For one thing, the contexts in which wampum circulated is closer to what a Western observer would be inclined to see as political than economic. The heyday of wampum was also a very long time ago: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, long before the birth of modern ethnography. But it's also hard to escape the impression that the case of wampum is in most other ways just a little bit too close to home. Wampum was, after all, material manufactured from clams found primarily off the coast of Long Island, whose shells are still to be found scattered on the beaches of Fire Island, the Hamptons, and other places where New York's stockbrokers and literati like to spend their summer weekends; it was used mainly for trade with the Iroquois towns that then dotted what is now upstate New York. Wampum was first manufactured in bulk by the Pequods of Connecticut, a group later to be wiped out by English settlers in a notorious massacre in 1637. This is not the sort of history most New Yorkers like to dwell on—or Americans in general, for that matter.

Finally, anthropologists' own role has not always been entirely innocent. In the late 1960s, when many of the Six Nations of the Iroquois were trying to win back control of their heirloom wampum collection from New York State museums, William Fenton, who was then and remains to this day one of the most respected Anglo authorities on the subject, took it upon himself to write a major treatise entitled "The New York State Wampum Collection: the Case for Integrity of Cultural Treasures" (1971) which made an elaborate case for refusing to accede to their requests. The essay, as one might imagine, served only to reinforce the widespread (and to a large extent historically justified) Native American impression that anthropologists were at best agents of cultural imperialism, and at worst, of even worse. Resulting bitterness has made the whole issue of anthropological views of wampum somewhat sensitive.

All this is quite a shame because it seems to me that the study of wampum is of potentially enormous interest to any theory of value. For one thing, it is probably the best documented case of beads being used as a medium of exchange between European traders and a very differently organized society in which we have a fairly clear picture of what the non-European parties to the transaction did with the beads once they got them. The focus in this chapter will be on the Iroquoian peoples of what came to be known as the Five (later, Six) Nations. What I'm going to do first of all is tell the history of wampum, up to around the end of the eighteenth century, which took on an extraordinary importance in the creation of the Iroquois Federation itself. The first effect of the arrival of European traders in search of fur, and soon after, settlers, on the coast of Northeast North America was, predictably, to plunge the peoples of the interior into an almost constant state of violent upheaval: a world of endless feuding, massacres, forced migrations, whole peoples scattered and displaced, of two hundred years of almost continual war. Wampum had a peculiar role in all this. It was the principle medium of the fur trade, which had sparked so much of the trouble to begin with—wampum was one of the lures held out by the newcomers to inspire people to attack each other; but at the same time, within the Iroquois confederacy—and the

Iroquois were considered by their Indian neighbors a particularly ferocious and terrifying population of warriors—it was valued primarily for its ability to create peace.

the origins of wampum

So much changed so quickly once Europeans began to arrive on the coasts of Northeastern North America that it becomes difficult to say anything for certain about the years before. There's no consensus about whether something that could be called "wampum" even existed before 1500; nonetheless, this is something of a technical question, since polished beads of one kind or another—rare stones, mica, beads of shell or quill—and similar bright and mirrored objects certainly did, and they were an important indigenous category of wealth across the northeast woodlands (Hammond 1984).

During the sixteenth century, European interest in North America focused mainly on fur—particularly beaver pelts, then in great demand for the manufacture of hats. Dutch and English traders began arriving on the coast armed with liberal supplies of glass trade beads—these were already being mass-produced in Venice and the Netherlands for use in the markets of Africa and the Indian Ocean—and usually found the inhabitants willing to accept them in exchange for pelts. For a time, they became a regular currency of trade. There was even an attempt to manufacture them in Massachusetts. But as time went on and European settler enclaves grew, their place was gradually supplanted by wampum: the small, tubular white and purple beads that the Algonkian-speaking peoples of Massachusetts and Long Island had long been in the habit of manufacturing from whelks and quahog clams. English and Dutch colonists apparently found it a relatively simple matter to force them to mass-producie them, stringing the beads together in belts of pure white or pure purple (the latter, because of their relative rarity, were worth twice as much) and setting fixed rates of exchange with the Indians of the interior: so many fathoms of wampum for such and such a pelt. Later, after the coastal Indians had been largely exterminated, colonists began to manufacture the beads themselves (Ceci 1977, 1982; Beauchamp 1901).

Wampum was not just a currency of trade. Settlers used it in dealing with each other. The early colonies were also notoriously cash-poor; silver money was almost unheard of, and most transactions between settlers were conducted through barter, credit, and wampum. Colonial governments recognized wampum as legal tender until the middle of the eighteenth century, many settlers preferring wampum to coins, even when the latter had become easily available—if only, perhaps, because Indians were more likely to accept them (Weeden 1884; Martien 1996). On the other hand there's no evidence that even the Indians living in the closest proximity to Europeans used wampum to buy and sell things to one another. We really are talking, then, about two profoundly different regimes of value.

When the first European settlers arrived, most of the coast was occupied by speakers of Algonkian languages; the woodlands west of the Hudson were inhabited mainly by speakers of Iroquoian ones. These latter were people who lived mainly in large fortified towns and who were grouped into a patchwork of political confederacies, of whom the most prominent were the Huron along the Saint Lawrence and Iroquois, scattered across the north of what is now upstate New York. Since most of the beaver along the coast were quickly hunted out, the Huron (allied with the French traders then established in Quebec) were best positioned to control the rotes to hunting grounds out further west. In the early seventeenth century, then, we have much more detailed information on the Huron than any other Iroquoian peoples, particularly because of the fact that French Jesuits had settled in most Huron communities and kept detailed records of their work. The Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy to the south—the Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, Mohawk, and Cayuga—were less well known. Most of the Algonkian peoples of the coast seem to have considered them as terrifying cannibals[1]—but the Iroquois had the advantage of alliance with the Dutch, and therefore, acess to a much more dependable source of firearms. During the so called "Beaver Wars" from 1641 to 1649, they managed to destroy most of the major Huron towns, carry off a large number of Huron as captives, and scatter most of the remaining population. By 1656 the

Iroquois had broken the power of the Petun and Neutral Confederations to the west as well, thus establishing a monopoly over the trade that they were to maintain for at least a century.

During the next hundred and fifty years or so, the Iroquois were involved in an endless series of wars: between the British and French, the British and American colonists, and any number of other Indian nations. It was especially during this period that wampum—which the Iroquois acquired both as payment for furs and as tribute from subjugated peoples—came to play a central role in their political life, even, one might argue, in the constitution of Iroquois society itself.[2] This is the period which I especially want to look at; but in order to understand what happened, it will first be necessary to try to at least attempt to reconstruct something of early Iroquoian social structure.

the resurrection of names

Like the Algonkian peoples to the east, Iroquoian nations were matrilineal and matrilocal. Unlike them, the Iroquoians (Five Nations and Huron alike) shared a very particular constitution: they saw their societies not as a collection of living individuals but as a collection of eternal names, which over the course of time passed from one individual holder to another.

Most of the peoples of northeast North America had a custom of the occasional "resurrection" of names. If a famous warrior, for example, were to die, another man might be given his name, and then be considered in a certain sense an incarnation of the same person; if he were a chief, he might also inherit his office. According to a Jesuit relation written in 1642 about the Huron:

> It has often been said that the dead were brought back to life by making the living bear their names. This is done for several reasons,—to revive the memory of a brave man, and to incite him who shall bear his name to imitate his courage; to take revenge upon the enemies, for he who takes the name of a man killed in battle

> binds himself to avenge his death; to assist the family of a dead man, because he who brings him back to life, and who represents him, assumes all the duties of the deceased. . . (JR 22: 287-89)

It was accomplished, significantly, by hanging a collar of wampum around the man's neck; if the latter accepted it, and did not shake it off, he would then become the dead man's former self.

The Iroqouis, however, took this principle much further: all names should eventually, be resurrected by being passed on to someone else. An Iroquois nation (or "tribe") was normally composed of a series of matrilineal clans, which were in turn grouped into two moieties. Each clan had its own collection of names and a matron who was its keeper. The most important, chiefly, names could equally well be thought of as titles—since each corresponded to a position in the political structure of the tribe or confederation. When one such office-holder died, the name was, as the Huron put it, "resurrected" by being conveyed to some person of similar qualities, would thereby also be invested in the title's associated regalia and thus in the office itself (Goldenweiser 1914; Parker 1926:61-65; Shimony 1961; Heidenreich 1978:371-72; for the Huron, see Tooker 1964:44-45). One might say then that the number of "persons"—using the term in the Maussian sense, as particular social identities fixed by socially recognized insignia of one sort or another—in the Iroquois cosmos was fixed, since, like Tylor's "images," they survived the death of the holder.[3] At any point in history, one would encounter the same basic collection of personae, the only difference being that while all the chiefly roles would be filled, some of the less exalted ones would be likely to be without occupants at any given moment.

Iroquois sources often spoke of this as "hanging the name around the neck." Evidence is sketchy, but at least among certain Iroquois nations—and perhaps all of them—each clan did have a collection of "name-necklaces" corresponding to its stock of names, and kept by the same matron responsible for keeping track of them (Fenton 1926:65). The major chiefly titles came with their own belts of wampum, which functioned as insignia of office, and which were indeed placed around

the neck of the man who succeeded to it, along with other insignia of office (Hewitt 1944:65-66; Beauchamp 1901:347-49; Fenton 1946:118; cf. Druke 1981:109-110).

