To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Elizabeth J. Giddens entitled "John McPhee's Rhetoric of Balance and Perspective." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

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JOHN MCPHEE'S RHETORIC OF BALANCE AND PERSPECTIVE

A Thesis

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Elizabeth J. Giddens

December 1990

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In Memory of My Father,
William David Giddens

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Vickie Reddick; Toney Frazier's friendship, Michael Island's support and affection; and Sandy Ballard's countless favors, insights, suggestions, and time and patience during long walks and phone conversations every bit as good as walks.

ABSTRACT

John McPhee has just begun to be studied as a master of nonfiction. Part of the reason he has not received much attention may be his own modesty and reluctance to echo the claims of writers like Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, and Hunter S. Thompson who felt they had created new art forms when they began to write New Journalism articles and nonfiction novels in the sixties. Unlike these writers, McPhee aligns himself with the profile-writing tradition at The New Yorker, where he has been a staff writer for twenty-five years. Despite his modesty, his works merit study because of their masterful handling of fact and detail, complex yet highly accessible prose structures, and subtle rhetorical impact and voice. A study of these elements may ultimately inform the teaching of writing by making teachers and students aware of the possibilities, complexities, and subtleties of contemporary nonfiction prose.

One of the most intriguing features of McPhee's prose is its employment of a strategy enabling him to be journalistically fair-minded and yet have a rhetorical impact. McPhee accomplishes this balance through his handling of structure and his own persona. I investigate these elements by using several of Kenneth Burke's key

concepts--symbolic act, dramatism, and identification--to analyze McPhee's rhetorical strategy in Coming Into the Country, his most acclaimed and complex book, which takes as its topic the challenges facing Alaska during the 1970's.

Chapter II describes the symbolic act of Coming Into the Country by focusing on its architecture and key terms. The work is divided into three books, each with a circular narrative frame that indicates McPhee's reluctance to judge quickly or easily about Alaskan conservation, politics, and people. This continuously inwardly turning structure alerts readers to the complexity and significance of each book's key terms, which are, respectively, the myth of the Alaskan wilderness, the concerns of urban and political Alaska, and the pioneer spirit of its citizens. Chapter III discusses McPhee's use of a presentational rhetoric which functions through the accumulation and juxtaposition of synecdoches, introducing readers to a number of representative Alaskan voices and the range of opinions about the future of the state. McPhee's copious repertoire of organizational elements--including reconstructed scenes, anecdotes, descriptions, histories, biographies, surveys of opinions, and excerpts from other sources--becomes the foundation of a dialectic about Alaska that moves both author and reader toward a broad understanding of relevant

issues as well as the concerns of Alaskans. As the value and limitations of many perspectives become apparent, the reader recognizes the attractiveness of McPhee's position, a position that advocates informed and empathic pluralism. Chapter IV analyzes how a reader is encouraged to identify with McPhee's perspective because of his formulation of an appealing persona both as a character struggling to discover his own attitudes toward Alaskan issues and as an author who is witty, intelligent, and humane in his characterization of the people he encounters and writes about.

The fifth chapter illustrates how the architectural, organizational, and identification techniques of Coming Into the Country appear as patterns throughout McPhee's books and articles. These techniques typically enable McPhee to demonstrate and foster a pluralistic philosophy.

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Chapter I

John McPhee, Genre, and the Need for Nonfiction Criticism

For roughly twenty-five years John McPhee has been prolific and successful as a staff writer for The New Yorker. His pieces have also been routinely published in book form by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. His best seller Coming Into the Country (1977), a book about Alaska after the oil boom and the Native Claims Settlement Act of the seventies, received an impressive array of critical acclaim. Reviewers called him "the quintessential impersonal journalist" (Core 737), a great contemporary writer along with E.B. White (Kahn 402), and "above all a craftsman, the most literate of American journalists, a reporter who makes art" (Murphy 36). In 1977 and 1978 Coming Into the Country gained McPhee the National Magazine Award for reporting, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters' Award, the Christopher Award for Best Book, plus a nomination as one of five for the National Book Critics Circle Award in general nonfiction. Coming Into the Country was also selected as a Notable Book by the American Library Association in 1978. Edward Hoagland, a respected nature writer and essayist, hailed the book as "a species of masterpiece" (48), while Donald Hall, poet,

critic, and essayist, claimed in an exuberant review that "we love [McPhee] for his form" (413). In another favorable review, Cullen Murphy described his work in glowing terms: "He writes pieces for The New Yorker that are as complex as novels, as meticulous as scholarship, on subjects most writers wouldn't dare . . ." (36). Diane Johnson in The New York Review of Books called McPhee "a writer who is able to be interesting on almost any subject [and] particularly skilled at presenting the dynamics of . . . complicated conflicting forces" (5). David Gancher, in a review for Sierra, proclaimed that McPhee's "writing is a triumph of meticulous organization, detail, and apparently effortless memory. In its ambitious scope, Coming Into the Country is comparable to the early classics of American exploratory literature" (59).

What becomes clear after any glance into McPhee's work and career is that he has received consistent praise from critics, reviewers, and readers who admire his ability to orchestrate fact, detail, anecdote, history, dialogue, and biography into subtle, complex, yet eminently readable articles and book-length studies of diverse yet always intriguing subjects. His range extends from books discussing everything conceivable about oranges in Oranges (1967), to an account of the development of an experimental airplane in The Deltoid Pumpkin Seed (1973), to an investigation of family medicine in The Heirs of General

Practice (1984). But despite his reputation and virtuosity, he has received very little scholarly attention. At this time, only one Ph.D. dissertation has been devoted to his development of a distinctive style of profile writing for The New Yorker ("Crafting Fact: The Prose of John McPhee" by George Roundy, which has recently appeared in article form, "Crafting Fact: Formal Devices in the Prose of John McPhee," in Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy, Chris Anderson, Ed.). Beyond reviews and sidebar interviews, only a handful of articles have discussed his work in detail. In fact, merely two additional articles treat his work exclusively--William Howarth's introduction to The McPhee Reader and an analysis of the form and theme of the first part of Coming Into the Country, "River of Paradox: John McPhee's 'The Encircled River,'" by Philip Terrie in Western American Literature. Recently, he has been accorded some attention in nonfiction criticism; Barbara Lounsberry includes a chapter on McPhee in The Art of Fact (1990) and W. Ross Winterowd briefly discusses his work in The Rhetoric of the "Other" Literature (1990).

But despite the scarcity of critical treatment of his work, McPhee is frequently anthologized in college readers and mentioned as an accomplished writer. In his On Writing Well, William Zinsser includes McPhee in a list of important writers who achieve "high seriousness and grace" in their nonfiction (56). It is as if the many people who enjoy and

appreciate his work are so seduced into its apparently effortless polish and smooth movement that they are unconscious of its achievement and forget to return the favor with serious analysis. I agree with Charles Schuster's opinion of McPhee's importance: "What is generally unacknowledged is the degree to which aesthetic elements in his work ensure him a more enduring place in literary history as one of the finest practitioners of aesthetic nonfictional prose in the twentieth century" (604). To acknowledge McPhee's contribution to literary history, then, we need to develop a way to analyze the unique elements in his work.

It is likely that McPhee has been neglected by scholars in part because of his own modesty. Although he is willing to discuss genre and literary theory in interviews, unlike some of the best known nonfiction writers, he has never claimed that he created a new genre or contributed fundamentally to the development of the genre. That role he has left to writers like Truman Capote and Tom Wolfe, and they have been quite successful in garnering most of the scholarly attention allotted to nonfiction, along with Norman Mailer and Hunter S. Thompson, whose public personalities have played a key role in their prominence. We must remember that when McPhee was just beginning to publish articles in The New Yorker, Capote and Wolfe were noisily asserting that they had created new nonfiction

genres. In 1966, shortly after the 1965 publication of In Cold Blood, Capote claimed, in a much publicized interview with George Plimpton, to have invented the nonfiction novel. During the same period Wolfe announced the arrival of New Journalism with his 1965 publication of Kandy-Kolored Tangerine Flake Streamline Baby and its preface explaining why and how he came to write the title piece in Wolfe's now signature, breathless, highly personal style. Later in 1973 Wolfe published The New Journalism, an anthology of articles with an introductory essay defining the characteristics of the form.

After Capote and Wolfe, Thompson became well known in the early seventies for his articles in Rolling Stone in which the "reporter" focuses on his own opinions and state of mind rather than on the event he was presumably assigned to cover. For example, his Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72 (1973) is a free-wheeling, irreverent account of the 1972 presidential campaign, but the book centers on Thompson's personality and his difficulty making sense of the hypocrisy and irrationality of campaign politics, often through the filter of Thompson's drug-altered state. Similarly, Norman Mailer, who, because of his earlier success as a novelist, had a public reputation long before he ever wrote nonfiction, focuses much attention on the question of what it is like to be Norman Mailer in both Armies of the Night (1968), about the

1967 March on the Pentagon protesting the Vietnam War, and in Of a Fire On the Moon (1969), a treatment of the Apollo 11 space shot that led to the first moon landing. For a variety of reasons, not least among them their personal and literary flashiness, these writers have been viewed as the trailblazers of contemporary nonfiction, and consequently they have received most of the scholarly attention. There are a number of studies of their works, some tracing the evolution of the nonfiction novel and New Journalism, and others simply examining the themes, techniques, and significance of their work outside of the historic/generic controversy. Some of the best of these studies are Chris Anderson's Style as Argument and his Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy (1989), a collection of articles which he edited; John Hellman's Fables of Fact (1981); Michael Johnson's The New Journalism (1971); John Hollowell's Fact and Fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel (1977); Robert Augustin Smart's The Nonfiction Novel (1985); Ronald Weber's The Literature of Fact (1980); and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh's The Mythopoetic Reality (1976), as well as the previously mentioned books by Lounsberry and Winterowd.

One of the most reasonable views of the New Journalism and nonfiction novel "movement" is Weber's theory that "what happened in the sixties was a rather noisy revival of the tradition of literary nonfiction in American writing under

the inspiration of Capote's well-publicized demonstration that documentary could yield a work of art" (Literature of Fact 4). It is certainly fair to say that these writers generated excitement about nonfiction and probably helped other writers discover for themselves how open and varied the genre could be. Their boisterousness might also have had something to do with the creation of a Pulitzer Prize category for general nonfiction in 1962, a manifestation of the rising status of and interest in nonfiction. Such talented writers as Barbara Tuchman, Norman Mailer, Frances Fitzgerald, Annie Dillard, Tracy Kidder, and Studs Terkel have since received this award.

McPhee has avoided aligning himself with the New Journalists or nonfiction novelists perhaps because his writing developed under the profile tradition, permissive atmosphere, and high expectations of The New Yorker and William Shawn, editor when McPhee became a staff writer for the magazine in 1965. His characteristic modesty and respect for The New Yorker tradition becomes clear in a response to an interview question about his contribution to profile writing and nonfiction in general:

> The framework for my writing has evolved mostly with The New Yorker. Thirty or forty years ago, the word "article" connoted something different than it can now. The person in the journalistic world who recognized this possibility and made this change is William Shawn. He encouraged writers to let their subjects grow, and he was highly innovative. But the Lieblings, the Alva Johnstons, the Jack Kahns [all New Yorker writers] came along much earlier than I. In

> short, I feel that I've wandered into a large room that was set up before I knew the difference between a grapefruit and a softball. And since I've been inside the room I've thrown around a few bricks. I've found my place in it; but I haven't built it. (Singular 1357)

This recognition of his debt to earlier profile writers distances him from the revolutionary tenor of Capote and Wolfe. After all, McPhee has described himself humbly as "a reporter, a writer, repeatedly trying to sense another existence, and in some ways to share it" (Allen 232). Once again we are not surprised to agree with Hoagland's description of McPhee as "uncommonly self-effacing," so much so that while he is "the most versatile journalist in America, yet [he is] probably the most underrated" (1). His unpretentiousness is reminiscent of another New Yorker writer with whom he has already been compared--E.B. White. White, one of the best known and most praised essayists of the twentieth century, had this to say about the second-class status of the essayist (and, by extension, of the nonfiction writer) in his 1977 forward to Essays of E.B. White:

> . . . I am not fooled about the place of the essay in twentieth-century American letters--it stands a short distance down the line. The essayist, unlike the novelist, poet, and the playwright, must be content in his self-imposed role of second-class citizen. A writer who has his sights trained on the Nobel Prize or other earthly triumphs had best write a novel, a poem, or a play, and leave the essayist to ramble about, content with living a free life and enjoying the satisfactions of a somewhat undisciplined existence. (vii)

Regardless of McPhee's humility, he has articulated a theoretical basis for his work that places him among writers whose motives are broader than those of the traditional journalist. In an interview with New York Times reporter Steven Singular, McPhee responds to a question about his supposed eclectic choice of topics and the accusation that his subjects are lightweight because they rarely directly treat the hot or weighty issues of the day. His reply reveals his own self-confidence and presents an argument for the acceptance of nonfiction as an art form:

> Critics may think I should be doing things on a grander scale and maybe I should be writing theological novels in Urdu. But fundamentally, I'm a working journalist and I've got to go out and work. . . . My work suits my psyche, such as it is, and in this I'm lucky. I have no regrets about what I've written. And I see no great scale of forms that implies good and better writing. Good writing is highly variegated and very scarce. Whatever you're writing you get completely immersed in, and you reach out for its outer limits. You don't quit until you've been there. Your work tries to communicate. Your motive is always to tell a good story while you're sitting around the cave, in front of the fire, before going out to club another mastodon. We keep finding new ways of doing this.
>
> (1536-37)

In other words, McPhee believes the status of writing should not be assigned by some arbitrary scale of genres or topics; taking a project to its "outer limits" and communicating with a reader are better criteria for assessment. Once this point is accepted, it is not so

difficult to think of nonfiction as literary, as McPhee explains:

> A few years ago people looked to factual articles only for information. But now factual characters can live as much on the page as any fictional character. It doesn't make any difference if a composition is factual or fictional. It all starts with seeing that a piece of writing is more than just the delivery of information per se. There are things you can and can't do in my writing. You can't think for people. It's not a field without dimensions. But my point is that fiction has limitations too. (1537)

Nonfiction is a genre with characteristics and limitations just like any other genre. Perhaps the limitations are easier to identify than those in other genres because we are so used to thinking of imaginative writers as free to do whatever they want. Probably this notion overstates the novelist's freedom and serves as a source of the bias against nonfiction writers.

Aside from this endless argument about status, however, some useful distinctions can be made between nonfiction and fiction. The cardinal one is the different nature of the appeal of nonfiction. McPhee explains his opinion of nonfiction's appeal in an interview with Norman Sims:

> Things that are cheap and tawdry in fiction work beautifully in non-fiction because they are <u>true</u>. That's why you should be careful not to abridge it, because it's the fundamental power you're dealing with. You arrange it and present it. There's lots of artistry. But you don't make it up. (3)

His point is paradoxical: nonfiction is in some ways indistinguishable from fiction in that all writing goes beyond the bare presentation of information and because accomplished nonfiction makes real people live for readers as much as fiction involves its readers in characters' lives. However, the crucial distinction is that a large part of nonfiction's appeal and power comes from the pervasive impression on readers that they are reading about real events, people, and situations.

With McPhee's theory in mind, let us turn briefly to the issue of how nonfiction is distinct from traditional journalism, which is rarely considered art, and fiction, which, of course, most often is. One of the earliest critics to treat nonfiction seriously is Mas'ud Zavarzadeh, who in 1976 published The Mythopoetic Reality: The Post-War American Nonfiction Novel, a discussion of the historic and literary events that led to the work of John Hersey, Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, Tom Wolfe, Andy Warhol, and Oscar Lewis. Although Zavarzadeh's purpose is to trace the development of the nonfiction novel in the hope of defining this particular genre,[1] much of what he

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[1]Zavarzadeh argues that "The new technological, economic, moral, and cultural forces operating in the postwar years and the information revolution which has accompanied them" have been the major causes of the emergence of the nonfiction novel (226). This historical

(Footnote Continued)

says can also apply to nonfiction which is literary, but not necessarily novelistic, such as personal essays, articles, and books that explore an issue in a kind of personal journalism. One important point Zavarzadeh makes is that contemporary nonfiction is often "bi-referential," referring both to the factual narratives of reportage and to fiction (227). In essence, nonfiction reads like fiction but claims journalistic accuracy. This is a difficult line for any writer to walk and a difficult concept for a reader to accept. Zavarzadeh suggests a useful way out of the fact/fiction dilemma:

> The nonfiction novelist [or nonfiction writer] goes beyond the myth of mutually exclusive categories of "objective" and "subjective" and in the dual modes of his narratives acknowledges the inherently ambiguous nature of human knowledge of the external world. As a writer he is also aware that his medium -- language -- is the main carrier of attitudes and values and knows . . . language changes whatever it describes. Because of the nature of language, all attempts at objectivity are rendered subjective, but nonetheless, there is an ontological difference between the nonfiction novel and the fictive novel. The reality which is mapped in a nonfiction novel is not a staged reality invented by the narratist and patterned in a way which endorses his interpretation of the order of the world. The events and actions in a nonfiction

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(Footnote Continued)
argument is severely challenged in Barbara Foley's article "Fact, Fiction, and 'Reality'" Contemporary Literature 20.3 (1979) 398-99, where she calls for "a workable theory of the relationship between history and fiction, whether in discreet or blended modes, [which] must avoid certain philosophical and historical cliches if it is to be perspicuous in its own right as well as instrumental for textual exegesis" (398-99).

> novel are actual phenomena in the world accessible to ordinary human senses and, unlike the contents of fictive novels, exist outside the covers of a book. The subjectivity involved in all acts of human perception of the external world does not deny the phenomenalistic status of the experience transcribed by the nonfiction novelist. (225-26)

So the nonfiction novel, or literary nonfiction in general, is primarily different from fiction because it insists that its subject exists in reality, despite whatever artistic shaping the reality undergoes as it becomes a text. On the other hand, the real subjects of nonfiction do not obscure the artfulness of the prose for a minute. Yes, the writer is in control of his work, but, as McPhee also suggests, he works within a set of limitations: verifiable facts, quotations, actual humans as characters. Chris Anderson sums up this notion very simply: "The language of contemporary American nonfiction is not transparent but translucent" (1).

Ronald Weber makes a similar claim about the nature of literary nonfiction in "Some Sort of Artistic Excitement," his lead article to an anthology of reviews, essays and statements about New Journalism, The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy. Weber argues that the New Journalism is not a "Great Take Over" of journalism or of fiction (26), but an extension of the range of nonfiction which

> Partly . . . involves a freedom of style and construction that permits the writer to abandon the tonal simplicities and ready-made structures

> of newspaper and magazine writing--a freedom to experiment with language and to align manner and form with material. (17)

Clearly the differences between journalism, literary nonfiction, and fiction will always be a subtle matter of the degree of control, shaping, and objectivity.

Given the existence of this continuum from objective writing to fiction, which is not entirely the same as the difference between what is or is not art, the appeal of literary nonfiction as literature is unchallenged. Often literary nonfiction offers readers sophisticated treatment of real issues, events, and people; it provides factual information and some interpretation that is no less interesting, moving, or artistic because it is filtered through the thoughts and personality of a writer. It is just as easy to say that literary nonfiction is theoretically impossible as art (because it tries and fails to have the best of both worlds) as it is to accept the theoretical fuzziness and enjoy nonfiction for the information, ideas, and sheer good writing that it offers.

Two critics who present attractive views of both the nature and appeal of nonfiction are Chris Anderson and Norman Sims. Anderson's book, Style as Argument: Contemporary Nonfiction, is probably the best stylistic study available of Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, and Joan Didion. By examining the work of these four writers to suggest how their characteristic prose styles

add a level of interpretation and persuasion to the factual material of their books, Anderson gets to both the theoretical crux of nonfiction and to the reason it interests readers. His book begins with a discussion of this point:

> Yet I agree with Zavarzadeh that nonfiction prose is one of the principal rhetorical genres of the age and that it is inextricably connected with the effort to express the force and magnitude and sheer overpowering energy of the American experience. . . . In my view nonfiction reportage is more than informative: it is an effort to persuade us to attitudes, interpretations, opinions, even actions. The rhetoric of reportage is subtle--it must be interpreted, the texts read carefully for nuances of imagery and tone--but it is there, powerful and persuasive. (2)

We read, enjoy, and appreciate nonfiction then because it is inherently interesting (since it is true) and significant (since it is relevant to our own lives), knowing that like fiction it has its case to make, its interpretation of reality, its own rhetoric. Beyond this theory for the appeal of nonfiction, Norman Sims suggests reasons why the genre attracts enthusiastic readers, if not crowds of critics, in his astute introduction to The Literary Journalists, an anthology of nonfiction articles:

> Reporting on the lives of people at work, in love, going about the natural rounds of life, [literary journalists including John McPhee, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, Jane Kramer, Tracy Kidder, among others] confirm that crucial moments of everyday life contain great drama and substance. . . . Literary journalists attempt to penetrate the cultures that make institutions work. (3)

In short, the artistic value of nonfiction rests largely in its interest in real human beings, the events of their lives, and the identity of their cultures--qualities not unlike those that fiction provides, but with the significant distinction that there is always a grounding in fact. McPhee and the critics basically agree on this theory about what enables nonfiction to be literary.

Despite the fact that there is a convincing argument to be made for nonfiction's significance as art and that it has long been employed in writing classes to help teach rhetorical principles, the genre still takes a back seat in academe; it is viewed mostly as light reading for the educated (in magazines like The New Yorker, Harper's, and The Atlantic) or as the stuff of which freshman readers are made, examples of good writing for the young. But even in this realm our understanding of nonfiction is shallow. Fortunately, the growth of scholarly interest in teaching writing that began in the sixties and continues to open up the fields of composition theory and rhetoric in English departments nationwide has caused some theorists and teachers to wonder aloud about the value of reading nonfiction and of using essays, articles, and book excerpts as tools--not simply models--in freshman-level composition classes and in teaching advanced writing. The logic behind this reconsideration goes something like this: We are reevaluating how to teach writing; a process approach to

writing seems to benefit more students than the traditional modes and models approach; it still seems useful for students (and teachers) to read good nonfiction, but what is the pedagogical basis of this belief? Perhaps we need to consider more carefully how students can learn writing strategies and techniques from professional writers, and perhaps we need to study professional writers to learn about the nature of their accomplishment.

James Corder, in his 1976 bibliographical essay "Rhetorical Analysis of Writing," and Dennis Rygiel, in his 1984 College English article titled "On the Neglect of Twentieth-Century Nonfiction: A Writing Teacher's View," have pointed out this line of thought. In the former's discussion of the few rhetorical analyses of contemporary nonfiction that might serve as the basis for understanding and then teaching how persuasion works in modern essays, Corder candidly sums up the issue:

> . . . I'm led to think that few of us study essays, that fewer still study book-length works of nonfiction. Of course we talk about such things, often for the ideas they contain, but they remain second-class, somehow inferior, other than art. We can easily enough conceive a poem or short story to be an imagined whole, emerging from an invented world, finding itself in a form and style that are its content and being, but we can seldom nerve ourselves in this way to an essay or a non-fiction book. And what a sad loss there is for us in this, that we've not yet fully come to see the loveliness and complexity of, say, John Graves' Good-bye to a River, or Loren Eiseley's The Immense Journey. (240)

Our own inability to focus critical analysis on nonfiction translates into uncertainty about what we as writing teachers are able to do with readings in composition classes, and there is no doubt that our students share our confusion about the nature of essays and the dubious importance of learning to write them: "Since we inadvertently teach [students] that essays are to be for [as ways of delivering information and of testing and evaluating students], rather than to be [as valuable communication and ways of making meaning through art], essays don't register consequentially with students who have no use to make of them" (Corder 237).

Rygiel's article echoes and extends Corder's point about the problems and losses caused by the profession's lack of scholarly interest in nonfiction. Beyond lament, he suggests useful avenues of study and research that may eventually provide teachers with a clearer sense of what they are teaching in writing classes and why they are teaching it:

> Yet our profession needs a body of criticism on individual works that is of suitable magnitude and sufficient quality--for conceptual, methodological, and attitudinal reasons. A body of such criticism would help us develop an adequate critical understanding of the artistic potential of various types of twentieth-century nonfiction and of the range of actual achievement, so that we could get a proper appreciation of the kinds of prose we teach and of kinds we could be teaching. In the case of prose shown able to sustain and reward critical analysis, we might then be led to expand our conception of nonfiction prose by coming to see

> that it can be "real and literary," can be art, and can therefore be worthy of study in and for itself . . . . (397)

In summary, these critics suggest that scholarly treatment of nonfiction (which investigates it both as art and rhetoric) will help writing teachers in at least three important and very practical ways. More nonfiction criticism will help writing teachers understand the nature, nuances, and possibilities of the genre that we teach to students as an important mode of communication. In addition, the criticism should help us learn to use readings more effectively in writing classes. If we learn more about how nonfiction affects us as a genre, we must also hope to discover ways to use essays, articles, and books in our classes that go beyond their traditional functions as springboards for discussions and response essays and as examples of what teachers would like to encounter when they read student essays. Perhaps we can find ways for readings to suggest the range of voices, techniques, organizations, and subgenres available as choices when students write, and perhaps we can teach students more about the relationship between the writing process and the finished product, by discussing an article's complexity, underlying research and planning, and the organization unique to its purpose. In this way nonfiction criticism will aid writing teachers in their efforts to strengthen students' communication skills

generally. Another way criticism and analysis of nonfiction can directly inform the teaching of writing lies in the notion that a better understanding of nonfiction subgenres such as journal and diary entries, personal memoirs, credos and manifestoes, news stories, reports, histories, investigative journalistic articles, encyclopedia articles, editorials, and persuasive essays, to mention a few, could help us create assignments that would stimulate meaningful student writing and aid us in locating criteria for evaluating writing that focus always on a text's basic purpose and its effectiveness in communicating that purpose. In short, perhaps we could begin to see for ourselves and to show our students that a writing class ought to enlarge any writer's choices, repertoires, and strategies. In his introduction to Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy, Chris Anderson echoes this notion, saying that

> literary nonficiton, by its nature, reveals to us the complexity and power and rhetorical possibilities of language--and that the complexity and power and possibility ought to be the unifying concern of rhetoric and composition as a discipline. (xxiv)

John McPhee is a good writer to study if we want to discover possibilities for nonfiction. Not only are his topics varied, his vocabulary precise and imaginative, and his sentences graceful, but his work is characterized by a surface richness and complexity of mode that will trigger new ideas in almost any writer. Entertaining, informative,

and readable, he is a stylist who delights us with a relaxed, unpretentious, and yet smoothly polished virtuosity. Sometimes he seems the master of the verbal sleight of hand, dexterously slipping textbook statistics and historical accounts into narrative sequences, dialogue, and descriptive passages. There is no predictable formula for his prose, except that he anticipates, answers, and places in context all of a reader's questions and expectations before the reader has a chance to raise an eyebrow. Another element of McPhee's accomplished form is his ability to present many perspectives on an issue in a fashion that is not tiresome or confusing; part of his skill in this area stems from a tendency to focus on the people involved in an issue, allowing them to state their own opinions, rather than presenting abstract summaries of viewpoints. In addition to the local color and information that these multiple perspectives supply, this technique impresses us with the writer's fairness of outlook; McPhee convinces us he is too conscientious to slight anyone. Further, revealing all facets of an issue demands a masterful handling of organization so that digressions and anecdotes do not divert the movement of the whole piece. McPhee manages this aspect by creating unique schemes for his pieces that fit his material naturally. He always considers the effect of order and placement on the reader, and he allows the structure to help him comment indirectly

on the issue. Reviewer Paul Gray notices the slyness of McPhee's structures by describing how he disrupts chronology to achieve interest and include data:

> Rather than stepping from A to Z, his plots tend to pick up casually with N and meander back around to M. The apparent informality is a ruse. McPhee consistently works like a reverse pickpocket, slipping facts deftly and painlessly into the folds of his narrative. (79)

In this way McPhee reaches a balance between the unbiased presentation of information and the expression of his own personality and attitudes, revealing in turn the subjectivity of all exposition.

McPhee's ability to orchestrate his prose effectively is not accidental; he devotes a great deal of effort and time to finding the right architectural structures and techniques for his articles, particularly during the elaborate planning stages of his writing process (see Howarth xiv-xx). A telling metaphor McPhee uses to describe his approach to writing is that it is like the game of curling, "where great effort is spent sweeping the ice clean to advance each shot" (Howarth xvii). Structure has always been the paramount concern for McPhee. Interviewers report that he is quite willing to talk in detail about the structure of particular works, referring to diagrams and elaborate notes (see Roundy xiii; Sims 12-15; and Howarth xiv-xvii). For instance, in an interview with Norman Sims, McPhee discusses a diagram for "Travels in Georgia" that resembles a lowercase "e" (13).

This piece profiles two unusual biologists who travel around the state picking up road kills, studying, and eating them, and McPhee knew that in arranging it he had to be wary not to offend his readers before they could begin to understand their way of life. So he chooses an order that begins with an anecdote about a snapping turtle that is surprising but not shocking and returns later to establish the chronology of the entire narrative. Even though the flashback itself is not unusual, the careful diagram that produced it is a testimony to the significance of structure in McPhee's approach to writing.

In Steven Singular's interview McPhee says that "[w]hat's most absorbing is putting these stories together" (1536). But he also hopes that his interest in structure does not portray him or his writing as formulaic:

> Because I'm interested in structure, I must sound mechanistic. But it's just the opposite. I want to get the structural problems out of the way first, so I can get to what matters more. After they're solved, the only thing left for me to do is tell the story as well as possible. (1536)

Although contradictory to his own remarks about the importance of the story, I do not think it is going too far to say that, for McPhee, structure is the locus of his own artistry and personality in the work, given both his own personal commitment to being accurate as well as that of The New Yorker's well-known fact-checking department. This notion suggests that since the informational content of McPhee's work is carefully regulated, he must express his

own ideas through the suggestiveness and implications of the topics that are investigated and the way in which the parts of his articles are organized, connected, and given context. Consequently, structure becomes a primary rhetorical agent in McPhee's prose: it allows him to do more than traditional journalism, and thus it is one of his most powerful means of affecting a reader. McPhee makes this point himself in his definition of structure:

> Structure is the juxtaposition of parts, the way in which two parts of a piece of writing, merely by lying side by side, can comment on each other without a word spoken. The way in which a thing is assembled, you can get much said, which can be lying there in the structure of the piece rather than being spelled out by a writer. (Sims 13)

In McPhee, structure is rhetoric. The shaping of a piece of fact writing becomes the activity which enables McPhee to go beyond the simplicity and objectivity of traditional journalism.

This point is similar to Chris Anderson's in Style as Argument. In that book Anderson claims that the styles of Wolfe, Mailer, Capote, and Didion are the vehicles of their common theme of the "dialectic between words and wordlessness" (5), or in other words, the notion that what is most imperative for contemporary nonfiction to cover are moments, events, and situations that for one reason or another resist articulation and that these writers' attempts to describe the wordless moments simultaneously reveal the power and limitations of language in our

society. Although I think Anderson's argument about the limitations of language is appropriate for the writers he considers, it does not apply to McPhee. McPhee, because he does not try to interpret or investigate the private consciousnesses of the people he writes about and because he only rarely focuses on his own most personal responses and opinions to events, is not usually attempting to describe events that resist articulation. Unlike Wolfe, Mailer, Capote, and Didion, whose styles are highly flavored by subjective responses and emotions and therefore the clue to the rhetorical content of their work, McPhee uses structure, on both a large, architectural level and a local surface level, to carry the rhetorical weight of his work. An oversimplification of this distinction is to say that the literary quality of Anderson's writers resides in their development of personal voices, while McPhee's is found in his mastery of structure. Since Anderson has pursued the rhetoric of style, I will pursue the rhetoric of structure, first by examining the elaborate structure of Coming Into the Country and later by illustrating the structural patterns that characterize McPhee's prose.

