

“And Some Guys Dream Bad Things”

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Abstract: [Please also see Part 2: *The Return of the Windigo, Again*]

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Introduction

Crees conceive themselves simultaneously as hunters of animals and as the prey of monsters who are the hunters of humans. For Rock Crees and other boreal forest Algonquians, the noun *wihtikow*, and its cognates refer either to an anthropophagous monster or to a human individual exhibiting symptoms of transformation into such a monster. Rock Crees say that all witikos were formerly human beings, although a subclass without human origins is recognized by the Ojibwas and Swampy Crees. Humans are said to have become witikos through dream predestination, possession, freezing, and commission of famine cannibalism. Crees say that an event of such cannibalism sometimes transformed its practitioner into a witiko who thereafter ate humans gratuitously; they also say that others became witikos through dreaming or possession without the prior occurrence of cannibalism. Witiko dispositions sometimes manifested themselves during times of famine, but Crees also say that incipient witikos sought human flesh even when acceptable food was abundant. The noun also refers metaphorically to historically known famine cannibals and also to gluttons and insane or violent individuals without ascribed cannibal impulses. In the remote age of the *acađohkiwin*, the early humans were stalked by two "races" of witiko-like beings, the *wihcikosisak*, small witikos, and the *mimiđitihisiwak*, hairy heart beings. These races are not ancestral or otherwise etiologically related to the witikos said to exist in the present but share many of their characteristics.

For some Crees, the witiko continues to constitute a thing of this world whose presence may condition decisions about bush-related activities and whose appearance in dreams prompts recourse to Indian medicine. For white academics, the witiko or "windigo" (from Ojibwa windigo) has been of perennial interest, the subject of an expanding anthropological literature including descriptive, folkloristic, historical, ecological, psychoanalytic, and structural readings (cf. Marano 1982). The symbolism of witiko has figured in many of these studies, but the most engrossing facet of the topic has been the so-called windigo psychosis of preceding centuries whose Algonquian sufferers exhibited symptoms of anxiety and depression and expressed the desire to eat human flesh. In at least one documented instance, and in many others if the Indian testimony is accepted, the nominal "psychotic" gratified these desires, killing and eating human beings rather than seeking

conventional food (Brightman 1988). The windigo psychosis has been anthropologically rendered as a culture-specific psychiatric syndrome unique to Great Lakes and boreal forest Algonquians. Persons suffering from it are understood to have subjectively experienced the symptoms of their disorder as signs of incipient witiko transformation. Such persons were, in turn, defined by their relatives and friends as witikos; variously, they have been ostracized, cured, or executed by their relatives or Euro-Canadian authorities.

In discussing the relationship of the Algonquian windigo figure to the Iroquoian "Stonecoat" and related beings, Fogelson (1980:147-148) remarked on the cross-cultural generality of oppositional relations between monstrous and human categories.

On a more general level, it should be pointed out that monsters cannot exist except in classificatory relation to others. Thus a universal function of monsters is to define what is human through contrast and opposition.

From this point of view, humanity monstrously distorted throws into relief the defining characteristics of the human condition. Following the lines of interpretation outlined here, it may be expected that a comparative ethnology would disclose considerable variation, each society distorting its distinctive conception of the human. Witiko traits comprise a systematic oppositional inversion of traits Crees understand as constitutive of the human state, or, more specifically, of the state of *nihidawiwini* 'Cree-ness'. It is as if the image of the witiko has been constructed on the basis of successively more inclusive reflections on defining human attributes.

The Domestication of the Hairy Hearts

A narrative told by Mrs. Selazie Linklater of Pukatawagan provides a suitable point of departure as it formulates and reiterates the contrasts between human and witiko conditions in a particularly direct fashion. The story describes the conflict of a human family with two Hairy Hearts, myth-age counterparts of the witiko. As will be seen, these differ from contemporary images of witiko in certain respects, being capable of speech and sociality.

Once then and very long ago this happened. There were then in this country Hairy Hearts. They say of these that they are without hearts or goodness. Then at this time there are two of these Hairy Hearts: a male and his son. They travel between the camps of the people, and they kill and eat the people. At one camp there is an old man, a "dreamer" himself, who has spiritual power. He can know before it happens that those Hairy Hearts are coming to his camp. He tells this to the others, his relatives and the people who stay with him. Really, very quickly then they break their camp and travel to a place there where the old man intends to hide. They have with them a moose hide. They use this hide by filling it with grass, and then just there they hang it on wooden poles. It looks like a living moose. Then I suppose just there they dig a hole under the snow. Over the hole they position this "moose." The head of the moose faces north from there. "Truly they will not look for us here," that old man says. "Those ones who are coming are not interested in moose. Only people they intend to eat." A long time they will stay in that hole so that the Hairy Hearts will not find them.

This Hairy Heart old man owns a staff. Straight up and down he aligns this staff, placing one end in the snow so it stands upright. Then, when he sings, this staff is able to incline toward that place where people are hiding. He sings to his staff, this Hairy Heart. But the

human old man, he who hides in the snow, exerts his power. Then really that staff inclines in the opposite direction. For a long time they hunt the human beings, those Hairy Hearts, and the old man [Hairy Heart] always uses his staff. Always that old man in the snow uses his power to overcome them. Finally, then, those Hairy Hearts leave that place there and travel to another lake. When they are gone, those [human] people come out of their dwelling in the snow. They intend to warn the other people around that lake that these Hairy Hearts are going around.

Those Hairy Hearts are truly almost starved to death now. "Near us there are people in a camp," that Hairy Heart old man says to his son. "Go and hunt for us. Bring from that camp two children. Run rawhide cordage through them so I can roast them." Then he catches them, two children who are playing outside of that camp. Those two children scream with fear. He brings them to the old man. Then really that old man roasts those two boys. The people at that camp hear those children screaming. Really, they are frightened. Then they break their camp and move from there, towards where the others stay at the lake.

That old man warns the people that they should stay together in a large camp. "We should not be in small groups," he says to them. They all travel together to a bay just there. Just there they will be able to see what might come towards them from across the lake. That old man is able to know that the Hairy Hearts will again hunt them, that the Hairy Hearts will transform into trees. In this way, they will stalk them [the people], those Hairy Hearts. He [old man] says to the children, "Always watch the ice on the lake. Maybe soon you will see something coming towards in from there. You will see trees. They will be closer to us each time you see them. When you see them, those trees, say loudly, 'Trees are on the ice!'"