It is a little difficult to generalize because we are dealing with a variety of peoples whose habits were probably not entirely consistent even within any one time and place. Probably even different clans or longhouses had different practices. But it's clear that among the Five Nations in particular, the resurrection of names became crucial to the constitution of society itself. It is possible this was simply a cultural quirk, but it's hard to escape the suspicion that this had something to do with the unusually predatory nature of Iroqouis society.

war and social structure

The League of the Hodenosaunee (or "Iroquois") consisted, at first, of Five Nations, the Onondaga, Mohawk, Seneca, Cayuga, and Oneida, all of whom occupied a swath of territory to the direct south of Lake Erie in what is now upstate New York.[4] The population was concentrated in a series of large, fortified towns—Dutch and English sources usually call them "castles"—perched on hilltops and surrounded by elaborate palisades.

Inside the palisades was female territory. Each longhouse was organized around a core of related women. The male domain was "the forest," with the usual emphasis on war and hunting. Villages and nations were of course connected by an overarching network of political institutions—the organization of the Iroquois League, which seems to have emerged in the years before 1500, just before Europeans appeared on the scene, was one of the inspirations for the federal system adopted in the United States. There were thus a set of different councils operating on different levels: from longhouse to village, village to nation, nation to the federation itself. There are two points here that I think deserve special emphasis. The first is that this system involved an extremely important role for women. Longhouses were governed by councils made up entirely of women, who, since they controlled its food supplies, could evict any in-married male at will. Villages were governed by both male and female councils. Councils on the national and league level were also

made up of both male and female office-holders. It's true that the higher one went in the structure, the less relative importance the female councils had—on the longhouse level, there wasn't any male organization at all, while on the league level, the female council merely had veto power over male decisions—but it's also true that decisions on the lower level were of much more immediate relevance to daily life. In terms of everyday affairs, Iroquois society often seems to have been about as close as there is to a documented case of a matriarchy. The second is that for all the complex federative structure, society was in most respects highly egalitarian. Office-holders, male and female, were elected from among a pool of possible heirs; the offices themselves, at least the male political ones, were considered as much a responsibility as a reward as they involved no real material rewards and certainly granted the holder no coercive power.

Of course, most of our evidence comes from a time of constant war. It's hard to tell precisely how all this affected the relative roles of men and women. On the one hand, it could only have increased the relative importance of the male councils, which were largely concerned with matters of war and peace. On the other, it eventually created a situation in which a large proportion of the men in any given community were not really Iroquois at all, which could only have increased the authority of women on the local level.

Iroquois warfare conformed to a pattern common to much of aboriginal North America. Daniel Richter (1983, 1992:32-38) calls it the "mourning war" complex. The logic is similar to, but not quite the same as, that of the feud. The death of almost any important person might lead to the organization of a military expedition, whether or not that person had been killed by enemies. Among the Five Nations, the logic might be considered an extension of the principle of replacing the dead. Whenever a man or woman holding an important office died, his or her name would be transferred immediately to someone new: the ceremony has come to be known in the literature as a "Requickening" ceremony, because it restored the life and vitality that had been lost to the entire community through death. More humble members of society would eventually be replaced as well. But in the meantime, the effects of loss could be disastrous, especially for those closest to the

deceased. The grief and pain of mourning was seen as capable of driving survivors entirely insane. Often, then, the women of the bereaved household could demand a raiding party be got together (usually from among their male affines) to capture a replacement. Normally this raid would be directed against some neighboring people who were considered traditional enemies. At times, they could escalate into major wars, replete with stand-up battles in which large parties of warriors would meet each other in "largely ceremonial confrontations between massed forced protected by wooden body armor and bedecked in elaborate headdresses" (Richter 1992:35). Death in battle was quite unusual, in part, because the main purpose of war was taking of prisoners.

As for the prisoners, their fate, once brought back to the Iroquois homeland, could be either surprisingly benign or utterly horrendous. All prisoners were formally adopted into the local family that had suffered a recent loss. It was up to family members whether they would then be tortured to death or kept on as a replacement for the deceased. European observers saw the choice as a matter of whim, almost entirely unpredictable. Those to be killed were first feasted, then tied to a stake where they were systematically cut, gouged, and most of all, burned with firebrands and red-hot metal, often over the course of an entire night before dying—ceremonies that, apparently sometimes did end with a communal feast on parts of the body of the dead (in other words, what their neighbors said was not entirely untrue). The vast majority of women and children captured on raids, and a very good proportion—probably the majority—of the men were not, however, killed but permanently adopted. They would be given the name of the deceased and, ideally, almost instantly find themselves treated like a member of the family, having all rights and relations of the deceased (i.e., a man would normally take his place as husband of the dead man's wife), and treated with the utmost tenderness by his female relatives. After a trial period during which they were carefully watched for any sign of disaffection, such prisoners could eventually become fully accepted members of society, even in some cases leading war parties or receiving higher names and offices with political responsibilities.

This anyway was how the situation appears to have worked in indigenous times. Warfare became much more severe and destructive during the seventeenth century, during which the Iroquois managed to break, one after the other, a series of rival federations, including the Mohicans, Hurons, Petuns, Neutrals, Erie, and Susquahannock—wars that often involved both unprecedented massacres (one Iroquois chief ordered eighty Huron prisoners slaughtered in one day, in order to assuage his grief and anger at the death of his brother) and the massive incorporation of alien prisoners into Iroquoian society. It was around this period one reads accounts of a society effectively divided into classes, with adopted prisoners doing the bulk of the menial labor and with members of their adopted families having the right to kill them for the slightest infractions or impertinence (Starna and Watkins 1991), and missionaries complained that in many communities most men were not particularly fluent speakers of their own nation's languages (Quain 1937). It may be that the unusually systematic nature of the Iroquoian naming practices only emerged in this period (alternately, it may be that it had existed for a very long time, and this was one of the reasons the Five Nations were able to expand and incorporate others more effectively than their neighbors). Anyway, this exceptionally brutal period did not last long: the children of these captives were considered full members of their adoptive clans.

the making of peace

At this point, let me return to the role of wampum. Wampum in fact played an essential role in the mechanics of both making war and ending it.

For example, if a man's death inspired members of his family to commission a war party, the clan matron was said to "put his name on the mat" by sending a belt of wampum to a related war chief; he would then gather together a group of men to try to bring back a captive to replace him (Lafitau in Fenton 1978:315). If the man in question had been killed, however—at least, if the killer was not from a completely alien group—the usual practice was to appoint an avenger.[5] The only way to prevent this, in fact, was for the killer's people to pay a gift of wampum immediately to the

victim's family. The usual fee was five fathoms for the life of a man, ten for that of a woman (T. Smith 1983:236; Morgan 1854:331-34; Parker 1926). Within the league, elaborate mechanisms existed to ensure any such matters would be quickly resolved; councils would be convoked, large amounts of wampum raised by canvassing the important members of the killer's clan. Even then, it was still the bereaved family who had the last word. If stubborn, they could still insist on sending the avenger on his way.

The mechanics of peacemaking are especially important because this is what the League was essentially about. The Iroquois term translated "league," in fact, really just means "peace": the entire political apparatus was seen by its creators primarily as a way of resolving murderous disputes. The League was less a government, or even alliance,[6] than a series of treaties establishing amity and providing the institutional means for preventing feuds and maintaining harmony among the five nations that made it up. For all their reputation as predatory warriors, the Iroquois themselves saw the essence of political action to lie in making peace.

Wampum was the essential medium of all peacemaking. Every act of diplomacy, both within the League and outside it, had to be carried out through the giving and receiving of wampum. If a message had to be sent, it would be "spoken into" belts or strings of wampum, which the messenger would present to the recipient. Such belts or strings were referred to as "words"; they were often woven into mnemonic patterns bearing on the important of the message. Without them, no message stood a chance of being taken seriously by its recipient. In council, too, speakers would accompany their arguments with belts of wampum—also called "words"—laying them down one after the other as the material embodiments of their arguments (Beauchamp 1901; Smith 1983:231-32).[7]

When envoys were sent to propose a treaty to another nation, not only would the conditions of the treaty itself be "spoken into" belts of wampum, but the envoys would be given belts and strings to convey as gifts for the nation to whom the treaty was proposed. These might also be woven into "words"; at any rate, they would be presented one by one to the accompaniment of words

of conciliation. Since Iroquois diplomacy is well documented, we have a good record of what these conciliatory speeches were like:

> They run somewhat as follows, each sentence being pronounced with great solemnity, and confirmed by the delivery of a wampum belt: 'Brothers, with this belt I open your ears that you may hear; I draw from your feet the thorns that pierced them as you journeyed thither; I clean the seats of the council-house, that you may sit at ease; I wash your head and body, that your spirits may be refreshed; I condole you on the loss of your friends who have died since we last met; I wipe out any blood which may have been spilt between us'. . .
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> And his memory was refreshed by belts of wampum, which he delivered after every clause in his harangue, as a pledge of the sincerity and the truth of his words (Brice in Holmes 1883:242).