Briefly, McPhee's structure in Coming Into the Country entails his division of the book into three sections("At the Northern Tree Line: The Encircled River," "In Urban Alaska: What they Were Hunting For," and "In the Bush: Coming Into the Country"), as well as the complex

organization and progression within each of these sections that enables McPhee to present dozens of views about what should happen in Alaska. He assembles the anecdotes and opinions of Indians, conservationists, developers, miners, townspeople, trappers, and politicians by framing each section with a narrative device. In the first book, McPhee recounts a fishing trip with a group of conservationists and government officials. The second is shaped by a day-long helicopter tour of sites under consideration for the construction of a new state capital with politicians and developers. The final book is much more loosely organized around McPhee's travels and visits to two bush communities, Eagle and Central, Alaska. The first two books are highly schematic in their focus on a single event; the third is rambling and relaxed in its movement.

Even though many readers have noticed McPhee's ability to orchestrate his work, it seems to me that they have often missed the point. For instance, Benjamin DeMott, in his review for The Atlantic Monthly, describes the motive behind McPhee's tripartite division of the book into sections:

> Not the least achievement of Coming Into the Country is that, in eschewing formulas, it manages simultaneously to represent fairly the positions of the parties in conflict--developers, conservationists, renegade individualists--and to show forth the implications for human society of the loss of the ground on which the dream of "lighting out for the Territory" has immemorially been based. (92)

This statement, although accurate enough, suggests that the impact of the book is a recognition of loss, that McPhee wrote Coming Into the Country to sadden us over the loss of the frontier and to warn us about the dangers of development. No doubt these motives are at least partly manifest. But the effect of the book is not so simple or so sober; that much is clear from the whimsical ending in which McPhee wishes luck to a young man going to live in the bush.

Reviewer Donald Hall interprets McPhee's typical strategy from an aesthetic perspective:

> McPhee takes no sides. Is he only the good journalist revealing objectively what he sees, arranging things so that we can make up our own minds? No. Perhaps that is what he seems to be doing, but really -- he is writing sentences. His objectivity is aesthetic. Objectivity makes for balanced sentences, for good paragraphs, for neatly resolved essays. (413)

In the next paragraph, Hall parses out the implications of McPhee's objectivity and structures:

> When John McPhee refuses to take sides between . . . exploiters and exploited, his overt politics is wishy-washy; the implicit ethics of clear prose, however, speaks more morally than all the right-thinking, wrong-saying editorials in all the world. (413)

Hall singles out the aspect of McPhee's writing that most impresses and sometimes puzzles a reader: his thorough fair-mindedness and reluctance to endorse an opinion or overtly persuade a reader to that opinion. This is what Hall means by admiring McPhee for his aesthetic objectivity

and his "ethics of clear prose." Hall's point is confusing and implies, perhaps inadvertently, that McPhee does not have a firm purpose in writing Coming Into the Country. Wouldn't the experience of reading a lengthy, thorough investigative report without interpretation frustrate a reader? Such aestheticism could be maddening.

We must recognize that McPhee's artistry and rhetoric do not lie in what he says overtly about various points of view but in what he implies about the whole process of decision-making: it should involve all interested parties and the solution should always be a compromise that allows, as much as possible, for all people to retain their ways of life. Through the structure of his work, McPhee persuades his reader to a rejection of monism (or any kind of extremism) and then to an endorsement of pluralism. This step takes a reader decisively beyond journalistic objectivity; it transcends objectivity with a philosophy. In this light, McPhee does not construct "balanced sentences" and "neatly resolved essays" for their own sake; he gives us open-mindedness to uncover the tangible gains of pluralism, the ideal underlying all of McPhee's equal-time multiple perspectives. No one is forgotten; no one is denied a voice or a forum. The effect on a reader is a growing awareness that better choices can be made when we embrace pluralism. McPhee has discovered a method of

making a rhetorical point in a tacit, and certainly "aesthetic," manner.

Since McPhee adopts an understated rhetorical strategy, and since a search for logical arguments presenting his point would turn up only a few noncommittal statements, my method of describing and analyzing his work should enable me to speculate about the impact of the structure of the work on the reader, one that will help me understand the manner in which the multiple perspectives play off one another to suggest pluralism. McPhee's work consequently calls for a method that accepts a very broad view of the techniques and ends of rhetoric. Such a view exists in the theories of Kenneth Burke, a rhetorical theorist and critic who has been described as "the foremost rhetorician of the twentieth century" because of his expansion of the range of rhetoric (Golden, Berquist, and Coleman 312; see also 323-29).[2]

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[2]Interestingly, George Roundy uses Burke's theory about literary forms from Counter-Statement to help him discuss McPhee's structural technique in Levels of the Game, Survival of the Bark Canoe, Encounters with the Archdruid, and briefly in the first book of Coming Into the Country (136-45, 164-69). However, Roundy's purpose is to illustrate the way in which syllogistic, qualitative, repetitive, conventional, and incidental forms (all Burkean terms) overlap in McPhee's works and create aesthetic formal pleasure for the reader in addition to the expected informative appeal of fact writing. Roundy does not consider how McPhee's structure works rhetorically, nor does he draw on Burke's concepts of symbolic act, dramatism, or identification.

For Burke, rhetoric encompasses the situations, or motives (his term), that give rise to all human communication; in other words, one starts to account for the purpose and effect of any given text by considering the situation that creates it and then by looking closely at the terminology and structure chosen to represent that situation to a reader. In short, when someone discusses a situation, he/she interprets it by clothing it in his/her words and by arranging those words. Words, however, are not simple referents; they are symbols that by their very nature have a rhetorical content. This notion fosters Burke's belief that rhetoric

> is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols. (Rhetoric of Motives 43; his italics)

So rhetoric exists in all efforts to discuss reality by means of the symbol system of language. Furthermore, Burke suggests that many of the most powerful persuasive techniques are often excluded from our traditional understanding of rhetorical devices. Burke looks beyond and underneath the overt and stated techniques to find ones which affect an audience covertly because they are inherent in context or latent in terminology. Walter R. Fisher and Wayne Brockriede provide a useful summary of Burke's contribution to rhetoric in their brief comparison of his rhetorical outlook to Aristotle's:

> If Burke is a linguistic realist, Aristotle is a sociopolitical realist. Although clearly Aristotle is not unconcerned with the functions of language (Burke speaks of the "dramatist nature of his vocabulary"), his primary concern is how language functions in rational ways in the fields of ethics, politics, and rhetoric. Burke does not avoid such concerns, but his primary interest is in the implications of human symbolization per se. For Aristotle, a person is essentially rational; for Burke, a symbol user. For Aristotle, rhetoric proceeds through persuasive proofs; for Burke, through identification via signs of consubstantiation. Though marked by some similarities, the realisms of Aristotle and Burke are grounded in different emphases. (40; Fisher and Brockriede's emphasis)

Stated another way, Burke is interested in how the style and structure of texts cause a reader to identify with the writer's persona and then how that consonance results in persuasion. Since McPhee's rhetoric resides in his methods of shaping and arranging information, Burke's rhetorical theories become serendipitously relevant. In the following chapters I will base my discussion of McPhee's structural rhetoric on several of Kenneth Burke's basic concepts--symbolic action, dramatism, and identification. I have chosen these concepts because they enable a useful treatment of the fundamental characteristics of McPhee's prose and because, in my opinion, they are the Burkean concepts that are most important for us to learn in order to better understand the rhetoric of all human communication.

Chapter II will describe the symbolic act of Coming Into the Country by focusing on its architecture, or rather

the general plan of the entire work, its three books, and the key terms McPhee develops in each book. Chapter III will treat the rhetorical content of the local and incidental structural techniques McPhee uses in organizing passages by drawing on Burke's dramatistic method of analyzing a situation. Although I have chosen this two-part division of McPhee's structural techniques largely to facilitate a Burkean analysis, it is assuring that Roundy finds a similar division suggested in McPhee's composing habits and by his works in general:

> In employing flashbacks and flashforwards, and in breaking up his chronological account with excurses [sic] into other subjects, McPhee gives his story two formal devices--a prior form and a new, self-generated one. (139)

Presumably, the prior form, or architecture, is decided early in McPhee's planning stages while the self-generated form takes shape during drafting sessions.

The work's complexity, as revealed in the discussion of structure, is caused by the presentation of multiple perspectives. As the value and limitations of each perspective become apparent, the reader realizes the attractiveness of McPhee's authorial fair-mindedness, which he eventually transforms into an advocation of informed and empathic pluralism. In chapter IV I will analyze how a reader is persuaded to identify with McPhee, in both his roles as character and author. The reader also recognizes, approves, and vicariously experiences the investigative and

synthetic processes McPhee undergoes. My analysis in this chapter is based on Burke's theory about the rhetorical function of identification.

So that the structural and rhetorical elements in Coming Into the Country will not be viewed as unique to this one book of McPhee's, the fifth chapter will illustrate the similarities of the strategies and patterns used in this book and in other representative McPhee works. These techniques typically enable McPhee to make a case for an outlook of informed, open-minded pluralism. And, finally, in a brief Afterword I will consider how McPhee's nonfiction might be used to help us teach writing.

Chapter II

McPhee's Symbolic Act in Coming Into the Country: Architecture

Before Coming Into the Country can be usefully described as a symbolic act, we must establish the relevance of this term to McPhee's structural rhetoric. As stated in Chapter I, the germinal notion for all of Kenneth Burke's theories is that man uses symbols: "Beginning absolutely, we might define man as the typically language-using, or symbol-using animal" ("Linguistic Approach" 259). From this point Burke derives the term symbolic act, which he defines as "poetry or any verbal act" (Philosophy of Literary Form 8) that is created for the purpose of communicating. It is important to note the element of causality, of intent, in this definition since the term shifts us from an aesthetic critical perspective to a rhetorical one. This shift is clarified in Burke's remark describing his basic outlook toward the role of criticism:

> The general approach to the poem might be called "pragmatic" in this sense: It assumes that a poem's structure is to be described most accurately by thinking always of the poem's function. It assumes that the poem is designed to "do something" for the poet and his readers, and that we can make the most relevant observations about its design by considering the poem as the embodiment of this act. (Philosophy 89)

Consequently, words on a page, which are often viewed as beautiful, entertaining, or informative, but altogether passive, are empowered because they are no longer regarded simply as objects but as acts, expressions of, or responses to, situations which are meant to affect an author and his reader. In short, a book is not static or self-contained, but a part of a conversation or series of human actions. People talk or write to affect themselves and others; they always have a rhetorical purpose. Once this active role is accorded to language, Burke's other famous definition of the symbolic act can be understood: a symbolic act is "the dancing of an attitude" (Philosophy 9). It is fair to say that in this definition dancing connotes both expression and seduction, a rhetorical act.

After Burke establishes all verbal acts as symbolic, he posits that the best way to understand the rhetorical force of a text is to study its structure because structure leads to an understanding of function. This line of thought supports the notion that a rhetorical function is inevitable in any text:

> The motivation out of which a poet writes is synonymous with the structural way in which he puts events and values together when he writes; and however consciously he may go about such work, there is a kind of generalization about these interrelations that he could not have been conscious of, since the generalizations could be made by the kind of inspection that is possible only after the completion of the work. (Burke, Philosophy 20; his emphasis)

Burke suggests that, whether or not a writer is conscious of the rhetoric inherent in his work, it exists in structure, and a recognition of this structure is essential to an understanding of the work as a symbolic act. Although Burke specifically characterizes the way rhetoric unconsciously creeps into a writer's text, it seems reasonable to extend the same techniques to a writer like McPhee who knowingly manipulates structure. Morever, Burke's expanded view of rhetoric is particularly useful in analyzing McPhee's work, given the latter's keen interest in and exploitation of structural technique.

Structure in Burke refers to several elements of a work, and these are named and explained in the title essay of The Philosophy of Literary Form (1-137). First he means form, how the work is organized and ordered. Next he includes the development of key terms, or symbols. These he names the work's equations and advocates tracing their occurrence and analyzing their cumulative meaning to find how they contribute to the work's impact. Finally, structure also includes a work's progression, or movement, which designates not only the narrative development but the way in which the meanings of key terms are transformed within the work. For example, a symbol that appears at the beginning of the work may come to suggest many more meanings or even very different meanings at the end of the work, and this transformation simultaneously reveals the

work's structure as well as its import. Of course, these structural elements are interrelated, so an analysis of one will lead to or imply the others. Burke distinguishes between equations and transformations by designating signs for each:

> The two main symbols for the charting of structural relationships would be the sign for "equals" and some such sign as the arrow ("from _____ to _____"). (Philosophy 74-75)

Later he explains how these facets are related to the larger concepts of form and symbolic act:

> The main point is to note what the poem's equational structure is. This is a statement about its form. But to guide our observations about the form itself, we seek to discover the functions which the structure serves. This takes us into a discussion of purpose, strategy, the symbolic act. (100; his emphasis)

Because the symbolic equations of a work play a role in its purpose, we can learn how a work makes a point by noticing both its narrative progression and how a key term gains new meanings. A single instance of a key term is a synecdoche, or an act which is representative of its context and role; the development of a work will be revealed in the transformation of meaning that key terms undergo throughout the work.

Coming into the Country is a symbolic act in which McPhee introduces his reader to the complexities of Alaska. We come into the country as we read this book; we meet people, see the land, get a sense of Alaska's economic and political problems. Interestingly, we never come out of

the country. There is a continuous inwardly turning structure to the book, mostly influenced by the circular nature of the individual books--they all begin and end at the same point, which is never a simple place of demarcation, but a mid-point. The books all conclude back in the middle of their issues and concerns. This structure then constitutes an expression of McPhee's belief that simple choices are impossible, that you cannot discount any of the perspectives in order to come to a decision about whether the Salmon River should be preserved as a wilderness area, about whether the capital should be moved and more of central Alaska developed, about whether miners and trappers should be able to continue living off the land without any concern for what they do to streams or whether or not they own the land. It is a curious arrangement. All these questions are raised, investigated, discussed, but not really resolved--McPhee concludes that there is much to know and think about in making social and political decisions and that the losses of not taking everything into account would be considerable. So the symbolic act is to lead us continually into the complexity of Alaska--its beauty, richness, variety, the competing arguments of conservationists, Indians, miners, trappers, developers, and townspeople. McPhee never simplifies, never deduces, as if to say that we should remember all, hold all the anecdotes in our heads at once; and when we can do that and

be honest and fair, then we can have a proper perspective on Alaska.

McPhee himself says as much in an interview with Dennis Drabelle for Sierra when he talks about his frustration with readers and reviewers who have quoted from only one section of the book:

> To have somebody pick up one or two of these facets [of Alaska's political challenges] and say that's what the book is all about disappoints me. That's not what it's all about. It's not intended to be an editorial or a club with which one party can hit another on the head. I would hope that the book is taken entire. In "The Encircled River" I felt the conservationist side got its full treatment. In the capital story the development side was heard. And "Coming Into the Country" is about the people who live in the country. (62, McPhee's emphasis)

McPhee follows this remark with a revealing statement about the kind of reaction to his book that pleases him; this statement clues us in to how he hopes the book to be taken:

> The fact that people up there [in Alaska] endorse this as a book that captures Alaska is the greatest reward I could have. (Drabelle 63)

Consequently, the book's symbolic act encourages a reader to learn as much as possible about Alaska and resist any temptation to find easy answers.

Because McPhee himself uses it, I have adopted the term architecture to designate what Roundy calls McPhee's "prior form" (139) and what Burke means by the organizational part of structure, "the structural way he puts events and values together" (Philosophy, 20). During his interview with Norman Sims, McPhee handed the

interviewer a quotation of Albert Einstein's on the music of Schubert which underscores the necessity of form: "But in his longer works I am disturbed by a lack of architectonics" (14). The fact that McPhee has written out this quotation and keeps it at hand once again reminds us of his concern for the kind of "structural design that gives order, balance and unity to a work, the element of form that relates the parts to each other and to the whole" (Sims 14). Another nonfiction writer, Richard Rhodes, attests to his own interest in architecture and fleshes out the term in the process:

> The kind of architectonic structures that you have to build, that nobody ever teaches or talks about, are crucial to writing and have little to do with verbal abilities. They have to do with pattern ability and administrative abilities--generalship, if you will. Writers don't talk about it much, unfortunately. (Sims 14-15)

Perhaps the best way to approach the architecture of Coming Into the Country is to consider first the implications of the title and the three-part division of the text into lengthy books. McPhee explains his title's origin at the very beginning of Book III, the book which bears the same title and focuses on the lives of individuals living in the Alaskan bush:

> With a clannish sense of place characteristic of the bush, people in the region of the upper Yukon refer to their part of Alaska as "the country." A stranger appearing among them is said to have "come into the country." (183)

This title is clearly appropriate for Book III, especially since McPhee's persona (and the accompanying reader as well) have literally arrived in the country, symbolized at the moment by Donna Kneeland and Dick Cook's cabin situated miles up a tributary stream of the Yukon River. But as the title of the entire work, it makes structural suggestions. The three books of the work are "At the Northern Tree line: The Encircled River," "In Urban Alaska: What They Were Looking For," and, of course, "In the Bush: Coming Into the Country." In each of these books McPhee presents his reader with a different approach to Alaska, as if he has organized his information into verbal maps of Alaska's physical, political, and cultural geography. The division furnishes a vast array of details and information about Alaska. As Donald Hall exclaims, "In its three-part structure--wilderness, government, settlement--it comprehends facts on the order of 10 to the 17th power" (412).

McPhee explained in his interview with Drabelle that he saw the first book as presenting the arguments of conservationists for the preservation of wilderness land, especially in the northern part of the state, which includes the rivers and fragile tundra of the Brooks Range. In addition to these arguments, however, there is also an emphasis on the physical geography of Alaska. The first book provides information about the immense size of the

state, the proportion of wilderness, and careful descriptions of the tundra climate and topography. Here we learn that "Alaska is a fifth as large as the contiguous forty-eight states" (18), that a grizzly needs "at least fifty and perhaps a hundred square miles" (64) of personal territory, and that "[t]here are three varying types [of tundra]--wet tundra, on low flatland with much standing water; moist tundra, on slightly higher ground; and alpine tundra like carpeted heather, rising on mountains and hills" (54).

A lesson in political geography, the second book focuses on the views of developers, the political issues, and the regional jealousies of the state. At the time the book was researched the key issues were the designation of land for preservation as wilderness areas and the Indians' selection of their territories after the 1971 Native Claims Settlement Act, but most of the speculation and controversy of Book II surrounds the choice of one hundred square miles for the construction of a new state capital. To acquaint a reader with the situation, McPhee looks closely at the development and history of Alaskan cities, especially Juneau and Anchorage; he explains the intense rivalry between Fairbanks and Anchorage, and illustrates how economically dependent Juneau is on the government's presence, largely because of its isolated location in a section of southeastern Alaska that "cannot be reached, or

even approached, by road" (103). Political maneuvering is illustrated by the strategies of State Senator Bill Ray to keep the capital in Juneau despite the public referendum supporting the move: he instigates the construction of a new state office building, courthouse, parking garage, and four-lane divided highway in Juneau. Ray's most vocal opponent, Robert Atwood, editor of the Anchorage Times, is given equal time to explain his support of the move, of development in general, and of exploitation of the state's resources for the benefit of its citizens. Minority opinions are included, such as those of Carroll and Verna Close, who run the Roadhouse in Talkeetna; they believe that "Since statehood . . . this country's went sour" (115) and are generally disgruntled about the government and see little sense in Alaskan politics. A reader meets planning committees for the new capital, sits in on a "workshop hearing" (136) where the public is invited to express their views, flies with a real estate salesman over the Susitna Valley and endures his sales pitch, and hears the wisdom of centrists like Governor Jay Hammond and the skepticism of a prominent Indian and the chair of the Selection Committee, Willie Hensley. Widening the perspective from that of a local argument, McPhee places the capital move controversy into historical perspective by providing anecdotes about how Missouri, West Virginia, South Carolina, North

Carolina, California, New York, Minnesota, Nevada, and Florida moved their state capitals.

Book III focuses on the socio-cultural geography of Alaska by describing the lives of people who live there. A reader is introduced to the habits, beliefs, homes, and occupations of various types of citizens living outside the cities. For instance, the yearly cycle of work for subsistence river people who live in primitive cabins in the wilderness is outlined. They shoot ducks in May, fish salmon in July, hunt large game like bear and moose in October, and begin trapping when the river freezes. The regular rounds of townspeople, miners, and Indians are developed through recreations of typical scenes and settings: the first make a social event out of waiting for the mail, the miners work their claims differently according to the season, and the Indians have a routine of paying visits to each others' cabins throughout the day. Alaskans' diet, education, and beliefs are fully sketched by lists from household diaries, individual histories, and accounts of such yearly events as the river people's vernal equinox celebration. In sum, the three books present three equally significant and distinct approaches to learning about the state, and the title hints at this strategy. Consequently, part of the symbolic act of the text is to provide a reader three distinct entries into life in Alaska.

The title also suggests the work's constant search for an understanding of Alaska. McPhee casts his title in the present progressive tense not only to echo the saying of the bush people but to emphasize the way the structure of each book literally brings a reader to a midpoint in a narrative, to a place from which the reader can begin to listen to Alaskans empathically, rather than objectively as an outsider. As we read we begin to understand the Alaskans' attitudes because we see the outlines of their situations, discover the rationale for their choices and preferences, and sense their intense desire to live without the constraints of the civilization of the "Lower Forty-eight." Since few readers are likely to view themselves as potential Alaskan pioneers, this function of bringing us into the lives, surroundings, and attitudes of Alaskans is an important one for enabling us to get a sense of what coming into the country means. The symbolic act of the work, then is to bring the reader into the country, to place him/her in a position that enables empathy with Alaskans, by means of information and narrative device. Further, the structure of the work, with its three approaches and its accumulation of impressions allows the reader to form opinions through synecdoche, rather than through a programmatic arrangement of premises.

McPhee's major architectural strategy for stressing an open-ended attitude toward Alaska is his use of a circular

frame for each book. At their most basic level, the frames operate to keep the reader on track through numerous digressions, side trips, and anecdotes that illustrate the variety and quirkiness of the Alaskan citizenry and of the state's land and history. Without the narrative frames, the work would be only an encyclopedic collection of facts and impressions. But McPhee selects a narrative in Books I and II and a loosely ordered travelogue in Book III to encapsulate the verbal maps, making his encyclopedic prose assimilable and connecting it to a story that helps a reader interpret it. In a sense, each book constitutes a separate symbolic act, since each takes the shape of an individual journey that McPhee as author, and as a persona present in his writing, has chosen and arranged to represent a particular facet of Alaska. The first book tells the story of a canoe and kayak trip down the Salmon River located above the Arctic Circle in the Brooks Range. In the second McPhee accompanies the Capital Site Selection Committee on a day-long helicopter tour of the six sites in the Susitna Valley most suitable for the relocation of the state capital. The final book, whose frame spans several seasons and lacks a conspicuous chronological sequence, describes McPhee's journeys in the bush country of the Yukon River, beginning and ending in the small town of Eagle, Alaska. Although only McPhee could have planned the events of the final book, it is interesting to note how he

has found and included himself in representative, highly symbolic journeys. He uses and even manipulates the chronology of these trips to lead a reader continually back into the country, echoing through structure the purpose of the entire text. The journeys themselves, of course, do have beginnings and endings, but the circular accounts of them that McPhee orchestrates posit a reluctance to judge quickly or easily about Alaskan conservation, politics, and people. The symbolic act of the book, and consequently the rhetorical effect, aims to bring a reader into the country as fully as possible.

The circularity of the first book is the most apparent: it begins and ends with McPhee sitting in a canoe and dipping his rolled bandanna in the cool water of the Salmon to wrap around his forehead. Progressing through the first pages, a reader slowly realizes that the first part recounts the second half of the canoe trip, which ends at the Eskimo town of Kiana thirty-five pages into the book. Then with a very casual transition ("Children were fishing when we were here before" 40), McPhee flashes back to the beginning of the trip, also at Kiana. At this point he tells about the first half of the trip, including the party's helicopter ride to the Salmon River; McPhee's story of a long hike in the tundra with Bob Fedeler, a wildlife biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Jack Hession, the Sierra Club's

full-time representative in the state; and the group's first several days on the river, which are punctuated by sightings of grizzly bears and other wildlife.

Philip Terrie, in his article "River of Paradox: John McPhee's 'The Encircled River,'" has already discussed some of the implications of Book I's broken and reconstructed chronology. Terrie is most interested in showing how the structure of this book complements the theme of cycles of nature and how the artificial circularity of McPhee's narrative echoes the notion that man must attempt to protect nature's cycles by artificial means such as boundaries for wilderness areas: "As another way of acknowledging the need for artifice [to protect the wilderness], McPhee has organized 'The Encircled River' with a somewhat contrived structure" (11). While it is clear McPhee intends for all of the cycles and circles to resonate and blend, this structure also allows for the book to end with McPhee, his companions, and the reader still in the wilderness. The final paragraphs describe a young grizzly playing with salmon:

> He picked up a salmon, roughly ten pounds of fish, and holding it with one paw, he began to whirl it around his head. Apparently, he was not hungry, and this was a form of play. He played sling-the-salmon. With his claws embedded near the tail, he whirled the salmon and then tossed it high, end over end. As it fell, he scooped it up and slung it around his head again, lariat salmon, and again he tossed it into the air. He caught it and heaved it high once more. The fish flopped to the ground. The bear turned away, bored. (94)

After this moment, the party floats into the bear's view; the grizzly, unpredictable and impenetrable as the wilderness, moves quickly away despite his greater strength and territorial hegemony. The canoe and kayaks drift past the mutilated salmon, continuing on their way to Kiana. McPhee gracefully exits the book by closing the largest circle he has made:

> My bandanna, around my head, was nearly dry. I took it off, and trailed it in the river. (95)

This non-ending leaves the reader with an impression of the group of conservationists still floating down the river, continuing their observations and discussions about what areas should be designated as protected wilderness. Since none of the questions is answered, a reader never learns the outcome of the trip; he remains in the wilderness with potentialities still hovering.

"What They Were Hunting For" has a subtle circular structure. While McPhee keeps the chronology of the day trip intact, he manages to emphasize the political muscle of Anchorage, the limited geographic options for a new state capital, and the actual route of the helicopter to create a circular, and inevitable, conclusion to the Selection Committee's search. The book opens with a small helicopter and a twin-engine plane leaving from Fairbanks and Anchorage, respectively, carrying committee members to a rendezvous point to begin a day-long inspection of the likeliest sites. The larger group is on the plane from

Anchorage, and the reader quickly learns of that city's political strength. As the state's commercial center, it has drained much of the business and power from other Alaskan cities, and it is now characterized by the rest of the state as greedy and ambitious. In a chorus of regional voices condemning Anchorage, Alaskans' general dislike and suspicion of Anchorage become evident. One citizen sums up this attitude:

> Anchorage works hard to get things from other towns. It has from the start. When Anchorage was just a few people in tents, they tried to take the headquarters of the railroad from Seward and the U.S. District Court from Valdez. In both instances they succeeded. Recently, they have tried hard to take the university from Fairbanks. They have part of it already. They wooed the U.S. land office away from Juneau. 'Proud' is a word still used here in Alaska--but not about Anchorage. (105)

To quiet the fears of Anchorage's shameless ambition, the 1974 initiative that eventually won approval for the capital move was written to exclude both Anchorage and Fairbanks. Even so, most of the sites are very near Anchorage, and would therefore be dominated by it if one were to become the new capital. The committee's tour is, writes McPhee, "as much as anything else, a gesture of courtesy to Fairbanks" (105-106).

The tour proceeds to all of the sites, landing the helicopter at each one to allow the members to see the area from a human perspective. Each landing becomes an opportunity to focus on one or more of the committee

members, profile the individuals as representative of certain political positions and regional outlooks, and include whatever information about that region that might be helpful in understanding the origins of the members' opinions. These digressions are lengthy, numerous, and so intriguing in themselves that a reader may momentarily forget that he or she is still reading about a helicopter trip. In several instances the frame disappears entirely to be stitched back into the prose pages later. The sections about the ugliness of Anchorage (129-35), the improbable founding of Juneau by two gold prospectors (139-46), and the McHarg method of using acetate overlays on a map to weigh the advantages of each site (153-57) can be read as set pieces, quite independent of the frame. However, they are not irrelevant or misplaced; they function to supply fascinating details and information just at the time when a reader might wonder about such matters.

The route of the tour begins at a site north of Anchorage and relatively removed from it, Talkeetna, then circles clockwise around to Willow, the final site of the day, the one closest to Anchorage, and the one that is ultimately selected. The committee ends its tour by settling down into Anchorage, "Alaska's principal city" (178), in falling rain and growing darkness. Earl Cook from Fairbanks notes the irony of the effort to find a place away from Anchorage and closes the book by saying,

"That's a hell of a way to get to Anchorage" (178), pointing out that the million-dollar search has led to the inevitable, and for him unwanted, conclusion of giving Anchorage what it wants. So the initiative that began in the dreams of Anchorage citizens ends there too.

Although this book ends by telling a reader which site will be chosen, it is not as closed as it may seem. Many committee members still hope that the state will decide against the move because of the cost and because the state has no funds to build it. Also, after reading about all of the varied and strong opinions throughout the state, a reader hesitates to think that anything about Alaskan politics is settled, that Anchorage has won at last, or that the developers will have sway over other factions such as Indians, conservationists, and the dogged individualists in the bush. The Alaskan paradox of a state being torn between "the Dallas scenario and the Sierra Club Syndrome," in the words of a former commerce commissioner for Governor Jay Hammond (127), remains unresolved.

The third book, over half the length of the whole, is not structured around a narrative sequence of events. Rather, it is divided into untitled and thoroughly integrated sections which are devoted to illustrating the ways of life of the major groups of people living in and around Eagle, Alaska. The book begins by placing us in the cabin of Donna Kneeland and Dick Cook and broaching the

question of why anyone would want to live in the bush, so far removed from the mainstream of life and from the conveniences and events of this century. Donna explains her reason for living in the bush by describing how claustrophobic she felt in Edmonton, Canada:

> In Edmonton, every place I went I could see nothing but civilization. I never felt I could ever get out. I wanted to see something with no civilization in it. I wanted to see even two or three miles of just nothing. I missed this very much. In a big city, I can't find my way out of a paper bag. I was scared to death of the traffic. I was in many ways unhappy. One day I thought, I know what I want to do--I want to go live in the woods. I left the same day for Alaska. (185)

Her companion, Dick Cook, seconds her desire for wilderness and explains that he came to Alaska to "repudiate one kind of life and try another. 'I wanted to get away from paying taxes to support something I didn't believe in, to get away from big business, to get away from a place where you can't be sure of anything you hear or anything you read'" (186). This couple represents the bush Alaskans' desire for greater freedom and for a way of life that does not hem them in by the conventions and the complexities of society.