Soon those children see trees on the ice. Each time that they look, they are a little closer to the camp. Those children are very frightened. Very close to the camp those trees approached. And then: "Trees on the ice!" they say. Just then, right there those Hairy Hearts stopped.

That old [human] man does not act frightened. He tells those Hairy Hearts to come inside the lodge. Inside the lodge, they are eating beaver meat. And then really when they come into the lodge, they become human beings. They lose all their powers and the ice in their bodies melts. And then they eat beaver meat with the others. Really, those Hairy Hearts would be frightened of fires and heat because it melts the ice in their bodies and they lose their strength.

They stay there then with the people in that camp. They always eat animal meat like the others. That old man and his son both marry women in that group of families just there. In the winter, the young man goes out hunting with his brothers-in-law. He brings back to the camp every kind of meat. But he stays a long time outside the lodge; seldom does he go in and stay by the fire. Really, he is still wicked, that young man. By staying out in the cold, he is getting stronger. Again there begins to be ice in his body. He stays out in the bush because he doesn't want to be warm.

It becomes spring there. Still that young man goes hunting with his brothers-in-law. Then really: "When I hunt with your younger brothers, they resemble animals to me," that young man says to his wife. In the morning, he will go out hunting again with his brothers-

in-law. They are preparing, outside the lodge. Then she hides the snowshoes of her brother, that woman. He comes inside the lodge to look for them. "There is something wrong again with my husband," she tells her brother. "Be careful when you hunt with him. Watch out for the welfare of our younger sibling."

They leave and go to hunt animals. That Hairy Heart young man doesn't walk with his brothers-in-law. He follows behind them, looking at their snowshoe tracks. He sees their snowshoe trail as the trail of a moose. He walks ahead of them through the bush. Then just there, he jumps out and grabs him. Then just there, the other one [older brother] chops off his head.

At the camp, those two old men are sitting in the lodge. Immediately, that old Hairy Heart knows it, that his son has been killed. He says to all of them there: "You killed my son. Now, if you don't kill me I will destroy all of you." They take sticks and try to kill that old man. He is too powerful for them, always he overcomes them. One woman stabs him in his arm with a sharp roasting stick. There is bone marrow on the stick, and he eats his own marrow. "How does it taste to you?" that woman says to him. "It is fat, good-tasting marrow," he says. Then right there, he seizes her with his other arm and kills her. Now the others are frightened that they cannot prevail over him. They run from the lodge. Just then those two men return to the camp. They enter the lodge and see that old Hairy Heart sitting by the fire. With their clubs, they strike him until he is dead. Those men are able to kill him only because he is near the fire. [Cree]

There are a great many specific attributes ascribed both to developed witiko beings and to incipient ones. The discussion below groups these characteristics into four dimensions defined by the themes of cannibalism, acultural practices, power, and frozenness.

Anthropophagy

"'Truly they will not look for us here,' that old man says. 'Those ones who are coming are not interested in moose.'" The most salient trait of the windigo is clearly anthropophagy, which contrasts with human zoophagy. The term "cannibalism" is imprecise, since Crees emphasize that the witiko, although formerly human, no longer is so. The very fact of eating or desiring to eat human flesh results in the loss of human identity, paradoxically resulting in a diet that is thereafter not technically cannibalistic. Crees say that practitioners of famine cannibalism in the past became witikos and sometimes represent the condition as the automatic consequence of such cannibalism: "From the moment he began to eat human flesh, he was a true Wetigo" (Merasty 1974:1). Similarly, the Plains Cree, Waypast, told Ahenakew that "the person kills and soon he (or she) is eating. He has passed from being a human being to beastliness" (Preston 1978:62).

In a passage of the Hairy Heart myth that listeners find especially gruesome, the older cannibal sucks his own marrow from a stick and avows that it pleases him. This propensity for autocannibalism is generalized in the conventional image of developed witikos who eat the flesh from their fingers, hands, and lips, leaving their teeth and gums exposed in a terrifying grimace (see also Vandersteene 1969:53, Merasty 1974:3). In addition to eating themselves, witiko beings are thought to prey on each other.

Witikos are imagined as existing in a state of chronic ravenousness, evocative of the famine tragedies said to induce the condition. One man said that persons who greedily ate acceptable food

in great quantities were thought likely to be incipient witikos. In the absence of human victims, or as a supplement, developed witikos eat other objectionable foods. In a tale recounting the adventures of a solitary family on the tundra, the victims barricade themselves in their cabin while the sensed but unseen witiko hovers outside; periodically, there are squeals as the monster eats the sled dogs staked out around the camp (Brightman 1989a :169-170). In another tale, a female witiko enters a small bush settlement, seats itself in the center of the cabins, and announces that it intends to eat all the resident dogs before beginning on the people (ibid.:173). The idea of eating dogs disgusts contemporary Rock Crees, although dogs were an esteemed food among some Cree populations in the nineteenth century (Harmon 1905 [1821]:281, 325). In another Rock Cree narrative, a witiko is encountered while roasting a worn-out rawhide mitt over a fire; at this point, the narrator, seemingly finding it anomalous that a windigo would have a mitt, paused and then remarked, "It must have found that old rawhide mitt somewhere" (Brightman 1989a :155). Dog meat and hide clothing were among the emergency foods to which isolated families might resort in extreme famine conditions, suggesting a network of associations between the witiko, ravenousness, and starvation. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the Southwestern Ojibwa word for rock tripe (*Actinogyra muhlenbergi*), another starvation food, is "windigo-egg" (Kohl 1985:365). Witikos are said to become especially active in the spring, as the activities of the imperfectly domesticated Hairy Hearts suggest. The period immediately prior to and during spring breakup in April is identified by Crees as the season during which food crises were formerly likeliest to occur.