Afterward, an envoy might place the treaty belts themselves over the shoulders of the chief, who could either accept the treaty or reject it by shaking them off (Heckewelder in Holmes 1883:246-47). If accepted, copies of the treaty belts would be sent back with the envoy, and both sides would keep their belts as a permanent record of their mutual obligations.

Michael Foster (1985) has suggested that the exchange of wampum in such negotiations was seen first and foremost as a way of opening up channels of communication. Hence the rhetorical emphasis on "opening the ears" and "unstopping the throats" of those who received it, and of otherwise putting them at ease with one another. This was particularly important if (as was usually the case) there had previously been hostilities between the two parties. It seems to me this is true as far as it goes; but the notion of "communication" plays into much larger cosmological ideas. Iroquois religion, as Elisabeth Tooker (1970:7; Chafe 1961) has aptly put it, was in its essence "a religion of thanksgiving." Ritual was seen above all as a way to give thanks to the Creator by showing

one's joy at the existence of the cosmos he had created. Even today just about every ritual event or even meeting involves thanksgiving speeches, in which the speaker lists the main elements of the cosmos—earth, trees, wind, sun, moon, sky—and celebrates the existence of each in turn.[8] This celebration or joy could also be imagined as feeling of expansiveness, an opening of oneself to the totality of creation and to the social world. In a similar way acts of condolence, such as the giving of wampum, were meant to clear all the grief and anger that obstructed the minds and bodies of those bereaved by death and to restore them to full communication with the world and other people. This is why the givers spoke not only of opening the eyes and ears and throats of their recipients but also of "revealing the sun" and "revealing the sky" to them once more. "Opening up channels of communication," then, is not simply a matter of creating an environment in which people can talk to one another; it is a matter of opening them up to the universe as a whole.

But why should gifts of wampum be an appropriate medium for this?

The most plausible explanation is provided by George Hammel (1984). Throughout the eastern woodlands of North America, he suggests, there was a broad category of objects that were seen as embodying what he calls "life and light"—illumination, in Hammel's analysis, being roughly equivalent to my "expansiveness." These included a wide range of bright or mirrored objects, ranging from quartz crystals to obsidian to certain sorts of shell, as well as, later, wampum and glass beads. Even before the advent of Europeans, these constituted a category of wealth that was traded over long distances, and in special demand by those engaged in shamanistic pursuits. Wampum was thus seen as carrying an intrinsic capacity to lift away grief. A Seneca myth about Hiawatha—who was said to be the inventor of wampum, as well as one of the founders of the League—has him gathering together the first string and vowing:

> If I should see anyone in deep grief I would remove these strings from the pole and console them. The strings would become words and lift away the darkness with which they are covered. (Hammel 1984:19)

Just in these few references one can already see a fairly clear set of terms of opposition. The difference between pleasure and pain, joy and grief is conceived as one between expansion and contraction; and by extension between light (which allows extend one's vision into the world, to see the sun and sky) and darkness (in which one's vision contracts to the immediate environs of the self). Even more importantly, perhaps, it is an opposition between articulate speech and silence or inarticulate rage; strings of wampum are themselves things of light, but they are also "words," that unstop the ears and throats of those who receive them, allowing them to pass into that domain of "self-extension" which is made possible only through language (Scarry 1985). The two possible fates of Iroquois prisoners are a perfect expression of this: one the one hand, to have a name hung around the neck, in the form of a string of wampum; on the other, to have red-hot axes hung around the neck, which burn into the flesh and send the prisoner into a spiral of agony that will ultimately lead to the ultimate contraction, that of death.

the origins of the Great Peace

In 1946, the Seneca anthropologist Arthur Parker suggested that if one wished to understand his people's history, one had to begin by taking a cosmological perspective: that is, to see how Iroquoians themselves place themselves in the overall history of the universe. Those of his time saw the latter as structured around three great creative moments: the first, that of the creation of the universe; the second, that of the creation of the League, or "Great Peace," and the third, the reforms of the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Around each there is an extensive oral tradition. During the period we are dealing with, there would appear to have been only two.

Iroquois legends concerning the origins of the League (Converse 1962; Hale 1883; Hewitt 1892; Parker 1916)[9] always begin by describing a time when incessant feuds and warfare had laid the country to waste. The Iroquois' ancestors had reverted to a state of savagery, fleeing to the

forests and giving themselves over entirely to murder, cannibalism, and rapine. In these stories, the effects of their grief and rage are often figured as physical deformities: the people had literally become monstrous. The action begins when, in the midst of all this chaos, war, and degradation, a man named Deganawideh emerges to reform the people, by magic and persuasion, and to have them agree to a Great Peace. The story follows him as he does so, meeting and joining forces with Hiawatha, and creating present day Iroquois society in the process by giving names to its constituent clans and nations. Its climax comes when the heroes are faced with most monstrous being of all, the evil sorcerer Thadodaho, of the Onondaga—described (in Hewitt's version: 1882:138-40) as having the hands of a turtle, the feet of a bear, snakes for hair, and a penis of many fathoms wrapped several times around his body. Rather than do battle, they offer him thirteen strings of wampum, one after the other, accompanying each with a song. With each presentation one of his deformities disappears, until by the end he is once again a normal human being. The reformed Thadodaho agrees to become the fire keeper of the central Onondaga council lodge and guardian of the League's wampum (including those very thirteen strings). Deganawideh goes on to speak the rules of the League into wampum strings that Thadodaho will preserve, and then disappears from the earth.

All the other protagonists of the story, including Hiawatha, remained just as the clans and nations to which Deganawideh gave names. Thadodaho himself became the keeper of the League's treasury of wampum belts; and ever since, whoever becomes the keeper of the treasury thereby becomes Thadodaho.

Note once again the parallel between the removal of grief, and the bestowal of names. Deganawideh and Hiawatha consistently do both. One might say that in doing so they create society in two senses: first, by creating peace, the potential for sociality that makes it possible; second, by establishing differentiations within this newly created peace, and thereby giving society its structure. All these primordial gestures continue to be reenacted in the present through acts of giving wampum. As in so many mythological systems, most present-day acts are not seen as

fundamentally creative in the same sense; they are simply a matter of re-creating the same structure of names and offices over and over again. Nonetheless, without that continual re-creation, the Great Peace would cease to exist and humanity would presumably revert again to savagery and rage.

The climax of the myth—the reform of Thadodaho—was recapitulated in the most important League ritual: the Condolence ceremony, held yearly to "raise up" new chiefs to replace those who had died. Like the smaller clan rituals on which it was modeled, it consisted of a confrontation between two moieties, one "clear-minded," the other bereaved. At the end, the clear-minded moiety would lift the others' bereavement by presenting thirteen "words," or messages, each accompanied by a string of wampum whose pattern reproduced the message in visual form (Hale 1883, Hewitt 1944, Parker 1926, Tooker 1978:437-40). Here, too, each string was intended to remove some hurt or obstruction that had been the consequence of grief: to wipe away the tears from their eyes, remove the obstruction from their ears, unstop the throat, straighten the body, wipe the bloody stains from their beds, lift their surrounding darkness, and so on. It was only after this that new chiefs could be raised up by giving them the strings or belts corresponding to the dead ones' names.

If the ritual was performed in full, there would also be a recitation of the League's chiefly names and of its constitutive regulations (Hale 1883:54-55). The belts into which Deganawideh originally spoke the latter were kept together with the League's collection of treaty belts (treaties that were in a sense their extensions) in the central Onondaga lodge under the care of Thadodaho. They too were laid out one by one as elders explained their significance.

> At certain seasons they meet to study their meaning, and to renew the ideas of which they were an emblem or confirmation. On such occasions they sit down around the chest, take out one string or belt after the other, handing it about to every person present, and that they all may comprehend its meaning, repeat the

> words pronounced on its delivery in their whole convention. By these means they are able to remember the promises reciprocally made by the different parties; and it is their custom to admit even the young boys, who are related to the chiefs, to. . .become early acquainted with all the affairs of state. (Loskiel in Holmes 1883:245-46; cf. Parker 1916:48)

Such belts were almost always woven in complex pictures, which could be interpreted as visual statements of the words once spoken into them, but these pictures were in no sense hieroglyphics. They were essentially mnemonics, and would have meant nothing unless interpreted by elders who used them, as Morgan says, to "draw forth the secret records locked up in their remembrance" (Morgan 1851:120-21; Druke 1985).

circulation and history

The Iroquois of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, then, appear to have conceived themselves as endlessly reproducing a social order that was essentially founded on the principle of peace, even as they themselves were engaged in constant, often predatory warfare. The unusually static conception of history—especially the conception of society as a collection of permanent, named positions—seems only to have facilitated this, because it meant that the often sordid or gruesome details of actual history could, as it were, be made to melt away at ritual moments when beautiful words and beautiful objects re-created the essential foundations of society, its ultimate truth.

Wampum became the necessary medium for this process. Now, on the face of it, this might seem somewhat paradoxical, since wampum was, after all, not something that Iroquois society itself produced. It came in from outside. But in a way this is only appropriate for a material that was itself seen as carrying the power of social creativity. It turns on a common cosmological dilemma: how can that which has the power to constitute a certain order itself partake of that same order?