After this introduction, the majority of this book is composed of profiles, anecdotes, and historical accounts arranged to be representative of the lives of townspeople, miners, river people, and Indians. The book closes with a coda, in which the more prominent individuals are visited one last time and the accounts of their lives are brought

up to date. This three-part structure--with a synecdochic introduction, a body of detailed accounts, and a reprise conclusion--has a circularity of its own because a reader encounters many individuals several times and in several settings.

There is another circular factor in the suggested, but not overt, structure given to McPhee's travels: he begins with a visit to Eagle; a departure from it enables him to meet miners in the Birch Creek District, river people in their remote cabins, and the Gelvin family in the small town of Central; finally McPhee returns to Eagle, studies its factions, neighbors' feuds, and politics. One method of seeing this structure more clearly is to divide the book into several major sections, as I have done below:

I. Introduction answering the question of why people want to live in the bush. This point is made largely by profiling Donna Kneeland and Dick Cook. (183-92)

II. Eagle, Alaska: a first look at the community. (192-221)

III. Departure from Eagle. The topic is gold fever: a history of the Alaskan gold rush and McPhee's first accounts of miners and his first meeting with the Gelvins. (221-239)

IV. Life in the bush. Stories about the river people who live in cabins along the Yukon and its tributaries. How their way of life is threatened by the nullification of the Homestead Act. McPhee visits several of these cabins. (239-90)

V. Arrival in Central. Profile of the Gelvin family who live in Central, Alaska, and are beginning a mining project. (290-314)

VI. Visits to several mining camps. Profiles of career miners and how the Bureau of Land Management has recently required that they comply with laws to prevent soil erosion and stream pollution. (314-35)

VII. Return to Eagle; a description of the town as suburban. (335-77)

VIII. Visit to Eagle Indian Village, three miles upriver from Eagle. (377-404)

IX. Coda. Final anecdotes and an update on the most prominent individuals. (404-38)

No doubt, this departure and return movement provides the book with a coherent frame largely because Eagle is portrayed as a focal point for the area. Eagle is introduced on the second page of the book as "the largest sign of human material progress in twenty thousand square miles of rugged, riverine land" (184). From this point on, it becomes a kind of home port from which McPhee departs to visit those living in the wilderness. Eagle is also a focal point for trappers, miners, river people, and Indians because it is where they come to collect mail and purchase supplies; it is an outpost in the wilderness offering the first signs of civilization and social life to individuals who live alone in their cabins for months at a time. McPhee describes this aspect of the town by noting it "is something like a bathysphere, lowered into a world so remote it is analogous to the basins of the sea. The people within look out at the country" (198). McPhee, always in keeping with his pluralistic efforts to show us as many perspectives as possible, structures the third book

to give a reader the view from within the town limits and, in turn, from outside the community.

Perhaps one reason why this structure suggesting a departure and return to Eagle is understated is that McPhee researched this book on two separate trips, as he explains in his interview with Drabelle:

> I went [to Alaska] the first time during the summer and early fall of 1975, when I did most of the work on the first two parts. I went back in the spring of 1976 at break-up time and stayed into the summer. I was back in the winter of 1977. The second two trips were the field work for the third part of the book. (61)

It seems reasonable to assume that the actual chronology of McPhee's travels in the bush country was too complex to make it the overt organizational scheme for the whole book. Further, even though McPhee, as we have seen in Book I, is quite capable of manipulating chronology to serve rhetorical goals, it makes sense that since his subject for this book is Alaskans' way of life, he would arrange his material to emphasize their occupations, habits, and beliefs rather than the chronology of his own travels. The circularity of this book gives it coherence, affirming Eagle's significance both because it represents Alaskan town life and because it is the focal point of the area.

In keeping with the notion that each book constitutes a separate symbolic act, since each takes the shape of a single sally into one facet of modern Alaska, each book is colored by a dominant theme and corresponding set of key

terms. This structural component, which McPhee appears to have consciously selected, reflects Burke's theory that the equations of a work lead a reader to its rhetorical content. The dominant theme of each book is directly related to the tripartite, pluralistic structure that McPhee explained in the Drabelle interview, and this structure is used by McPhee as a strategy intended to generate desired responses from readers. Although Burke's theories propose to describe the way all texts generate responses from their readers, they seem particularly relevant to McPhee's overt and typical strategies.

The key terms of the various books tie into McPhee's preference for pluralism by becoming resonant symbols of each of the major perspectives. The Salmon River, the grizzly, the cities, Denali, the individuals we like and admire even when we find out how different they are from us, from a norm, and how extreme they seem sometimes--these symbols add to the whole by communicating that each represents something so precious that any loss would be a great one. Thinking about Alaska, then, becomes a balancing act--as making decisions about it must be. And this use of a wide variety of key terms implies that the act of balancing in all decision-making is of utmost importance.

If, as we recall McPhee's assertion, Book I is designed to give the conservationists an opportunity to

voice their concerns about the threat of the oil pipeline, the Native Claims Settlement Act, and the development boom on the Alaskan wilderness, at first glance he appears to have adopted a strategy that defeats this goal. This is so because Book I impresses readers from the Lower Forty-eight with the fact that Alaska still boasts huge expanses of wilderness with abundant and untroubled wildlife populations. The wondrous picture of Alaskan wilderness presented in Book I causes a reader to be drawn into the extraordinary nature of the excursion and into the beauty and size of "Alaska," which, after all, is an Aluet word meaning "the great land" (87). In short, a reader is seduced into believing, at least temporarily, "the myth of Alaska" that McPhee attempts to disavow us of. His strategy is paradoxical: showing us the myth at its fullest and most enchanting and then reminding us that we don't have access to it and that, despite Alaska's size and commanding presence, the myth and Alaska itself are severely threatened.

This theme is introduced quite early in the book during the first evening that McPhee narrates. After a string of amusing fishing stories has been told by several of the party, ending with one by McPhee himself about landing a soda can "full of silt and sand" outside Anchorage, Bob Fedeler professes:

> "That is the myth of Alaska," he says. "The myth is that in Alaska there's a fish on every cast, a

> moose behind every tree. But the fish and the moose aren't there. People go out with high expectations, and they're disappointed. To get to the headwaters of a river like [the Salmon] takes a lot of money. The state needs to look to the budgets and desires of people who cannot afford to come to a place like this." (9-10)

But by accompanying McPhee on this journey the privileged reader sees the myth:

> The country is wild to the limits of the term. It would demean such a world to call it pre-Columbian. It is twenty times older than that, having assumed its present form ten thousand years ago, with the melting of the Wisconsin ice. (53)

More important, however, than the occasional declarations of the wildness of the Brooks Range are the symbols of the wilderness that McPhee repeatedly places before a reader's eyes such as the spawning salmon and the clear water of their eponymous river, the northern tree line and tundra geography, and the grizzly. Often a symbol is demonstrated to be the essence of the wilderness and then its dominance is called into question by a brief mention of man, his artificiality, and his power to determine the future of huge tracts of land. For instance, Book I begins with a description of the Salmon River. Spawning salmon are so plentiful that "[l]ooking over the side of the canoe is like staring down into a sky full of zeppelins" (6), and the water, unlike that of otherwise comparable rivers in the northeast, is "in an unmodified natural state--opaque in flood, ordinarily clear, with levels that change within a closed cycle of the year and the years" (16). Following

these pages devoted to showing the reader how wild and isolated the area is appears a concise discussion of the Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, which "opened the way to the Trans Alaska Pipeline, . . . only the first of many big scale projects envisioned by development-minded Alaskans . . ." (19). The important distinction between the manner in which the wilderness is revealed to the reader and the threats to it are presented is that the wilderness is made tangible, visible, while the threats to it are narrated in abstract terms. The point is that the reader becomes aware of the environmentalists' central difficulty: it is hard to make an argument for the protection of wilderness land when it seems so powerful, so massive. When man ventures into the wilderness, he is cowed by it: the grizzly threatens his life, and he must yield to the natural cycles of the weather, the water, and game migration. It is difficult for him to remain aware of the fact that he is actually the aggressor, one of the "Romans inspecting Transalpine Gaul" (37), and that his projects, his parcelling of the land, will in time destroy what awes and threatens him. Man's power is abstract, while that of the wilderness is evident.

This point is perhaps most forcefully made in McPhee's encounters with and attitudes toward the grizzly. Throughout the trip McPhee is conscious of the grizzly's presence and sovereignty in the wilderness. In the first

paragraph of the book, he tells the reader he is "mindful" (5) not to wipe his hands smelling of fish on his shirt in order to keep from inadvertently attracting a hungry grizzly. This consciousness of the bear's presence never leaves McPhee. During the first night of the account the group tells stories about grizzlies while sitting around the fire. One in particular sticks in McPhee's mind; it is about a writer who "pitched his tent on a bear trail" and after a grizzly found him "nothing much but the pencil" was left (13). These ominous stories are followed by sightings, the first and most frightening of which occurs on a hike McPhee takes with Bob Fedeler and Jack Hession. They see a big boar grizzly

> about a hundred steps away, in the blueberries, grazing. The head was down, the hump high. the immensity of muscle seemed to vibrate slowly--to expand and contract--with the grazing. Not berries alone but whole bushes were going into the bear. (58)

Subsequently, McPhee recounts everything he knows about what prompts bears to attack and the best way to respond to them, acknowledging finally that "they are both intelligent and independent and will do what they choose to do according to mood, experience, whim" (60). Once the immediate danger has passed, McPhee considers the bear's significance as a symbol, pointing to the grizzly's dominance in the country as well as his vulnerability:

> What mattered was not so much the bear himself as what the bear implied. He was the predominant thing in that country, and for him to be in it at

> all meant that there had to be more country like it in every direction and more of the same kind of country all around that. He implied a world. He was an affirmation to the rest of the earth that his kind of place was extant. There had been a time when his race was everywhere in North America, but it had been hunted down and pushed away in favor of something else. For example, the grizzly bear is the state animal of California, whose country was once his kind of place; and in California now the grizzly is extinct. (62-63)

The grizzly and the wilderness are synonymous, both impressive, both threatened, both in need of protection from man. While McPhee shows us the grizzly, a part of the Alaskan myth, he undercuts it by revealing its vulnerability.

Two more bear sightings are narrated in the book, and in both the bears notably choose not to attack. The former is Jack Hession's story of inadvertently drifting in his kayak by a sow grizzly and her two-year-old cub. The bears retreat; McPhee concludes that "[w]hen you are the Sierra Club's man in Alaska, the least of your problems is bears" (81). Even though the major implication of the joke is that Hession is more threatened by developers than he is by bears, the anecdote also reminds a reader of how grizzlies, despite their unrivaled strength, need protection, that, to be sure, developers are a greater threat to the grizzly than their champion, Jack Hession. Terrie makes a point in keeping with this notion in his explanation of the book's title:

> The river is "Encircled," that is, made into a circle by the author. It is also "Encircled" in that it is threatened--by development, progress, civilization itself--and thus arguably in need of protection, which will involve yet another encircling, in the boundaries of an officially designated wilderness area. (11)

The untainted wilderness is vividly described and simultaneously revealed to be dependent on man's decision to preserve it.

The final bear sighting is described on the last two pages of the book. This time the party watches a young grizzly play with a salmon while approaching and drifting past in their boats. The grizzly reacts to seeing the party, but his actions indicate the paradoxical power struggle between man and wilderness and between the myth of Alaska and the reality of it: regardless of impressive size, the bear and his country are losing ground to development and civilization:

> We drifted toward him. At last, we arrived in his focus. If we were looking at something we had rarely seen before, God help him so was he. If he was a tenth as awed as I was, he could not have moved a muscle, which he did, now, in a hurry that was not pronounced but nonetheless seemed inappropriate to his status in the situation. (95)

Through the vehicle of key terms such as the grizzly McPhee shows us the extant part of the myth of Alaska. Awesome as the portrait of it is, a reader is not allowed to forget that the myth is under siege by those who are reluctant to accept John Kauffmann's assertion that the proposed Alaskan

wilderness areas comprise "the last big piece of magnificent mountain wilderness we have left" (89).

The key terms of Book II are orchestrated to illustrate the jarring differences between urban Alaska and the more spacious but politically weak undeveloped regions of the state. The contrast is generally between the vision of the wild represented by Denali, or Mt. McKinley, and the portrait of grimy urban Alaska embodied by descriptions of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. The image of Denali begins the book and, since it is a symbol of nature, bridges the shift from Book I's discussion of wilderness to Book II's concern with politics and development. Denali is characterized by the grizzly's magnificence and dominance:

> The mountain was a megahedron--its high white facets doming in the air. Long snow banners, extending eastward, were pluming from the ridges above twenty thousand feet. (102)

Added to its visual impressiveness as "the most arresting sight from forty million acres around" (110) is the fact that it is nicknamed the Weathermaker since it generates its own storms from its height and coldness. The mountain is the first topic of conversation among the Committee as the group sets out to inspect sites. Its presence functions as an assertion by nature, an affirmation of its dominance of the political factions represented by the occupants of the plane from Anchorage. The Indian name Denali, in fact, means "The Great One, The Mighty One, The

High One" (110) and McPhee claims that it symbolizes Alaska to its citizens, both Indian and white.

Aligned with Denali are the undeveloped sites that the committee visits; each has been chosen as an attractive and suitable place for a city that will be representative of the beauty and promise of the state. Further, most of the proposed sites offer a view of Denali. They are, however, not as invulnerable as the mountain, as we learn during the course of the day when various homesteaders and committee members worry over what might happen to the wildlife and scenery of the site that is eventually chosen.

A good example of the vulnerability of the capital site, and by extension, of all of Alaska to uncontrolled development, is provided during the Committee's brief visit to a southerly slope of Mount Yenlo. The description of the site quickly associates it with the wilderness of Book I and with the need for care in Alaskans' decisions about building a new city:

> Just below, and beside the clear stream, was the most remote site under consideration for the capital--thirty-five miles from the highway and undeniably as beautiful a setting as could possibly exist in the valley. It was high grassland--under, but approaching, a thousand feet--with white birches and white spruce scattered through it, big trees for this part of the world, almost a foot in diameter. The mean January temperature was ten degrees, July fifty-six. The summit of Yenlo was above the site, to the immediate northwest, and due north, close across fifty miles, was the palpable McKinley. The committee spread out through berry fields, these laced with stands of fern. There was sign of moose and caribou. There were

> depressions in the grass where bears had slept. (173-74)

Even the noise of the waiting helicopter, McPhee suggests, takes away "something of what it had brought us to see" (174), reminding a reader that wilderness can be destroyed quite easily by the necessities of civilization. As if this hint is not enough to make the point, McPhee furnishes the reader with committee member Arliss Sturgulewski's opinion. Also a member of the Greater Anchorage Area Planning and Zoning Commission, she has seen what happens to Alaskan cities that are allowed to grow without firm, long-range city planning. Consequently, she frets over the land use and zoning of a new capital saying finally, with an implied sigh:

> Now look at this place--how beautiful it is. Can you imagine what could happen out here? Alaskans don't see the value of order, don't see the value of looking to the future. (175)

McPhee's plane ride with real estate salesman John Leifer over the Susitna valley confirms her assessment of the Alaskan attitude toward development. During the trip Leifer "buzzes" a black bear for his potential customer's amusement:

> He throttled back, and we glided silently down on the bear, which stood still, in near-sighted perplexity, wondering where the sound had gone. Then suddenly, Leifer advanced the throttle and buzzed the astounded animal, which ran across the muskeg in a kind of rolling cringe as we passed over and then gained enough altitude to clear the trees. (168)

Here the cousin of the hugely symbolic grizzly is literally humiliated, frightened, and endangered.

These doubts about the possibilities of an attractive and carefully planned capital city are supported by the dismal failure of urban Alaska to produce a livable city. Anchorage, Juneau, and Fairbanks, the major Alaskan cities, are all marred to the point of making them not only unpleasant but seemingly unbearable. They, in one way or another, are all products of Alaska's boom philosophy and history, and each has unfortunate geographic characteristics that make expansion impossible or undesirable and city life and commerce difficult. Juneau, perhaps the most attractive, is inaccessible because of its distance--two time zones--from the center of the state (103). In addition, its windy, rainy weather and its almost total entrapment in an elbow of mountains makes air travel chancy, even hazardous. No wonder many Alaskans would like to see the capital moved. Centrally located Fairbanks seems like it would be a logical capital, but it has rather severe climatic drawbacks: its weather is characterized by the most extreme temperatures of the state, and it features more "motor vehicles per capita than . . . Los Angeles" (106). This combination results in "an especially pernicious, carcinogenic subarctic variety of smog" (106).

Anchorage, however, comes to symbolize the kind of city that a boom philosophy creates and that serves as the counterpoint to the loveliness of the Alaskan wilderness:

> While the dream of the capital city plays on in the mind, Anchorage stands real. It is the central hive of human Alaska, and in manner and structure it represents, for all to see, the Alaskan dynamic and the Alaskan aesthetic. (129)

Unfortunately, it is a nightmare of a city, assembling in one place all the ugliest, cheapest parts of other American cities:

> It is virtually unrelated to its environment. It has come in on the wind, an American spore. A large cookie cutter brought down on El Paso could lift something like Anchorage into the air. Anchorage is the northern rim of Trenton, the center of Oxnard, the ocean-blind precincts of Daytona Beach. It is condensed, instant Albuquerque. (130)

This description colors the city as both uncontrolled and artificial, in contrast to Denali and the myth of Alaska sketched in the first book. More unfortunate than its own, self-contained unsightliness, is its ambition to influence and even control development in the rest of the state. No wonder Alaskans of other regions both resent and fear its political and economic power.

> There are those who would say that the only proper place for a new capital of Alaska--if there has to be a new one--is Anchorage, because anyone who has built a city like Anchorage should not be permitted to build one anywhere else. (135)

Throughout Book II Anchorage comes to symbolize the drive for development and the threat of that drive to the rest of

the state. However, the lightness of McPhee's own tone, the reassurance he provides about the plenitude of untouched expanses beyond the city, and the many cautious voices recorded from other regions keep Anchorage from becoming a villain.

In his review David Gancher aptly describes McPhee's tone and the symbolic strategy in Book II: "McPhee has a great gift for presenting opposite sides, violently antagonistic arguments, with cheerful equanimity" (60). The book juxtaposes polar terms and successfully presents the difficulties of a boom philosophy and a growing resistance to the easy answers this attitude fosters. The key terms themselves enable the playing out of this struggle in such a way that all consequences are suggested and the dialogue does not become, in McPhee's pages anyway, a fierce battle. Humor, variety of opinion, and hope for a suitable compromise lessen the distance between points of view.

In "Coming Into the Country" the focus of the entire book shifts, putting the earlier symbols of the grizzly and the cities into a more human perspective. The grizzly appears as a source of food as much as a symbol of the wilderness, and the cities become places where bush people send children to high school or college, go for medical services, and order supplies from. The ideal around which the key terms of Book III revolve is that of "the man [or

woman] of maximum practical application" (204), an appellation first given to Dick Cook by one of his disciples, Steve Ulvi. Cook is one of the most successful and entrenched of the river people, "a sachem figure" (191) to young people who aspire to subsistence lives in the bush: "He knows the woods, the animals, sleds, traps, furs, dogs, frozen rivers, and swift water" (191). Although this term applies directly to Cook, during the course of McPhee's travels around Eagle, it comes to represent the kind of individual who flourishes in a hard, demanding country which offers few traditional kinds of employment and tests a person's ability to endure extreme cold, isolation, and primitive conditions. McPhee demonstrates the propriety of this term by profiling a number of impressively resourceful, self-reliant Alaskans who manage to live interesting, fulfilling lives in a country that, "by virtue of its climate, will always screen its own" (436). These people, and the way they live, are the remnant of the American pioneer, the frontier life; McPhee, presumably accompanied by many of his readers, feels an atavistic kinship with and hereditary respect for these Alaskans' brand of individualism.

Detailed profiles of a handful of people reveal the kind of variety and self-definition possible in the Alaskan bush. Besides Dick Cook, a reader comes to know his companion Donna Kneeland; John Borg, a man of many titles

in Eagle; Indian Chief Michael John David; and the Gelvin family, among others. Each of these is hard-working, resourceful, and entirely adjusted to an existence which requires versatility and strength of character. Donna Kneeland tans fur and occupies herself for long stretches alone cooking, canning, and keeping her cabin. John Borg is the jack-of-all-trades in Eagle, serving as Mayor, mailman, weather recorder, customs agent, hauler of wood, road worker, and leader of the strongest political group of the community, the Christian bloc. Similarly, Michael John David leads the Indian community by serving as its chief, studying law, and managing his village's share of Doyon, Ltd. (his tribe's part of the money and land from the Native Claims Act). He feels a great responsibility to his people and attempts to educate them, fight their predilection for alcoholism, and encourage them to maintain their identity as Indians by using their native language, Han, and following Indian customs and ways of life.

Despite these compelling profiles, Ed and Ginny Gelvin and their son Stanley most rival Cook's claim to the title of the person of "maximum practical application." The Gelvins homesteaded in Central in the early fifties and since then Ed and his wife Ginny have supported their family in a number of ways: "They cut and sold cordwood and lumber. They ran the roadhouse for a year and a half. They shot wolves for the bounty, which was fifty dollars. .

. . Meanwhile, Ed went off to construction jobs--a month here, six weeks there" (295). Over time they have built their own compound of sixteen buildings on a ten-acre plot of land. The compound includes a sawmill, shop-garage, guest cabin, meat cache, smokehouse, toolshed, warehouse, airplane hangar and airstrip, and a main cabin with five rooms and a full basement. In short, they are self sufficient and have developed a comfortable life in keeping with the climate and the opportunities of the country:

> They are modern-type pioneers. They do things the old way, they do things the new way. They are the kind that built the country. (299)

Stanley and Ed also represent the miners' perseverance to pan and unearth gold in the tributary streams of the Yukon, and they have acted on this desire with a plan both elaborate and costly. Beginning by cutting a small tractor into two pieces, flying it to their site, and reassembling it, they continued by leveling an airstrip, and eventually purchasing the largest size Caterpillar tractor made, the D9, driving it up a frozen creek to the site, and then constructing a large sluice from steel plates, fifty-five gallon drums, and welding rods.

This portrait of the Gelvins' industry and ability establishes them as the most attractive, and to some extent, fully adjusted individuals McPhee describes. They represent all of the admirable qualities of Alaskan individualism, and through them McPhee demonstrates a

positive side to the unfettered, unregulated life that many Alaskans want to live. In this way he suggests not just a compromise between preservation and development forces in the state, but the notion that Alaska has room for all these perspectives, and that each offers something valuable. Strictly speaking, the Gelvins are neither pro-conservation nor pro-development; their attitude is that Alaska has been too manipulated by the federal government and the environmentalists who do not understand the needs of the Alaskan people. All the same, the Gelvins display an almost contradictory respect for land and wildlife and a belief that they should be able to use both to their own advantage. They respect the moose, for example, that provides meat for their family, and they appreciate the beauty of the land, as supported by Stanley's reluctance to plow through a mountain ridge on his D9 Cat when he is driving to the mining site, saying: "You can cut a road into the side of a mountain if you want to with a Cat like that, but I just inched up the thing, and over. I didn't want to dig up the country" (239). At the same time, however, they do not hesitate to trap furs, shoot wolves, or destroy a natural stream bed in their search for gold. McPhee emphasizes the sizable difference in the destruction and probable profit from the latter of these undertakings:

> This pretty little stream bed is being disassembled in the name of gold. The result of

> the summer season--of moving forty thousand cubic yards of material through a box, of baring two hundred thousand square feet of bedrock, of scraping off the tundra and stuffing it up a hill, of making a muck and gravel hash out of what are now stream-side meadows of bluebells and lupine, daisies and Arctic forget-me-nots, yellow poppies and saxifrage--will be a peanut-butter jar filled with flaky gold. Probably no one will actually use it. (430)

Certainly in the terms of the first two books, the Gelvins' actions can be readily judged reprehensible to conservationists and praiseworthy to developers. But in this book, the perspective has changed; McPhee views the Gelvins as endangered as the grizzly, connecting them at once to the symbols of nature already established and bringing the issues into focus at a close distance. McPhee resists total acceptance or condemnation of the Gelvins' attitudes and looks instead for a way to preserve the lives they, along with the river people, the other miners, and the townspeople, lead. His response to their mining constitutes the most direct call for pluralism in the entire book:

> Am I disgusted? Manifestly not. Not from here, from now, from this perspective. I am too warmly, too subjectively caught up in what the Gelvins are doing. In the ecomilitia, bust me to private. This mine is a cork on the sea. Meanwhile (and, possibly, more seriously), the relationship between this father and son is as attractive as anything I have seen in Alaska--both of them self-reliant beyond the usual reach of the term, the characteristic formed by this country. Whatever they are doing, whether it is mining or something else, they do for themselves what no one else is here to do for them. Their kind is more endangered every year. Balance that against the nick they are making in

> this land. Only an easygoing extremist would preserve every bit of the country. And extremists alone would exploit it all. Everyone has to think the matter through--choose a point of tolerance, however much the point might tend to one side. (430)

This characterization of the Gelvins as symbolic of Alaskan, or even American, self-reliance and individualism establishes them as equal in importance to the wilderness and to the politics and economy of the state. Further, it suggests that a pluralistic, even empathic, perspective leaves room for all the interests and diversity of the state. By definition, pluralism rules out extremism and exacts tolerance, often making possible the kind of compromise that springs from understanding and mutual respect.

Worth mentioning too is the ending of Book III, an anecdote about McPhee's encounter with "an immense young man" with a beard "about a foot deep" and "diamond blue" eyes who is preparing to strike out into the bush (416). While the man looks at McPhee's topographical maps, McPhee describes him as also representative of the Alaskan individual, amiable yet determined to live in his own way. The final remarks gracefully indicate the conclusion of McPhee's travels around Eagle and the beginning of the young man's journey:

> I asked him where he meant to go.
>
> "Down the river," he said. "I'll be living on the Yukon and getting my skills together."
>
> I wished him heart felt luck and felt in my heart he would need it. I said my name, and

> shook his hand, and he said his. He said, "My name is River Wind." (438)

The book closes one cycle and opens another unnarrated one that implies ongoing discovery as well as the irrepressible drive of such individuals as River Wind to live in the bush no matter what regulations attempt to restrain him. In his essay "Letting Subjects Grow: Literary Nonfiction from The New Yorker" Ronald Weber explains the poignancy of this conclusion:

> The ending is as carefully calculated as that of any novel. It has the effect, like the ending of "The Encircled River," of turning the reader back upon the account and recalling all the resolutely independent people McPhee has described, those for whom Alaska is the final place in which to act out a dream of a new life. River Wind's dream is as elusive as his name, a dream about which one can be of two minds, yet a dream, McPhee makes us feel, that we must honor and take seriously just as we honor and take seriously the last land in which it might be realized. (497)

River Wind, like the other individuals of the book, is a synecdoche for the myth of Alaska and the need for pluralism, as the ideology that can sustain the myth.

The people of Book III are presented as variations on the theme of Alaskan individualism; their portraits complicate and obscure the clearer symbolic associations of the earlier two books. This shift in perspective, especially in its empathy for many ways of life, leads the reader to accord all factions a respectable position and a voice in the conversation which will eventually define the future of the state.

This glance into the workings of McPhee's architecture in Coming into the Country suggests the nature of its symbolic act. Despite its three parts, the book works as a whole to reveal the need for accurate information accompanied by tolerance and understanding before any writer or audience can justly assert opinions about the future of Alaska on any issue whatsoever. As Robert Root suggests in his brief endorsement of McPhee's work, these qualities imply that good writing exhibits a full integration of form and idea, which is both aesthetically and ethically rewarding:

> McPhee's success demonstrates fully how much design grows out of understanding of the subject, how essential detail is to the development of ideas and narrative and how rewarding the process of writing can be for both writer and reader when the author is committed to exploring and understanding a topic. (78)

As a book shaped by fact, research, and care, Coming Into the Country transcends the realm of partisan politics and overt persuasion. Its actual rhetorical effect is to open a reader to a world view comprehensive and fair enough to see the merits of many attitudes. That is why McPhee brings his reader into the country again and again and presents him/her with the variety of opinions, lives, and human goals extant in that region. More than just a study recommending the value of study, the book schools a reader in a dialectical process of critical thinking that is skeptical of more assertive argumentative sequences,

proposing instead extensive synecdochic inquiry, which provides richly detailed and animate surveys of a many-faceted issue. McPhee's structure, unlike many of the opinions recorded in the book's pages, does not prescribe a solution to the problems facing Alaska; it prescribes a method by which answers may be found, answers that evenhandedly avoid even the most appealing and noble forms of extremism.

Chapter III

Dramatistic Argument in Coming Into the Country

In Chapter II I discussed how the structure of Coming Into the Country reveals the nature of its symbolic act, which is to move readers toward an understanding of Alaska by exposing them to a variety of perspectives. In this way the book encourages a reader to think dialectically about the decisions facing the state. Here I want to look more closely at how these perspectives are presented, the types of discourse used and the ways in which they are varied and juxtaposed to determine how McPhee manipulates this facet of his prose for the same rhetorical purpose that he selects an architectural structure. My contention is that the style he uses authenticates the multiple perspectives that are presented to a reader, providing that reader with a thorough and tangible enough view of them to constitute a dialectic--that is, a true weighing of reasonable attitudes, an earnest endeavor--rather than mere lip service to that aim.

Within his narrative frame, one of the major stylistic strategies that McPhee adopts toward this dialectic end is a recreation of moments, events, situations, and individuals by scene building (involving descriptive and narrative details as well as the reproduction of actual

dialogue). This technique has been popular for many contemporary nonfiction writers, no doubt because it enables them to go beyond the simplicities of objective reporting. In his dissertation chapter on McPhee, John Beard lists the author's salient techniques as a "scene-by-scene construction," a "full recording of dialogue," "an established point of view from inside the events," and "a careful recording of events, places, and people who surround the characters in a story" (82). Other critics have noticed these characteristic techniques as well. Robert Root terms them as "the accumulation of detail through experience" (78); reviewer Richard Todd states that McPhee "brings a reverence to observation." Root elaborates, "The title of his first book, A Sense of Where You Are, suggests an attribute of them all, an intense affection for the here and now" (114). And George Roundy characterizes McPhee's style with another term from the same book, likening it to Bill Bradley's approach to basketball; McPhee, he says, has a "multi-radial way of looking at things" ("Prose of McPhee" 115) in which he "almost never generalizes about experience; he presents it and lets it stand for itself" ("Prose of McPhee" 195).