The contrast between the witiko and the human diet is foregrounded by the monsters' antipathy to esteemed foods such as grease and meat. As one Cree stated tersely, "If you try to feed it [witiko] good food, it won't take it. Never mind if you put good food out, it won't take it. It just wants to eat people. That's what it's hungry for." The witiko's indifference to animal meat is dramatized in the Hairy Heart myth by the old man's ruse with the makeshift "moose" in which he knows the cannibals will take no interest. At the same time, the story associates the transient human condition of the cannibals with their acceptance of beaver meat. Anorexia is identified by Crees as one symptom of an incipient windigo condition. It was reportedly present also in the cases of the Oak Bay Ojibwa cannibal (Henry 1969 [1809]:199-201) and the Cree Moostoos (Teicher 1960:95). Witikos are represented as averse to animal meat, an antipathy that functions as a plot device in narratives where the monster, in an attempt to conceal its condition, pretends to eat meat but actually conceals it (Merasty 1974:6). In an incident reported to Nelson (Brown and Brightman 1988:89) at Lac la Ronge, an old woman suspected of being a witiko was experimentally offered marrow fat and grease to determine her condition; witikos were thought incapable of eating these foods.

Raw Meat and Ungroomed Hair

The eating of human flesh is itself sufficient to produce the nonhuman condition into which the witiko degenerates and is thus directly associated with the loss of cultural characteristics. From a moral point of view, the cruelty and exploitation of such a diet—dramatized forcibly by the passage in which the Hairy Hearts abduct and eat children—is itself a sign of a noncultural condition. The Hairy Hearts, who use language and possess family relationships, are relatively socialized in contrast to typical witiko images but nonetheless run true to type by lacking dwellings and fire. The myth juxtaposes their frozen and monstrous state outside with the transient condition of domestication effected by their entrance into a human dwelling, exposure to fire, and ingestion of beaver meat. The typical witiko is represented by Cree as dirty, naked or dressed in rags, solitary, ungroomed, unhoused, lacking fire, and eating flesh raw or half-roasted. I have grouped these features as an anticultural dimension.

Cree narratives devote attention to how witikos ingest human flesh. The usual image is that the witiko consumes human victims as *askiwiyas* 'raw meat'. In Cree reports of witiko disorders, the sufferer's consumption of raw animal flesh or blood is interpreted by others as a symptom of the condition (Masson 1889-90:249-250, Cooper 1933:22, Brown and Brightman 1988:92). I was told the story of a Cree who had to be executed because he turned witiko after incurring the enmity of a sorcerer. The early stage of the disorder was both symbolized and caused by the victim's consumption of raw bear meat. The narrator clearly saw this as materially effecting the disorder: "He (sorcerer) sent that. . . The guy'd eat that bear so he turn crazy. He eat the head-part raw. He turned sick, wouldn't eat. Ah shit, [he'd] turn to *wihtikow* then" (Brightman 1989a : 179-180).

Another man stated with evident disgust that, not content with eating human flesh, witikos ate it raw in the same way that Eskimos eat caribou meat. Crees familiar with Eskimo dietary habits expressed dismay at this practice, and Crees say that "Eskimo" derives from a Cree word meaning 'raw meat eater'. This translation is of some interest since Crees in the eighteenth century are said to have practiced on Eskimos a form of war-related ritual exocannibalism, eating small pieces of the raw flesh of slain enemies (Drage 1968 [1748-49], 2:45-46; Umfreville 1954 [1790]:48; Graham 1969 [1767-1791]: 174; Skinner 1911:79). The only other example known to me of Crees using raw meat foods is the practice of drinking moose and caribou blood from the neck of a freshly slain animal. Evidently, the cooking process blocks acquisition by the eater of desired immaterial properties contained in the raw food. The Hairy Hearts exemplify the other typical witiko culinary practice: roasting over an open fire. Roasting is a conventional cooking technique, and some of the shock value of these narratives derives precisely from its juxtaposition with human flesh. In the story in which Wisahkicahk becomes involved with a witiko (Brightman 1989a :40), he is ordered to go and himself cut the pronged roasting sticks on which he will be spitted and cooked. In the hero myth of Mistacayawasis, the witiko villainess only half-roasts her child victims, a compromise between the raw and cooked (ibid.: 117-119).

In his celebrated exposition of the culinary triangle, Lévi-Strauss (1966b , 1978:471-495) outlined a continuum of symbolic values concerning the relatively "natural" and "cultural" character of foods and cooking methods. The terms "nature" and "culture" are represented in Lévi-Strauss's comparativist structuralism and in writing influenced by it as universally recognized and opposed social constructs (cf. Ortner 1984). Strathern (1980) has since argued that Western conceptions of "nature" and "culture" cannot be regarded as universal and that non-Western societies may lack equivalent concepts or construct them differently. Without, at present, engaging the question of whether or how Crees make these distinctions, I use "cultural" in what follows as a predicate of attributes associated with human beings and "natural" as a predicate of contrasting attributes exhibited by animals and witikos. Beginning with the postulate that all cooking is a mediatory relation between "natural" or raw food and "cultural" or cooked food, Lévi-Strauss proposed that both the methods of cooking and the foods that result can be further partitioned between relatively more or less natural conditions. This results in a proportion of the type A:B:B₁ :B₂ , with the contrast between raw and cooked foods paralleling that between roasted and boiled foods. Lévi-Strauss defines roasting as a relatively natural cooking method insofar as neither manufactured cooking vessels nor water are interposed between the meat and the fire. The affinity of roast meat itself with the natural rests on the fact that it may be incompletely cooked, either on one of two surfaces or on the inside, preserving thereby aspects of rawness. Roast meat is thus relatively natural in relation to boiled meat and is a transitional term between raw and boiled foods strongly marked as "natural" and "cultural," respectively.