(This is of course another version of the Goedelian problems discussed in chapter 3.) The origins of Deganawideh himself were, as so often with such heroes, somewhat extra-social: he was born to a virgin mother in a Huron village. After having constituted the social order, he then vanished; alone among the characters of the story, he did not remain part of it.

Wampum entered Iroquois society in two principal ways. One was the fur trade. The Iroquois became more and more central players in the trade over the course of the seventeenth century; Dutch, French and English merchants supplied large amounts in exchange for furs. The other was through tribute. In the wars by which the Iroquois fought against other groups to take control of the fur trade, they also imposed very unequal treaties, obliging defeated groups to pay what amounted to hundreds of fathoms of wampum in tribute every year. In both cases, wampum tended to arrive already woven into belts uniform both in color and in size.[10]

Once it arrived, wampum appears to have been divided among important office-holders, a class who some early sources even refer to as 'nobles"' "It is they who furnish them," wrote Lafitau, "and it is among them that they are redivided when presents are made to the village, and when replies to the belts of their ambassadors are sent" (Holmes 1883:244); though there are some hints of ceremonial dances or other events in which office-holders would "cast wampum to the spectators" or otherwise redistribute the stuff (Michelson 1974; Fenton 1998:128; Beauchamp 1898:11). But it does not really seem to have *circulated* in the sense of being transacted, passed from hand to hand. Neither for that matter was it much used as a casual form of adornment (Morgan 1851:387-88), by notables or anyone else. Instead, it was kept hidden away in chests or pouches in its owner's longhouse until needed for some ritual or diplomatic act, whereupon the women of the longhouse would weave it into the required patterns. Beauchamp remarks that "to some councils they were taken almost by the bushel, over a hundred being sometimes used, but nearly all these were afterwards taken apart or made to do duty on some other occasion." For such league-wide events, office-holders could seem to have had the right draw on the reserves of those they represented; afterwards, they would presumably redistribute part of what they themselves

received to the contributors. (At any rate, that was the case in diplomacy, which could involve even more grandiose expenditures.)

Hidden wampum, then, represented a kind of potential for political action: for making peace but also for making war. It remained invisible until something important needed to be said or done: a speech made at council, a war-party commissioned, an agreement negotiated, a mourner consoled. On such occasions one might make gifts of generic wampum, belts of pure white or "black" (purple). More often, though, one gave belts made of both white and black beads woven into concrete, particular patterns that could be displayed, one by one, as the visual complement to a speaker's arguments. If the words were truly important, the belts could be preserved in that form, placed in a chest but periodically brought out to be displayed and their words remembered; otherwise, they would be cut up into their component beads and distributed again.

One can, I think, distinguish two different forms of value here, which can also be thought of as two different ways in which wampum was similar to speech. On the one hand, the designs of wampum used to resolve disputes or to "open up channels of communication" were as ephemeral as ordinary conversation, but as in much ordinary conversation, what was said was not so important as the mere fact that people were speaking to one another. Beads, as Hammel emphasized, embodied what might be considered the ultimate value in Iroquois culture: the sense of brightness, clarity, expansiveness, of unhindered communication with the cosmos, whose social manifestation was peace and the unobstructed solidarity of human beings. But wampum was not simply a representation of value. By assembling, distributing, and presenting it as soothing words to unblock the obstructions of grief and anger in others, one actually created that peace and solidarity. Like Marx's money, wampum was a representation of a value that could only be realized through its exchange.

On the other hand, certain "words"—certain figured belts and strings—could become significant and memorable in themselves. Like the unique heirlooms discussed in chapter 4, their value was either (in the form of name-belts) tied to unique personal identities, or else (in the form of law- and treaty-belts) derived from a unique history of human action. This is presumably why,

according to Lafitau, the latter could be referred to equally as "words" or as "transactions": they were the embodied memory of previous acts of diplomacy and peacemaking. If hidden, generic, or ephemeral wampum was the potential to create peace, heirloom belts were peace in its crystalline form.

creation and intentionality

Let us imagine the history of piece of wampum, circa 1675. It was manufactured from a whelk shell by an Algonkian somewhere on Long Island and became part of a solid white belt, which was then passed by its manufacturer as tribute to some Dutch official. For a while the belt circulated as money back and forth between colonists in New England in New Amsterdam, the memory of each transaction disappearing with the next. Finally, an English trader used it to purchase the pelt of a beaver that had been killed somewhere around Lake Michigan, from a member of the Seneca nation who had got it from an Ojibwa trade partner. From there the belt might have passed west to the Great Lakes, where the pelts were being extracted by tributaries of the Iroquois, and from there, passed back to the Iroquois as tribute once again; or it might have remained in the longhouse of the man who had sold the English trader the pelts. In any event, memory of each specific transaction would continue to be effaced with each new one. The value of the wampum, then, derived not from the importance of past actions but, like money, from its capacity to mediate future ones, and also, one should add, the fact that it was the medium of a larger circuit of exchange, spanning most of North America, a totality of interactions that continued to be reproduced through its medium. Again like money, it was a tiny portion of a greater, undifferentiated totality. Only if the belt were broken up and reworked into "words" would the bead's value shift from that of a potential for future actions to that of actions already taken in the past.

Note that outside of the colonies, wampum functioned only in an anonymous fashion in dealings between people who did not consider themselves part of the same society: a English trader and a Seneca, and Seneca and an Ojibwa. . . In transactions between members of the same society,

or even transactions between members of different nations intended to create peace, all this changed. Sometimes, the "words" could simply be reenactments of actions taken in the mythic past, whether of naming or condolence. Others, however, were not simply repetitions but creative acts that, if successful, could themselves end up memorialized Here is the twenty-third clause of the League's Constitution, as translated by Arthur Parker in 1916:

> 23. Any Lord of the Five Nations Confederacy may construct shell strings (or wampum belts) of any size or length as pledges or records of matters of national or international importance.
>
> When it is necessary to dispatch a shell string by a War Chief or other messenger as the token of summons, the messenger shall recite the contents of the string to the party to whom it is sent. That party shall repeat the message and return the shell string and if there has been a summons he shall make ready for the journey.
>
> Any of the people of the Five Nations may use shells (or wampum) as a record of a pledge, contract or an agreement. (1916:37)

The contractual language may seem a bit *expostfacto*, but "pledge" seems far closer to the Iroquoian conception than "gift." True, the recipient would usually keep what was given him, but even payments of white wampum in bloodwealth were considered "not in the nature of compensation for the life of the deceased, but of a regretful confession of the crime, with a petition for forgiveness" (Morgan 1851:333). A gift of wampum then revealed the intentions of the giver (when they were not called "word," they could be described as bearing the "thought" or "mind" of the giver: Hewitt 1892:146-48). But they did so in a form that was potentially permanent. It was the fact that it could be kept as a memorial that made the giving of wampum a pledge of sincerity, so that no important proposal or argument would be taken seriously without it.

The crucial moment of the act or "transaction" that was memorialized was not even so much the giving of wampum as the mere revealing of it: it came when the speaker pulled the strings or beads out of the pouch or basket in which they had been hidden, and placed them on the ground before the assembly. It was an act of revelation, of bringing the invisible, intangible contents of mind or soul into visible, physical reality. It was in a sense the quintessential creative act, by which new political realities could be brought into being.

The connection of mind specifically with words deserves further consideration, since it appears to have a particular relevance to the cultures of the Northeast woodlands in general, and particularly with notions of the person. The key text here is Irving Hallowell's ([1954] 1967) essay on conceptions of the soul among the Ojibwa, an Algonkian people of Canada. By "soul," Ojibwa refer to any being with a capacity for perception and intentionality. While Ojibwa assume that souls can take many different appearances or shift from one appearance to another, the uniform kernel behind them is never itself visible to the eye (177). On the other hand, one thing all souls do have in common is an ability to speak, and "the only sensory mode under which it is possible for a human being to directly perceive the presence of souls of *any* category, is the auditory one" (180, his emphasis). In other words, even if souls are invisible, they always make some sort of sound.

If this sort of analysis applies to Iroquois conceptions as well (and both Hallowell and Tooker suggest that it does)[11] then words themselves can be seen as mediating between the invisible and the visible in much the same way wampum does. They provide the necessary medium between hidden desires and concrete, visible realities. This is very important because, I think, it opens up the question of an underlying theory of creativity.

I have already mentioned that Iroquoian ritual is constantly marked out by thanksgiving speeches in which the officiant proceeds to draw attention to each aspect of the cosmos that gives humans happiness and pleasure and thanks the Creator for its existence. In these speeches, creation itself is always treated as an act of speech. After each aspect of the cosmos listed, the speaker comments, "this is what the Creator decided (or "intended")"—then cites his words and

confirms that these words were indeed true and continue to be true, and that for this reason we should all be grateful. Here's a brief sample of the rhetoric:

> And this is what the Creator did. He decided, "There will be plants growing on the earth. Indeed, all of them will have names, as many plants as will be growing on the earth. At a certain time they will emerge from the earth and mature of their own accord. They will be available in abundance as medicines to the people moving about on the earth." That is what he intended. And it is true: we have been using them up to the present time. . .. And this too the Creator did. With regard to the plants growing on the earth he decided, "There will be a certain plant on which berries will always hang at a certain time. I shall then cause them to remember me, the people moving about on the earth. They will always express their gratitude when they see the berries hanging above the earth." And it is true: we see them when the wind becomes warm again on the earth; the strawberries are indeed hanging there. And it is also true that we use them, that we drink the berry water. That is what he did. And it is true: it comes to pass. (Chafe 1961:17-24)

And so on with springs, forests, and animals. The image of creation is always a series of deliberate, intentional acts.