But these summaries simplify the surface of McPhee's prose since they suggest that he merely records the variety of life that his senses perceive. They barely suggest the extensive use of secondary resources or the fact that he

often provides a context for his reified scenes by including historical, biographical, and factual material. Perhaps William Howarth best sums up McPhee's style when he compares Bill Bradley's style of playing basketball as described in A Sense of Where You Are to McPhee's own approach:

> McPhee does not venerate his heroes, he replicates them for our own judgment as fully as he can. His principal aim is to maintain an artist's distance and catholicity, to bring alive all the possibilities of a story, not merely a few of its stronger points. He liked Bill Bradley for the totality of his play: "He did all kinds of things he didn't have to do simply because they were dimensions of the game." (xxii-xxiii)

This summation, I think, is apt in several ways. First, it emphasizes McPhee's efforts to present people, their situations, environment, and actions as faithfully and fully as possible by dramatically recreating actual dialogue and the moments surrounding the dialogue. Further, it touches on the scope and pervasive attitude of McPhee's writing--"catholic," broad, all-inclusive. This designation refers not only to the amount of information and the number of perspectives he incorporates into his writing, but also to the variety of modes he uses to present what he has gathered. Further, the plenitude, generosity, and variety of his style are significant; these qualities convince the reader of McPhee's authority and fairness. It is clear that his topics are thoroughly researched and faithfully recounted. And never do we tire

of the constant parade of facts, details, explanations, scenes, and events; their presentation is made intriguing by the juxtaposition of a variety of modes (descriptions of individuals and settings, narratives of events, historical accounts, brief biographies, catalogues of items, surveys of opinions, reports of facts, explanations of processes, and rare moments of contemplation and assessment) which mirrors a juxtaposition of perspectives.

An important consideration regarding McPhee's typical style is that it too, like the structure, has an impact that supports the rhetoric of pluralism. Simply put, the variegated surface of McPhee's prose itself becomes a subtle, but effective method of argument, offering us in one passage significant events recreated in novelistic detail and, in the next, complementary or contradictory information in the form of a catalogue, survey or chronicle. This is why it is relatively easy to lift "set pieces" from McPhee's books that are interesting in and of themselves and that when taken alone can skew one's perception of McPhee's general purpose. An important feature of McPhee's mode of progression is that it is not discursive, dependent in any large part on logical arguments made by assertion and support. Typically, information is offered without commentary, and the transitions, though adequate to keep a reader on track, do not privilege a single perspective. Instead, McPhee's

style is based on synecdoche; a reader is provided representative anecdotes and an array of information and appears to have the job of gathering impressions and making judgments.

Since Kenneth Burke's analytical method, dramatism, is also based on synecdoche, it will be useful for us to consider the mechanism of McPhee's rhetoric from a dramatistic perspective. Burke's dramatism is a methodology derived from drama, designating a perspective that treats each event or text as a drama which has an inherent symbolic effect on an audience or reader. Burke explains his etymology in the introduction to A Grammar of Motives, the work that introduces and develops this methodology:

> the titular word for our own method is "dramatism," since it invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that, being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and thought primarily as modes of action. (xxii)

The method itself involves reflecting on the topic at hand in a particular fashion: designating and speculating about the interdependence of the basic components of the act. These components are collectively named the pentad (xvi). Burke glosses them thus:

> In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the act (names what took place in thought or deed), and another that names the scene (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also you must indicate what person or kind of person (agent)

> performed the act, what means he used (agency), and the purpose. (xv, Burke's italics)

Burke also considered attitude as an important term, saying it "has the quality of 'incipient action'" (480); he later wished he had included it in his pentad ("Dramatism and Development" 23 and Winterowd, "Dramatism," 582).

The application of the dramatistic method to a particular text requires that one not only identify the various elements of the pentad, but that one combine them into pairs, labeled "ratios" by Burke (Grammar, 3-20, and "Questions and Answers," 332), and consider how one element influences or colors the nature of the other. Burke defines a ratio as "a formula indicating a transition from one term to another":

> Thus, a mode of thought in keeping with the scene-agent ratio would situate in the scene certain potentialities that were said to be actualized in the agent. And conversely, the agent-scene ratio would situate in the agent potentialities actualized in the scene. And so with the other ratios. (262)

For instance, in examining a political speech one would need to consider how the politician was affected by the time and place in which he presented it. Perhaps the speaker would stress certain beliefs before a particular audience or perhaps he would be more tempted to attack his opponent as the election date neared. These considerations would arise from an analysis of the scene-agent ratio. In short, dramatism enables the analysis of an act by

encouraging the study of the interrelation of its components.

Burke's dramatism also posits that a text will usually feature one term and that the featuring of this term reveals the rhetor's philosophical motive for the act (Grammar, 127). For example, if an individual blames his fate on circumstances beyond his control, then he features scene above other terms. Consequently, the motive for his speech may be said to be materialism, which frees him of some of the responsibility for his actions since, from this vantage, all action is motion governed by physical laws. Burke therefore suggests a system by which one may identify the "generating principle" (Grammar, 127) of a rhetor and, in turn, his text. In summary, he links the following philosophies with his dramatistic terms:

> For the featuring of scene, the corresponding philosophic terminology is materialism.
> For the featuring of agent, the corresponding terminology is idealism.
> For the featuring of agency, the corresponding terminology is pragmatism.
> For the featuring of purpose, the corresponding terminology is mysticism.
> For the featuring of act, the corresponding terminology is realism. (Grammar, 128, his italics)

As a critical approach, then, dramatism enables one to view a text as representative of the rhetor or of a situation, then determine the weighting of the terms within that context, and finally speculate about the philosophic grounding of both the text and rhetor.

From a broader perspective, since issues engage more than one rhetor, dramatism is synonymous with dialectic (Grammar, 402); it identifies and speculates about the "terministic screens" (the influences of terminology on one's world view) which language forces upon us, encouraging one eventually to account for the effects of different terministic screens on one's understanding of an issue. Burke has identified two routes that this aspect of language can lead us down. One is tragic:

> There is a gloomy route, of this sort: If action is to be our key term, then drama; for drama is the cumulative form of action . . . . But if drama, then conflict. And if conflict, then victimage. Dramatism is always on the edge of this vexing problem, that comes to a culmination in tragedy, the song of the scapegoat. (Symbolic Action, 54-55, his italics)

Fortunately, the "happy route, along the lines of Platonic dialectic" (Symbolic Action, 58) is the second option. Its workings can be surmised from a stanza from Burke's "Dialectician's Hymn" in which the devotee addresses Logos:

> May we compete with one another,
> To speak for Thy Creation with more justice--
> Cooperating in this competition
> Until our naming
> Gives voice correctly,
> And how things are
> And how we say things are
> Are one. (Symbolic Action, 56)

Or, rather, if language, then drama; if drama, then conflict. If conflict, then dialectic; if dialectic, then pluralism; if pluralism, then a search for transcendent

terms. Wayne Booth glosses this part of Burke's theory as well:

> We [Burkean critics] will build a dialectic that leads from term to term and ends in alternative visions of possible transcendent terms for order, for beauty, for right action, for God--whatever. ("Ways of Knowing," 19, his italics).

Taking all this together--text as synecdoche, dramatistic terminology, philosophic motivation or grounding, and the tendency toward dialectic--Burke's theory has a great range of applications, from helping one to recognize the terministic screens of texts to proposing a general solution to human conflict (as he dedicates his efforts in A Grammar of Motives towards "the purification of war").

Like McPhee's circular narrative, Burke's method continually circles back to a consciousness of the entirety of the act, to the act as symbol, to the act as a whole that means something because of the way the components have influenced and defined each other. As a system of looking for motives, a dramatistic analysis preserves the unity of a particular act while it provides an investigation into its complexity. William H. Reuckert explains that "[a] dramatistic analysis calls for the placing of the act according to its primary purpose and an examination of it in the light of what is known about that particular category" (160). Because a dramatistic analysis focuses on the holistic nature of the act, the act itself is accorded the status of a symbol, or synecdoche, for something larger

than itself. The act ultimately informs its context, teaching the reader, audience, or observer something from the interior view, one which is admittedly limited in scope but richer in empathic appeal than the more logical and detached discursive form of argument. Because of a symbol's ability to reach beyond itself and inform other acts or attitudes (perhaps those of a reader), it can be said to have a rhetorical effect, becoming a method of argument.

When we begin to look at synecdoche as a method of argument, in some ways we are emphasizing a particular portion of Burke's system, that of the potential of a terministic screen to function persuasively. In effect, when we discuss a writer's style (or method of argument) as dramatistic, we are using Burke's system to describe a type of prose that is characterized by dramatic passages and presence (Anderson, "Dramatism" 38, and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 115ff). This style and method of persuasion have been discussed most notably by W. Ross Winterowd in his article "Dramatism in Themes and Poems" and his recent book The Rhetoric of the "Other" Literature and by Chris Anderson in "Dramatism and Deliberation."[1] In

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[1]While Anderson terms this style "dramatistic deliberation" and Winterowd uses the term "appositional" in his article and "presentational" in his book, both authors

(Footnote Continued)

short, the dramatic passages in nonfiction prose constitute representative anecdotes that influence readers by their perspectives. Burke explains this property of the representative anecdote best in Language as Symbolic Action:

> The dramatistic view of language, in terms of "symbolic action," is exercised about the necessarily suasive nature of even the most unemotional scientific nomenclatures. And we shall proceed along these lines; thus:
>
> Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must also function as a deflection of reality. (45, his italics)

We can see how this concept is attractive to the rhetorical critics of nonfiction prose: it establishes the notion of synecdoche, significant and rhetorical in itself because of the way an example particularizes an act, simultaneously rendering it intriguing and entertaining for a reader, and, most important, rhetorical because this trope (as all language) is by nature an interpretation, the characteristics of which are revealed by its scope, terminology, tone and, of course, the interplay of dramatistic ratios.

Well then, just how does this dramatistic method of argument work? How is it different in substance, intent,

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(Footnote Continued)
mean essentially the same thing. Some of the distinctions between my use of Burke's ideas and theirs are discussed in the conclusion of this chapter.

tone, and effect from the more widely recognized discursive argument in prose? Discursive argument works by way of presenting its view through assertion and support, leading toward a conclusion or general statement.[2] Indeed, part of the support for any assertion may be an anecdote or example, related in great detail, but the status of that anecdote is subordinate to the larger argument; it is a part of the support and fits in to illustrate another part. A dramatistic method of argument, on the other hand, is one which brings moments, scenes, contexts, situations to life in the same way that drama does. Its appeal to a reader is not through the rational construction of an argument with assertions reasons or convincing testimony, but through the personal involvement that fiction, film, theatre, and story-telling provide. A reader is coaxed to deliberate a situation or issue from inside the perspective of one directly involved. The author attempts to enable the reader to experience perceptions, emotions, attitudes, and responses comparable to a participant's by involving him or her as thoroughly as possible in the people of the

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[2]I have adapted the term "discursive argument" from Susanne K. Langer's terms "discursiveness" and "discursive form," which she juxtaposes with the notion of a presentational form of expression often found in art. A useful discussion of these terms appears in Chapter IV, "Discursive and Presentational Forms" (79-102), in her book Philosophy in a New Key.

situation. In a way, it can be thought of as the ethical and pathetic appeals of Aristotelian rhetoric expanded to constitute the whole discourse. William Zeiger in his article "The Personal Essay and Egalitarian Rhetoric" makes this point:

> The chief difference between rational and narrative forms [which are analogous to dramatistic argument], I think, is that the former relies more on logos and the latter more on ethos and pathos.

Of course, as often is the case, once a reader participates in a story, he or she is pulled empathically into the perspective of the narrator. The rhetorical mechanism here is identification, another of Burke's key theoretical concepts, which will be treated in the next chapter.

To return to McPhee's rhetorical strategy, let us focus initially on his text as a collection of synecdoches, with each placing the reader within the Alaskan scene, bringing him or her vicariously into the country through the reconstruction of moments, conversations, and events. Most often these reified scenes are part of the narrative line of the book in which they appear; consequently, they are scenes in which McPhee himself appears as a character, on-looker, reporter, and/or interviewer. Let us reserve those in which his presence as a character is emphasized for the subsequent discussion of identification and consider here the passages where McPhee, although clearly present, focuses on the scene or his companions and prompts

them to reveal their personalities, mannerisms, and thoughts to the reader.

A good example of a reified scene appears early in Book III when he devotes a five-page passage to the routine events of a morning spent in the Eagle post office on a mail delivery day. A profile of John Borg, postman, mayor, and "central figure of the town" (193) precedes this passage and includes a description of the building:

> The post office is a small cabin about a hundred yards from the riverbank at an intersection of unpaved streets--the heart of town. Borg owns the building and rents it to the United States. He arrives there by eight in the morning, after checking the height of the river (when it is liquid). (193)

This paragraph and the next continue to show Borg performing his many duties, such as calling in weather statistics to the Weather Service in Anchorage. Along the way McPhee also explains how Eagle's communications with the outside world are limited to single-side-band radio transmissions to Anchorage or Fairbanks and mail plane deliveries "two, three, occasionally four times a week" (194), the frequency of which depends on weather. Then, with another paragraph break, the direction of the passage shifts slightly into an account of a typical morning at the post office:

> The foyer stirs. The post office has a miniature lobby, a loitering center, with a small grid of combination boxes, public notices, and a wicketless window framing Borg himself. Camouflage hat. Faded plaid shirt. "What can I do for you?" (194-95)

The use of present tense, a simple declarative sentence, and salient details, twice offered in fragment form, bring a reader into the room, as if he or she had just entered and been addressed. These stylistic features create a sense of actuality, immediacy. McPhee has not leisurely composed long embedded sentences from a distant remove; instead, he lists essential information in present tense. As both he and his reader look on, curious, mail-seeking townspeople parade into the office. For each individual, a name, brief physical description, and statement of purpose are given, about the level of detail one would perceive from a chance encounter. Distinctive attributes and telling remarks are recorded:

> Lilly Allen (in her twenties) has a cartful of textbooks to ship back to the University of Nebraska. High school in Eagle is by correspondence, and is controlled by filing cabinets in Lincoln. The teachers are in Nebraska. Lilly is the resident supervisor.
>
> Jim Dungan comes in, slowly, hands Borg a letter, and makes no move to go. He leans forward on his crutches and draws on his pipe. Dungan has more time even than his fellow-townsmen do this year, as a result of an accident. He says, often, "I'll be off these crutches soon. I won't be wearing them all my life, that's for sure." There are lead weights on the crutches today. Borg asks about them, and Dungan says they are divers' weights, and that when his leg gets better he will slip them into pockets in his wet-suit when he dives for gold. On each crutch, the weights total fifty pounds. They are not to create a vanity of muscles but to build his stamina, to keep him in condition.
>
> "It's easy to get out of condition," Borg remarks. "All you have to do is nothing."
>
> (195)

As minutes and paragraphs proceed, other townspeople wander in and out with letters and questions for Borg. The range of personalities, attitudes, and philosophies is illustrated as McPhee classifies members of Eagle's Bible Chapter far to the right of the liberal, somewhat lawless river people, bridged by a "middle span of the society . . . drifters, merchants, visionaries, fugitives, miners, suburbanites, and practitioners of early retirement" (198). Finally, in the midst of a hailstorm, the mail plane arrives, delivers mail as well as a passenger or two, and departs. Next, "People throng the post office like seagulls around a piling, like trout at the mouth of a brook" (199), and the eventfulness of a mail day becomes evident:

> On days when the mail plane does not come, the human atmosphere is notably calmer than it is now. With a sheet of plywood against his postal window, Borg blocks himself away while he and his wife, whose head tops out at his shoulder blades, do the sorting. As letters go into boxes the doors open and slap shut. The babble declines. Many stand and read without dispersing to their cabins. (199)

This passage and the way it is sketched imply several important characteristics of the citizenry and way of life in small town Alaska. Guided by McPhee's narrative, a reader observes the eclecticism of the townspeople as well as their common need for companionship, cooperation, and patience in Eagle, along with at least occasional connection to the world beyond. The post office is a

meeting place for the town and a contact point with Anchorage and Fairbanks. Both the climate and isolation of the town are made apparent by the moment-by-moment account that is not organized around assertions about life in Eagle, but structured according to the chronology of actual events. A reader watches as Borg hears the roar of the mail plane above the hailstones' din, loads a van and meets the pilot at the airstrip, hands Lilly Allen a long-awaited mail order dulcimer, and interprets obscure legal prose for Sara Beiderman. These encounters establish the rhythms of life in a bush community. Further, despite the memorable characterizations of several individuals, scene dominates the passage since it is responsible for the agents' isolation, routine, and desire for association. This passage, as well as others like it throughout the text, features scene and therefore accentuates the ways in which the bush community must adapt and respond to the harsh climate and to Eagle's remoteness. Here a reader sees just how Alaskan life differs substantially from life in the lower forty-eight (without doubt one of the significant points made repeatedly by Alaskans quoted throughout the book), and in turn this understanding of scene acquired through synecdoche goes a long way to explain the inhabitants.

This type of recreated scene occurs several other times. In Book II similar reconstructions of the daily

routine at the Talkeetna Roadhouse (114-15), of the beginning of the Capital Site Selection Committee's journey in the Twin Otter bypassing Mt. McKinley (101-102), and of a workshop hearing about the capital relocation (136-39) appear; Book III includes an account of an Eagle town council meeting (373-75), the river people's vernal equinox celebration (257-62), and the Indians' habit of visiting each other's cabins (3383-84). In contrast, the recreated scenes of Book I always include McPhee as a character, no doubt partly because that book is largely an account of a river trip with a group of five others; McPhee's presence cannot be effaced from the tale of a small expedition, as he does in his account of bigger events. Nonetheless, for the most part the purpose of this type of passage is to place a reader in Alaska, thus emphasizing its uniqueness, the harshness of the climate, the expansive territory, the particular cultural and political factions, and the boom-dependent history of the state. Such scene-oriented synecdoches imply a degree of relevance for a materialistic philosophy, although they are balanced throughout by profiles that reveal Alaskans' idealism.

Another kind of reconstructed scene depends on McPhee's presence as an interviewer or participant, and is a very common strategy for illustrating Alaskans' diverse occupations, values, and perspectives on current issues. These brief profiles also function to explain what kinds of

people can flourish in such an extreme and unyielding climate and why they have chosen the bush, an Indian village, a small town, or an Alaskan city as their home. In these situations McPhee's presence and questions serve as catalyst for others' actions and remarks, in the form of more or less formal interviews. A reader's attention is not directed to McPhee's personality or thoughts although his presence is essential to the incident. This kind of recreated scene enables one to see most clearly the influence of McPhee's experience as a celebrity profile writer for Time (Roundy "Prose of McPhee" 9-10).

Although scenes recreated for the purpose of exposing character appear throughout Coming Into the Country, the most self-contained ones, and consequently the easiest to examine, occur in Book III since McPhee organizes this part episodically. A memorable section narrates a day spent with Dick Cook and Donna Kneeland at their "vacation" shelter located ten miles from their cabin. The scene serves as one of several synecdoches for the river people's sensibility. This particular account appears roughly eighty pages after the initial introduction to and descriptions of the couple. In addition, it follows two surveys of relevant opinions that townspeople have regarding Cook and Kneeland specifically (205-206) and river people in general (262-65). This latter survey, which immediately precedes the vacation account, summarizes

attitudes towards river people ranging from "awe and envy, admiration [and] contempt [to] fear" (262) and sets Cook up as representative of the pioneering spirit inherited from the region's earliest gold miners. The survey ends without authorial comment, yet McPhee inserts a quotation from a 1905 government bulletin to establish this connection:

> Over a cup of coffee, prepared in an old baking powder can, one is made to understand the important part these [pioneer miners] have played in the development of this portion of our possessions and their reasons for having learned to call it home . . . men who have labored hard in a quiet way to satisfy the craving for individual independence and have gained through hardship something that is worthwhile even if their hopes are not yet realized. (264-65)

Via a record of a lunchtime conversation and an account of a modestly successful afternoon spent hunting, the subsequent section establishes the specifics of Cook and Kneeland's existence and attitudes, commenting implicitly on the townspeople's mixed reviews and on the historical ideal. It opens <u>in medias res</u>:

> Dick Cook, in his generosity, lifts from his plate a small gob of muskrat fat and gives it to me. The fat is savory, a delicacy. The lean of the "rat" could be taken for dark, strong chicken.
>
> He is saying, "There's a pride to doing something other people can't do. My life style is what so many people dream about. What they don't dream is that it took six or eight years of hard work to get it. A lot of these people who keep coming into the country don't belong here. They have fallen in love with a calendar photo and they want to live under a beautiful mountain. When they arrive, the reality doesn't match the dream. It's too much for them. They don't want to work hard enough; they don't want to spread out--to go far enough up the streams. This is

> relatively poor trapping country. You need a twenty-mile radius. But they won't move away from the Yukon. My cabin is the farthest off the river. Have another cup of tea."
>
> Tea strong enough to blacken tin. Hanging over the campfire is a No. 10 can, coated with carbon from the fire, and even blacker within, its bottom a swamp of leaves. (265)

The echoes of the government bulletin's theme of hard work and the motif of coffee (or tea) prepared in a primitive manner link the romantic pioneer archetype to the contemporary phenomenon of young people dropping out of mainstream society and homesteading in the Alaskan interior. To some extent this passage testifies to the persistence of the pioneer's dream because it confirms the existence of individuals like Cook and Kneeland who live it. The section also undercuts the heroic proportions of these contemporary adventurers by establishing their personalities and imperfections. For instance, Cook's lectures reveal both positive and negative qualities; he is truly knowledgeable, self-assured, and thoroughly adjusted to bush subsistence, but he is also domineering, at times overbearing, moody, and full of unsolicited advice and censure. He talks at length, sketching out a new-comer's necessities and process for "digging in," while Kneeland serves tea and tends the fire. But as the afternoon and synecdoche continue, his ego is checked by the forces, perhaps, of "Momma," or what he names the religious power of nature, during his unsuccessful attempts to shoot a

loon. As an agent, Cook is certainly impressive; still he is continually challenged by the scene.

As Cook stalks alone, McPhee and Kneeland watch for game at the edge of a lake; where she is prompted to speak her mind:

> We whisper through the time. At length more shots ring out, down the lake. It is the sound of Cook, missing. . . . "You can be active in a job in town, but it doesn't seem as important," Donna whispers. "Here the important thing is--well, getting your meat." (269)

Kneeland then recounts a story about a near crash when she worked as a stewardess for Reeve Aleutian, and ends it by explaining that "That is the only time in my life I have ever . . . taken a drink to relax" (270), a remark which suggests that she finds the challenges and uncertainties of life in the wilderness easier to cope with than those of civilization. These hazards become apparent when Cook returns empty-handed and edgy, pointing out himself the risks of depending on one's ability as a hunter:

> He says, "One trouble with this type of life is you can go hungry if you screw up." This is true in two ways, for cartridges cost a few cents a piece and shotgun shells a quarter. In effect, he has been firing grocery money into the lake. We return to the sled dogs and lean-to, but soon Cook, frustrated, says, "If we don't get something, we're not going to eat," and cursing Momma, he takes off once more, for a final walking circuit of the shore. (270)

McPhee's commentary bridging the quotations of this moment function to explain Cook's mood. Although interpretative, they are not judgmental, being clearly meant to inform a

reader of the subtext of the moment. This profile of Cook and Kneeland emphasizes throughout how their determination as agents overshadows (at least for the moment) the significance of the scene, which is unpredictable and remote wilderness.

As Kneeland mends a pair of Cook's trousers, she and McPhee continue to discuss differences between Alaskan and other wilderness areas; McPhee remarks that he believes Alaska to be both a more extensive and complete wilderness, different in kind and magnitude from other places. Then he sketches the scene while he patiently waits for Kneeland's opinions:

> For a time, the only sound is the fire. The dogs are asleep. There's no wind. The forest is as quiet as it was, a month before, under snow. Donna tightens the thread. She says, finally, "I know what you mean. When I first came out here, I felt the same way. I saw what it was like and I thought, I'll never survive."
>
> What would she do in a medical emergency, like a simple case of appendicitis?
>
> "I hope this doesn't sound corny," she answers, "but things are living and dying out here all the time. If I got appendicitis, I would just die." (271)

Out of context, and without an authentic sense of her commitment to a subsistence life, these remarks would indeed seem corny, or maybe disingenous; but within the reconstructed scene, they convince one of the sincerity of her choice to live in the bush. It is clear that she prefers the risks of the wilderness to those found in society. Also, her desire to live life simply becomes

manifest. It seems doubtful that McPhee could have achieved a comparable effect by recounting this scene either in a more cursory fashion or by way of a brief summary of events, as might occur in a text that employed this event as part of a discursive argument for the need to maintain at least part of Alaska as an escape hatch from civilization, a role it and other frontiers have traditionally played. This passage submerges a reader in a situation and approach to life that may not be adequately accounted for through logic.

The day closes as Cook returns with a muskrat, which is skinned and cooked; finally, all three roll out their sleeping bags and the ever-humble McPhee apologizes as he reaches for his pillow. Cook's response again echoes the balance between necessity and choice that he and Kneeland have tried to establish:

> "Don't apologize," says Cook, getting up on one elbow to admire the pillow. "As Nessmuk [a nineteenth-century nature writer] said, we're not out here to rough it. We're here to smooth it. Things are rough enough in town." (272)

This remark perfectly closes the day and the discussion of the comparative difficulty of subsistence living. Cook and Kneeland's perspective is that their lives require hard physical work and knowledge of many basic skills, but that for them these requirements are easier to meet, as well as more satisfying, than those of the twentieth-century American society. It is a perspective evidently informed

by temperament and personality, one that others may not share, but one that can be empathized with through the vehicle of McPhee's dramatistic style.

This passage demonstrates McPhee's interest in revealing individual perspectives. He accompanies Cook and Kneeland, narrates their actions, provides scenic details, and then draws them out with questions and comments, asked informally at appropriate moments. His text becomes a reconstruction of his subjects' actions, thoughts, and circumstances, thereby building a reader's understanding of their lives. This tack, with its extensive use of quotation, largely abrogates any adjectives and summaries of personalities that might betray McPhee's own value judgments; he makes an authorial interpretation unnecessary since he provides individuals the fairest forum possible by letting them speak for themselves in their own environment. Of course, McPhee selects and arranges their words, and this interference probably accounts for the thematic unity of these passages. For example, it is likely that McPhee selected the remarks he needed to focus on the issue of the difficulty and romance of life in the bush. But even so, the detail, dialogue, and lack of assertions in his prose enable him to appear faithful to his subjects. He gives his reader a synecdoche of subsistence life in the wilderness; this synecdoche constitutes one spoke of a large and complex wheel of dramatistic dialectic.

Even though this scene is not overtly persuasive, it has a cumulative rhetorical effect by allowing a reader to get to know Cook and Kneeland, and however much we may find that we differ from them temperamentally or philosophically, however much we are aggravated by Cook's occasional pomposity and Kneeland's submissiveness, or however much we are nonplused by their subsistence lives, we can understand why their choices have suited them and why they have made them. This passage also fosters in a reader the attitude that individual preferences and perspectives are best enjoyed and accepted as pertinent, at least for their believers, regardless of how little they might appeal to someone else. In addition, this passage substantiates the threatened ideal for which the river people strive, which is comprised of their desires for escape from the pressures of society, for independence, and for self-sufficiency. As one reads, one recognizes that Cook and Kneeland have a life that has been denied to others since the curtailment of the Homestead Act in March 1974 (169). A reader recalls Lilly Allen and Brad Snow, who were evicted from their cabin by a Bureau of Land Management official, along with Stanley Gelvin, who must resign himself to living on his parents' compound rather than building a place of his own in the woods. The life exemplified here then becomes one that is threatened by the current and proposed development of the state. It is a

synecdoche for the aspirations of a sector of society and a vivid presentation of what may already have been lost. In actuality the pioneering spirit was made defunct by the latest of the state's booms--the discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay in 1968 (83-85, 312), since that was the event that ultimately led to the point of stasis which functions as the general scene for the book, or rather the present situation in which almost all sectors of Alaskan society are having to change their traditional ways of life or recognize that they will have to comply with laws and compromise with each other. This vacation passage communicates the passion for personal freedom that is characteristic of river people, and to a certain extent of all Alaskans, including miners, Indians, politicians, and developers, and it does so in such as way as to impress upon the reader the significance of this value in a way that discursive argument cannot. As a synecdoche, it furnishes the reader with more than abstractions about Alaskans' mindset, and is developed so that it has much greater impact than a supporting example. The reconstructed scene comprises the whole of the passage; through it one learns about individuals and the views they hold. Generalizing becomes the reader's work as he or she weighs the significance of each anecdote and pieces it together with others that may complement or challenge its version of reality.

A good number of these synecdochic profiles are scattered throughout the text. In Book I these are briefer than in the rest of the text, again because the narrative of the journey predominates. All the same, there are memorable sketches of John Kaufmann (20,87-91), Bob Fedeler (10), Pat Pourchot (23-24,91-92), Jack Hession (80-81), and Robert Atwood (85-86). Atwood's profile is the most autonomous since it interrupts the narrative to provide a pro-development opinion as a counter-statement to the conservation stance of the others. It consists mostly of a long quotation of Atwood's remarks made during a lunch with McPhee in Anchorage and is fleshed out with another paragraph of physical description in the next book (132-33).

More elaborate examples appear in the other two books. The most significant of these are used to present representative views from the various sectors of Alaskan society. Book II includes profiles of Frank Harris, the Anchorage dry cleaner and state senator who sponsored the successful bill for the capital move (146-48); Bill Ray, a state senator who wants to keep the capital in Juneau and has appropriated state funds for a new governmental office building and a highway in order to increase the state's investment in the city (157-62); John Leifer, a real estate salesman who attempts to interest prospective buyers by flying them above the Susitna Valley to show them wildlife

and, in McPhee's instance, "buzzes" a black bear (167-68); and Willie Hensley, the chairman of the Capital Site Selection Committee (123-26,148-53). Each of the profiles provides a reader with an understanding of the motivation behind the individuals' various stances on the capital move, rendering what initially seems like a simple issue of placing the capital near the majority of the population into one that would radically affect the future of Juneau, Anchorage, and Fairbanks; the financial solvency of the state; and the lives of the homesteaders in the Susitna Valley.

Similarly, the profiles of Book III represent significant factions living in and around Eagle and Central, Alaska. Townspeople such as John Borg (192-94), Viola Goggans (206-208), Sarge Waller (212-215), Jack Boone (336-42), Jim and Elva Scott (368-73,375-77), and Horace Beiderman (397-400) are sketched in situ and provide insight into some of the clashes between the fundamentalist Christians, anti-communist conservatives, liberals who drink liquor, moderates, and Indians who inhabit the village. Another set of profiles illustrates the miners' way of life and their attitudes towards stricter enforcement of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. These include profiles of Joe Vogler, "the cartoon Alaskan, self-drawn" (314-22), Fred Wilkinson and hydraulic miner Henry Speaker (322-34), retired miner Earl Stout (334-35),

and the Gelvin family, who are not only miners, but trappers, pipeline workers, and long-time Alaskan citizens as well (290-314,418-24). Native American interests and concerns are demonstrated in the profiles of the Eagle Village Indian Chief Michael John David (377-82,388-93), his father Harry David (384-88), and of the so-called land-claim bridegroom Mike Potts, who is white and married to a native American, Adeline Juneby (400-404,418-24). As mentioned earlier, the river people's perspective is represented in the profiles of Cook and Kneeland (see also 404-17).