In narratives, the witiko—a being that has lost its cultural identity—eats human flesh raw, half-roasted, or roasted but never boiled. Witiko dietary habits are thus opposed to those of human

beings by a threefold contrast between human and animal flesh, raw and cooked flesh, and roasted (or half-roasted) and boiled flesh. Crees roast, fry, and boil meat; boiling, however, was and is the commonly preferred method, and the witiko is seemingly never represented as employing it. Since Lévi-Strauss suggests that the relatively natural character of roast meat derives from the absence of manufactures in its preparation, it is interesting to note that a comparable idea influences Cree eating practices at the *wihkohtowin*, or eat-all feast (chap. 8). Certain cuts of meat, typically bear meat, may be eaten without using knives or other utensils and sometimes without using the hands. Eating food raw—as with moose blood or with Eskimo flesh in the 1700s—and eating it without utensils—as in the eat-all feast—appear as parallel strategies for ingesting spiritual qualities of foods that would be neutralized by cooking or by manufactures. With specific reference to cannibalism, Lévi-Strauss has further argued (1966b :589) that since human flesh is a cultural kind of food, cannibals would ordinarily employ boring, the most cultural of techniques. Since, however, enemies may be categorized as noncultural or nonhuman, he predicts associations of roasting with exocannibalism and boiling with reverent endocannibalism, in which deceased relatives are the fare. Cree exocannibalism was even more radically natural, since the flesh was eaten raw. The idea that roasting correlates with distance between eater and eaten, however, is consistent with the use of roasting by the witiko, since the latter, from the Cree perspective, is no longer a human being.

If raw or roasted human flesh induces witiko transformation, hot liquid animal grease is described as a remedy for the witiko condition if administered at an early stage. Rohrl (1970) suggested that fats may have possessed therapeutic benefit with respect to posited nutritional components of windigo disorder. Brown (1971) subsequently questioned the premise that grease possessed other than symbolic significance. The idea that grease may effect a cure for the witiko condition is widely distributed among Algonquians (Cooper 1933, Bloomfield 1934:55) and affirmed by Crees at Granville Lake. They explain the effectiveness of grease and other liquid cures as resulting from the hot temperature at which they are ingested. Below, I discuss these cures in terms of the witiko's frozen condition but suggest here that the identification of grease, especially bear grease, as the exemplary witiko remedy is motivated by its symbolic value as the prototype of human foods. Fatty meat and its by-products are esteemed foods in the Cree diet. Grease is drunk as a warm liquid, eaten when congealed, used as a condiment for meat and bread, and mixed with dried meat and berries to make pemmican-like foods. Cree cooking methods maximize the collection of grease. When meat is roasted, a vessel may be positioned to collect the drippings that collect at the bottom. Boiled fatty meat and crushed metapodial bones of moose and caribou yield grease that is skimmed from the surface of the kettle when the contents cool.

The witiko feeds on human flesh eaten either raw or in a roasted or partially roasted condition. In contrast, human beings feed on cooked animal flesh. Since fire and cooking convert raw meat products into cooked meals, they possess marked human associations. Conversely, a person defined as witiko converts itself from a human to a nonhuman condition by eating human flesh. The significance of grease derives from the fact that it is a precipitate of the cooking process, typically of boiling, and thereby strongly marked as a human food since it epitomizes cooking. Rock Crees say that grease from the bear, the fattest of the big game animals, was the ideal witiko cure. From at least three points of view, bear grease might be understood as precisely the wrong food to give to an incipient witiko whose human identity is endangered. First, bears are defined as the most spiritually powerful animal, their power attributes concentrated in certain body parts, including the intestinal fat. Second, the bear is alone among the boreal fauna in its capacity to hunt, kill, and eat Indians. Although such attacks are rare, Crees are well aware that the animal is potentially capable of reversing the hunter-prey relationship in this way. The fact that bears eat human beings explains the association of the species with witiko, as in narratives where bears haunt the graves of

executed witikos (Brightman 1989a :18, Bloomfield 1934:155). Finally, Crees say bears resemble humans more closely than other species, an affinity expressed by the honorific name *apitawidiniw* 'half-human'. Eating bears therefore possesses for some Crees connotations of cannibalism. In all these respects, bear grease might be expected to exacerbate rather than reverse a witiko condition. That it does not do so suggests that bear grease, as a product of the most powerful game animal and a precipitate of cooking, metonymically evokes the entire process through which animals are overcome and eaten. To be human is to eat cooked animal meat, and grease, the by-product of cooking, represents the human condition from which the witiko has deviated but to which it may be restored.

The raw or half-raw diet of the witiko is paralleled by other features that define it as acultural. The witiko is usually solitary, traveling by itself and possessing neither relatives nor friends. In some narratives, incipient witikos conceal their condition and continue to reside with their families, but this is prompted by predation rather than sociality. Second, in its fully developed condition, the witiko loses the ability to speak. One person explained this muteness by speculating that witikos ravenously eat their own tongues; others say that the witiko aphasically "forgets" language. When it encounters humans, the monster usually remains mute but sometimes emits grotesque and incomprehensible sounds. In one narrative describing an encounter with a witiko near Nelson House, the human survivor is struck dumb by the fright he experiences. Possibly related to the impaired speech of witikos are stories (cf. Merasty 1974:13-14) in which they are defeated by losing a shouting match with a human opponent. Unusual speech behavior is also ascribed to persons who in the past were identified as incipient witikos. Both silence and incomprehensible raving were reported by a firsthand observer in 1823.

I look upon this as a sort of mania, or fever, a distemper of the brain. Their eyes (for I have seen people who are thus perplexed) are wild and uncommonly clear—they seem as if they glistened. It [the disorder] seems to me to lodge in the Head. They are generally rational, except at short, sudden intervals when the paroxysms cease [seize] them: their motions then are various and diametrically contrary at one time to what they are at the next moment—Sullen, thoughtful wild look and perfectly mute: staring, in sudden convulsions, wild, incoherent, and extravagant language. (Brown and Brightman 1988:91)

Crees say that incipient witikos are *kiskwiw* 'crazy' or 'insane' and may use "witiko" to refer metaphorically to persons so categorized (cf. Landes 1938:30, Marano 1982:389). I did not systematically examine Cree definitions of insanity, but witikos exemplify three characteristics probably assimilable to this condition. First, they lose control over their own behavior, a condition associated with the loss of autonomy produced by possession or dream predestination: "Some spirit goes into Chipewyans or Eskimos up in the Northwest Territories and they go crazy." As another Cree put it, "It's that evil spirit controlling his mind." Second, the witiko's cannibal acts were so monstrous that Crees say only an insane person would commit them. Narratives foreground this theme by describing lucid periods during which witikos express guilt and horror over past or potential crimes against relatives and request their own execution (Bloomfield 1934:155, Brightman 1989a: 92); persons who defined themselves as witiko sometimes made the same requests (Brightman 1988). Third, in the Hairy Heart myth, the younger monster perceives his affines as game animals and their snowshoe tracks as an animal trail. This parallels an attribute generally ascribed to witikos: hallucinations in which it perceives humans as game animals. Such impaired

perceptions parallel other ascribed disturbances with regard to self, place, and memory. A fully developed witiko is said not to recall its human identity.