It is important to stress that such thanksgiving speeches were (and are still) given at virtually every important ritual occasion, so ordinary people were likely to have heard them dozens, probably hundreds of times. This is why it is a bit surprising when one looks in collections of Iroquois myths, and discovers that in stories about the creation of the world, the very origins of the universe look quite different.

The myths in question were mostly gathered in the mid- to late-nineteenth century among elderly members of several Iroquois nations and translated somewhat later (E. Smith 1883; Hewitt

1903:167, 1928:479, Converse 1908; cf. Levi-Strauss 1988:130-34.). In these stories, the original creator/protagonist, sometimes referred to as the "Holder of the Earth," is represented simply as the chief of a people who lived in the sky. At this time there was no sun or moon but a great tree in the very center of the sky that provided illumination during the day and grew dim at night. This chief, it was said, had just married a certain young woman, a young virgin. While conversing with her outside his longhouse, their breath mingled together as they talked and she became pregnant as a result. This certainly would suggest the chief's words had creative efficacy of a sort. However, he does not appear to have been aware of the fertilizing properties of his own speech, because when she later told him she was pregnant (they had not yet had sexual relations) he became profoundly upset.

Here is the original text, in the rather annoying, stilted English that translators then felt appropriate for myths:

> It is certain, it is said, that it formed itself there where they two conversed, where they two breathed together; that, verily, his breath is what the maiden caught, and it is that which was the cause of the change in the life of the maiden [that is, her pregnancy]. . .
>
> Thus it was that, without interruption, it became more and more evident that the maiden would give birth to a child. At that time the chief became convinced of it, and he said: "What is the matter that thy life has changed? Verily, though art about to have a child. Never, moreover, have thou and I shared the same mat. I believe that it is not I who is the cause that thy life has changed. Dost thou thyself know who it is?" She did not understand the meaning of what he said. (1908:167-68)

While the chief did not understand the power of his speech, his wife was apparently ignorant even of what we would consider the normal mode of procreation. Eventually, she gave birth to a daughter. By that time the chief had begun to fall ill.

> His suffering became more and more severe. All the persons dwelling in the village came to visit him. . . They questioned him repeatedly, seeking to divine his Word, what thing, seemingly, was needful for him, what kind of thing, seemingly, he expected through as dream. Thus, day after day, it continued that they sought to find his Word. . . what manner of thing his soul craved. (1908:171)

Illnesses, as we shall see, were normally understood to arise from frustrated desires: desires that were often as not unknown to their victims, or revealed only indirectly in their dreams.

The creator, we are told, called his people to assembly, announced that he had had a dream, and asked them to "find his word"—to guess what his dream had been. Many tried and failed. Finally, someone suggested the dream was that the great tree standing next to the chief's longhouse had been uprooted, so that all were able to stare through the hole into the abyss below. This, he said, was the right answer, and so the people promptly carried it out. The tree was uprooted. The chief looked down, then invited his wife to follow suit. When she did so, he kicked her down the hole.

The myth goes on to describe how, below, she ultimately gave birth to twins. At this point, the original creator, not fully conscious of either his own creative abilities or destructive impulses, seems to split in two: into one Good Twin (who seems to correspond to the creator of the thanksgiving speeches) who does indeed create the various features of the universe and names them, trying to construct a world amenable to mankind, and an Evil Twin trying to undo everything his brother does. Still, the rather odd reference to guessing dreams deserves further explanation, as it corresponds to a very important dimension of Iroquoian ritual practice.

the dictatorship of dreams

There are a series of elements that appear to me to be crucial to the story and to the underlying theory of creativity it entails:

1) What sets off the whole sequence of events is the protagonists' fundamental ignorance of the nature of his own powers of creation

2) This ignorance then leads to anger and aggression—though, it would seem, the protagonist is not fully aware of this either. It appears in somewhat symbolic form: the desire to uproot the great tree. In the symbolism of Iroquois diplomacy, at any rate, "the tree of peace" was a symbol of the League that sat at its center, and "uprooting the tree" meant war (Jennings, Fenton, Druke and Miller 1985:122).

3) In every case, creation cannot take place alone but only through the mediation of others. The chief's "words" can bring things into being only through the medium of his wife (by making her pregnant), and then through others "guessing his word" and then translating his desire into reality.

The custom of dream-guessing appears to have been an important one among all Iroquoian peoples, and early missionary sources invariably have a great deal to say about the matter. So does Anthony Wallace, who in 1958 wrote a famous piece on the subject, called "Dreams and Wishes of the Soul." In 1649, for instance, a Jesuit named Ragueneau wrote of the Huron:

> In addition to the desires which we generally have that are free, or at least voluntary in us, which arise from a previous knowledge of some goodness that we imagine to exist in the thing desired, the Hurons believe that our souls have other desires, which are, as it were, inborn and concealed. . .
>
> Now they believe that our soul makes these natural desires known by means of dreams, which are its language. Accordingly, when these desires are accomplished, it is satisfied; but, on the contrary, if it be not granted what it

> desires, it becomes angry, and not only does not give its body the good and happiness that it wished to procure for it, but often it also revolts against the body, causing various diseases, and even death. (quoted in Wallace 1958:236)

Wallace goes over a large number of accounts of such Iroquois theories, which for obvious reasons he compares with Freud's. To realize such dreams, though, one usually needed the help of others; and Jesuit reports make it clear that neighbors or kin felt it was incumbent on them to comply with all such "wishes of the soul," insofar as they were able to do so. If it was the dream of an important person, a council might be immediately invoked to discuss its possible significance and how to realize it. Obviously unacceptable dreams might be acted out in symbolic form: a woman who dreamed of acquiring someone else's fields might have to make do with a gift of a few symbolic furrows; a man who had dreamed of being tortured to death, might receive a mere token burn (cf. Wallace op cit., Tooker 1970, Blau 1963); but sometimes they could lead to quite elaborate and, to the missionaries, quite shocking dramatizations, as in the example of an old sick Huron woman who dreamed all the young men and women of the village paired off in a great orgy inside her longhouse, and whose dream was quite literally reenacted.[12]

Quite frequently, these dreams seem to have focused on physical objects. This was certainly the case during the annual dream-guessing festivals. In these, part of the midwinter rites, people would present their dreams to one another in the form of riddles or charades—it was important at any rate that even if understood by the dreamer, they never be stated in clear, straightforward terms. Friends and neighbors would then offer objects, one by one, trying to determine if these were their "soul's desire." The same could sometimes happen when a person fell sick, and realized their illness was the result of an unfulfilled dream. The ill person—in Jesuit accounts, it most often seems to have been a woman—might not even present a riddle, but simply move throughout the village with her entourage, demanding that everyone guess her dream. In 1636 Le Jeune described a Huron ritual held

> when some one says that they must go through the Cabins to tell what they have dreamed. Then, as soon as it is evening, a band of maniacs goes about among the Cabins and upsets everything; on the morrow they return, crying in a loud voice, "We have dreamed," without saying what. Those of the Cabin guess what it is, and present it to the band, who refuse nothing until the right thing is guessed. You see them come out with Hatchets, Kettles, Porcelain, and like presents hung around their necks, after their fashion. When they have found what they sought, they thank him who has given it to them; and after having received further additions to this mysterious present—as some leather or a shoemaker's awl, if it were a shoe—they go away in a body to the woods, and there, outside the Village, cast out, they say, their madness; and the sick man begins to get better. (JR 10:175-177)

Note the element of initial disruption: in other accounts, the violence is much more in the foreground. Take Father Dablon's description of an Onondaga dream guessing festival of February 1656: as soon as the elders announced it had begun, "nothing was seen but men, women, and children running like maniacs through the streets and cabins," most barely dressed despite the bitter cold:

> Some carry water, or something worse, and throw it at those whom they meet; others take the firebrands, coals, and ashes from the fire, and scatter them in all directions, without heeding on whom they fall; others break the kettles, dishes, and all the little domestic outfit that they find in their path. Some go about armed with javelins, bayonets, knives, hatchets, and sticks, threatening to strike the first one they meet; and all this continues until each has attained his object and fulfilled his dream (JR 42:155-56)

Similarly, Le Jeune elsewhere writes of "bacchantes" in outlandish costumes who during each night of the festival have "liberty to do anything, and no one dares say a word for them."