All of these profiles not only inform a reader about the citizens of Alaska, but impress one as well with the strength of the individuals' convictions to their chosen way of life. No doubt one reason that Alaskans are so strong-minded is that many of them came to the state because it could afford them the opportunity to fulfill their dreams. For the most, part white Alaskans came because they were unhappy elsewhere, or did not fit in, and once they arrived, they tenaciously held on to their rights to trap, hunt, fish, mine, and build wherever and however they want. Their dedication, as portrayed in these profiles, reveals them to be individuals who are motivated by their own visions of their lives.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the outlandish claims and plans of Joe Vogler, a miner and sometime politician

who is incensed by the federal control of state land, the enforcement of pollution regulations for miners who increase turbidity in streams below their claims and endanger fish breeding cycles, and the federal government's plans to designate some of its land as federal parks. He advocates Alaska's secession from the Union:

> "When the bureaucrats come after me," he went on, "I suggest they wear red coats. They make better targets. In the federal government are the biggest liars in the United States, and I hate them with a passion. They think they own this country. There comes a time when people will choose to die with honor rather than live with dishonor. Our goal is ultimate independence by peaceful means under a minimal government fully responsive to the people. I hope we don't have to take human life, but if they go tramping on our property rights, look out, we're ready to die." (317)

Vogler believes deeply in his right to do as he chooses and asserts that he is prepared to defend this right.

If anything can be said to be typical of Alaskans, and of the views expressed in the profiles, it is this demand for the right to self-determination. The Gelvins display a similar attitude when they complain about being exploited and misunderstood by the rest of the country. Here are their reactions to a conservation article in a magazine:

> "People in the Lower Forty-eight do not understand Alaska" [says Ginny Gelvin].
>
> "They have everything wrong," Ed inserts. "They think it's all ice and snow and igloos here."
>
> Ginny continues: "They wonder how Alaskans get their mail, and what they do in winter. They can't believe anything can grow here. They're amazed we can't buy any land. They think Indians and Eskimos. They know nothing about Alaska, and

> yet they've been manipulating us for years. We thought statehood would put an end to that." (309)

Even Jim Scott, a retired forester for the Bureau of Land Management, now describes the Bureau as having "reverted to being a national grab bag surrounded by people in sharkskin suits" (371). And the Indians' reaction to the current situation also reveals their concern about the loss of their freedom to follow the animals they hunt, since the generous Native Claims Settlement Act requires that each tribe select its property and live according to white man's notions of the private ownership of land. The Indians' reaction is explained by Michael John David:

> "The government wants to make a park down the river," Michael says. "Some of the best hunting grounds are down that way. It puts our native-land selections in a tight squeeze. I don't care very much for parks. I like to go into the lands and check them out, not be told what to do. But there is another side. If the government does not keep the land someone will take over. I am against development in this country. Without the pipeline--without the Native Claims Act--I'd feel freer. The Alaskan population is bigger now, because of the pipeline. I don't like a lot of people. I like the lands. If the land-claim settlement did not exist, you could go anywhere and build a cabin. If we strike oil in this country, we'll all be very rich, because it's on our land. But I don't want to see that. With a lot of money, people get into trouble. Where money is, more people will come. There will be a new pipeline, through here. I don't think I want to be rich." (389-90)

These statements apppear within the profiles and voice --from an interior, personal, empathic view--some of the complaints Alaskans have about the effects of the

development of the state. Consequently, the profiles themselves feature the agents, the various people of the state. This featuring of agents, as opposed to scene in the more objective reconstructed scenes, on the one hand balances out the materialism of the text, the interest in Alaska as a unique setting with certain geographic and climactic characteristics to which people must adapt, with the idealism of the citizens who have adjusted to the state and who are as powerful a force in determining its future as the oil reserves. In short, the profiles prevent one from believing that the state's challenges are simply the result of either Alaska's size, climate, or resources or of the pressures from the other states, as a result of the demand for oil, Americans' guilt about the previous treatment of native Americans, or the Lower Forty-eight's interest in the environment. The profiles empower Alaskans as important agents, capable of influencing the scene.

On the other hand, McPhee's use of what Burke would call a scene-agent (or agent-scene) ratio is thoroughly plural, never allowing one group's ideal to remain on center stage for more than a section of the text. This aspect of McPhee's synecdochic technique underlines the fact that each profile posits a significant and in some ways appealing point of view, absorbing the reader and gaining his acceptance because of its richness. But no matter how attractive the individuals or their dreams may

be, the reader also recognizes that these individual perspectives are limited, usually not accounting for the complexity of the issue or the just needs and concerns of all factions. One recognizes that to agree fully with any one perspective means discounting another, which cannot easily be dismissed as unimportant. The conflict between the views is just as undeniable as their individual attractiveness. Consequently, the dialectic process begins in the reader's mind.

Dialectical thinking is encouraged by another stylistic strategy as well: the shifting and juxtaposition of discourse modes. It is awkward to speak of this strategy as a method of argument since it is difficult to say at what point in the text a reader might, if ever, become aware of McPhee's potpourri of forms and whether that reader will apprehend its effect as leading one along the comic route of dramatistic dialectic. Although the point of this technique--pluralism--cannot be located temporally in the book, nonetheless it is suggested continually, made manifest in McPhee's act of constructing a text that exists as a multiplex sampler of ways to approach an issue. The mechanism of this kind of persuasion is analogous to the way the beat of an overheard song will cause one to walk in step, the way the reader of a poem responds physiologically to its meter, or the way a blue dress will make its wearer's green eyes look blue.

There is a very natural and involuntary sympathy aroused on the reader's part: if McPhee is willing to entertain diverse perspectives in assorted modes (with, as always, a remarkable skill in weaving them together), then the reader, with a multiplicity of information, attitudes, and forms before her, will accept them, and because it is simple enough to do, balance and weigh them against each other. Reviewer George Woodcock characterizes the effect of the text's departures by explaining it as creating a spatial arrangement in a reader's memory:

> McPhee creates his effects by a series of disconnected narratives, which we read in succession but which in memory arrange themselves spatially in a kind of wide-screen vision of Alaska outside the towns.

Perhaps all that is consciously necessary on the reader's part is the patience to perceive them all before reaching for conclusions.

This technique is apparent throughout Coming Into the Country as McPhee glides in and out of his narrative frames in each book. At first glance one might be tempted to label these lapses from the narrative as digressions, but that term, with the pejorative connotation of irrelevance, is not accurate. First of all, the departures from the narrative line are a common feature of McPhee's approach; further, they are always relevant to the narrative, for they supply related information, often from different perspectives such as the distance of history, an opposing

view, or factual information relevant to emotional preferences. George Roundy also notices this feature in McPhee and uses the terminology of Burke's Counter-Statement to account for it:

> Typically McPhee will structure a piece by playing a prior syllogistic progression (usually chronology) against syllogistic progressions and repetitive forms of his own. ("Prose of McPhee" 140)

Roundy, however, never posits that this technique is rhetorical in effect; he is most interested in explaining how Burke's "psychology of information" and "psychology of form" apply to McPhee's prose simultaneously, explaining that

> . . . because the reader is led to transcend his interest in the mere facts of McPhee's story by virtue of their place in the formal play, he is open to the formal pleasure of which Burke speaks. ("Prose of McPhee" 142; see Burke's Counter-Statement 144-46)

He does not consider how these primarily aesthetic Counter-Statement ideas are transformed in Burke's later works into ones which emphasize a rhetorical motive.

One conspicuous manifestation of this technique occurs when McPhee alternates in brief passages back and forth from the narrative to quoted passages from another text, juxtaposing his own record of experiences with another's. A good example appears in Book I during McPhee's account of his, Bob Fedeler's, and Jack Hession's first encounter with a grizzly. Interspersed with the story are three paragraph-length passages quoted from Grizzly Country by

Andy Russell, a professional hunter turned photographer. These passages constitute a part of the dialectic about the habits, temperament, and danger of grizzlies, and they serve as a contemplative voice from a distant remove in counterpoint to the tension of the moment. As McPhee and his companions stand downwind of a boar grizzly in a patch of blueberry bushes wondering what they should do if the animal notices them or if the wind direction changes, a reader learns about the "several schools of thought about guns" (57). To explain the reasoning behind many naturalists' decision not to carry guns, McPhee quotes the following from Russell:

> Reviewing our experiences, we had become more and more convinced that carrying arms was not only unnecessary in most grizzly country but was certainly no good for the desired atmosphere and proper protocol in obtaining good film records. If we were to obtain such film and fraternize with the big bears, it would be better to go unarmed in most places. The mere fact of having a gun within reach, cached somewhere in a pack or hidden holster, causes a man to act with unconscious arrogance and thus maybe to smell different or to transmit some kind of signal objectionable to bears. The armed man does not assume his proper role in association with the wild ones, a fact of which they seem instantly aware at a distance. He, being wilder than they, whether he likes to admit it or not, is instantly under even more suspicion than he would encounter if unarmed.
>
> One must follow the rule of an uninvited visitor--an intruder--rather than that of an aggressive hunter, and one should go unarmed to insure this attitude. (62)

This shifting of modes, and in this case of speaker too, has several effects. One is that it provides an expert

opinion on the topic; a second is that even though it momentarily removes the reader from the scene and intellectualizes the alarming event into a discussion, it simultaneously heightens the tension of the encounter since it delays the denouement (the party's careful retreat) and it infuses in that moment of panic several levels of significance, including the survival instinct, speculation about man's relationship to animals, and reflection about both the essence and meaning of the wilderness and the animals that inhabit it. It is also important to note that although none of the hikers carries a gun, other points of view on this issue are presented. McPhee does explain that most people carry a gun in the wilderness, while he also includes anecdotes testifying to the limitations of a dependence on weapons. (This issue, however, is not resolved; McPhee struggles with it again in Book III, finally deciding to keep a rifle with him when he stays alone overnight on the Gelvins' mining claim.)

This episode, it must be said, is more complex than the simple paralleling of quotations with narrative since the quoted passages, though important and salient, are not the only departures from the narrative. Much factual information about grizzlies summarized from other sources is slotted into the section. For instance, McPhee segues into a lengthy description of the bear's diet and yearly

cycle from a comment by Fedeler once the moment of danger has passed:

> "It's amazing to me," Fedeler said. "So large an animal, living up here in this country. It's amazing what keeps that big body alive." Fedeler went on eating the blueberries with no apparent fear of growing fat. The barren-ground bear digs a lot of roots, he said--the roots of milk vetch, for example, and Eskimo potatoes. The bear, coming out of his den in the snows of May, goes down into the river bottoms, where overwintered berries are first revealed. Wolf kills are down there too. By the middle of June, his diet is almost wholly vegetable. He eats willow buds, sedges, cotton grass tussocks. In the cycle of his year, roots and plants are eighty per cent of what he eats, and even when the salmon are running he does not sate himself on them alone but forages much of the time for berries. In the fall, he unearths not only roots but ground squirrels and lemmings. It is indeed remarkable how large he grows on the provender of his yearly cycle, for on this Arctic barren ground he has to work much harder than the brown bears of Southern Alaska, which line up along foaming rivers--hip to hip, like fishermen in New Jersey--taking forty-pound king salmon in their jaws as if they were nibbling feed from a barnyard trough. . . . (65-66)

The paragraph continues to explain how bears select and hollow out their winter dens and includes an explanation of the physiological effects of hibernation as well, ending with a definition of a "winter bear" covered with ice and especially fearsome. The next paragraph returns to the account of the hike, which is completed without further interruption, although McPhee returns to the topic of the grizzly's impressiveness at the end when he explains his indelible memory of the bear and how, for him, the grizzly has become the symbol of the wilderness. This reflection

is followed by the final excerpt from Russell's work, an equally contemplative musing about the animal's nature:

> His association with other animals is a mixture of enterprising action, almost magnanimous acceptance, and just plain willingness to ignore. There is great strength and pride combined with a strong mixture of inquisitive curiosity in the make-up of grizzly character. This curiosity is what makes trouble when men penetrate into the country where they are not known to the bear. The grizzly can be brave and sometimes downright brash. He can be secretive and very retiring. He can be extremely cunning and also powerfully aggressive. Whatever he does, his actions match his surroundings and the circumstance of the moment. No wonder that meeting him on his mountain is a momentous event, imprinted on one's mind for life. (72)

The effect of moving in and out of the narrative frame by inserting factual and interpretive passages from a variety of sources becomes comprehensiveness, adding depth and complexity to the account. These qualities transform the story into a dialectic, playing information off against experience, emotion, and symbolic significance, displaying the multiplicity of human approaches toward wildlife from fear to fascination to empathy and/or exploitation. Such a medley is typical in McPhee and appears again in a similar formulation in Book III's interweaving of backwoodsman Rich Corazza's journal with Brad Snow and McPhee's canoe journey to Central (272-90), a further investigation of life in the bush and the beauty of the Yukon River. But the interrupted narrative technique pervades the text, and is exemplified nicely by the discussion of Alaskan air traffic and pilots in Book I which accompanies the profile of

Louisiana pilot Gene Parrish and the flight to the Salmon (42-50); by the trip with Michael David for cabin logs in Book III, which encases a profile of the chief's father, a description of Eagle Indian Village, and an outline of Alaskan Indians' culture and problems (377-97); and most evidently by the complex organization of Book II, the narrative of which is often overshadowed by departures from it.

Perhaps the midsection of "What They Were Looking For" illustrates the shifting and juxtaposition of modes more poignantly than others since it provides a full display of McPhee's repertoire. This part of the book comprises nine separate subsections (marked in the text by a break and a large initial capital letter) between pages 123 and 166 and is the lengthiest departure from the narrative. Just before this declination, the "flying quorum" (119) of the Capital Site Selection Committee has crowded into the large Bell Huey and is enumerated and individually introduced; McPhee describes Willie Hensley last, once the helicopter has landed at the Peters Creek site. A paragraph of physical description ends the subsection and prepares for a shift from present tense narration into another mode:

> Beyond the big Huey, on down the ridge, Willie Hensley stood alone, looking southeastward over the valley. In time, I left the berry picking and went to join him. In his Western boots, his dungarees, his bright-red down jacket with blue-banded shoulders, he seemed somewhat incongruous there--an Eskimo, many miles from home, dressed apparently for the rodeo or a

> basketball game in which he might star. He was slender, physically adroit, and his high Mongolian cheekbones, his soft hair ruffling in the wind, his Asian-myna-bird look all seemed to suggest that he had recently walked across the land bridge to have a look around. Willie in the committee was first among equals. The others had long since made him their chairman. (123)

A nonchalant transition begins the next subsection and lapses gently into past tense and a biography of the chairman: "Willie Hensley was born in Kotzebue, in Arctic Alaska, and grew up some ten miles out of town in a kind of family commune, with uncles, aunts, and cousins all around him as well as his immediate family" (123). The wide-angle lens used for taking in the scene at Peters Creek has been exchanged for a zoom, and McPhee will continually change lenses, angles, and filters to approximate the reality of the situation. The subsequent forty-three pages investigate many of the details of the proposed capital move, fleshing out a context for the interrupted narrative.

One way to grasp the general content and variation of this part of the text is to outline it and then acknowledge the parallels and juxtapositions within and between the subsections. Here is an outline suggesting McPhee's strategy; the modes employed are indicated by bold print.

> Subsection 1 (123-26). Partial **biography** of Willie Hensley explaining his loyalty to Kotzebue, his political career, and his belief that the proposed capital move is too expensive.
>
> Subsection 2(126-29). **Explanation** of Alaska's provinciality. **Report** on current trends in state politics. **Survey** of opinions about the capital move.

Subsection 3 (129-35). **Description** of Anchorage, including its geography and atmosphere. Its thin **history**. **Profile** of Robert Atwood, who is pro-development and anti-conservation. **Explanation** of the ironic position of conservationists who live in Anchorage. **Anecdote** of McPhee's experiences in the city.

Subsection 4 (135-39). **Report** of other states' capital moves. **Survey** of opinions recorded from a workshop hearing about the move which includes **comparisons** to the constructions of Brasilia and Canberra and a discussion of the effect the move will have on Juneau.

Subsection 5 (139-46). **History** of the founding of Juneau interrupted by a **description** of the city, including its geography, climate, and atmosphere.

Subsection 6 (146-48). **Profile** of State Senator Frank Harris. **Comparison** of Minnesota and Nevada's capital moves. **Profile** continues and includes Harris' vision of the new capital.

Subsection 7 (148-53). One-paragraph return to **narrative** line consisting of Hensley's hope that the committee is not wasting its time. Continuation of Hensley's **biography** accounting for his education and involvement in native American land issues. **Narrative** of how oil discovery resulted in the Native Claims Settlement Act. **Description** of the native corporations with emphasis on Doyon Ltd., of which Hensley is a central figure. **Profile** of Hensley as an executive and statesman.

Subsection 8 (153-57). **Comparison** of Alaskan prices for food to the cost of the new capital site. **Description** of the McHarg method used for locating potential sites. **Description** of two consultants' visions of the new capital.

Subsection 9 (157-66). **Profile** of Bill Ray, a state representative from Juneau. **Report** of air traffic and air hazards in Juneau. **Comparison** to fight against Florida's proposed capital move. **Report** of skepticism regarding the move's cost as predicted in the Boeing Report and of Juneau's response to the move. **Comparison** of other states' moves. **Report** about Juneau citizens favoring the move.

This outline reveals how the multi-dimensionality of the section provides ample information about the political climate, the reasons the capital move was initiated, the people for and against the move, the history of the state that has resulted in having Juneau as capital and Anchorage as the largest city, the methods used to find suitable sites and predict costs, and a number of other states and countries that have moved their capitals. Only once, at the beginning of subsection 7 when Willie Hensley's hope that the committee is not wasting its time is recorded, is the reader reminded of the narrative line. McPhee complements the wealth of information by presenting it through constant variation of mode and therefore emphasizes the deliberative nature of the text. In short, he provides a truly dramatistic text by covering many angles and revealing numerous agents, their methods (or agencies) for attempting to gain their desired ends (or acts), the reasoning behind their actions (their purposes and attitudes), and of course the enormously complex context (or scene) in which each agent finds himself, complex because any act by any agent affects the scene and because of the relation of the current situation to Alaskan history in general, to other states' similar experiences, and even to the nation's need for oil and its guilt about the plight of native Americans.

This approach is also Burkean in that it echoes what Burke sees as the educational advantages of dramatism, which are explained in his article "A Linguistic Approach to Education." Here he proposes that education should take "a more humanitarian view of alien ways" that would "seek to describe and 'appreciate' other groups, in all their varied habits, strengths, and shortcomings, not for partisan purposes, but purely in accordance with ideals of 'truth' or 'scientific accuracy'" (283). Bob Heath glosses the workings of this system in his article "Kenneth Burke's Perspective on Perspectives":

> [Burke's] fondness for dialectic results from his belief that perspectives can be corrected not so much by examining them against nature, but by pitting them against one another. (287)

Clearly McPhee is taking the same approach. He wants a reader to know as much as possible about the issue, to understand what underlies each perspective, and to apprehend the manifold aspects of the scene. But while a reader gains information, the dialectic experience of shifting modes and perspectives enables one to recognize parallels and contrasts, as well as the inevitability of conflict and opportunities for confluence. It is part of McPhee's humility and wisdom that this dialectical experience arrives unheralded; the style influences by showing the reader possibilities and complexities instead of proclaiming their presence. The shifts in mode heighten the dialectical effect, demonstrating that no one

terministic screen is adequate, be it subjective or objective, phrased as history, biography, report, profile, anecdote, survey, or explanation. Any single rhetorical stance will distort the issue; a multiplication of approaches increases the probability of accounting for the issue truthfully.

Parallels and contrasts occur within and between subsections, as if the reader might tally them mentally while moving through the text. For instance, in subsection 3 the parallels between the Alaskan aesthetic of Anchorage and Robert Atwood's pro-development stance and between the conservationists who live in town and McPhee's claustrophobic reaction to the city are established; these in turn contrast with each other, just as they juxtapose description and profile with explanation and personal anecdote. This dichotomy suggests a need for balancing "the Sierra Club Syndrome and the Dallas Scenario" (127), an effort which happens to be the tenor of the current governor's administration and is reported in subsection 2. Also, the Anchorage subsection parallels the one devoted to Juneau (subsection 5); both have geographical drawbacks and are portrayed as uniquely Alaskan. The differences between the outlooks of these cities are developed in the profiles of state politicians like Frank Harris (subsection 6) and Bill Ray (subsection 9). In turn, the relatively disinterested service of Willie Hensley (subsections 1 and

7) contrasts to their regional loyalties. In the surveys of opinions included in subsections 2 and 4 Anchorage and Juneau again figure prominently, and these surveys, composed of anonymous quotations displaying a range of attitudes, mirror the more fully developed discussions of the issue. They embody the dialectic and the shifting of modes in their conversational changing of speakers; these surveys are synecdochic:

> "The capital is Juneau's only economic base."
> "They will move the capital over my dead body."
> "That condition is acceptable."
> "This move in effect puts up a fence across the hundred-and-forty-first meridian and says, 'We don't care what happens to you Southeastern Alaska.'"
> "Juneau snatched the capital from Sitka in 1900. They lobbied secretly in Washington."
> "Anchorage thinks Juneau exercises an undue and malign influence over the entire state--in matters of money, land speculation, capital improvements."
> "Juneau, with the legislature, has had more than its share of appropriated funds. People want to get the money up here in Anchorage."
> (138-39)

The diversity of voices and alteration of forms imply each other, sometimes creating cacophony but usually exposing the need for mediators like the current governor, Willie Hensley, or McPhee himself. In time, the voices of dialectic compose the outlook that champions pluralism, just as the multiple perspectives are contained in the one that absorbs them all and transcends them, that is aware of conflict but seeks confluence.

McPhee has acknowledged his preference for a dialectical approach in an interview with Joan Hamilton:

> I don't want to look at a topic from just one perspective. . . . I want to look at the complexities, to come up with a piece of writing in greater dimensions. (54)

His interest in "greater dimensions" suggests not only his dramatistic strategies but also a philosophy about the purpose of his books, which, I would argue, is a call for informed pluralism and tolerance. This philosophy can be phrased in Burkean terms as well. Because McPhee's approach to his topic (as opposed to the other agents' whose perspectives he includes) is dramatistic, it therefore, like Burke's system, ultimately emphasizes act. That is to say, while the agent-scene ratio is prominent within profiles and reconstructed scenes, McPhee as author asks that a reader take in all the dimensions of the issue and ultimately make something out of this exercise, that one recognize what he is doing by way of his techniques. He privileges the act of dialectic speculation for the purpose of encouraging tolerance, focusing on an act-purpose ratio, which means that his philosophical groundings are those of realism and mysticism. This pairing at first appears to be a contradiction in terms, but if we consider that McPhee views himself as a fact writer who wants to reveal the "greater dimensions" of his topic, the two motives seem more compatible.

Furthermore, this, I believe, is the very philosophical grounding of Burke's dramatism. Consider this summary statement from The Grammar of Motives:

> All told in the project directed "towards the purification of war" the Grammar should assist to this end through encouraging tolerance by speculation. (442)

In the following paragraphs Burke sketches what works adopting this perspective should be like:

> To what extent can we confront the global situation with an attitude neither local nor imperialistic? Surely, all works of goodwill written in the next decades must aim somehow to avoid these two extremes, seeking a neo-liberal, speculative attitude. (442-43)

Therefore just as Burke pursues "a truth-of-act, a meaning that is more probed than proved . . . a way of knowing, a knowing that is in itself a kind of action," to quote Wayne Booth's opinion ("Ways of Knowing" 8), he connects act with a mystical purpose, the comic path of dialectic that seeks transcendence. This process is discussed in both Burke's Grammar and Rhetoric; here is a passage from the latter:

> Bring several rhetoricians together, let their speeches contribute to the maturing of one another by the give and take of question and answer, and you have the dialectic of a Platonic dialogue. But ideally the dialogue seeks to attain a higher order of truth, as the speakers, in competing with one another, cooperate towards an end transcending their individual positions. Here is the paradigm of the dialectical process for "reconciling opposites" in a "higher synthesis." (his italics 53; see also Grammar 440)

Burke and McPhee advocate a similar process for analogous purposes, and whereas McPhee's rhetors do not always

transcend their individual perspectives, he does manage transcendence through the reader's experience and ultimately through a reader's identification with McPhee both as character and rhetor (a notion reserved as the topic of the following chapter).

Other McPhee critics have noticed parts of this process. Barbara Lounsberry, in her chapter on McPhee from The Art of Fact, links him to Transcendentalism:

> In his aesthetic appreciations of "level number one," the natural world, McPhee strives always for the fullest "panoptic" vision. Thus his works characteristically include not only natural description, but historical, scientific and technical, religious, sociological, biological (and even autobiographical) dimensions that contribute to each scene. In this respect McPhee reveals his kinship with the transcendental perspective of Emerson and Thoreau, their rich appreciation of the many to the one and of all things to all things. (106)

The echoes between Lounsberry's statement and Burke's dramatistic dialectic are clear, even though she is not concerned with the rhetorical mechanism.

Oddly, those who are so concerned have not noticed this aspect of McPhee or the potential of a dramatistic style to function dialectically. In The Rhetoric of the "Other" Literature W. Ross Winterowd applies Burke similarly to contemporary nonfiction but does not view dialectic as part of a dramatistic style, partly because he focuses on the lyric voice and privileges an agent-scene ratio:

> Presentational literature in general is persuasive--has a "formative effect on attitude." Three reasons for this potency are the presence that characterizes presentational texts, the form that predominates in them, and their ability to create identification. (his italics 45)

In Winterowd's application of this system, only works with an overt lyric narrator such as Peter Matthiessen in The Snow Leopard and Annie Dillard in Pilgrim at Tinker Creek are classified as presentational (or dramatistic); the works of John McPhee along with those of Tom Wolfe are viewed as "dramatic exposition" (88):

> As we have noted, Kenneth Burke characterizes the lyric ratio as that of scene-agent, the agent being both the author and a character in the drama, perhaps the only character. Throughout his work, McPhee almost never engages as a character in his own right, though he appears now and then as the craftsman, as the maker of the piece. . . . This absence is an important factor in the reader's response to [Rising From the Plains] as a piece of discursive writing, for the writer as reporter, not as participant, maintains a rhetorical stance of objectivity and aloofness that is impossible otherwise. (81)

Although I agree that McPhee effaces his presence more frequently and to a greater extent than Matthiessen or Dillard, I think it is possible and likely that a reader can identify with him both as character and craftsman. Further, Winterowd's conception of a dramatistic style is simpler than one which views an author's multi-dimensionality as relevant. It is possible that his choice of Rising From the Plains as his only example also steers him in a direction different from mine, for McPhee's presence is less evident in that work than in Coming Into

the Country and in a number of others. All in all, however, Winterowd's pithy explanation of the appeal, the charm even, of dramatistic argument is, I think, apt:

> The great disadvantage of the representative anecdote is that it does not lead to the closure of enthymeme [which is roughly analogous to discursive argument]. Its great advantage is that it does not force such closure.
> ("Dramatism" 588)

Let us add that it can suggest closure in the way that Wolfgang Iser speaks of the appeal of all literary texts:

> Strangely enough, we feel that any confirmatory effect--such as we implicitly demand of expository texts, as we refer to the objects they are meant to present--is a defect in a literary text. For the more a text individualizes or confirms an expectation it has initially aroused, the more aware we become of its didactic purpose, so that at best we can only accept or reject the thesis forced upon us. More often than not the very clarity of such texts will make us want to free ourselves from their clutches. But generally the sentence correlatives of literary texts do not develop in this rigid way, for the expectations they evoke tend to encroach on one another in such a way that they are continually modified as one reads. (53)

Consequently, a subtle, flexible approach works through its suggestiveness, not demanding concurrence but prompting a reader to think along lines that are similar to the author's. This, I think, is one of the most attractive qualities of McPhee's dramatistic method of argument.

Chris Anderson, the other important critic of literary nonfiction who uses Burke's ideas as a basis, agrees with both Iser and Winterowd on this point and counsels us about when dramatism is especially appropriate:

> In dramatism, despite its greater presence, the conclusions are always presented as tentative. The representative anecdote and its extension make the claim more vivid and present, but we are never logically compelled by that vividness and presence.
>
> But I think there is something to be said for this limitation. It has a kind of rhetorical power in certain situations. Dramatism would be ineffective and out of place in matters of public policy and decision-making. When we are making decisions about what to do, what specific courses of action to take, we need clear and logical statements of generally applicable conclusions, not the presentation of the experience of thinking. But dramatistic deliberation seems to me appropriate for the earlier stages in the problem-solving process, for those points in the consideration of value when we must puzzle over moral and ethical questions underlying issues of policy and action. If we think of deliberative discourse as existing on a continuum, dramatistic deliberation tends away from public policy and towards the pole of reflective/exploratory writing. It tends toward the private rather than the public, the ethical rather than the political. ("Dramatism" 41)

Though Anderson's assessment is pragmatically reasonable, it seems to me that he underestimates what dramatism can provide and what Burke hopes it will provide. Burke does not want to reserve this approach for our private lives and choices, but rather he wants it to reveal to us how the subjective, the ethical, and the private do already influence public policy and how that influence can be made to work for good. This is not to say that he advises indecision, but that we must first recognize and understand the motives for our own and others' terministic screens, and that while we participate in a dialectic we should attempt to transcend the differences that exist, with a

pluralistic outlook that tolerates imperfection and dissent, an outlook that he prefers to the dangerously narrow perfection of any one view. Sloppy as this approach seems, it is the one that safeguards society from the tragic route.

McPhee, with all his glimpses of others' lives and departures from the narrative line, exploits the gentle persuasive force of dramatistic dialectic; he gives us a mosaic, it is true, that is dazzling in its complexity, but one, moreover, which is clearly the product of a thoughtful, knowledgeable, and tolerant personality.

Chapter IV

Coming Into McPhee's Perspective: Identification

In "North of the C.P. Line," the final essay of Table of Contents, John McPhee recounts his own version of "The Secret Sharer." Unlike Conrad's tale of clandestine friendship and guilt, McPhee's story has little to do with the unsettling challenges of close rapport such as a serious questioning of individual identity or of one's own world view, although it is arguable that vestiges of these concerns remain. But the friendship the author develops with another John McPhee, a John Malcolm (as opposed to Angus) McPhee whose principal occupation is game-warden pilot in the North Maine Woods despite occasional sallies into writing, does illuminate his awareness of the role identification plays in his research and texts:

> My other self--as he might be called in a brief, ambiguous novel--was in this instance a bush pilot several hundred feet above Third Matagamon Lake, face to face with a strong winter wind. The plane was a Super Cub, scarcely large enough for the two of us. We sat in tandem and talked through an intercom. There is a lot of identification, even transformation, in the work I do--moving along from place to place, person to person, as a reporter, a writer, repeatedly trying to sense another existence and in some ways to share it. Never had that been more true than now, in part because he was sitting there with my life in his hands while placing (in another way) his life in mine. (249)

Though the tone of this piece is light-hearted, the topic (whether or not the two McPhees discount their shared names and interests as sheer coincidence or serendipity) suggests a fundamental element of John Angus McPhee's appeal to his subjects as well as his readers: that he continually attempts to make connections between himself and others, a purpose that markedly distinguishes his approach from that of traditional journalism.

McPhee's awareness of the need for and inevitability of identification in his writing intimates a simultaneous recognition of the impossibility--and perhaps the undesirability--of objectivity and a candid acknowledgement of the ineluctability of rhetorical motives, which if we recall Burke's definition are "rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (Rhetoric 43-44). McPhee also clearly understands the need for mutual trust and openness in any ethical rhetorical exchange since he routinely places himself in situations where he depends upon his subjects' knowledge, skill, and advice and recognizes that they trust him, too, believing he will portray them accurately. It is not difficult to extend this subject-author relationship to the reader as well, who

also has the ability to learn and the power to misinterpret and misrepresent.