The developed witiko being is represented as lacking characteristic human artifacts and techniques. The witiko is imagined as sleeping in the open and as ignorant of the use of fire. Similarly, it does not use canoes and enters water only as a swimmer. The appearance of the witiko, already distinctive, is made more grotesque by its indifference to hygiene and dress. The following image is a composite of several Rock Cree accounts (cf. Merasty 1974:3, Vandersteene 1969:53). The witiko is naked or dressed in dirty and ragged clothing, lacks moccasins, and may wear only a loincloth. Its body is unwashed and its hair long, ungroomed, and dirty. These characteristics suggest a loss of concern with the conventions of appearance: the witiko no longer cares what it looks like to others.

Power and Domination

The feature of *mamahtawisiwin*, power, is continuous rather than discrete: the witiko possesses greater spiritual abilities than most humans, manifested in such attributes as physical strength, hypnotic control of victims, invulnerability, and resurrection after death. On another dimension, the destructive power of the witiko, and of the sorcerers with whom it is associated, contrasts with beneficial uses of power.

Crees emphasize the control the witiko exerts over its human victims, suggesting a comprehension of the food chain as a series of dominance/subordination relationships. Power is concretely manifested by killing and eating others, and he who kills and eats is most powerful. Just as the power of the witiko is pragmatically identified by its ability to kill human prey, so is the human flesh itself identified as a source of the witiko's power. Crees say that the strength, endurance, and other less material powers of animals are concentrated in certain body parts; humans can acquire these traits by eating these body parts as cooked food (chap. 4). The same concept presumably explained the practices of martial cannibalism discussed above. Crees say that once a witiko has succeeded in eating human flesh, it grows excessively powerful, presumably by ingesting the power attributes of its victim (cf. Speck 1935a :37).

Cree narratives dwell on the measures used by the witiko to stalk and overcome in advance their human victims. The witiko produces by means of its frightful appearance or by exerting its will a condition of melancholy, acute fear, or hypnotic control over its victims which prevents them from taking effective action. As Savage (Merasty 1974:14) puts it, "Staying alive was made less difficult for a Wetiko by the fact that most people were rendered helpless just by sighting it." Said Ahenakew's Plains Cree instructor, Waypast,

The rest of the family realizes that they have a Wetikoo to cope with. All that they have heard about such monsters comes into their minds. A great dread overwhelms them, the *marrow* inside the bones seems to melt and they have no power to move or fight. While they might have met ordinary dangers bravely, they were as frightened children in the presence of a powerful inhuman monster. They give in and very soon share the fate of the first victim. (Preston 1978:62)

The older Hairy Heart's oracular staff parallels other extraordinary techniques used by the witiko to locate and immobilize its victims.

According to legend, a Wetiko would sometimes sit through the night among the pines a short distance from a tipi. The spirits of the people within the tipi would fly out in the form of fireballs and whirl about the Wetiko. If it were able to catch the fireballs, all those within would die. Otherwise, the fireballs flew back into the tipi and the people were spared. (Merasty 1974:11)

Crees described to me a similar practice by an incipient witiko still residing with others. At night, the witiko sat by the fire or stove, snatching and devouring the sparks that flew up. The sparks represented souls of potential victims, each spark captured prefiguring a victim that the monster would later kill and eat. These techniques closely parallel the kinds of preparatory control over hunting that Crees say they exert in dreams and in performances of the shaking lodge.

The witiko possesses extraordinary physical strength, and some Crees say they can fly (see Mason 1967:58), a capacity not mentioned in nineteenth-century sources. This ability is associated with the appearance of powerful winds in late winter and early spring, and there are stories of witiko tracks that lead into a clearing and then disappear. The giant size of the witiko, in certain Ojibwa (Landes 1968:12-13), Eastern Cree (Speck 1935a :67-68), and Swampy Cree (Honigmann 1956:68) images, is absent from Rock Cree conceptions. The idea that the witiko is about the same size as a human being appears to be general among Rock Cree (Smith 1976), Thickwoods Cree (Vandersteene 1969:53), and Plains Cree (Preston 1978:60) divisions.

The witiko is represented as invulnerable to certain forms of attack or as capable of returning to an animated condition after a nominal "death" at the hands of human executioners. Both of these capacities are related to the idea that the heart or other internal organs turn to ice and that the monster cannot be killed unless the ice is chopped apart or melted. Whatever the method used to kill the witiko, narratives express concern with preventing reanimation of the corpse. Decapitation, cremation, and pouring hot liquids into the chest cavity are the methods noted, all of them paralleled by the treatment afforded corpses in historical cases of witiko execution (Brightman 1988). Axes are often used to kill witikos; in a sample of twenty-one narratives, axes figure as the weapon of execution in eleven (see Hallowell 1976:421). The younger Hairy Heart is killed and decapitated with an axe, and the hero in a narrative discussed below prepares for a witiko encounter by cleaning an ax handle and sharpening an ax head. In 1815, the Nelson House Post Journal states of famine cannibals that "they seldom if ever escape the punishment they so richly deserve of being burnt by their countrymen after they have killed them with hatchets, as they consider them unworthy of being killed with the gun" (HBC B.141/e/1).

The reference to cremation strongly suggests that the persons described here were identified by Crees as incipient witikos and thus as likely to become reanimated in a witiko condition. The use of the ax suggests less the stigma of a dishonorable death than the conviction that shooting was a chancy solution. In a story told to Nelson in 1823, a woman threatens her incipient witiko husband: "'Keep quiet, for thou dog if a Gun hath no effect on thee, my axe shall—I shall chop thee up into slices: thou hadst then better be quiet.' This indeed kept him quiet for some time" (Brown and Brightman 1988:94).