> If they find kettles over the fire, they upset them; they break the earthen pots, knock down the dogs, throw fire and ashes everywhere, so thoroughly that often the cabins and entire villages burn down. But the point being that, the more noise and uproar one makes, the more relief the sick person will experience. (JR 17:170)

The violent chaos, and indulgent patience on the part of the community, are followed by the actual guessing of dreams, whether by riddles, charades, or simply a laborious process of elimination. In most cases objects that did not turn out to be right were eventually handed back, but it would seem that large amounts of property could sometimes change hands. "It would be cruelty, nay, murder," Dablon notes, "not to give a man the subject of his dream; for such a refusal might cause his death. Hence, some see themselves stripped of their all, without any hope of retribution; for, whatever they thus give away will never be restored to them, unless they themselves dream, or pretend to dream, of the same thing" (JR 42:165). Dablon adds that he does not imagine this often happens, since faking a dream was believed to lead to all sorts of terrible misfortunes. Finally, the objects given were often seen as carrying an ongoing protective power for the dreamer; a bearskin or deerskin given in dream-guessing ritual, for instance, would thence be regarded as a "remedy," and used to cover the body or kept close by whenever the owner was threatened, as a kind of protective talisman (Carheil in JR 54:65-67).

The sequence, then, is much the same as in the myth: ignorance (the dream indicates something the dreamer had not even been aware that he or she desired), aggression (the wild threats and destruction of the evening), and the need for others to transform one's desires into reality.

Not all dreams expressed merely desires of the soul. In some it was not entirely clear whether the inspiration was from the dreamer's own soul or from a deity called the "Holder of the Skies," and also "Master of our Lives"—apparently the Creator in a particular aggressive aspect (Tooker 1970:86-88): this seems to be the reason why the dreams of important people were often considered matters of national concern. Or even of decisive import in political debates: Brebeuf claims that "if a Captain speaks one way and a dream another, the Captain might shout his head off in vain,—the dream is first obeyed" (JR 10:169). One rather doubts, though, that the same dream would weigh so heavily no matter who it was who had it.

Finally, there were also what Wallace calls "visitation dreams" (1967:61) in which gods or spirits would appear to announce news, predict the course of future events, create new rituals, or even establish new guidelines for the storage of crops. Two oft-cited examples are that of a Huron woman who had been, contrary to custom, married away to another village, and who encountered the Moon in the form of a beautiful woman: she revealed herself to be the lord of all the Hurons, declared her love the dreamer, and announced that she wished her to be dressed entirely in red and to receive tribute from all the Huron allies in a great feast that, she ordered, was also to be repeated henceforth by other villages and nations; and the sick, "disfigured" Onondaga warrior who on his return from an unsuccessful expedition against the Erie announced he had encountered the Creator in the form of a dwarf, who demanded he be given two women and that dogs, wampum, and food from each longhouse be offered in sacrifice to ensure future victories (the first LeJeune in JR 17:165-87; the latter in Dablon, JR 42:195-97). Iroquoian societies at the time appear to have been open to constant ritual innovation, and great new cosmological truths seem to have been revealed in dreams on a regular basis, usually only to fade away almost as soon as they appeared.

Midwinter ceremonial and the white dog sacrifice

It's not always easy to square the sketchy and often sensationalistic accounts of Iroquois ritual to be found in early missionary sources with the meticulous descriptions compiled since the nineteenth

century. For example, the wintertime "Feast of Dreams" mentioned by several early authors was clearly part of what is now called the Midwinter Ceremonial (Tooker 1970), the Iroquois New Year and the most important event of the present-day ritual calendar. In most Iroquois communities, the midwinter rites continue to involve dream-guessing, but the general tenor of the ritual has obviously changed a great deal in the intervening centuries. Spontaneous dream-guessing seems to have vanished entirely.

The most striking of these changes is the degree to which what was obviously an extremely free-form and improvisational process has since become tamed and formalized. The "language" of dreams has now become codified, and dramatic reenactments no longer occur; instead, there is an established code of what dreams are significant and an elaborate series of correspondences with certain foods and miniature talismans that are considered appropriate gifts for each. The best account is Harold Blau's description (1963; cf. Beauchamp 1888,) of the Midwinter dream-guessing rituals among the New York Onondaga in the early 1960s. The Onondaga nation is divided, like most Iroquoians, into two moieties; at the height of the ceremony, each moiety takes its turn presenting its dreams to the other in the form of riddles and guessing those of the other side by offering the equivalent sorts of food; once a dream is guessed correctly, the dreamer moves back to his own moiety's assembly house, where a member of his own moiety has to guess correctly too; both will later provide appropriate gifts. For instance, a man who dreamed of playing lacrosse might end up with a pound of sugar and a tiny model lacrosse stick. Similarly there are all sorts of other symbolic tokens, miniature versions of the real object of desire: animals, canoes, sleds, false-face masks and any number of other things, which the dreamer will normally keep afterward as her personal amulet or protector.[13]

The climax of this ritual involves a fascinating set of inversions. After about a hundred dreams have been guessed, a man impersonating the Creator himself enters and offers his own riddles to the people of both moieties. The answer though is always the same. In the nineteenth century, the Creator's desire was for the sacrifice of two dogs, which were first strangled, then

immolated, painted white, and festooned in belts of white wampum. These appear to have been substitutes for the death of war prisoners, who were, in a certain sense, seen as offerings to the Creator. Since 1885, even the dog sacrifice has been abandoned, and the Creator is offered tobacco and white ribbons instead (Hale 1885; Hewitt 1910b, 1910c; Speck 1946:145-46; Blau 1964; Tooker 1965, 1970:41-47, 102-103, 128-41). The sacrifice is marked by any number of inversions on the usual relation between Creator and humanity. Where normally people perform thanksgiving speeches and songs to celebrate creation, here the Creator himself sings a song of thanksgiving (it isn't clear to whom); where normally the thanksgiving speech emphasizes the truth of the Creator's words, here the sacrificers declare they are making the offer "to prove *their* words are true." Finally, according to Fenton's informants, "the white dog which is sacrificed to the Creator. . .is a dream token from all the people to the Creator and it becomes his guardian" (1942:17).

So we are back where we started: with a dreaming god who once again seems slightly confused about his own role in the process of creation, and who (therefore?) ends up mixing urges for destruction in his creativity.

This is not what I mainly want to emphasize, though. What really interests me is the underlying theory of creativity and its relation to conceptions of the person. We have already encountered two aspects of the latter: on the one hand, the formal, Maussian *persona*, which among the Five Nations was embodied in the eternal name; the second, the inner "soul," or seat of desires. One was embodied in visible tokens such as wampum, while the other was fundamentally invisible and perceptible mainly through dreams and voices. Both were to a certain degree exterior to consciousness, but exterior, one might say, in opposite directions: one a social imposition, the other, desires so intimate even the desirer was not entirely aware of them.

Dreams were the desires of this inner soul, or "the language" in which those hidden, invisible desires could begin to take visual form. What Wallace stresses, though, is that this process, by which hidden desires could become visible, manifest, and specific, finally taking on permanent material form—could happen only through the participation of others. "Dreams are not to brood

over, to analyze, and to prompt lonely and independent action; they are to be told, or at least hinted at, and it is for other people to be active" (247). In other words, the hidden can become visible (or the generic specific) only by the individual becoming social (or the specific, generic). This social action reaches its highest form in the midwinter dream-guessing, in which the entire community is mobilized to bring material being to each other's dreams. If gifts people give on such occasions are kept and treasured as talismans and guardians, it must be because they are not only material tokens of the hidden content of a person's mind but also embodiments of the protective action of others.

Wallace places a psychological spin on all this; understandably enough, considering the nature of the material and the direction of American anthropology at the time. Iroquoian societies combined a very indulgent attitude toward children, with extreme psychological pressures on adults. Children were never to be punished; to frustrate a powerful desire in a child might endanger their health. Adults, on the other hand, especially men, were held to high standards of generosity, bravery, and above all stoic impassivity in the face of hardship. Even those tortured to death were expected to, and generally did, face their fate with a show of utter equanimity. Iroquois dream-therapy gave one a chance to be indulged in a similar way by society as a whole; the closest contemporary equivalent to the great dream feasts are the antics of the false face societies, whose members are also privileged at certain times to wreak havoc among people's houses, playing practical jokes, begging, tossing things around, and who are indulged like whimsical children. They represent the same psychological complex: "a longing to be passive, to beg, to be an irresponsible, demanding, rowdy infant, and to compete with the Creator himself; and to express it all in the name of the public good" (Wallace 1967:93).

It's also possible to look at the same phenomena from the perspectives sketched out in the first half of this book: how forms of value emerge to regulate a process which is ultimately about the creation of people. The Midwinter Ceremonial was also a time for the naming of children and consolation of mourners; and condolence, like dream-guessing, was something for which one needed the services of the opposite moiety.[14]

Generally speaking, moiety structures are a way of creating imaginary totalities: if both "sides" are present at a ritual, then in a sense society as a whole is present. Such totalities are both constructed out of, and serve as the means to reproduce, relations within whatever domestic units make up that society's basic building blocks. In the Iroquois case these were of course matrilineal longhouses, each organized around a core of women, and in which women appear to have made all the most important decisions. Dream-guessing does not seem to have been particularly marked for gender one way or the other in early times, but now it seems to have passed largely into the hands of men; condolence was always very much a male concern, one in which women played little part. Still, it was in the longhouses that the most important forms of labor took place, and therefore it is all the more frustrating that we don't have all that much detail about how they were organized. Still, Wallace's observations on socialization are useful here, particularly his emphasis on the combination of indulgence of whims and the gradual process of "hardening" children (for instance by intentionally leaving them underdressed in winter, and occasionally dunking them in cold streams.) The two modes seem to represent opposite poles of the same process, meant to produce highly autonomous adults, as one might expect in a society that seemed to place a roughly equal stress on egalitarianism and individualism.