A second intriguing revelation in this statement, his mention of transformation, indicates a psychological form of inquiry and persuasion; one wonders who is transformed. McPhee clearly seems open to this side effect, and no doubt his subjects are transformed into symbols and parts of symbol systems when they are portrayed by words. Similarly, one may propose that to be an ideal reader, sensitive to the text and the author without submitting to either, the reader should be open to the possibility of transformation, of learning new facts and attitudes and of pondering their relevance to his or her individual circumstances and beliefs. In this way, it seems McPhee tries to increase the likelihood of a benevolent, transcendental dialectic by remaining impressionable and yet prudent; transformation on all sides may become possible in a state of parity, of give and take. As already mentioned, this theory slides rhetoric toward dialectic, away from propaganda and mind control. Of course, this kind of rhetoric occurs only when there is an alignment of the motives and good will of the rhetors (subject, author, and reader). The point is that McPhee's methods of identification and subsequent transformation are consonant with the criteria for such a dialectic. They are also consistent with Burke's notion of the most "mature"

goal of education, "one that would surely be aimed at, in an ideal world of civilized and sophisticated people. . . . [which] for that very reason, . . . is very difficult to maintain, except in glimpses and at happy moments" ("Linguistic Approach" 284). Ultimately, this highest goal of education moves beyond dialectic toward broadly defined goals of learning, inclusion, and tolerance:

> One would try to decide how many positions one thinks are important enough to be represented by "voices," and then one would do all in one's power to let each voice state its position as ably as possible. No voice deemed relevant to the particular issue or controversy would be subjected to the quietus, and none would be inadequately represented (as were one to portray it by stating only its more vulnerable arguments). But although one would be as fair as possible in thus helping all positions to say their say, a mere cult of "fair play" would not be the reason. Rather, one hopes for ways whereby the various voices, in mutually correcting one another will lead toward a position better than any one singly. That is one does not merely want to outwit the opponent, or to study him, one wants to be affected by him, in some degree to incorporate him, to so act that his ways can help perfect one's own--in brief, to learn from him. ("Linguistic Approach" 283-84)

In this light we may link dramatism to identification: a dramatistic dialectic engenders identification as a process and even suggests a form of identification as an end, a view of the phenomenon which posits that it is not just the rhetorical trick of getting an audience to recognize similarities between themselves and the rhetor, but that identification is a means of connecting with other individuals for the purpose of mutual enlightenment, a

process that enables community among disparate members of a society. This is the comic, or perhaps utopian, version of identification.

Practically, however, methods of identification may be used for any purpose, and Burke is aware of this dual edge. In the opening section of the The Rhetoric of Motives titled "The Range of Rhetoric," he establishes this point by moving from an anecdote of killing to an interpretation of this act as a species of transformation and then points out how rhetoric, the more generalized term, may be embodied in a spectrum of particular circumstances:

> That is, we can recognize that our anecdote is in the order of killing, of personal enmity, of factional strife, of invective, polemic, eristic, logomachy, all of them aspects of rhetoric that we are repeatedly and drastically encountering, since rhetoric is par excellence the region of the Scramble, of insult and injury, bickering, squabbling, malice and the lie, cloaked malice and the subsidized lie. Yet while admitting that the genius of our opening anecdote has malign inclinations, we can, without forcing, find benign elements there too. And we should find these; for rhetoric also includes resources of appeal ranging from sacrificial, evangelical love, through the kinds of persuasion figuring in sexual love, to sheer "neutral" communication (communication being the area where love has become so generalized, desexualized, "technologized," that only close critical or philosophic scrutiny can discern the vestiges of the original motive). (19)

In the rest of this section he discusses several ways in which identification works as a rhetorical mechanism, but three of these are most clearly summarized in a later

lecture series titled "Dramatism and Development." I will outline the fourth subsequently. Here is his summary:

> The term "identification" can be applied in at least three ways. The first is quite dull. It flowers in such usages as that of a politician who, though rich, tells humble constituents of his humble origins. The second kind of identification involves the workings of antithesis, as when allies who would otherwise dispute among themselves join forces against a common enemy. . . . But the major power of "identification" derives from situations in which it goes unnoticed. My prime example is the word "we," as when the statement that "we" are at war includes under the same head soldiers who are getting killed and speculators who hope to make a killing in war stocks. (28)

Critic Philip Tompkins glosses these three kinds as "1) common ground, 2) identification by antithesis, and 3) the assumed we" (129). It might also be useful to think of them in terms of the ways they create writer/reader relationships. Common ground statements proclaim "I (the rhetor) am like you (the audience)"; identification by antithesis essentially posits that "we (rhetor and audience) are not like them (antagonist and/or scapegoat)"; and implicit identification (or the assumed we) implies or encourages an agreement in outlook, values, or substance between rhetor and audience without resorting to direct statement. For example, a current advertising campaign for Diet Coke uses the slogan, "Just for the taste of it--Diet Coke!" suggesting one should buy this soft drink because it tastes good, denying the assumption many people have about aftertastes in low-calorie soft drinks. But it

simultaneously suggests that one should associate Diet Coke with fun because the slogan adapts the idiomatic expression "just for the fun of it" to the salesman's needs. The connection between fun, good taste, and Diet Coke is usually underscored by the presence of popular musicians wearing offbeat clothes and singing and dancing to the slogan (which becomes a jingle) in television advertisements. Significantly, however, there is no direct appeal to the audience to make a connection between Diet Coke, fun, and their own self-image; the advertiser depends on the audience to complete the identification process, assuming that many people who see these advertisements want to have fun, discriminating taste, and slender physiques. Consequently, the relationship between the rhetor (the Coca Cola Corporation) and the audience is implied by presenting an attractive image and appealing values to the audience as those which are already possessed by the product.

This sort of implicit identification alters the Aristotelian notion that rhetoric is essentially addressed to an audience, revealing instead how the audience may participate in persuasion as it recognizes a correlation between its own identity and the particular values and attitudes that a rhetor has attached to the topic at hand. Burke explains this extension of the range of rhetoric by discussing the interdependence of personal identity and that of the surrounding society:

> The individual person, striving to form himself in accordance with the communicative norms that match the cooperative ways of his society, is by the same token concerned with the rhetoric of identification. To act upon himself persuasively, he must variously resort to images and ideas that are formative. Education ("indoctrination") exerts such a pressure upon him from without; he completes the process from within. If he does not somehow act to tell himself (as his own audience) what the various brands of rhetorician have told him, his persuasion is not complete. Only those voices from without are effective which can speak in the language of a voice within. (Rhetoric 39; see also Language as Symbolic Action 301-302)

The fourth variety of identification fosters a sense of association between the rhetor and audience by exploiting the assumptions and expectations both parties share as users of the same language. It results from the effect form is likely to have on an audience who is familiar with typical modes of expression:

> At least we know that many purely formal patterns can readily awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us. For instance, imagine a passage built about a set of oppositions ("we do this, but they on the other hand do that; we stay here, but they go there; we look up, but they look down," etc.). Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter. Formally, you will find yourself swinging along with the succession of antitheses, even though you may not agree with the proposition that is being presented in this form. Or it may even be an opponent's proposition which you resent--yet for the duration of the statement itself you might "help him out" to the extent of yielding to the formal development, yielding to its symmetry as such. (Rhetoric 58)

All these ways of inducing a sense of fellowship between rhetor and audience appear in one instance as shockingly

coercive and in the next as instinctive and natural, a state of affairs that portends the pervasiveness of rhetoric, for laudable as well as despicable purposes, in human interaction.

Clearly ignoring or avoiding these workings of the language would diminish the likelihood of communication and understanding between two or more people. Burke explicates this paradox as he explains the inherent ambiguity of such terms as identification, persuasion (the traditional term for the aim of rhetoric), and communication:

> As for the relation between "identification" and "persuasion": we might well keep it in mind that a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identification; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify with the speaker's interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience. So there is no chance of keeping apart the meanings of persuasion, identification ("consubstantiality") and communication (the nature of rhetoric as addressed). But in given instances, one or another of these elements may serve best for extending a line of analysis in some particular direction. (Rhetoric 46)

These realizations of overlap go far to account for apparent incongruities in some rhetors' statements about their goals. For instance, John McPhee's remark about his purpose for writing Coming Into the Country as recorded in an interview by Dennis Drabelle suggests multiple goals differing in their degree of importance:

> I didn't write Coming Into the Country as a political tract. My deepest goals are aesthetic. The book's political role makes me uneasy, but

> only beyond this point: I wanted to tell a lot of people how a few people are living, and I hope to hell they can go on living that way. (62)

The contradictions apparent in this remark may be subsumed under the Burkean notion of symbolic act, and the remark echoes McPhee's views of drawing connections between subject, author, and reader as important. Also, McPhee expresses his rhetorical motive in general terms, discouraging a reader from concluding that the author wants to influence regional or national politics and hinting at the broader objective of promoting honest inquiry, debate, and transformation about Alaska and its citizens as well as what one reviewer has labeled "subjects much vaster than Alaska" (Wood 41). That he treads lightly over the immediate, specific exigencies of his subject wins him a reader's indulgence and earns him latitude, which he needs in order to encourage identification as both a technique and a goal.

We can identify three of Burke's identification techniques at work in Coming Into the Country, avoiding identification by antithesis since that strategy, by definition, excludes some participants in order to attract others more strongly. The other three identification techniques work in conjunction, creating an appealing voice in the text through McPhee's portrayal of himself, his evident skill as a writer, and the audience's presumed response to his persona and style. The author presents

himself as attractively modest, even fallible, when he appears as a character in his text, yet simultaneously his intelligence, insightfulness, and cleverness as a writer is ever present. He is without doubt capable of meeting the demands of his topic, of successfully orchestrating complex prose pieces, and of providing accurate, pithy, and benevolently humorous accounts of himself and others. This dual stance of novice Alaskan and adept author gains him the sympathy of a reader who is not a skilled backwoodsperson and the kindly tolerance of those who are. Also, such a stance suggests credibility since McPhee is clearly not self-absorbed and may be trusted to observe and record without bias but with urbane perspicacity. William Howarth, a critic and friend of McPhee's, has remarked that the author often adopts a posture of ignorance when he interviews, despite previous knowledge or research, in order to prompt meaty answers to his questions (xii); this strategy, no doubt, keeps the subject from feeling defensive and enables McPhee to appear to be an ordinary man, one with whom readers and many subjects can identify, one who is easy to be around. This interview technique is not deceptive; it shows how McPhee recognizes that his perspective may be different from another's. While he may know his own perspective, perhaps some others', as well as some facts, he may still be ignorant of additional perspectives. His acumen has its proper playing field

later in the construction of his texts which are characteristically thoughtful and pleasantly sophisticated.

This two-part persona appears throughout the three books of Coming Into the Country; on the one hand McPhee is the ordinary person accompanying federal and state officials on a wilderness trek, politicians in search of a solution to the development/conservation tensions in the state, or town and river people in the extraordinary routines of their daily lives. On the other hand, in a much quieter fashion, his identity is connected to his skill and reputation as a writer for The New Yorker, as well as to the smooth complexity of his prose and his witty turns of phrase which entertain and surprise a reader.

When McPhee mentions his own experiences and thoughts in brief references and anecdotes, which he often does in Books I and III, they typically have a mock heroic effect, pointing out that he is unfamiliar with and occasionally uncomfortable in the Alaskan wilderness. From the beginning of the first paragraph, a reader watches him fend off headaches from the intense Arctic sun and take care not to get any fish scent on his clothes which might attract grizzlies. He tells an anecdote about an unsuccessful fishing attempt when, after great effort, he lands a soda can full of silt from a river outside Anchorage. Admitting to being "mildly nervous about a lot of things" (13), he terms himself a "what-if type" (92) who can readily imagine

multitudinous dangers and risks. Occasionally he makes himself out to be comparatively inept, as when he tires during a hike (68) or must learn how to get in and out of a kayak:

> Getting into a kayak just once is awkward enough, let alone dozens of times a day. You put your hands behind you on the coaming, then lower yourself into place, all in the same act removing your legs from the river and shaking off water. Hession, at the start, showed me how to do this, and then he sat lightly down on his own kayak and floated away. I flopped backward into mine and nearly rolled it over; but the day would hold, if nothing else, practice in getting in and out of a kayak. When the boats scraped bottom at the tops of riffles, we got up, sought the channel of maximum depth, moved the boats through, and then got back into them where the water was fast and deepening in the lower parts of the rips. The problem of getting in was therefore complicated by generally doing so in the middle of rapids. In the first such situation, I lost all coordination, lurched backward onto the boat, nearly sat in the river, and snapped a toe, ripping the ligaments off the second joint. By noon, however, I was more or less competent, and further damage seemed unlikely. (73)

He has other deficiencies too; one is knowing nothing about guns (269), a passing knowledge of which is essential in the bush. He hesitates to use his pillow when camping with Cook and Kneeland, thinking his concern with comfort might constitute a faux pas in the wilderness (272). And he doubts that he has a commanding enough voice to control Cook's dog team so he drives them in silence, hoping they will not register the difference (410). These instances appeal to a reader who might have similar reservations and make similar mistakes in such a setting; they also serve to

draw that reader into the scene, making it possible for others to envision themselves in such a place living such a life. George Roundy notices this technique and explains that

> In order to make his unfamiliar subjects accessible, he offers himself in on-scene accounts as his reader's surrogate--the novice addressing an alien world--and weaves revelations about the lore of his subjects into these accounts as answers to a novice's questions. ("Prose of McPhee" 154; see also deMott 92, Johnson 4, and Root 77)

Further, that McPhee is this honest and humble about himself, hazarding the occasional gaffe in order to learn and experience, suggests that his accounts of others are kind in tone and reliable in fact. As a student he will not make harsh or hasty judgments of others.

The other thrust of McPhee's presence in the book's narratives (and method of establishing common ground) is his awe of the country's beauty and of the ways of life it sustains. The descriptions of wildlife approach the realm of the fantastic. Seeing the spawning salmon in their eponymous river compares to "staring down into a sky full of zeppelins" (6), and animal tracks portend their owners' constant activity and presence:

> Tracks are numerous, coming, going, multidirectional, tracks wherever there is sand, and in gravel if it is fine enough to take an impression. Wolf tracks. The pointed pods of moose tracks. Tracks of the barren-ground grizzly. Some of the moose tracks are punctuated with dewclaws. The grizzlies' big toes are on the outside. (7)

It is the sort of place one can catch a fish the length of a leg (73) and come upon groves of shed caribou antlers (67). The Eskimos' lives also seem charmed, as evidenced by the children whom he meets and entertains in Kiana:

> What awakened me were the voices of children. Three small girls had followed us up from the Kobuk, where we had watched them fish. They had crossed the runway and picked blueberries, and now were offering them from their hands. . . . They asked for nothing. They were not shy. They were totally unself-conscious. . . . When they noticed my monocular, on a lanyard around my neck, they got down beside me, picked it off my chest, and spied on the town. They leaned over, one at a time, and put their noses down against mine, draping around my head their soft black hair. They stared into my eyes. Their eyes were dark and northern, in beautiful almond faces, aripple with smiles. (41-42)

This motif is continued in McPhee's evident respect for Willie Hensley and Michael John David in Books II and III; he admires their soft, lyrical voices as well as their efforts to improve the lives of their people. But admiration is not reserved for the native Alaskans alone; clearly the Gelvins' resourcefulness and the river people's commitment to subsistence living also impress him favorably. Cabin life too has its appeal, as this description of the prospect outside his cabin at the Gelvins' explains:

> Outside, some paces away, I have stood at a form of parade rest and in the broad light of a June midnight been penetrated in the most inconvenient place by a swarm of indecent mosquitoes and on the same spot, in a similar posture at the same hour, have stared up in darkness from squeaky snow at a green arch of the aurora, green streamers streaming from it all across the sky.

> At home, when I look up at the North Star I lift my eyes but don't really have to move my head. Here, I crane back, lift my chin almost as far as it will go, and look up at the polestar flirting with the zenith. The cabin is long and low, and its roof is loaded white--mantled eighteen inches deep. Its windows are brown-gold from the light of burning lamps. The air is so still I can hear the rising smoke. Twenty-two degrees below zero. Balls of ice are forming in the beard. I go back inside and comb it off, and jump into a bag of down. (301-302)

McPhee portrays his Alaskan travels as wondrous, remarkable; for him, just as for many of his readers, Alaska is an entrancing, strange land. While it is checked by his humor and factual accuracy, the author's awe substantiates the connection between Alaskans, the author, and readers, making the experiences of the first two accessible to the latter.

Impressed as McPhee is by the people and the setting, and despite his willingness to learn from all perspectives, he balances his apprentice stance in the wilderness with the savvy of his writing, the fabled accuracy of New Yorker articles, his control of voice, and the complexity of his book's structure. McPhee notices, reads, and records enormous amounts of information. The unwavering level of detail that he provides convinces one of the acuity of his eye. In Book I he informs a reader regularly about both the water and air temperature during his summer trip on the Salmon and Kobuk rivers (5,14,21,26,38,39,72). He measures wolf tracks and reports that they are a remarkable seven inches long (29). When the camping party assembles the

collapsible kayaks at the head of the river, he counts the number of parts used in each design, explains what materials they are made of, narrates how they fit together, and assesses each assembled kayak for grace of line, maneuverability, and seaworthiness (51-52). Book II blends a thorough discussion of the criteria for a new capital with information about limiting realities such as the routes of existing highways and railroads along with the fractions of land that are above two thousand feet (one third), reserved for native and federal government use (two thirds), and "underlaid by permafrost" (two-thirds) (106-107). Readers are told the population of small towns: "Skwentna, Alaska 99667 (fifteen people)" (118) as well as the message on a sign in Juneau's new State Office Building: "POSITIVELY NO DOGS" (144). The last book supplies everyday details of life in Alaskan towns and bush such as how cabins are built (339-40), the cost of groceries (209), a diary of meals at the Gelvins' (297), and the many uses and exact size (34 3/4" high X 23" diameter) of fifty-five gallon drums (431-32). This trivia establishes credibility, credibility which is heightened if one considers that it has all been verified by The New Yorker fact checking department (see The New Yorker Education Program's "Check the Facts").

His stance as an author also reveals a flexible, inventive mind that readily draws humorous and apt

analogies and selects felicitous expressions. Early in Book II, for example, McPhee suggests that with all the capital initiative's problems, given the fact that the state is broke and that most of the Selection Committee members oppose the move, "[o]ne might think that only Gilbert and Sullivan could work out the story" (104). In describing the regional planners' devotion to the McHarg technique for identifying the best site, he compares them to Muslims' ever-present consciousness of Mecca: "McHarg was not connected with CCC/HOK, but when his name was mentioned its people tended to swivel and face Philadelphia" where Ian McHarg, "the absent master," teaches at the University of Pennsylvania (154-55). In addition, the droll playfulness of his phrasing implies an analytic nature, enjoyment of adventure, and acceptance of the variety and quirkiness of life. While eating Pop-Tarts, instant oatmeal, and freeze-dried eggs for breakfast alongside the Kobuk River, he senses the relativity of perspective and touches on the difficulty of making judgments about cultural differences:

> For those who do not believe what they have just read, allow me to confirm it: in Pourchot's breakfast bag are pink-icinged Pop-Tarts with raspberry filling. Lacking a toaster, and not caring much anyway, we eat them cold. They invite a question. To a palate without bias--the palate of an open-minded Berber, the palate of a travelling Martian--which would be more acceptable, a pink-icinged Pop-Tart with raspberry filling (cold) or the fat gob from behind a caribou's eye? (38)

Later he compares the homing trails salmon make in the river bed to the hapless ones left by their clumsy two-man kayak, saying he and Kauffmann left "Kleppler trails in the gravel" (81-82). In a description of the Alaskan aesthetic he quotes an architect and friend who has noted that "[a]esthetics are not compatible with survival" and then provides a picture of Sarge Waller at work in a yard that "contains boxes, traps, stove parts, cans, buckets, Swede saws, washtubs, tires, sawhorses, fourteen fifty-five gallon drums, and five snow machines in different stages of dismantlement" (212):

> He is out in his yard now, surviving. He is piling up wood. On his pickup--which has three spare tires, a gun rack, and a searchlight--is a load of driftwood he has collected from the boat-landing eddy. To heat his cabin through a winter, he needs at least five cords. His cabin, exhaling smoke, is angular and miscellaneous. Sarge himself is less vulnerable to heat loss. He is a big man, with a girth approximating four feet. His arms are legs of lamb. His large ovoid head is covered with Marine brush. In all this magnitude, his eyes, which are dark, seem small. Sarge is amiable, garrulous. (212-13)

The profile is no less factual because it is genial and amusing. A reader senses through McPhee's phrasing an outlook composed equally of astuteness, curiosity, and goodwill. Not only does one enjoy the scene, but one enjoys seeing it through the author's eyes and temperament, although, of course, only an individual can decide if such a voice causes one to identify with the author. It is probable, however, that one will not be offended either by

McPhee's cleverness or civility. Unless a reader has been previously persuaded to a partisan view of one of the book's issues, he or she has few obstacles to overcome in connecting with McPhee's tolerant attitude. Even in that case it would be difficult to resist entirely the charm of the text, because of its benevolence and fairness.

McPhee's persona and voice is effective in the same way that George Orwell's portrayal of himself in his essays is persuasive; this is the topic of Richard Filloy's article "Orwell's Political Persuasion: A Rhetoric of Personality." They are both ordinary, but admirable men:

> Orwell's hero is the sort of person his audience might be at their best: decent, caring, and basically good, but fragile under pressure; often wrong, selfish, and confused, but capable of sacrifice for the general good. In Burke's terms, Orwell surrounds himself with properties which establish his identity, an identity in which the audience wishes to share and believes it can share because Orwell has rendered it an ordinary one. (Filloy 64)

Although Orwell's personal opinions are generally much more prominent than McPhee's, both adopt the kind of ethical argument that attempts to draw connections between author and reader by revealing them to be equals, rather than by venerating the author or setting him above his audience in social status, integrity, or intelligence. Filloy believes this approach to ethical argument to be "a kind suited especially well to the egalitarian ideals of our century" (58-59). Additionally, this attitude toward the reader

exemplifies McPhee's implicit identification with his reader (the "assumed we" identification technique).

Another ubiquitous factor prompting identification between author and reader is the recursive formatting of the prose. As previously noted, McPhee continually weaves exposition around narratives, altering within every few pages his modes of discourse and showing particular fondness for profiles of individuals who represent the range of society. A reader becomes accustomed to this sort of movement going back and forth in time, from riverbank to city to town to cabin, from the Brooks Range to southeastern Alaska to the interior, sampling ways of life and indigenous attitudes, recognizing their appeal and their logic, sensing the influence of perspective on politics. One dips and skims through the state and acquires a sense of the parts as well as the whole, of shared values and points of sharp disagreement. This process of moving in and out of different contexts consequently becomes the anticipated progression of the text, and a reader develops a "collaborative expectancy" (Burke Rhetoric 58) regarding McPhee's patterning as he or she moves through the book. Often a framing narrative functions to keep one oriented, providing the security of knowing "where one is" at any particular moment, as when a reader picks the book up after a break from reading. But to some extent, depending of course on the reader's

preferences, one may develop a fondness for or merely a tolerance of departures from the narrative line. Nevertheless, the reader must participate in these departures, these samplings, to complete the book. If one takes the passenger's seat, he or she must accompany the driver where and when and however fast he drives along, reserving at all times the option of bailing out. In Coming Into the Country such participation causes an assumption of McPhee's dialectical way of thinking, at least for the duration of the reading period. This identification technique, though involuntary on the reader's part, may (as already suggested) function as a type of argument. If McPhee's approach to issues becomes attractive to the reader, his manner of dialectical thinking may even be adopted by the reader; having already experienced involuntary identification, the reader may be compelled to proceed with a more conscious, willful variety.

Furthermore, the complex movement of his prose enables one to identify with characters other than McPhee. Many of the people he encounters are likely to appeal to a reader, especially since McPhee portrays the majority of them sympathetically. Often, people like John Kauffmann, Jack Hession, Alice Powell, Willie Hensley, Governor Jay Hammond, Arliss Sturgulewski, Donna Kneeland, Dick Cook, Leon Crane, the Gelvins, Jim and Elva Scott, Michael John

David, Mike Potts and Adeline Juneby have access to a world and a fund of knowledge that is intriguing and informative when presented in the text. One is inclined, without knowledge of specific counterarguments, to accept their views and like these people as individuals. Yet one realizes that it is contradictory to accept them all entirely. For instance, even the positions of John Kauffmann, Willie Hensley, Brad Snow, Ed and Ginny Gelvin, and Michael John David (all of whom are portrayed as knowledgeable and reasonable) are incompatible. Kauffmann favors preserving "whole ecosystems, whole ranges, whole watersheds" (88) in park land. However, those who are most aligned with him in their appreciation of the wilderness and their reluctance to sell out to developers, the native Alaskans like Hensley and David, are uncomfortable with the federal control of land, fearing that even the designation of official wilderness status to land, as in the proposed Kobuk Valley National Monument, will cause them to lose their hunting and fishing rights (87), not to mention their traditional ways of life. Already the Native Claims Settlement Act has required Indians and Eskimos to accept the concept of private property. McPhee summarizes this effect late in Book III: "For all its overt benefits and generous presentations, the bluntest requirement of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was that the natives turn white" (393). The whites like Brad Snow who aspire to

subsistence living in the bush are allied by similar values to the Indians, but they feel powerless since they can no longer homestead, are forced to live in small towns, and have no voice in federal decision-making processes, lacking a supporting bureaucracy and financial clout. They do not want the land to be developed or regulated; these options do not account for their interests. Others like the Gelvins, who have lived in the state for decades, are uneasy with by all these stances, believing that the state has the right to develop and use its own resources without undue restriction from the federal government or environmentalists (313). Like natives and subsistence pioneers, however, they also favor individual use of the land so they can trap and mine freely. Consequently, their view of ecology differs from the others' but is nonetheless based on an appreciation of both the land's beauty and its bounty:

> "[People in the Lower Forty-eight] don't understand trapping. They don't understand the harvesting of animals," Ed says. "And they say that Alaska is 'fragile.' All this delicate ecology business just kills me. How could it be so delicate if it has survived all these Siberian winters? Alaska would be O.K. as a state if the feds hadn't kept two-thirds of it. Now under the native-land-claims act, they want to make eighty million acres into parks. My contention is that nothing stays the same in this earth. Everything changes. You can't keep anything. Even the vegetation changes. So all this preserving things--it doesn't work." (309)

Despite this endorsement of change, the Gelvins and others like them are equally unhappy about the suspension of the

Homestead Act and about stricter enforcement of mining regulations. In short, as the reader progresses through the text these overlapping alliances and conflicts imply that ultimately none of the individual views is sufficient to answer the just concerns of the citizens.

So the reader must look for a perspective that can account for and subsume all the others; the most apparent one becomes McPhee's, the voice of the reader's affable, thoughtful, and impartial guide, a man who listens carefully and identifies sincerely--if only partially--with all the factions. William Howarth suggests how McPhee's temperament becomes apparent to his readers:

> His own character, deliberately kept at the edge of the piece, still shapes the fabric and texture of its center. Style <u>is</u> the man: whenever McPhee's prose is short, compact, brisk, and edgy, there is also a facsimile of his own basal metabolism. (xi)

Just as his style reveals his personality, his endorsement of pluralism filters through the organization of his prose. McPhee's structure complements pluralism and simultaneously fosters the acceptance of this perspective in readers. Working together, McPhee's identification techniques--establishing common ground, appealing indirectly to attractive (and presumably shared) values, and exploiting the hypnotic effect of form--function as ways of moving the audience toward pluralism, itself a philosophy that requires identification.

These global techniques for encouraging identification between reader and author are punctuated by several pivotal moments in the narratives, which serve as local, concentrated efforts to establish identification, expose McPhee's own search for the best attitudes toward Alaska, and prompt the identification of the reader. These are the moments when McPhee reveals himself to be faced with experiences that unsettle him and cause him to enter into an internal dialogue regarding his own attitudes toward the basic civilization/wilderness conflict of the book. They also comprise the most thoroughly developed scenes in which McPhee appears as the central character, the lyrical self experiencing and interpreting events of personal significance.

At least one of these moments occurs in each book, and each treats McPhee's personal search for a balance between his love and hope for the preservation of the Alaskan wilderness (as well as all it holds) and his admiration for the people, the outposts of civilization, who inhabit the wilderness. These two factors are further mitigated by McPhee's pragmatic recognition of humanity's fundamental urge toward development. This conflict and McPhee's own working out of it are synecdochic of the relevant issues of the state, so in these moments a reader is exposed to yet another perspective, this time an intensely personal one, which exposes some of McPhee's deepest concerns and which

is also entirely relevant to questions about the capital move, government preservation, development and use of the land's resources, and citizens' rights to live as they like. Although these scenes are memorable, partly because they are some of the most fully dramatized ones, it is important to recall their modest proportion compared to the other vignettes, profiles, and discussions in the text. Consequently, a reader may remember these scenes vividly but probably will not take them, or the personal struggle and revelation they contain, to be the main thrust of the text; McPhee uses these lyrical moments to echo the rest of the book, providing an individual demonstration of dramatistic dialectic with which a reader may identify. Here is the dialectic that occurs within one man's heart and mind. In a way it is offered as a model to the reader; in another it functions as McPhee's honest and necessary statement of where he stands on the issues that he has presented. If one does not come to agree with him, then at least his perspective is known and can be accounted for.

The lyrical moments in Book I consist of McPhee's reactions to the first grizzly sighting. Though these reactions are embedded in much exposition of the subject of grizzlies, at two moments McPhee pauses to consider what the encounter means to him. The first of these appears in the midst of the anecdote while he and his companions are watching the bear and determining their course of action:

> Like pictures from pages riffled with a thumb, all of these things went through my mind there on the mountainside above the grazing bear. I will confess that in one instant I asked myself, "What the hell am I doing here?" There was nothing more to the question, though, than a hint of panic. I knew why I had come, and therefore what I was doing there. That I was frightened was incidental. I just hoped the fright would not rise beyond a relatively decorous level. I sensed that Fedeler and Hession were somewhat frightened, too. I would have been troubled if they had not been. Meanwhile, the sight of the bear stirred me like nothing else the country could contain. What mattered was not so much the bear himself as what the bear implied. He was the predominant thing in that country, and for him to be in it at all meant that there had to be more country like it in every direction and more of the same kind of country around that. He implied a world. (62-63)

McPhee's emotions in this passage range from panic and fear to epiphanal exuberance when he realizes that he is seeing the very essence of the wilderness. This encounter begins a struggle as well because he admits to himself that he has not found a comfortable posture toward the dangers of the Alaskan wilderness. At once he is frightened of the bear and drawn to it, recognizing that the grizzly symbolizes an existence beyond the comprehension and experience of man; like the wilderness, the grizzly must exist apart from humanity, and yet McPhee, like many people, is drawn toward a life that he cannot truly share. McPhee knows that wilderness and civilization are largely incompatible and that humans, at least, must recognize and respect the grizzly's right to his own territory. Philip Terrie describes McPhee's "inner discovery" as a recognition of

the distinctions that must be made between humanity and wildlife:

> In "The Encircled River" the thematic "point" of the narrative depends absolutely on our acknowledging the crucial function of the narrator and the deepened understanding he achieves of his place in nature. (4)

McPhee's concern throws light on the book's discussion of the paradoxical need for wilderness areas protected and defined by humans such as the proposed Kobuk River National Monument, and the difficulty and risks of cohabitation. Once the hike is over, McPhee realizes in a second reflection that this experience has gained him a concrete understanding of the wilderness; he is beginning to learn what life in the country, in Alaska, means and how a balance of wilderness and civilization might be reached:

> When I got into my sleeping bag, though, and closed my eyes, there [the grizzly] was in color, on the side of the hill. The vision was indelible, but fear was not what put it there. More, it was a sense of sheer luck at having chosen in the first place to follow Fedeler and Hession up the river and into the hills--a memento not so much of one moment as of the entire circuit of the long afternoon. It was a vision of a whole land, with an animal in it. This was his country, clearly enough. To be there was to be incorporated, in however small a measure, into its substance--his country, and if you wanted to visit it you had better knock. (71-72)

In short, for humanity to exist alongside the wilderness without destroying it, people must accept its risks and respect its sovereignty. This moment elicits a sympathetic response from the reader for McPhee because he behaves as

we might like to, with caution and intelligence, openly deliberating about the conflict without seeming cowardly, boastful, or foolhardy. He dismisses neither the danger or the attractions of contact with the wilderness, and suggests that if a man facing a grizzly might hope to survive, according the grizzly the same hope in facing the onslaught of civilization is only reasonable.