The belief that a nominally "dead" human witiko can become reanimated is attested in an early reference to a man identified as one at Fort Severn in 1774 (Bishop 1975:243). Additionally, Brown (1982:399) described a case in which a human being without obvious witiko characteristics was

thought likely to return as a witiko after death. Both decapitation and cremation were intended to prevent such resurrection. Decapitation figures in the Hairy Heart narrative, in two other Rock Cree witiko stories (Merasty 1974:10-11, 23), in the death of the Beaver Indian "Moostoos" executed as an incipient witiko by his Thickwoods Cree relatives (Teicher 1960:95), and in another such execution by a Plains Cree band (Cameron 1926:46). Cremation is noted in the 1815 Nelson House report cited above, in three historical windigo executions, and in five Cree narratives. In two such stories collected by the author, the melting icy heart adds an element of suspense as the thawed water extinguishes the crematory fire and the "corpse" begins to revive before additional wood is piled on (cf. Merasty 1974:6,14).

Crees say that only very powerful men could prevail over the superior spiritual strength of the witiko, and narratives of the battles between witiko beings and known persons identified as strong opawamiwak 'dreamers' comprise a popular Cree literary genre. Vandersteene (1969:54) wrote of the Thickwoods Cree, "To overpower a Witigo, an austere preparation is necessary." Rock Cree narratives describing such encounters emphasize this preparation, the dependence of the "dreamer" on his **spirit** guardians, and the exhaustion entailed by exertion of spiritual resources. The account below paraphrases Johnny Bighetty's account of the experiences of his great-grandfather.

Long ago, each bunch of Indians during the winter had to have an old man with them who could beat witiko. If they had no one like that there, then witiko might come and eat everyone in the camp. These old men could tell ahead of time when witiko was coming. I told you about my great-grandfather. He was one of those old men with powers. If a witiko is coming he would suddenly start to dream. He won't talk or move; it's like he doesn't know anything that's happening around him [Question: "How do you say that in Cree? "*i-pawakwamit* . He's dreaming, but he's not really asleep. His mind is far away from there, going around someplace else."] Then he wakes up, and he tells the people there, all the people that are staying with him, that a witiko is coming toward them, that it's forty miles away. Right away, he starts telling everyone what to do. He tells them to give him an ax handle and an ax blade. He cleans the ax handle, and then he sharpens that ax blade till it's sharp. Next, he tells them to get charcoal and mix it up with water to make that black paint, and he takes off his clothes and paints himself all over until he's black. Then he puts on an animal hide shirt. He tells his son: "When I come back from where I'm going, I'm going to be just about dead. When I come back, you have to rub me all over with bear grease." Then he starts dreaming again. He's dreaming for about an hour. All that time, he's talking to his spirits and calling them. Then he wakes up again. He tells all the people that those spirits are going to come and pick him up and carry him through the air to where the witiko was. Then he goes outside in the snow. The people could hear the spirits flying through the air. They can't see them, but they can hear them. These things that are coming are animals or anything that he dreams of. And they're all talking at once. You know what a radio sounds like when reception is bad and four channels are coming in at once? That's what they sound like. They came and picked him up and he was gone for four hours. Then they bring him back to the camp, but they land him about a quarter of a mile out on the lake. Just like an airplane coming in the winter. Or when a ptarmigan lands in the snow, it shows this trail of messed up snow? It looked like that. All the people went there and saw the snow where he landed. He walks back to camp from the lake. When he comes inside, he slumps over and passes out. Looks like he's dead. Then his friends did what he told them, they rubbed him all over with bear grease, and he came to and told them what happened. That witiko was forty miles away from them but coming closer. His spirits put him up at the top of a tree, right above witiko. The witiko had made a fire and was roasting an old rawhide moose mitt in it. Then he sent his spirits down there to tell the witiko to go off in the opposite direction. So he scared that witiko away from there.

It is probable that the departure and return of raiding parties that fought human enemies in the eighteenth century were similarly ritualized. Here, the encounter with the witiko requires preliminary trance, preparation of weapons (which remain unused), an animal hide garment, and the black paints associated with the shaking lodge, the vision fast at puberty, and, among some Cree groups (cf. Mackenzie 1927 [1801]:ciii), funerary rites. Bear grease, the witiko cure, occurs here as a restorative. The idea that such encounters physically exhaust those who undertake them occurs in another narrative whose hero must be restored with a sweat bath before he can dispose of the bodies of slain witikos (Brightman 1989a :162-163).

The witiko's use of its power to kill and devour human prey is the antithesis both of appropriate moral conduct and the ideal circumstances under which personal power is exerted. The idealized Cree conception is expressed in what Crees told Nelson of the instructions given by a spirit while revealing both the beneficial and harmful uses of plant medicines.

He explains every *circumstance* &c., relating to them; but with a most strict injunction never to employ them at his *Peril* : "unless you wish to die: I teach you all these things because I love you and know your heart to be compassionate: but *mind my words* , if ever you employ them with an ill or evil view thou shalt die. Other *Indians*, as well as thyself, love life—it is sweet to everybody; render it therefore not a burden or a *disgrace*; and I *hate* those who thus abuse my confident affection" &c., &c. (Brown and Brightman 1988:57)

In a detailed exposition of the Ojibwa category of "bad medicine," Black (1977) argued that the practices so characterized are conceptually unified not simply because they may impose physical harm, although this is often entailed, but because they interfere with the autonomy and independence of others. This is consistent with the ethical precepts expounded by Nelson's consultant. Power is legitimately exerted only to help the self and others; the witiko is the extreme case of power used to harm and exploit others. In similar terms, a Rock Cree distinguished between the "good" dream spirits that helped him in hunting and their "evil" counterparts that aided him in disposing of enemies (Rossignol 1938:69-70). In this respect, the relationship of the witiko to its prey parallels that of the *maci-maskihkiwiðiniw*, sorcerer, to his or her victim, and Crees indeed identify sorcery as a cause of both witiko attacks and witiko transformations.

Witiko doesn't exist.

No? I thought they had that thing here. Long time ago.

Well, they do. . . they do exist, alright. Some bad people, you know, one like that. If you make them mad, they'll send you witiko. He'll kill you or give you a good chase anyway. That's how they used to do. If you'd make them mad, well, they'd give. . . they'd send you a witiko. Or you'd turn to witiko.