Both dream-guessing and condolence are clearly modeled on this labor of socialization. In each case, members of one moiety provide nurturant care for the other. They are similar in other ways as well. In each case, the focus is on the psychological condition of individuals, which are full of dire possibilities: frustrated desires can kill, and the grief of mourning can drive the mourner entirely insane. In fact, one could go further: in each case, nurturant care was set against a strong undercurrent of (at least potential) violence. The violence is most explicit in the Jesuit accounts of dream-guessing, in which the dreamers go about at night attacking people, scattering fires, and destroying furniture;[15] but even if it's not dramatized in the same way in condolence rituals, this is because it doesn't really have to be: the whole point of the proceedings is to lift away emotions that can lead to the desire for revenge and terrifying projects of war and cruelty. In each case,

finally, objects change hand between the two sides that are, or become, probably the most treasured tokens of value known to Iroquoian society.

From another perspective, dream-guessing and condolence might be said to represent two opposite movements in the construction of the person. The first is about the realization of the most intimate fantasies and desires of individuals, though this can only be achieved through the help of others—in fact, insofar as dreams have to be guessed by the opposite moiety, achieved only by society as a whole. Condolence, of course, is set off not by individual desires but by the dissolution of the individual in death: in all Iroquoian societies, one of the main tasks of moieties is to bury one another's dead. It is also about the creation of sociality and what endures despite the death of the individual. Wampum is the prime medium through which that enduring life of society is re-created: both through condolence itself and the giving of names. If dream-guessing is about how the individual can only be realized through the mediation of society, then one might say the resurrection of names is about how society itself cannot continue to exist except through the mediation of individuals. Hence the objects that pass back and forth between moieties in each case: in the former, the very most particular, in the latter, the very most generic.

Hence the difference between the essential models of creativity involved in each. In one, the object reveals the mind, or "word" of the giver; in the other, it reveals the mind, or "word" of the recipient.

Not everything moves across moiety lines, however. In each case there was a complementary gift from within one's own moiety. In the Onondaga Midwinter Ceremonial, once someone of the opposite moiety guesses one's dreams, the guess has to be confirmed by someone from one's own. Both parties end up giving gifts, though it is the one from the other side who provides the actual talisman; one's own matrilineal relatives merely provide an equivalent variety of food: a bag of corn, a sack of sugar, and so on. In other words, a relatively generic gift complements a relatively specific one. In the matter of condolence it was even more extreme, since while condolence itself is something that one "clear-minded" moiety must carry out for its opposite ("the mourners"), the

subsequent transfer of names occurs not only within one's own moiety but within one's matriclan. And while one is an affair of men, the other is conducted exclusively by women: even in the case of the most important federal chiefs, it is a female council that chooses the successor. In this case, in other words, one's matrilineal kin provide a relatively specific gift (a unique name) to complement a relatively generic one (the standardized gifts of even more standardized wampum) provided by others.

If these complementary gifts have anything in common, it is that they are comparatively straightforward; gifts of food or names seem to lack the overtones of peril and violence that always seem to lurk behind relations between moieties. It seems to me this is the key to the nature of the moieties themselves. Tradition has it that Iroquois moieties were once exogamous (Morgan 1851:83, Fenton 1951:46, Tooker 1970:23). If so, this doesn't seem to have been the case for some time—one is now forbidden only to marry members of one's own clan—but even if Iroquois moieties were never actually exogamous, it seems important that people believe they were. Lynn Ceci (1982:102-103) points to an Iroquois myth of the origins of wampum that is also a myth of the origins of exogamy: a young warrior from an enemy tribe is the only one able to kill a magical bird covered with wampum. He marries the local chief's daughter, and distributes the beads between his own and his wife's people as a way of establishing peace (E. Smith 1883:78-79). But as Ceci notes, normally it was exogamy itself that created peace, "since in this way young hunter-warriors are dispersed among their in-laws" (103). Iroquois marriage really could be considered an exchange of potentially dangerous young men between largely self-sufficient groups of women.[16] Hence it would only make sense that in the larger, "political" relations between moieties, these same men—and especially older men—adopted forms of ritual action modeled on the work of primary socialization, as a way of overcoming the potential for violence and disruption that ultimately originated in themselves.[17]

All of this might help to explain one otherwise curious feature of wampum. Parker (1916:46) claims that in League Belts, white beads represent the League's women, the purple or "black" ones,

its men. This is not surprising in itself: by all accounts it was the white beads that embodied the values of "light and life" that made wampum suited for its political role—black ones, by contrast, represented its opposite, the negative values of grief, mourning, anger, and war, the last at least considered a male domain (Holmes 1883:241; cf. Hammel 1992). The curious thing is that despite embodying an essentially feminine virtue, wampum was one of the few important forms of property in Iroquoian society that women did *not* control.[18] Houses, fields, food, most tools, and household implements—even such items as the brass kettles that were one of the earliest and most important trade item acquired from Europeans (Turgeon 1997)—were either owned by individual women, or owned by collective groups like longhouses or clans, in which women played the most important roles. While women actually wove the beads together, outside of certain limited forms such as name belts, belts and strings circulated almost exclusively among men.

This might be considered a final way in which actions taken on the political sphere of peacemaking inverted those typical of that below: Iroquois kinship, after all, was largely a matter of groups of women exchanging men; politics, of men exchanging an essentially feminine substance. But one can also see it as the result of a necessary and inevitable tension in any philosophy of society that sees "peace" as the ultimate human value. Granted, the Iroquois defined peace about as broadly as one possibly could: as Paul Wallace put it, peace was "the Good expressed in action" (1946:7), an expression of "wisdom and graciousness" as well as a joyous unity with the cosmos. It was, as a Dumontian might say, the ultimate, encompassing value, since it was about the relation of humans to the cosmos as a whole, the ultimate "imaginary totality". Yet logically, it was entirely premised on the prior existence of its opposite. Without war, "peace" is meaningless. In a sense, then, the wampum belts themselves—or, perhaps more accurately, the process of weaving them together—was itself a model of the process it was meant to mediate, one constantly reproduced in ritual: of converting the potential for destruction into harmony by integrating it into a larger social whole.

dream economies

Let me finish with a few words of historical context.

The basic structure described in the last section appears to be very old. This is probably true both of the fundamental forms of producing people and their ritual refractions: something like dream-guessing, and something like condolence, were probably being practiced among the speakers of Iroquoian languages long before the first foreign ships began appearing offshore. The same no doubt goes for the concrete tokens of value that emerged from them: people were no doubt treasuring dream-tokens and using bright objects derived from faraway places in peacemaking for quite some time as well.

On the other hand, it was only in the late seventeenth or even early eighteenth century that wampum became the universal medium of diplomacy, and probably in the nineteenth century that the language of dreams was largely reduced to a matter of symbolic tokens. In fact, the one thing that really jumps out at one reading the Jesuit relations and other sources from the same period is just how open-ended such things were, especially in comparison with the careful ceremonial etiquette of later times. Of course, this has something to do with the nature of the sources. But it also seems to reflect a genuine change.

European merchant and fishing vessels—French, Spanish, Dutch, Swedish, English, and Basque—began appearing off the northeast coast of North America in the 1500s, and with them came trade goods: glass beads, but also brass kettles and steel axes, which seem to have spread quite quickly. It was only in the next century, however, when European settlements began to be established and Amerindian societies drawn into the global fur trade, that one can speak of the beginnings of a dependant economy in the familiar sense of the term. The Huron Confederacy and then the Five Nations were soon dependent on Europeans for their tools, domestic equipment, clothing, weapons, even foodstuffs, all of which was obtained in exchange for a single product: fur. They were dependent on goods got through commercial transactions with outsiders in order to

maintain their society, but within that society, regimes of property and distribution remained largely unchanged.

> Within the Huron community, there were no commercial transactions, properly speaking. Goods acquired were spontaneously shared within lineages (or segments of clans). This generalized practice of giving insured equality and accounted for the disdain with which the accumulation of goods was viewed; it governed the rules of courtesy at all times as well as the Huron penchant for games of chance, contributions to feasts, rituals, and carnivals, and the obligation to satisfy any desire expressed by a member of the community. As a result, there were no sellers nor buyers among the Hurons, neither commanders nor commanded, neither rich nor poor. . . 'On returning from their fishing, their hunting, and their trading, they exchange many gifts; if they have thus obtained something unusually good, even if they have bought it, or if its has been given to them, they make a feast to the whole village with it. Their hospitality towards all sorts of strangers is remarkable'. (Delâge 1993:52-53)

Delâge argues that among the Huron, new regimes of property and the possibility of personal accumulation, really emerged only among converts to Christianity; among the Five Nations, they do not seem to have emerged at all. However, it's hard to avoid the temptation to interpret the dramatic intensity of some of the Jesuit accounts—games in which people would bet all their personal possessions, down to their very clothes; rituals in which domestic property was smashed, and houses often burned down, in which huge amounts of wealth could change hands in order to indulge someone's dream—as arising to some degree in reaction to this situation. It is probably not entirely coincidental that the "Hatchets, Kettles, and Porcelain" hung around dreamers' necks in

Lejeune's account were probably the three most important items of import during the first century of trade.