The oppressiveness of civilization for humans is the topic of the important personal moment in Book II, which occurs when McPhee feels he must escape the neon and noise of Anchorage. Roughly in the middle of "What They Were Hunting For," McPhee lapses into a paragraph of personal anecdote and revelation as if to suggest that the search for a new Alaskan capital situated in sight of Mt. McKinley, and in harmony with the geography and beauty of the state, might not be merely an indulgence but also another attempt to strike a balance between wilderness and civilization, a balance that Anchorage and other Alaskan cities have so far failed to accomplish. His stance here is clearly that of a middle-class American caught up in the hectic pace of city life, a position that a reader is likely to share occasionally. Again the moment touches directly on the civilization/wilderness conflict; this time the anecdote posits the necessity of the wilderness as an outlet for members of society:

> The first few days I spent in Alaska were spent in Anchorage, and I remember the increasing

> sense of entrapment we felt (my wife was with me), knowing that nothing less than a sixth of the entire United States, and almost all of it wilderness, was out there beyond seeing, while immediate needs and chores to do were keeping us penned in this portable Passaic. Finally, we couldn't take it any longer, and we cancelled appointments and rented a car and revved it up for an attempted breakout from town. A float plane--at a hundred and ten dollars an hour--would have been the best means, but, like most of the inmates of Anchorage, we could not afford it. For a great many residents, Anchorage is about all they ever see of Alaska, day after day after year. There are only two escape routes--a road north, a road south--and these are encumbered with traffic and, for some miles anyway, lined with detritus from Anchorage. We went south, that first time, and eventually east, along a fjord that would improve Norway. The road turned south again, into the mountains of Kenai--great tundra balds that reminded me of Scotland and my wife of parts of Switzerland, where she had lived. She added that she thought these mountains looked better than the ones in Europe. Sockeyes, as red as cardinals, were spawning in clear, shallow streams, and we ate our cheese and chocolate in a high meadow over a torrential river of green and white water. We looked up to the ridges for Dall sheep, and felt for a moment, about as free. Anchorage shrank into perspective. It might be a sorry town, but it has the greatest out-of-town any town has ever had. (133-34)

McPhee obviously struggles (although humorously, with his prison terminology) for a balanced perspective about city and country. He needs both, and to a large extent this moment encapsulates the entire development/conservation issue facing the state, especially since Alaskans have traditionally divided themselves sharply into extreme camps, at least until the 1974 election of Gov. Jay Hammond and the rise of a moderate approach to development. McPhee, thoroughly civilized, urbane even, demonstrates the

need for escape valves from society; knowing he is not of the wilderness, he also knows he is not entirely of the city; both worlds offer him valuable resources. The trouble is striking a balance between them.

Several significant moments of personal revelation appear in "Coming Into the Country," and at the end of this last book McPhee reaches some tentative reconciliations of his struggles with the decision to carry a gun, with the damage miners and developers are doing to the country, with the rights of people to live as they like in the bush, and ultimately with the general conflict between wilderness and civilization. These moments serve as the author's commentary on the preceding dialectic as well as a conclusion to the entire text since they all occur in its last thirty pages.

The first of these instances consists of the story of McPhee's anticipation and experience of walking from Cook and Kneeland's cabin to the Yukon alone, a distance of six miles, where he will meet Sarge Waller. Not having overcome his resistance to carrying a gun, despite the advice of others, he explains his apprehensions about the possibility of bear encounters:

> And here I am about to walk through the woods the distance merely from Times Square to LaGuardia Airport and I am ionized with anticipation--catastrophic anticipation. I may never resolve my question of bears--the extent to which I exaggerate the danger, the extent of the foolishness of those who go unarmed. The effect of it all, for the moment, is a slight but

> detectable migration of my internal affections from the sneaker toward the bazooka, from the National Wildlife Federation toward the National Rifle Association--an annoying touch of panic in a bright and blazing day. (409)

Weighing the stances of the environmentalist and the pioneer, McPhee attempts to find one that suits him philosophically and that will also mitigate his immediate fear of grizzlies. Not discovering an answer in either of the two clear alternatives, he distracts himself by wishing it were winter. Next he tries to persuade Cook to accompany him. When this plan fails, he is faced again with the dilemma when he listens carefully to his host's philosophic acceptance of the risks and worries of life in the wild. Cook, presumably for McPhee's benefit, "reviews the sterner facts of nature" (416):

> "In New York," [Cook] says, "people separate the concepts of life and death. In this country, their whole view of life and death would change. The woods are composed of who's killing whom. Life is forever building from death. Life and death are not a duality." (416)

Finally, Cook counsels that "[y]ou've got to have a healthy respect for the country" (417), and McPhee begins his walk on this note, even repeating Cook's words to galvanize his nerves and alert animals of his approach:

> Like an explosion in my face, a grouse starts up, two feet away, whirring. I break out in muskeg, back to heavy woods. I have a metal cup. I tap on it with a spoon. I pass bear scat, old and familiar. Tap. Now another mound. I have not seen that one before. Tap. Tap. In other words, never surprise a bear. One or two must be here somewhere. To make myself known, I deliver lectures to them in a voice designed to

> clear the hall. "Uncontrolled fear and deep respect are two different things," I explain to them. "You've got to have a healthy respect for what comes through the country." (417-18)

The tension of this moment is made manifest by McPhee's tapping, his report of small details, and his slight modification of Cook's philosophy, a modification suggesting that the author is absolutely sure he has a healthy respect for the wilderness and hopes that any bear overhearing him will return the favor. Like many people he adopts humor as a means of handling stress, and this tactic sees him safely to the Yukon.

But once he is out of danger, his earlier questions return, and he tries again to resolve the conflict. Still unsuccessful, the best he can manage is to bring the issue into sharp focus; it is the same issue that confronted him with his first grizzly sighting:

> The walk took less than two hours. I don't feel elevated by that journey, nor am I shy to describe it--just happy that it is complete. I scarcely think I was crazy to do it, and I don't think I was crazy to fear it. Still I am left awry. I embrace this wild country. But how can I be of it, how can I move within it? I can't accept the rationale of the few who go unarmed--yet I am equally loath to use guns. If bears were no longer in the country, I would not have come. I am here in a sense because they survive. So I am sorry--truly rueful and perplexed--that without a means of killing them I cannot feel at ease. A punctual speck appears on the river. Staff Sergeant James Waller, United States Marine Corps, Retired. Tap. (418)

This is a kind of non-resolution like the non-endings to his circular structures. The issue is clarified,

investigated, but no conflict is resolved, and to some extent the type of pluralism that McPhee supports circumvents clear-cut resolutions. Perhaps McPhee as author delays the resolution of his personal struggle a bit longer to challenge the reader to find one for him- or herself. In his book review David Gancher explains that "[o]nly at the end does McPhee admit his own personal feelings: he admits his ambivalence" (60). There is no doubt that through much of the text McPhee is ambivalent about the political issues currently at stake and about his own attitudes towards a wilderness, which despite its allure is too unpredictable and dangerous for him to romanticize or deny its crueler aspects. This is the ambivalence of a student busy observing and deliberating over facts, others' opinions, and his own inklings. Up until this point in the text McPhee has resisted a resolution of this issue and all others because he, like his reader, has been learning.

But McPhee's ambivalence ultimately changes from sheer indecisiveness to one which is inclusive, allowing him to find "a point of tolerance" (430) between conservation and development, wilderness and civilization. This is a variety of ambivalence which is less wrenching, a sort that one can live with, offering one the option of accepting both perspectives rather than only one of them. This change takes place on two levels: the first in the realm

of McPhee's own personal conflict and the second touching on his final attitude toward miners, river people, and Alaskans' general exploitation of the land.

The section immediately following the walk-out recounts a literal communion rite for McPhee as he consumes "fresh shoulder of grizzly--giving a new, unexpected, and grimly ironic turn to my approach to this creature" (419) while visiting Mike Potts and Adeline Juneby:

> The grizzly was tender with youth and from a winter in the den. More flavorful than any wild meat I have eaten, it expanded my life list--muskrat, weasel, deer, moose, musk-ox, Dall sheep, whale, lion, coach whip, rattlesnake . . . grizzly. And now a difference overcame me with regard to bears. In strange communion, I had chewed the flag, consumed the symbol of the total wild, and from that meal forward, if a bear should ever wish to reciprocate, it would only be what I deserve. (421)

This event is pivotal because now McPhee has done to the grizzly what he feared the grizzly would do to him. Further, he suggests that people who kill and eat wild animals are no less wild than those animals, and this notion decreases both his anxiety about being separated from the wilderness as well as his fear of the wilderness as an inscrutable foe. With this act, then, he enters the natural cycle of life and death, a story that has already been told in anecdotes about Eskimos and caribou (33-34), wolves and moose (311), and foxes and ravens (314). Consequently, he accepts the danger and adopts the belief that he is entitled to defend himself against it; when he

next finds himself alone at the Gelvins' mining claim, he carries a rifle. So his method of reconciling his personal conflict with the wilderness has been first to learn as much as he can about it, then to identify with the grizzly when he eats it at Mike Potts', and finally to let that communion supper transform him from a man who believes he is at odds with nature to one who sees himself as an integral part of it.

In Burkean dramatistic terms, McPhee takes the comic path of participating in a dialectic which is reconciled by a transcendence of the conflict. Transcendence entails a recognition of parity between human and grizzly, then adoption of a pluralistic outlook in which the bear and the man possess equal rights and powers in the wilderness. Once again McPhee schools a reader in pluralism by becoming an exemplar of it. He begins with a stance toward the wild that many readers are likely to share, reveals his own vacillations between attitudes, and then transcends them with an all-encompassing one. While I do not mean to suggest that McPhee prepares readers for their own grizzly meals (surely it is doubtful that many will be faced with such an option), I think he does expose the alternatives in such a way that a reader will feel compelled to think the issue through toward his or her own resolution. Also, it is important to note that McPhee never dismisses any of the alternatives, even when he determines they are not right

for him. A reader does not have to reject McPhee as a writer or individual if he or she selects an alternative different from the author's.

The final scene of personal reflection takes place at the Gelvins' mining claim where McPhee has asked his friends to leave him for a night alone. Although he does not proclaim it, the scene functions as a final meditation of the issues of the book and simultaneously as a rite of passage where he synthesizes all he has learned, observed, and felt into a comprehensive approach to the state and what it represents. Further, this is the last experience in the wilderness that McPhee narrates for the reader; after this scene, only a brief update of the people he has met in and around Eagle precedes the ending of the text. Clearly, the time for a conclusion has arrived. Even so, McPhee retains his mock heroic posture; not rising above his human frailties, he uses them to his rhetorical advantage, humoring the reader and keeping his or her defenses down. Specifically, McPhee portrays himself as disoriented in time, if not in space:

> Now alone in mountains nearly a hundred miles west of Eagle and at least thirty from the nearest human being, I am puzzled by the hour of the day. I have no idea what it is. I don't wear a watch. I am like that Frenchman deep in the caves who hadn't a notion of the hour and slept and ate only according to need. I wonder: Could I have prepared and eaten three full meals in only two hours? In twelve? Fifteen? If I could see the sun, the sun would not help. I have neither a map nor a compass with which to assess its position, and now, at the summer

> solstice, it rides so low above the mountain ridges and dips so briefly behind them that 4 A.M. looks much like nine and noon. (424-425)

This state of uncertainty imbues the whole scene with a tentativeness that is not only modest but also appealing. Shortly, McPhee will reach a conclusion for himself, but he admits to being caught up in the Gelvins' project so thoroughly that he reserves the right to reject or alter it. Nonetheless, at this point he is evidently more comfortable than during the walk-out, but McPhee still watches the surrounding tundra balds diligently. Interestingly he does not seem to be driving himself toward a revelation, but simply waiting for the Gelvins to return:

> With my monocular I look around, scan the middle ground, glass the hills. "Schizomotive" is the word for this situation. I regularly check the landscape in hopes of seeing what I am reassuring myself is not there. Moving around from place to place, stopping to use the monocular, I am like a watchman with a Detex key. I would give a lot to see caribou, and more to see a wolf. I am content with the bears I have seen, and prefer that they keep their distance--notwithstanding this big fella on my shoulder, a Winchester .308. (425)

He is not "at work" on a task of reaching for conclusions; there is nothing forced about the pattern of his thoughts and actions as he moves simply and informally from watching for animals and recalling the day before to finding his stance almost inadvertently while writing a letter home. Before he begins his letter, he recounts in detail Ed and Stanley Gelvin's construction of their mining operation from the smoothing of an airstrip to the fitting of a slick

plate, sluice box, and riffles, to the making of the first stream bed cut. After these steps are complete, accomplished in one day's work, the mine is ready for operation and the Gelvins fly home. This side-step into narration establishes once again the exact nature of mining projects, emphasizing the use of heavy equipment, the destruction of wilderness, and the size of such an operation. Then returning to the present moment, McPhee doubts himself again, preferring to think that he has little sense of time than to consider that the Gelvins could be anything but punctual in their promised return to work another day and take McPhee back home with them: "Perhaps I just lay down for an illusory minute, then got up and sprinkled salt in the iron pan for toast. . . Once more I scan the mountains, where nothing is passing but the day" (429). Once again McPhee credits others with admirable qualities and discounts his own patience. In a similar fashion he will characterize his readers as competent and fair enough to make good choices in their views on Alaska. Finally, out of boredom for something to do after having eaten and cleared the airstrip of rocks, he writes the letter home. This letter explains his attitude toward the fact that the Gelvins will make a "muck and gravel hash" out of a pretty stream and meadow to collect "a peanut-butter jar filled with flaky gold" (430):

> " . . . Am I disgusted? Manifestly not. Not from here, from now, from this perspective. I am

> too warmly, too subjectively caught up in what the Gelvins are doing. In the ecomilitia, bust me to private. This mine is a cork on the sea. Meanwhile (and possibly, more seriously), the relationship between this father and son is as attractive as anything I have seen in Alaska--both of them self-reliant beyond the usual reach of the term, the characteristic formed by this country. Whatever they are doing, whether it is mining or something else, they do for themselves what no one else is here to do for them. Their kind is more endangered every year. Balance that against the nick they are making in this land. Only an easygoing extremist would preserve every bit of the country. And extremists alone would exploit it all. Everyone else has to think the matter through--choose a point of tolerance, however much the point might tend to one side. For myself, I am closer to the preserving side--that is, the side that would preserve the Gelvins. To be sure, I would preserve plenty of land as well. My own margin of tolerance would not include some faceless corporation 'responsible' to a hundred thousand stockholders, making a crater you could see from the moon. Nor would it include visiting exploiters--here in the seventies, gone in the eighties--with some pipe and some skyscrapers left behind. But I, as noted, am out of sync with the day. Is it midnight? Is it morning? Is it late afternoon? Where on earth could the Gelvins be?" (430-31)

What is striking about this moment of decision is that despite McPhee's careful articulation of his own perspective, in a moment that could be termed his personal resolution of the issues of the entire text, there is no hint of insistence in his tone. After all, on the surface he is only writing a letter home and in this context does not need to assert himself strongly. Of course, that a reader has access to this private communiqué renders the letter rhetorical for his broader audience, rather than just descriptive in intent, as a truly private letter might

be. But even with the larger role of the letter in mind, he does not push for a reader to agree but only for one to "think the matter through" and choose his or her own stance. Instead of recommending a position, he recommends a process that accounts for the inevitability of subjectivity and attempts to correct that subjectivity with an awareness of the subjective stances of others. This is truly a generous empowering of the reader, to acknowledge him or her as equally informed and involved in the conflicts of the book and encourage that reader to find solutions too, as if McPhee expects to continue the discussion with the reader as participant at some future date. Furthermore, McPhee makes his own position more attractive simply by presenting it as imperfect, personal, open to alteration[1], and, of course, moderate and inclusive. The fact that his view occurs to him naturally, arising from an unplanned wait for his friends' return,

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[1]It is worth noting that a few pages later McPhee restates his conclusion while recounting a conversation with Brad Snow:

> If I were writing the ticket, I would say that anyone at all is free to build a cabin on any federal land in the United States that is at least a hundred miles from the nearest town of ten thousand or more--the sole restriction being that you can't carry in materials for wall or roofs or floors. (436)

This repetition implies that even though his conclusion is tentative, McPhee has embraced it with a degree of conviction.

further implies the flexibility of his view and how his choices are born of his experiences, rather than by an abstract study of issues. He finds a perspective with which it is difficult for a reader to disagree and still retain the unbiased, broad-minded qualities that the author has characterized his reader with through the implications of his tone and his expectations. Since a reader will not want to be classified as an extremist, he or she is likely to look favorably on the author's moderate position.

McPhee's final perspective on Alaska transcends all of the individual ones that he has learned in the course of his travels and research, and it is reasonable to suggest that to some extent he has even undergone a transformation from being inclined in Book I to agree with his old friend John Kauffmann that preserving the wilderness is more important than preserving those who choose a life in the wilderness to recognizing the value of preserving the land, animals, Eskimos, Indians, and pioneers equally. As William Howarth says, "In his own work McPhee strives for the balanced configuration of values" (xxiii), and in including himself in Coming Into the Country he reveals that he has struggled to find his own balance with the question of grizzlies and with the related issues of whether, how, and how much the Alaskan wilderness should be exploited and developed.

Clearly this pluralistic stance is one McPhee has struggled to find and present for several reasons, ranging from a personal desire to see the many factions of Alaskan society, wildlife, and geography continue to exist and function, a desire to inform his readers of what he has learned about the state, and an attempt (no matter how subtle, reasonable, or modest) to influence those who read his book. Because McPhee presents so much information and because his influence on a reader is so gentle and the view he stresses so reasonable, the rhetorical impact of the book is sometimes overlooked. Several critics and reviewers have interpreted the effect of McPhee's dual presence (author and character) as what Mas'ud Zavarzadeh would call "instrumental," in that he serves as "an articulating voice through which the interiority of events experienced by people is registered" (129). And to some extent this view is correct. For example, in his article "Letting Subjects Grow: Literary Nonfiction in The New Yorker," Ronald Weber explains how McPhee highlights the topic through the vehicle of his presence in the work:

> Throughout the book McPhee handles his authorial presence with immense care and shrewdness. His references to himself are usually fleeting and often amused. . . . And when he states his own views on Alaska, he is brief, almost whimsical, and aware of the strong influence of the moment on his thinking. . . . McPhee never becomes a subject himself nor does he insist that the material can exist for us only through him, but the personal tone and point of view of the book and McPhee's carefully arranged appearances help

> bring his vast subjects to concrete and haunting life. (497-98)

Similarly, George Roundy concludes his dissertation by arguing that McPhee immerses "his reader deeply in the story through a detailed record of his own immersion" ultimately for purposes of "the revelation of his subject" (216), and reviewer David Gancher believes that McPhee avoids "[r]hetoric [which]--no matter how well-intended or politically correct--is thin ice on which a polemicist must glide rapidly and lightly." Gancher maintains that with a rhetorical goal "[t]here is no time for a good look around. The virtue of McPhee's writing is its patience and confidence. There is no need to convince the reader of anything" (60). But these writers are not taking into account the fact that while McPhee is revealing his subject, he is also exposing his own approach to it, which ultimately constitutes a rhetorical act, encouraging readers to learn, yes, but additionally to come into the country in a fashion similar to McPhee. One reason why the reader does not need to be convinced of anything, then, is that he or she adopts the author's perspective through the course of the book as he or she identifies more and more with McPhee's persona and personality. Also, the goals of informing and persuading probably cannot be and do not need to be separated, especially in a work where the author provides much factual information, includes many perspectives, and develops a persona and an appealing,

humorous, and sophisticated voice of his own with which to present his views. McPhee himself has admitted to multiple goals; these do not have to create tensions in the work, as he implies in the Stephen Singular interview:

> Your work tries to communicate. Your motive is always to tell a good story while you're sitting around the cave, in front of the fire, before going out to club another mastodon. We keep finding new ways of doing this. (1537)

There is nothing unethical in this overlapping of goals: if an author selects a story to tell, it will be one that has meaning for him; consequently it is natural for him to attempt to convey that meaning to his readers.

William H. Rueckert explains the logic behind an aggregate of aims by glossing the aesthetic of Burke's Counter-Statement:

> In fact, Burke actually seems to contradict himself at certain points in the book, maintaining that poetry is an end in itself which "does not change the mold of our lives" and that poetry is above all a powerful rhetoric, effecting radical changes in the auditor. Actually, there is no contradiction. What Burke maintains is that, ideally, literature is an end in itself, the essence of which is 'eloquence'; and that it can be studied purely as ritual, concentrating exclusively upon the illumination, appreciation, and enjoyment of the poem qua poem. But in actuality, every ritual may also be a self-revelation (an image of the poet who wrote it), a revelation about the nature of reality itself, and a powerful piece of personal, historical, and universal rhetoric. (32)

Although all texts function in this way, McPhee has mastered the balancing of these goals in such a way that the reader, whether or not he or she is fully aware of it,

becomes engaged in a conversation in which McPhee presents his own perspective and simultaneously displays his respect for those he has met and interviewed, and for his reader. His approach to the rhetorical functioning of his work is analogous to Burke's notion of the "unending conversation" (Philosophy of Literary Form 111), which as Tilly Warnock has explained in her article "Reading Kenneth Burke" is both a theory of language and a theory of reading (74). Burke describes this conversation as follows:

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending on the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (Philosophy 110-11)

Critic Charles Schuster has also noticed a connection between McPhee's rhetoric and the progress of a conversation in his article "Mikhail Bakhtin as Rhetorical Theorist." Schuster sees a similarity between McPhee's tendency to demonstrate dialectic and Bakhtin's notion that language is "a conversation where a great many people talk at once" (605).

In her article Warnock extends Burke's conversation metaphor by applying it simultaneously to the process of reading, suggesting that

> Readers can confront a text eager to get in on the textual conversation, itself embedded in broader literary and historical contexts. At the same time readers can assert themselves into the textual conversation, bringing to bear on the text their broader experiences and expectations. In Burke's theory, neither the text, nor the author, nor the reader has the first or last word. (74)

It is my contention that McPhee recreates and generates such a conversation in Coming Into the Country by having his say, allowing others to have theirs, and encouraging readers to participate--tacitly, at the very least. In fact, more important than getting one to agree with his attitude toward Alaska is getting a reader to approach the topic at hand, and any other topic for that matter, dialectically. McPhee repeatedly urges readers "to think the matter through" (430) by presenting his own thinking processes, the play of numerous perspectives against one another, his provision of adequate resources and information for independent contemplation, and his reluctance to settle issues with definitive answers. The time, space, and emphasis he devotes to this broader rhetorical goal far outweighs that meted to his personal perspective. Inclining readers to this process becomes more important than influencing them to agree with his

personal resolution of the wilderness/development controversy of the text.

Since this approach is atypical, it has sometimes confused readers who view writing and rhetoric as essentially assertive. For instance, reviewer Philip French notices McPhee's offering of a variety of perspectives, but, because he is unused to a text which engages the reader in this way, chides McPhee and his editor for their indulgence in lengthy and interactive writing:

> McPhee regards the Alaskans with a tolerant eye, allowing us to draw our own conclusions. But this final part [Book III] is too long and meandering, and is indicative of the vices that accompany the virtues of New Yorker reporting under its present editor William Shawn. The magazine's founder Harold Ross edited the magazine tightly. Its profiles and articles were tough, self-consciously sophisticated, and rarely ran to more than six or seven thousand words.
>
> Under Ross's successor, the pieces have become longer, more benign, often without any strong viewpoint, other than a fascination with a subject and a desire to interest the reader in it. (830-31)

Unfortunately, French, when he does not find the firm answers, the "toughness" he expects, is unable to see that interesting the reader, pulling one into a conversation, is the very humble--and very high--goal of McPhee's text. French responds correctly to the text by recognizing the role of the reader but then cannot account for this sort of rhetoric and consequently rejects it.

Nonetheless, readers less demanding of answers and more intrigued by the people and the complexities McPhee introduces are likely to understand that he is enacting a kind of rhetoric that does not aim for conversion on particular issues but mutual understanding of those particulars, and, moreover, a perspective that acknowledges others' lives, values, and opinions, granting them significance equal that accorded one's own. McPhee attempts to establish parity between all rhetors and potential rhetors; he helps subjects, readers, and even himself locate in themselves and in social issues "a point of tolerance," a pluralism that will offer the possibility of "comic" and humane resolutions of conflict. This philosophy depends on the efforts of everyone involved to find connections between themselves and others, a type of identification which reaches toward mutual understanding and esteem. It is the sort of identification that McPhee has for his double, the other John McPhee, at the close of "North of the C.P. Line":

> Whenever I think about him, however, I feel such a strong sense of identification that I wonder if it is not a touch of envy--an ancestral form of envy, a benign and wistful envy, innocent of chagrin. As anyone might, I wish I knew what he knows--and wish not merely for his knowledge but for his compatibility with the backcountry and everything that lives there. I envy him his world, I suppose, in the way that one is sometimes drawn to be another person or live the life of a character encountered in a fiction. Time and again, when I think of him, and such thoughts start running through my mind, I

invariably find myself wishing that I were John McPhee. (292-93)

Chapter V

Pieces of the Frame: Patterns in McPhee's Work

When McPhee refers to his work, he often uses the phrase "a piece of writing" (see Sims 13, 15; Singular 1537; and Hamilton 53). Perhaps this choice simply reflects his personal modesty or a reluctance to label his work with anything but the most generic of terms. But such a designation also implies a characteristic outlook toward his work, one which acknowledges the particulate nature of one person's role in the composite discourse on a topic. McPhee claims only a discrete part of the discussion for himself, recognizing a conversation in which many people speak. Let us recall that he speaks of himself as "a reporter, a writer, repeatedly trying to sense another existence, and in some ways to share it" (Allen 232). Again, this appellation may be symptomatic of humility, even shyness and curiosity, but it may also imply a view of his role in any discourse about a topic as that of one participant among many in a given discussion. He does not aspire to discovering or providing readers the last, authoritative word on a topic; he simply offers pieces of the frame, a part or parts of what might be said or thought, tacitly implying the existence of other pieces and

viewpoints, whether they exist as the spoken or written opinions of experts and participants (which are often included in McPhee's work) or as the thoughts of readers. A survey of several patterns in his books reveals that pluralism is his standard philosophical stance.

This particulate, pluralistic outlook is also evidenced by a glance at the titles of his book-length pieces which often depend on plural nouns. Note, for example, Oranges (1967), Levels of the Game (1969), Encounters with the Archdruid (1971), Pieces of the Frame (1975), and Heirs of General Practice (1984). Although many of his titles do not reflect this pattern, one is tempted to say that this "parts to the whole" formula further indicates a characteristic approach to topics. In addition, other McPhee titles imply plurality--A Roomful of Hovings and Other Profiles (1968), The Crofter and the Laird (1970), and Table of Contents (1985)--suggesting that even when the topic itself does not designate a number of people or approaches, a plural view is possible, as when in the title piece to A Roomful of Hovings McPhee presents his profile of Thomas P.F. Hoving in eleven separate portraits that cover significant stages and moments of his life and career, giving his readers a multi-dimensional view of the man who became the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art at age thirty-six. Surely, the plurality of these

titles suggests something of a characteristic temperament and approach.

Each of the plural titles obviously and practically describes the scope of its book. A reader of Oranges learns about differences between such varieties of the fruit as Jaffa Oranges, blood oranges, Thomson Navels of Spain, Maltaises, Washington Navel Oranges, Valencias, Parson Browns, Pineapple Oranges, and Hamlins. Levels of the Game discusses the levels of achievement and competition in tennis from private clubs and individually sponsored development teams, to high school tournaments and interscholastic Championships, to college tournament circuits, and finally to national and international competition in the U.S. Open at Forest Hills. This discussion of levels is given context by a comparison of Arthur Ashe and Clark Graebner's personalities, backgrounds, playing styles, and, ultimately, their levels of achievement. Similarly, accounts of three meetings between former Sierra Club Executive Director David Brower and significant "natural enemies" (as claimed by the book's subtitle) make up Encounters with the Archdruid. Pieces of the Frame collects eleven separate articles on topics ranging from conservation, urban life, Scotland, and sports, while the title piece juxtaposes three scenes treating humans' fascination with and fear of creatures like the Loch Ness monster. Heirs of General Practice

samples the lives and careers of ten family medicine "specialists" and hints that actual specialists and subspecialists are likewise heirs of the Great American G.P.

Beyond the evident plurality of his titles and the subjects McPhee treats lies a more fundamental conception of the variety, multiplicity, and richness of views, factors, and people surrounding and composing the whole of any issue. Oranges treats not just the fruit, but its probable evolution; its cultivation and history; the growers, researchers, and pickers involved in the modern orange industry; the climate of orange-growing regions; and the harvesting and manufacturing of oranges as fresh fruit and as concentrate for juice. Even if the "pieces" supply only part of the story, McPhee consistently makes an effort to illuminate the multiple facets of a topic. Clearly, McPhee is compelled to take a "panoptic" view of his topics, a word that slips in and out of a number of his works; he explains this tendency to Norman Sims:

> I discovered that you've got to understand a lot to write even a little bit. One thing leads to another. You've got to get into it in order to fit the pieces together. (9)

In addition to McPhee's continuous effort to discover and fit pieces of information together, he draws on several patterns to help him with the actual fitting of the pieces, the composition of his works. In his pieces one typically finds variations of the architectural structure,

organizational strategies, and identification techniques that appear in Coming Into the Country; consequently he consistently suggests a pluralistic philosophy. This is not to say that he is limited to only one concept in all his works, but that the rhetorical impact of his books is similar and that his methods for creating this impact are distinctive and pervasive. McPhee's subject matter is greatly varied (despite the fact that he has pursued fields such as sports, conservation, and geography more than once). What doesn't change is an overarching search for a balance between polar and conflicting stances, theories, forces, or individuals. While McPhee has many facts to present, histories to sketch, individuals to profile, and controversies to deliberate, he has one metadiscursive way of resolving the disparate pieces: to search for a balanced perspective which can tolerate and accommodate many interests and factors and is therefore both informed and humane. This search is evidenced by his structural, organizational, and identification techniques. Because of his effective (and affective) employment of these aspects of his prose, structure, rather than assertion, functions as his rhetorical medium. His structural rhetoric reduces the need for directives and proclamations, which are rare; consequently, the clearest statement of his personal stance appears in Coming Into the Country where he advises the reader to think the matter through for him- or herself.