The human reaction to witiko aggression in one Cree narrative suggests that that destructive power is only legitimate against others when it is used defensively. A "dreamer" uses a magically charged caribou antler knife to kill the witiko that has attacked him and his family, all the while carefully and

didactically explaining to the monster that his actions are motivated only by the need for self-defense. He adds, before dismembering the witiko with his knife, that he has been angered by the threats to his family members' lives and that the witiko has brought its fate on itself. The tone of emotional self-control and the elaborate justification of hostile action in this narrative are characteristically Algonquian (Brightman 1989a :156-157, see Hallowell 1976:410-420). The hero concludes by telling the witiko that it simply should have left his family alone.

Dreams of Ice

The myth of the Hairy Heart beings associates their monstrous condition and power with the ice inside their bodies. Their transitions between monstrous and human states and between more and less powerful conditions correlate with the contrast between cold temperatures outside and the warmth inside the lodge. Ice exists in their bodies outside but melts inside. Residence in the lodge "humanizes" both monsters transiently, but the younger reverts as a result of staying outside. When the ice melts, their power is proportionately diminished, allowing, finally, the elder monster to be defeated after he stays too long by the fire. The monsters are also associated with the northern direction from which they approach their victims. As all these aspects of the story suggest, the witiko is surrounded by associations with frozenness: the northern and eastern directions from which the coldest winds blow, winter, and ice. The witiko is adapted to cold and embodies it, whereas humans survive in it by using a technology—clothing, shelter, and fire—that the witiko lacks.

The witiko condition may be directly produced by freezing:

It's not in its right mind. It was froze in winter time, and it gets cold air in its mind. That cold air goes in its head. They stay frozen all winter, but their brains are still working. In spring, they thaw out and begin moving around. When they thaw out, they go crazy.

Rock Crees say that the heart and other viscera of any incipient witiko gradually turn to ice. This condition is simultaneously represented as cause, consequence, and correlate of the disorder. Of the Crees of Lac la Ronge in the 1820s, Nelson wrote, "They also think that firearms are absolutely unable to injure them—'a ball cannot injure *Ice* : to destroy *Ice*, it must be *chopped up*: and *the heart then* [in the witiko condition] *is all Ice* '" (Brown and Brightman 1988:94). Nelson also related a Cree account of a witiko execution in which the self-diagnosed witiko begs his brothers during a lucid period to execute him before he commits murder. Accordingly, the brothers lay an ambush for him after moving their camp, but the witiko perceives the one who is waiting to shoot him and addresses him as follows:

"Thou thinkest thyself well hid from me, my brother; but I see thee; it is well thou undertakest it. It had been better for thee however hadst thou begun sooner. Remember what I told you all—it is *my heart*; *my heart*, that is terrible, and however you may injure my body if you do not completely annihilate my *heart* nothing is done," . . . accordingly he shot, straight for the heart—he [witiko] dropped, but rose immediately and continued toward the camp that was within sight, laughing at their undertaking. "The ball went through and through, but not a drop of blood was seen—*his heart was already formed into Ice*." Here they seized and bound him and with ice chisels and axes set to work to dispatch him. According to his desire they had collected a large pile of dry wood, and laid

him upon it. The body was soon consumed, but the heart remained perfect and entire: it rolled several times off the Pile—they replaced it as often: fear ceased [sic] them—then with their (Ice) chisels they cut and hacked it into small bits, but yet with difficulty was it consumed!!! (Brown and Brightman 1988:93)

These ideas were not limited to narrative but were acted on in the contexts of witiko accusations and executions. Self-defined witikos stated that they felt their internal organs freezing (Brightman 1988). The depositions given in the case of Moostoos, a Beaver Indian resident with a Thickwoods Cree band near Little Slave Lake in 1899, provide detailed descriptions of postmortem measures and the motivations of the executioners (Teicher 1960). Moostoos was executed by his Cree companions as a witiko after an unsuccessful attempt at curing. The body was subsequently shackled with trap chains, staked to the ground through the chest, and decapitated. Hot tea was poured into the chest wound in an attempt to melt the internal ice, a measure reported also in a Cree witiko execution at Sturgeon Lake, Saskatchewan, in 1889 (Duchaussois 1923:293). The accounts of the executioners show that the corpse continued to be an object of fear even after mortal injuries were inflicted:

All the day before I thought there must be ice in him to make him sick that way. I thought that if the ice was allowed to stay there, that the evil spirit could not be killed out, and I suggested the hot tea. (Teicher 1960:96)

We stuck the stick in so that he could not get up. We believed he had an evil spirit in his body. We thought he had ice in his breast, therefore we poured tea into the body. We were going to melt the ice so we got the hot tea. We poured the tea in the same hole where the stick was driven in. . . . The man was dead while this was done. I was afraid he would rise again. I do not believe another man could rise, but that man could. (ibid.: 101)

These observations relate the possibility of resurrection to the persistence of the frozen viscera inside the nominal corpse.

The aversion of the witiko to cooked food and its propensity for raw flesh are further indexes of the incompatibility between the monstrous condition and warmth. The significance of liquid grease as a witiko cure relates in part to the hot temperature at which it is served. Warmth also reverses the witiko condition in other contexts: the grease is part of a series including fire, noted in the Hairy Heart myth, fortified wines, sunlight and hot weather (Brown and Brightman 1988:93), hot water (Duchaussois 1923:293-294), and hot tea (Teicher 1960:101), which are used either as cures or postmortem measures to prevent resurrection. Eastern Crees imagined the witiko to alternate between monstrous and human conditions in winter and summer (Speck 1935a :69). More positively, an incipient witiko might be cured permanently during the warmth of summer, as a Cree told Nelson, "for the sun then *animates* all nature" (Brown and Brightman 1988:94). Some Crees today say that people who freeze to death in winter become witiko; they "thaw" in spring and then are active until summer, when the warmth kills them.