One might argue, as Delâge seems to, that this was the morality of a hunting economy, or at least one in which people's main experience of a sudden windfall is of large quantities of meat. Trade goods, which were themselves acquired in exchange for animals, were treated in much the same way. Still, factors like dream-guessing and the apparently constant appearance of new revelations and prophets leave one with the impression of a society of enormous instability, in which almost everything, in a sense, was potentially up for grabs. No doubt if one were living there at the time, one would discover an endless game of political maneuvering between women and men, young warriors and elders, young women and old matrons, those with access to foreign wealth and more traditional authorities, and so on. Of course, such struggles always exist in any society, but here the usual comparatively gentle tugging back and forth seems to have turned into a situation burst wide open, a poker game in which half the cards had suddenly been made wild.

I don't think the phrase "dream economy" is entirely inappropriate here: at least, it captures something of its combination of absolute unpredictability and ephemerality. Radical moments seem to have flickered away almost as quickly as they appeared.

There is a more common pattern here, one that has tended to be obscured a bit by the way anthropologists have approached the question of culture change. A key concept has been the "revitalization movement," a term that, in fact, was coined by Anthony Wallace (1956) with Iroquois history very much in mind. At times of extreme cultural disruption, the argument goes, one often finds the emergence of prophets with self-conscious projects of cultural reformation, the paradigm being the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake who, in the years of the Six Nations' defeat and demoralization following the American Revolution, came forward with what might be considered the final, definitive dream-revelation: a new moral code mixing Quaker and Iroquoian elements, which among other things placed Iroquois males back firmly in control of their nations' economic and political life. The kind of tumultuous world described in the Jesuit accounts, then, tends to be seen

simply as the years leading up to revitalization movements—which, if the situation becomes truly desperate, can take the extreme form of millenarian cults and expectations of the immanent destruction of the world.

There are other ways to look at this. Many anthropologists and historians have noted the remarkable bursts of cultural creativity that so often occur during the first generation or two after many traditional societies are suddenly integrated into a larger world economy. If the conditions are right—if the group maintains some degree of political autonomy and happens to be in a relatively advantageous position in relation to the market—the result can be a spectacular expansion and enrichment of existing cultural forms: of art, architecture, drama, ritual, exchange. Often such a result is referred to as a cultural renaissance. It's not the best possible term, perhaps, since the notion of "rebirth" implies that something was previously moribund, or dead. Still, an analogy to, say, the Italian Renaissance is not entirely inappropriate: that too was made possible at least partially by the newfound wealth of cities in the process of being integrated into a larger world economy, much of which was invested in fairly self-conscious projects of cultural renewal, both inventing and elaborating traditions as they did so. For anthropological parallels: the Kwakiutl renaissance of roughly 1875 to 1920 is probably the most famous, along with the efflorescence of Highland New Guinea exchange systems like *te* and *moka* during the 1950s and '60s; or, to take a less familiar example, of Malagasy mortuary art and ritual around the same time. Examples are legion. What they all seem to have in common is that despite the intense social struggles that so often give them force, new means are mainly being put to very old ends; more specifically, a vast flow of new resources is put to the task of pursuing traditional forms of value.

Such situations rarely last more than fifty years or so; the boot comes down eventually, in one form or another.

The kind of "dream economy" one encounters in the American Northeast in the 1600s, then, might be considered a darker possibility. In some ways it seems the sociocultural equivalent of a bubble economy, in which vast fortunes are made and lost overnight, but especially, in the at least

implicit awareness that bubbles always burst. Or even more, perhaps, one might imagine the wartime economy of a probably doomed city, in which vast amounts of wealth can be scammed or stolen one day, then gambled away the next. The seventeenth century was, after all, a period that combined newfound sources of wealth, and a newfound dependency, with absolutely unprecedented epidemics, famines, and genocidal wars. Most of the population between Pennsylvania and Quebec died; during the beaver wars alone, the Petun, Neutrals, Susquahannock, Mohicans, and Hurons, among others, were destroyed as political entities, their populations massacred, scattered, or incorporated into rival societies. It would be surprising if some of this insecurity was not internalized in the life of the societies themselves.

It did so, one might say, in rather the way a theorist of commoditization might predict: through an emphasis on individual self-realization. But it was individual self-realization in profoundly different cultural terms.

Wampum took on its overwhelming importance only toward the end of this period, and primarily among the Five Nations, as they were in the process of either destroying or incorporating all the others. At this point, wampum, as the currency of the fur trade, could be seen as the very symbol of their growing dependency and of what had caused the region to collapse into a state that must have seemed increasingly reminiscent of the chaos described in the Deganawideh epic. The number of wampum beads in circulation by 1650 has been estimated as high as three million (Richter 1992:85), and they became one of the great media for the Iroquois' great political project of the times, what Matthew Dennis (1993) has described as "cultivating a landscape of peace" by gathering all the region's people together in the structure of the League. Doing so of course involved the endless repetition of the very precise etiquette of condolence, a spirit obviously very different from that of dream-guessing. But by converting the money of the trade, the very stuff of violence, into the potential to create peace, League office-holders were following an ancient ritual logic. And the beads themselves, as they moved back and forth between abstract potential and concrete forms, also created a bridge between a commercial system dedicated to the accumulation of

material objects, and a social system whose great imperative had increasingly become the accumulation of people: effected, most often, by throwing a belt of wampum around a captives shoulders and thus giving them a name.

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[1] "Mohawk" in fact is from an Algonkian word meaning "cannibal". "Iroquois" seems to be derived from one for "killer".

[2] This was the period in which wampum was no longer playing the role of currency among settlers: as of circa 1652-54, it was no longer recognized as legal tender in the English colonies. The Dutch kept using it, but the English then began to dump supplies for fur and Dutch goods to create a severe inflation in the New Netherlands.

[3] Among the Huron, at least, there was one aspect of a person's "soul" that was said to be reborn when the name was resurrected; another that ascended to an otherworldly village of the dead (Heidenreich 1978:374-75). I have not been able to find any information exactly paralleling this from Iroquois sources.

[4] Later a sixth, the Tuscarora, was added on, but only in a subordinate, nonvoting capacity.

[5] Whether through giving him the victim's name (as with the Huron) or through the giving of a belt, we are not told.

[6] Eric Wolf makes a great point of this (1982:168-70): in no major conflict in which they were involved did all of the nations of the league even take the same side.

[7] In the absence of wampum, other gifts could be substituted, such as hatchets or beaver pelts (Snyderman 1954:474; Druke 1985). The crucial thing was that some object had to change hands. But all sources agree that wampum was the proper gift; at times, parties to negotiations who did not have any wampum on hand would simply give sticks as a pledge for wampum to be provided later.

[8] The formal speeches may have been inspired to some degree by missionary influence (Fenton, personal communication, 1999), but almost all Iroquois rituals can be seen as thanksgiving rituals in one way or another.

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[9] For two recent treatments of the epic, with full background on the various extant versions, see Dennis 1993, chapter 3; Fenton 1998, chapters 5-6.

[10] One purple belt was worth two white ones, since the purple beads were more rare. In exchange with European settlers the logic of supply and demand still held, so white beads were worth less, despite the fact that they were held to convey the highest value in Iroquoian terms. Over time most of the pelts arrived as tribute as well.

[11] Hallowell 1960:52; Elisabeth Tooker (1979b) agrees.

[12] Some dreams implied dangers not just for the dreamer but the community as a whole, or alternately were seen as prophecies: hence, if a man dreamed of being burned to death by enemies, it was often felt necessary to carry out some kind of milder version of this fate, so as to prevent it from happening for real. I note in this case the desire appears to be not the dreamer's soul but the Creator's.

[13]Wallace too notes that the "soul," the inner invisible aspect of the person is identified with intentions and desires, though the terms for this are continuous with those for the talismans given to satisfy them (Hewitt 1885:113).

[14] This is most explicit among the Onondaga (Blau 1962) but appears to be a general principle even in places where dream-guessing is no longer such an important part of the ceremonies (e.g., Fenton 1936:17-18, Speck 1949:122, Shimony 1961:182-83).

[15] It's much less pronounced in contemporary material; it appears primarily in the antics of the False Face society, whose members were drafted by means of dreams on a cross-moiety basis (e.g., Fenton 1936:17).

[16] For example, a young man's brothers would probably be scattered across different clans and his father would belong to the opposite moiety.

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[17] Though of course women could also be the immediate cause of war, since when someone died, it was usually their female relatives who would demand a mourning war (cf. Dennis 1993:109-10).

[18] The obvious exceptions were name belts and strings; still, the more generic forms, the closest to the raw power to create political realities, seem to have been exchanged almost entirely between men.