Witikos are closely associated with the northern direction and, like the Hairy Hearts, characteristically approach their victims from that direction. Associations with the north occur also among Ojibwas, who identify the "North Pole" as the home of cannibal giants (Brown and Brightman 1988:88). Some Crees today say that witikos originate among non-Algonquian groups living to the north. An alternative directional classification is indicated in a Cree cosmogonic myth from York Factory in 1823 (Brown 1977:46) in which the witiko is introduced into the world by East Wind, a being associated with cold winds and weather. The witiko condition is said to be caused by possession or predestining dreams. In Cree thought, beneficial and harmful power attributes derive from the characteristics of the spirit agencies who bestow them. The disposition to use power in harmful or evil ways may then be understood as ultimately exogenous: the individual is shaped by the character of his or her dream spirit. This parallels conceptions of human witikos who have the condition thrust on them through possession or dream predetermination. As one Cree expressed this,

Then he start dreaming. And some guys dream bad things. That's the guys that turn witiko. Most of the people turn witiko cause they dream bad things. Even now there's people like that. After all, they're baptized, but still there's things in bad dreams. They got to hire an older guy to try and kill it for you. That's the only way that thing don't happen to you.

The Crees of Lac la Ronge in the 1820s associated the windigo condition with dreams of Kiwitin the North Wind spirit, and Maskwamiy, the spirit of Ice. Those who accepted such beings as their dream spirit at puberty or encountered them in dreams later in life were said to be predestined to witiko degeneration. Nelson recorded a complex dream whose narrator narrowly escaped this fate by refusing to eat (in the dream) what he initially perceived as animal meat but later learned to be human flesh (Brown and Brightman 1988:90). Granville Lake Crees associate witiko dreams with Maskwamiy, as do the Rock Crees of Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan: "Sometimes a man who had left to get his puagan [dream spirit] would come back a weetigo because his dream had brought him the puagan of ice. He would go crazy, and if this happened, if he had this ice puagan, he would become a weetigo" (Cockburn 1984:41). I was told that Maskwamiy might appear to the dreamer as an animal. If the dreamer unwittingly accepted its blessings, he or she was predestined to become a witiko after eating an animal of the same species that the ice being had used as a disguise. Of similar import is the idea that ingestion of ice by children predestines their or their parents' degeneration into a witiko (Brown and Brightman 1988:91, Cooper 1933).

Winter and spring, the north and east, ice, cold, starvation, famine, cannibalism, and the witiko together comprise a metonymic series. More fundamentally, the witiko complex is a complex metaphor likening the most obscene expression of human violence to the climatic conditions most inimical to human survival. With negligible exceptions, summer appears to have been a season of reliable foraging throughout the Algonquian subarctic. Winter provided the hazards of isolation, freezing, famine, and, correlatively, emergency cannibalism. Famine cannibalism and the spirits of the cold create the witiko.

Witiko and Human

When speaking English, Crees usually refer pronominally to the witiko as "it," an index of the impersonality of the condition. The fascination of the witiko turns in large part on the belief that it was once a human being but is no longer. The contrasts between *nihidawiwini*, Cree-ness, and

wihtikowatisiwin 'witiko-ness' (a Plains Cree form) are formulable in terms of attributes that the witiko has lost, and it is these that the witiko image represents as constitutive of the human state.

Humans are defined by what they eat: animal flesh, the product of beings other than the self. The witiko is defined by its diet of human flesh, the product of beings with which it was initially identical in kind. Cree exegesis makes clear that diet is a fundamental constituent of one's self and kind: the witiko stops being human when it stops eating animal meat. Humans distinguish between humans and animals; the witiko is sometimes represented as confusing them and perceiving humans as moose and beavers.

Humans are defined also by how they eat, by their use of cooking techniques that transform raw meat into food. The witiko contrastively eats either raw, half-cooked, or roasted meat, the latter perhaps the least "cultural" of cooked foods. The use of hot grease, a precipitate of cooking, as a witiko remedy signals the incompatibility of the witiko condition with culinary techniques.

Humans are warm-bodied and perishable beings, vulnerable to the climatic hazards of winter. They interpose between themselves and these extremes manufactures—dwellings, clothing, and fires—on which their ability to survive depends. The witiko, in contrast, takes the external cold inside its own body, literally freezing internally. This physical transformation is engendered by freezing or by dream experiences with the *ahcak* beings who rule the winter. As a result, the witiko "forgets" and survives in the cold without human technical artifices; it goes about during winter naked or in rags, without dwellings, ignorant of fire. Contact with the cold produces witikos; warmth sometimes restores their humanity.

Humans live and travel together in social groups; the witiko is solitary. As Thompson (1962 [1784-1812]:174) wrote in the 1790s, the witiko "no longer keeps company with his relations and friends, but roams all alone through the forests." Humans communicate by speaking Cree and other languages; the witiko is aphasic and mute. Humans are concerned with their appearance to others. Clothing with its fur, bead, quill, and thread ornamentation, cosmetics, hairstyles, ornamented hats and hoods, bracelets, necklaces, earrings, cleanliness, depilation, face painting, and tattoos all serve or served to express the wearer's gender, attractiveness, and self-esteem. The witiko is dirty, naked, ungroomed, unornamented. Humans consciously regulate their actions, a capacity linked with the ability to recognize objects correctly. The witiko is deprived of its own will and of control over its actions, its faculties usurped by an evil spirit or sorcerer. In narratives, transiently lucid witikos beg for execution. With respect to power endowments, the witiko exhibits certain abilities not conventionally ascribed to human beings but equaled or exceeded by some powerful dreamers: imperviousness to bullets, immortality or resurrection, the ability to withstand winter cold, and a paralyzing control of human victims.

Finally, the noun *kisiwatisiwin* and related verbs refer to the quality of disposition and conduct that the Crees translate as "goodness" or "kindness." Predictably, a wide range of actions merit this term, typical of which are adopting orphans and caring for the elderly or ill. The defining and axiomatic criterion of "goodness," however, is the sharing of food within and beyond the domestic group. Cree converges with English in associating moral dispositions with the heart: one who is *miđotihiw*, or "good-hearted," distributes meat and fish; only a *macitihiw*, or "bad-hearted," person hoards it. The witiko is a being with a heart of ice, and the eponymous significance of the name "Hairy Hearts" is clear: "They say of these that they are without hearts or goodness." The conduct of the witiko is, of course, the obscene and antisocial extreme of reciprocity: instead of giving food, it steals life, murdering and converting its victims into food and thus continued life for itself. Identifying famine cannibalism as a cause of witiko disorder, Crees say that this exploitative

treatment of fellow humans as food changes men and women into beings themselves no longer human, lacking speech, sociality, and culture.

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