Architectural patterns vary in McPhee's work largely according to the length of the piece. As in Coming Into the Country, longer works are usually divided into parts which are self-contained and yet closely related, possibly to facilitate serial publication in The New Yorker. Encounters with the Archdruid and The Control of Nature (1989) each have three major, independent sections and raise their respective issues in different settings. Encounters contains accounts of a hike in Washington's Cascade Range with a mineral geologist ("A Mountain"), a visit to Cumberland Island off the coast of Georgia with the developer of Hilton Head ("An Island"), and a raft trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon with the commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, the premier dam builder of the nation ("A River"). The Control of Nature consists of reports from three battle zones between man and nature--one on the Army Corps of Engineers' efforts to direct the flow of the Mississippi River ("Atchafalaya"), another about the attempt of Iceland's citizens and scientists to protect the island town and harbor of Heimaey from the lava flow of an erupting volcano by cooling it with water ("Cooling the Lava"), and a final part about the ongoing efforts of the Sedimentation Section of the Los Angeles Department of Public Works to prevent life-threatening debris flows off the geologically unstable San Gabriel Mountains ("Los Angeles Against the

Mountains"). McPhee structures his geologic series in a similar fashion. The series is currently composed of three books with the promise of a fourth; all are to be gathered under the series title of Annals of the Former World. The three existing books, Basin and Range (1981), In Suspect Terrain (1983), and Rising from the Plains (1986), explain the geologic history of segments of the United States while proceeding west across the fortieth parallel, along Interstate 80; each book takes a single region as its subject.

The architecture of the longer books' major sections resembles that of entire shorter pieces. For the most part both are arranged as interrupted narratives in which the narrative line is more or less prominent depending on its significance to the point of the piece. The conspicuous frame of Levels of the Game, for example, is the semifinal match between Ashe and Graebner at the U.S. Open. The book begins with the first game of the first set and closes with match point; in between, of course, are numerous departures. In fact, the reader learns of Ashe's finals victory over Tom Okker before the last game of the semifinals is narrated. The suspense of the piece becomes the revelation of just how Ashe wins against Graebner. Here it seems important that McPhee retain the frame of one match, despite the fact that he has much to say about each player's life both before and after. Comparable books that

manipulate a narrative for suspense like A Sense of Where You Are (1965), The Deltoid Pumpkin Seed (1973), The Survival of the Bark Canoe (1975), and the three parts of Encounters emphasize the exertions of an individual or small group toward a definite goal, and while they contain departures and set pieces to add breadth, the conflicts are often inherent in a single situation, as in the clash of personalities between Henri Vallaincourt and the other canoeists in Survival, or in the differences between the Aeron Corporation's first president, Monroe Drew, and its first designer, John Fitzpatrick, depicted in The Deltoid Pumpkin Seed.

In other books, an episodic structure prevails. In Suspect Terrain, for instance, is unified by McPhee's car trip with geologist Anita Harris going west from New York to outside Chicago on I-80. Because this frame is not critical to McPhee's interest in the tensions between plate-tectonic theory and the Old Geology or to the concept of paradigm shifts in scientific study, it is adopted lightly, as a way of providing the reader reference points, but does not involve a dramatic heightening or climax. The I-80 route does have its purpose, however, since it follows the terminal moraine of the last glaciers. Nonetheless, the book has the pace of a travelogue and is much like the movement of Oranges, The Pine Barrens(1968), The Crofter and the Laird, Heirs of General Practice, and La Place de

la Concorde Suisse (1984), in which the reader is always aware of McPhee's travels and the books' progression but becomes more interested in the episodes, side trips, and departures from the narrative than in the actual route or method of development (which is not always evident anyway). Perhaps "Travels in Georgia," the first article of Pieces of the Frame, is the quintessential example of this type. Here McPhee accompanies two state employees as they drive around Georgia highways looking for road kills and persuading land owners to help preserve natural areas by registering their property with the Georgia Natural Areas Council; the personalities, values, and controversies of the piece unfold gradually, and according to no overt scheme, as the three encounter a variety of animals and people. These works have a calm, loose, meandering quality and seem to suggest McPhee's own legwork and developing awareness of the many sides of an issue; there is little drive toward a dénouement since the working out of these books' conflicts takes place more in the reader's mind, as he or she confronts them during the succession of scenes, than in a conclusion.

But what is essential to both architectural modes is the accommodation of a thorough investigation into the topic. That is why The Control of Nature has three examples and Encounters includes three narratives; one section might be enough for an essay asserting one

position, but one example would not have enough scope or room for data to enable McPhee to imply his broad-based rationale for a balance between extremes. While the episodic architecture of pieces like "Travels in Georgia" has all the space of a picaresque novel, the narrative architecture as seen in Levels of the Game is often interrupted with departures that can fill in background information and other perspectives, and the long, sectioned books overtly supply multiple examples. Always, the architecture attempts to manage multiplicity and complexity in an efficient, appealing, and comprehensive manner.

The breaks and shifts provided by McPhee's architectural schemes accommodate his organizational strategies; they enable a patterning of the local and incidental features of his prose according to two criteria: experientiality and interactiveness. McPhee uses synecdoches to expose readers to subjective perspectives, and then he multiplies the number and kind of synecdoches to formulate a dialectic about the topic. Consequently, a reader is encouraged to weigh contending views, facts, emotions, and values against each other while reading a text, thus participating first in the individual perspectives and ultimately in a dialectic which is integrally informed by those perspectives.

The foundation of this strategy is the recreated scene that provides the reader with a sense of being physically

present in the scene and, moreover, constitutionally involved in the topic. Such scenes saturate McPhee's prose, giving significant chunks of it the drama of fiction. Also, they compel a reader to abandon any detachment from the topic that he or she might have by forcing one to experience relevant events. The reader is then capable of understanding the issue from the perspectives of those emotionally, intellectually, and even financially interested. Often extending to a dozen or more pages in length, these scenes are rich in descriptive detail, dialogue, and unhurried narration of unfolding action. For the most part, they are cast in the present tense, which heightens their immediacy and tangibility.

Perhaps some of the most memorable recreated scenes appear in the last part of Encounters with the Archdruid when McPhee recounts highlights of his raft trip down the Colorado River with Floyd Dominy, the dam builder, and David Brower. Although there are five reconstructed scenes in this part, the first exemplifies McPhee's technique in Encounters as well as in most others. This first scene appears as the fourth marked section of the piece, after Dominy's career and past battles with Brower as Sierra Club executive director have already been sketched. This placement is significant. The previous sections school a reader in conservation theory from both perspectives; however, the recreated scene illustrates how personality

plays a role in individual beliefs and gives the reader a specific river, the Colorado, and a potential dam site at Havasu Canyon to ponder while reading about the thoughts, attitudes, and evidence which constitute the controversy. The section begins abruptly, at a point which is over halfway through the raft trip, with scenic details and an introduction to the antagonists' routine:

> Mile 130. The water is smooth here, and will be smooth for three hundred yards, and then we are going through another rapid. The temperature is a little over ninety, and the air is so dry that the rapid will feel good. Dominy and Brower are drinking beer. They have settled into a kind of routine: once a day they tear each other in half and the rest of the time they are pals. (174)

During the three hundred yards of smooth water and the next three and a half pages of prose McPhee describes both men, the other people on the trip, the raft, and the appearance and geologic history of the surrounding wilderness. The level of detail in characteristically high, as shown by this portrait of Dominy:

> Dominy is wearing a blue yachting cap with gold braid, and above its visor in gold letters are the words "Lake Powell." His skin is rouge brown. His nose is peeling. He wears moccasins and a frayed cotton shirt in dark, indeterminate tartan, and long trousers secured by half a pound of silver buckle. He has with him a couple of small bags and a big leather briefcase on which is painted the great seal of the Bureau of Reclamation--snow-capped mountains, a reservoir, a dam, and irrigated fields all within the framing shape of a big drop of water. Dominy has been discoursing on the multiple advantages of hydroelectric power, its immediacy ("When you want it, you just throw a switch") and its innocence of pollution. (174-75)

Such descriptions yield the notion both Brower and Dominy have appealing and aggravating qualities. McPhee explains that "both [are] showing off a little" (175) and that Browers's reticence is countered by Dominy's gregariousness.

These characteristics are then illustrated by the men's behavior. Brower braces himself for the upcoming rapid and quietly enjoys its wildness, while Dominy flirts with a gym teacher from Phoenix and displays bravado at Deubendorff Rapid, one of the thirteen "heavy rapids" on the river (180):

> There is a sense of acceleration in the last fifty yards. The water is like glass right up to where the tumult begins. Everything is lashed down. People even take hats and handkerchiefs off their heads and tie them to the raft. Everyone has both hands on safety ropes--everyone but Dominy. He giggles. He gives a rodeo yell. With ten smooth yards remaining, he lights a cigar. (181)

Making it through the rapid with hat and cigar intact, he is cheered as "the hero of the expedition to date" (182). The personality differences between the two men correlate later with their different approaches to nature: Brower is spiritually attached to undeveloped wilderness while Dominy revels in changing it for society's benefit.

The scene and the day continue through the pitching of the evening camp, a foot tour of Deer Creek Falls, dinner, and the evening's altercation between Dominy and Brower. This exchange again reveals the personal differences

between the two men, but now connects these to the issue. Neither is wholly reasonable or unreasonable; while Brower may depend too heavily on exaggerations (a fact established on page 173 and elsewhere), Dominy denies the loss of a wild river that a dam represents. They are evenly matched and skillful opponents:

> Tonight's fight was about siltation. When Brower finished his steak, he looked across the river at the flying plume of Deer Creek Falls and announced to all in earshot that Commissioner Dominy wished to fill that scene with mud, covering the riverbed and the banks where we sat, and filling the inner gorge of the Colorado right up to within fifty feet of the top of the waterfall. [This announcement refers to the proposed construction of a dam at Havasu Canyon, also in the Grand Canyon.]
>
> "That's God-damned nonsense," Dominy said.
>
> Brower explained quietly that rivers carry silt, and silt has to go somewhere if men build dams. . . .
>
> "They said Hoover Dam was going to silt up Lake Meade in thirty years," Dominy said. "For thirty years Lake Meade caught all the God-damned silt in the Colorado River and the Hoover has not been impaired."
>
> "No, but when Meade is low there are forty miles of silt flats at its upper end, and they're getting bigger."
>
> "Not appreciably. Not with Lake Powell three hundred miles upstream."
>
> "Yes, Lake Powell will fill up first."
>
> "When? Tell me <u>when</u>?" Dominy was now shouting.
>
> "In a hundred to two hundred years," Brower said quietly.
>
> "That's crap! The figures you work with aren't reliable."
>
> "They come from reliable people."
>
> "Nonsense."
>
> "Oh." (187-88)

The advantages of such scene-building becomes apparent in this passage. The details, reports of events and moments,

and transcripts of conversations reveal the personalities of the characters and provide a glimpse of how an individual's stance is affected by personality as well as by the facts, inferences, and interpretations that different people make. This is an effective way of revealing the complexity of an issue: by placing interested parties in the scene to discuss and even argue how that particular setting might be affected by a policy.

Comparable scenes appear throughout McPhee's books. The Pine Barrens, for example, begins with the story of McPhee's first meeting with Frederick Chambers Brown, a native "piney" (6-13). The account introduces the informality of life in the region, provides a picture of Brown's house, and samples pineys' direct, unpretentious manners and hospitality. The book includes at least two more scenes that recreate the Barrens and treat the issue of regional development. One records the atmosphere and typical events of the Chatsworth General Store and seems to be a precursor of the mail day scene in Coming Into the Country. A reader watches as locals buy gasoline and soft drinks and sit on the oak plank placed over the radiator (78-83, 88-89). McPhee also includes an account of a visit to the site of a proposed jetport with the planner for the project then follows planner Herbert Smith around, quotes him, and describes his plan alongside a description of the part of the barrens that such a development would

eradicate. In Levels of the Game the point-by-point narrative of the tennis match, emphasizing the players' thoughts and concentration, functions as a distilled synecdoche for the lives of Ashe and Graebner; McPhee interviews each as they review a tape of the match to discover, as much as possible, the players' different approaches to competition. The Crofter and the Laird offers memorable, humorous recreations that reveal the truculence and independence of natives of Colonsay, an island in the Hebrides, and their prickly relationship with the laird. Included are an account of a Coast Guard rescue drill (84-86), a vignette about a lobstering outing with Donald Gibbie (20-24), and a view of the laird's love and knowledge of boats as well as his frank demeanor as McPhee helps him prepare his launch for a group of marine biologists to use while studying seaweed (113-17). In Survival of the Bark Canoe the reader witnesses Henri Vallaincourt's self-confidence and talent as one watches him carve a perfectly proportioned center thwart by sight (13-22). Later one tastes his moodiness and arrogance as he insists on crossing a lake during high wind (74-75).

The pattern continues in more recent works. Anita Harris' return visit to her childhood home in Brooklyn (20-35) and her jubilant reactions to roadcuts along the interstate route (157-60) are reconstructed in In Suspect Terrain. Heirs of General Practice recreates numerous

visits of local patients to the clinics, offices, and hospitals staffed by family practice doctors. Each part of The Control of Nature also features recreated scenes. In "Atchafalaya" McPhee goes along on the yearly Low-Water Inspection Tour made on the Army Corps of Engineers' tow boat Mississippi (15-26, 55-57, 64-68), an event which is part party, part public hearing, part public relations gimmick. In the next part, McPhee recounts a visit to the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory to establish the nature of an active lava flow, and to experience the heat and uncertainty of walking on partially cooled lava (151-59). This section serves to substantiate the preceding anecdotes told by Icelanders with McPhee's own first-hand experience. The final section of the book includes a number of vivid accounts of families' experiences of being caught up by or buried in debris flows off the San Gabriel Mountains. The most prominent of these is the Genofiles' story, which includes details about how the family of four was trapped in their house by the flow, discovered by neighbors, and dug out by Flood Control (183-86, 197-202).

The major purpose of recreated scenes is to help the reader experience places, competition, disputes, and catastrophes in a multi-dimensional fashion by foregrounding the emotional, ethical, and logical facets of the relevant issues. Consequently, a reader may more thoroughly understand how all these factors affect one's

perspective on an issue. They serve as synecdoches of individuals' lives, beliefs, careers, and of the various views and stances available toward an issue. They may illustrate positions but rarely function to persuade the reader to accept wholly a particular stance, since often the rationale behind them seems to be an effort to humanize abstract concepts and controversies, revealing the people whose lives are affected by them and those who have taken sides concerning them.

The interactive quality of McPhee's organizational strategies is achieved by his use of varied modes of discourse during departures from the narrative line. This is one way in which the extensiveness of his research becomes evident, for the sundry excerpts from other texts, profiles, histories, and the surveys of opinions testify to exhaustive reading, questioning, observation, and compilation of information from diverse sources. These elements also suggest that McPhee encourages readers to weigh the many facets of issues while searching for one's own stance, and the mosaic surface of his prose implies that the endeavor should be earnest. McPhee never investigates various stances to determine how to refute others' arguments, to use their ideas and statements against them. For that matter, he never attempts to win an argument in the way that Brower and Dominy do in their disputes, because his goal is a transcendence of the

dispute with the recognition of a need for a pluralistic compromise. In this way these set pieces do not function as a traditional means of supporting an assertion; rather, they foster dialectic thought on the part of the reader and, at least metaphorically, initiate interaction between participants and readers.

Some types of departures appear so regularly in McPhee's books that they may be said to be trademarks of his style. One of these is his use of excerpts from diaries, letters, papers, and reports. For example, The Pine Barrens contains over two dozen brief entries from a "semi-official diary" kept by the clerk of a nineteenth-century iron foundry in Martha, New Jersey (30-33), which provides a vivid sense of the employees' hard work and hard living. "Travels in Georgia" quotes a handful of entries from Carol Ruckdeschel's notebooks; as one of the two state biologists in the piece, she has a friendly and extensive relationship with wild animals:

> 12 May. Caught Natrix erythrogaster flavigaster, red-bellied water snake 9:30 A.M. Saw quite a large gator at 9:35. Ten feet. Swarm of honeybees 24 feet up cypress at edge of creek. Large--six foot--gray rat snake in oak tree over water. Elaphe obsoleta spiloides. Tried unsuccessfully to knock into canoe. Finally climbed tree but snake had gone into hole in limb. (19)

Heirs of General Practice likewise includes Sandy Burnstein's sketches of his patients' family histories (30-40) to illustrate his literal interest in family

relationships and his belief that "a doctor who treats your grandmother, your father, your niece, and your daughter will be more adroit in treating you" (36). Similar citations appear in The Survival of the Bark Canoe where McPhee defers first to Howard I. Chapelle's book The Bark Canoes and Skin Boats of North America for exact descriptions of bark canoes' dimensions and construction (6, 18, and 117-44 in an appendix) and then to Henry David Thoreau as the preeminent voyager through the Maine woods (37-42, 83). He also quotes a chronicler of log drivers, Fannie Hardy Eckstrom, who sold stories about loggers to The Atlantic Monthly during the first decade of this century (80-83). The Curve of Binding Energy boasts a kind of intertextuality in its use of nuclear physicist Theodore B. Taylor's personal letters (32-34, 77-80), as well as passages excerpted from Mason Willrich's Global Politics of Nuclear Energy (96-97), physicist Freeman Dyson's lecture "Mankind in the Universe" (178-80), and parts of a government report (207-10) about the protection of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium in three civilian "facilities" (206). These excerpts all suggest that McPhee is open to other texts that may offer depth and detail beyond what it is meaningful or necessary for him to summarize and/or transpose into his own words. They are evidence of his own active deliberation and his willingness to let the people he writes about speak for themselves.

Another characteristic departure from the narrative frame consists of surveys of opinions of individuals informed about or involved in the issue. These passages take the form of lists of compiled, often anonymous, quoted statements, each a few sentences in length. Sometimes these surveys focus on an individual, as in the poll of Sierra Club directors' opinions of David Brower and their vote to remove him as executive director in Encounters with the Archdruid, and in The Crofter and the Laird, where the islanders' wide range of opinions on Donald Gibbie (44), Donald Garrard (62-63), and Euan Smith, the laird and fourth Baron of Strathcona (101-107) are outlined. Often, though, the survey sketches the sweep of attitudes toward a controversial issue. Heirs of General Practice samples specialists' views of the family practice movement (88-97); La Place de la Concorde Suisse cites a dialogue assembled from statements made by Swiss colonels, majors, and captains about the readiness of the Swiss Army and its exclusively defensive mission (26-32); and The Curve of Binding Energy scans the range of professional people's opinions about society's tolerance of nuclear explosions (4-7), the safety of nuclear reactors (140-43), and the possibility of radical groups stealing weapons-grade material from manufacturers (219-20). Variations of this mode appear in The Control of Nature where McPhee quotes realtors' and homeowners' reactions to his questions about

debris flows, revealing in large part their determination to deny their occurrence (252-54), and in In Suspect Terrain when he excerpts an exploratory discussion between plate-tectonic geologists "trying to puzzle out the details" (143-48). These surveys function in themselves as interactive dialogue about McPhee's topics and simultaneously expose readers to many opinions, which, though routinely made by experts, are stated as interpretations and individual views. This feature leaves the issues open for a reader's contemplation.

Also typical are set pieces which tell the history of a town, region, individual, or concept, implicitly contrasting the past with the present and using it to explain the peculiarities of the current state of affairs. These historical anecdotes once again encourage readers to assemble their own broad understanding of a topic by thinking through causes and effects and recognizing recurrent patterns of events. In Suspect Terrain is a prime example of this technique since it repeatedly juxtaposes the concepts of geologic time, human time, and the life spans of scientific paradigms. The book recites several histories at once. On the most familiar level, the story of Anita Harris' life and career is provided, explaining to a reader how she escaped the ethnic slums of Brooklyn, pursued her career, discovered an important indicator for the location of oil, and finally developed

her own catastrophic approach towards geology along with her suspicions about plate-tectonic theory. The geologic history of North America is sketched in counterpoint to her personal history and discusses the formation of the Appalachian chain and the eastern coast as well as the effects of geologic events such as glaciation in the last ice age. Throughout this introduction to geology, Harris reminds McPhee (and vicariously reminds readers) that "geology repeats itself" (63, 84, 116); this notion serves not only to instruct a reader about the topic at hand, but supplies insight into the history of ideas positioned at the end of the work. The first three of the book's four sections discuss plate-tectonic theory as the latest answers to the earth's mysteries in conjunction with Harris' uneasiness with the way the theory has been accepted without sufficient support by fieldwork. The final section places this theory and accompanying paradigm shift into historical perspective by employing discreet set pieces to relate the seismic shifts in thought caused by nineteenth-century geologists like James Hutton and Louis Agassiz, both proponents of continental glaciation, and by Charles Darwin (173-85, 190-97). These lessons in the history of science reveal how new ideas are resisted until evidence and changes in thought render them conceivable. Readers can easily see parallels between the cold reception of Hutton and Agassiz's theories, Agassiz's own rejection

of evolution, and Harris' caution regarding plate-tectonics. As Robert Hatcher, a professor of geology at the University of South Carolina, says in his review of the book,

> In Suspect Terrain provides a great deal of information about the way many geologists think about science, about scientists' skepticism of each other, about the necessity of a multitude of opinions on any concept, and about the necessity for continual questioning and revising of new and old ideas. (94)

So this text uses historical anecdotes to illustrate both the need for pluralism and dialectic in scientific inquiry. Although McPhee does not explicitly link the book's historical strands, it is clear that he intends for them to inform a reader's understanding of geology as a whole. The juxtaposed histories of the book further imply that the most intelligent tack for an individual to take toward controversies in general is one that is open to all relevant information and makes an effort to resolve points of conflict with an outlook that can accommodate as much data as possible. Despite her reservations about the grand claims of "the plate-tectonics boys" (5, 118, 142), even Anita Harris accepts some of their interpretations of geologic events, and she admits that they have brought new people and excitement into the field.

Many other books incorporate historical anecdotes for similar purposes. In The Crofter and the Laird the history of clan life and the events that led to the

breaking of the clans (3-10) alert a reader to differences in roles and attitudes held by Colonsay natives and the current laird, whose great-grandfather bought the island from the last McNeil laird. The legendary history of the island which closes the book (133-59) further underscores differences between the time when clan life flourished and its present obsolescence. The Survival of the Bark Canoe includes a section (55-63) which illustrates the practicality and importance of bark canoes to fur trading in its heyday during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These anecdotes explain the development of the longest canoes and of the mutually profitable trade between Indians and white men that they enabled. Similar set pieces in Oranges and The Pine Barrens sketch the development of the orange industry in Florida (88-117) and the relatively short-lived smuggling and iron industries in the New Jersey wilderness (23-40). Both help a reader to comprehend the current economics of their respective regions. La Place de la Concorde Suisse describes the history of the Swiss Army (47-56) to explain its members' reputation as fierce soldiers, the development of the Swiss Army knife, and the traditional relationship between Switzerland's business sector and the military (Swiss mercenaries returned home with the money that started the country's banking industry). Histories of the growth of New Orleans (30-42) and Los Angeles (239-48) in The Control

of Nature provide insight into how and why Americans ever presumed to take on the Mississippi River and the San Gabriel Mountains; the necessity of these ongoing battles developed over time, a point that mitigates the hubris that otherwise characterizes these efforts. In all these works McPhee adds depth to his coverage of the issue by including a historical perspective and, more generally, implies that events are best approached from a broad context.

McPhee's trademark set pieces function as structural components interacting with and fleshing out the narrative frames of his books. In this way he comments on his topic, time and again reaching toward a perspective that genuinely attempts to account for the complexity of issues and multiplicity of voices. In her article about the unique features of Kenneth Burke's prose style, Tilly Warnock applies the adjective "heuristic" to it, explaining that it "engag[es] . . . readers in the process of making connections but which also, paradoxically, project[s] them beyond the texts, not to a meaning designated or fixed by the words but to a reality indicated by them" (69). McPhee's books have a similar influence upon their readers. The structural patterning within his individual books and throughout his works acts to adapt readers to McPhee's characteristic world view; through the identification mechanism of "collaborative expectancy" (Burke Rhetoric 58)

readers come to anticipate a text that investigates and balances opposing forces.

McPhee's tone and persona complement the structural impact of his books. Typically, he appears intelligent, droll, and modest, a demeanor that validates the dialectic of his prose because of its forthrightness. As in Coming Into the Country, McPhee often portrays himself as ordinary, equally subject to the discomforts and pleasures of his journeys. In part one of Encounters with the Archdruid he suffers from a bone spur under one heel that makes the hike toward Image Lake difficult (35). He is also stirred by his group's finding copper rocks on the trail (52-55) and thus reveals his belief that it is quite natural for humans to want to remove copper and other valuable minerals for their own use. He is neither puritan nor epicurean. Neither is he heroic or overly self-confident. In Survival of the Bark Canoe, he confesses to being so tormented by insects during the night that he resorts to desperate measures:

> At 3 A.M., I got up and went out of the tent and down to the shore. I went into the water like a fly-crazed moose. I stayed in the lake in the dark for an hour, as I had in the river the night before, only the nose out--dozing. (43)

He tires of his freeze-dried food packets during the second half of the trip (100) and dreads paddling all day through heavy wind (74). While accompanying hydrologist Wade Wells and debris-flow specialist Edwin Harp on a trip up the San

Gabriel Mountains to collect undisturbed soil samples in part three of The Control of Nature, McPhee is uneasy walking on the steep slopes and prefers to sit on the sharp needle grass to take notes as the specialists stand, walk, and nonchalantly go about their tasks (207).

Also capable of occasional misstatements and faux pas, he narrates his own mildly embarrassing moments for his reader's enlightenment. For example, during his research for "Los Angeles Against the Mountains" he visits Leon Silver, a geologist at California State Polytechnic University and slips while discussing the danger of the San Gabriels:

> "Yes," I said. "The rock up there is really rotten."
>
> Silver seemed offended. Drawing himself up, he said, "I beg your pardon, sir. It is not rotten. It is shattered." (225)

In The Crofter and the Laird he recounts his accidental killing of an islander's chicken when he runs over it with his car. In an effort to abate the intense gossip of the community and the risk of being thought inconsiderate, McPhee apologizes and pays the owner for the loss (93-94). In Suspect Terrain reveals his imperfect knowledge of basic geology; at one point Harris must explain to him the significance of dips in folds of mountain rock:

> "The dip always points upsection, always points toward younger rocks," Anita said. "You learn that the first day in Geology I."
>
> "Do you ever get tired of teaching ignoramuses?" I asked her.

> She said, "I haven't worked on this level since I don't know when." (83)

Moments such as these establish McPhee as modest, unassuming, and alert to the humorous overtones of situations and statements. He functions as the reader's proxy, asking basic questions, feeling a little fearful on a steep slope or drained by physical exertion, and continuously curious about the topic, hazarding his own dignity to facilitate his research and enhance his readers' comprehension. This persona further suggests that McPhee as author is not so sure of his own judgments that he attempts to compel readers to agree with him. Instead, he asks that we vicariously live through his experiences, learning what he learns and acquiring a sense of the whole phenomenon of an issue. Such a process entices readers to identify with the undeclared but participatory pluralism inherent in the structure of his books.

This discussion of the patterns in McPhee's work might inadvertently suggest that his books are formulaic. But that is not the case. Their varied subject matter and insistent use of reconstructed scenes reveal that each book constitutes an organic inquiry, as opposed to a static presentation composed of stock elements. If anything, McPhee's handling of the patterns affirms each book's singularity because these very features resist the abridgment of information and experience that is typical of much nonfiction. Rather than pare his findings into a

monotonic argument, McPhee repeatedly draws attention to irreducible moments, exchanges, histories, and facts by presenting them in full, at the level of direct discourse, thereby keeping summary and interpretation at a minimum. The patterns he employs help him make this plenitude accessible and coherent. A resonant image from In Suspect Terrain serves as a fitting analogy for the complexity and unity of McPhee's writing.

> A braided river carries such an enormous burden of sand and gravel that it does not meander through its valley like most streams, making cutbanks to one side and point bars opposite. Instead, it runs in braided channels through its own broad bed. (84)

McPhee's own braiding of architecture, organization, and tone enable an interweaving of numerous voices and richly detailed data into pieces of writing that both demonstrate and foster pluralism.

AFTERWORD

In a thoughtful and detailed article connecting nonfiction to the teaching of writing ("Reading Nonfiction in Composition Courses: From Theory to Practice," College English), Phyllis Frus McCord proposes that writing teachers instruct students to read all genres of nonfiction as literature, asking them to distinguish the plot (the way something is said) from the story (what is said). She believes that this approach to readings will help students

> to see their own and one another's writing not as attempts to capture and mirror reality or truth, but as efforts to produce a plausible, convincing version of ideas or events, of which there are many other possible versions. (751)

By this sort of "'process' reading" (758), she also suggests that students will often be able to discern how a finished piece of writing exists as the legacy of the writer's thinking, writing, and revision processes since "traces" of composition stages and, I would add, of the writer's choices will remain in the text.

This approach can be extended to help readers identify the types and number of outside sources that writers consult as they research and invent. McPhee's prose is especially enlightening in this regard; students reading McPhee (and no doubt many other writers) can consider how

an author is able to include specific descriptions and quotations in his or her work because of the observation, note-taking, and interviewing that precedes drafting. My teaching experience suggests that students are generally surprised by the amount of legwork that supports a McPhee piece. By looking for evidence of his research, prewriting, and invention, they discover that composing involves more physical exertion and contact with others than they had supposed. This extension of McCord's method can demonstrate that writing is an active pursuit, as opposed to the presumption of some student writers that writing denotes isolated and somewhat passive contemplation.

McCord gives her method a decidedly literary context, which allows her to make several claims about the merit of reading nonfiction. She asserts that any text may be read as literature, that some nonfiction should be regarded as literature, and that this approach is easily implemented, since writing teachers are familiar with literary exegesis. Despite this context, the method she proposes also has the advantage of alerting students to the functioning of rhetorical motives and choices inherent in any symbolic act. In other words, focusing on structure in literary analysis yields an appreciation of the artistic accomplishment (or degree of it) in nonfiction prose as it simultaneously points readers to the machinations and

comprehensive rhetorical effect of a text. It is not necessary to make distinctions between literary and rhetorical analysis here, however useful they may be elsewhere, since the practical effect of this teaching method renders the study of nonfiction more obviously relevant to a process-oriented writing class.

Clearly, I believe that asking students to read and analyze works by authors such as John McPhee is a good idea; it is an even better idea for students in composition courses, where their insights into and impressions of the works may prompt them to try out new invention, research, drafting, and revision techniques. Perhaps they may even attempt to use some of the subtle rhetorical strategies that appear in accomplished nonfiction. I hope that my study of McPhee's structural patterns illustrates some of the fruitful avenues that may be pursued when discussing McPhee and other nonfiction writers, or even when a class critiques so-called referential prose such as "objective" news reports.

I also think that McPhee is particularly rewarding as the subject of a writing class discussion because of his mastery of detail and use of factual information, because of his orchestration of an immense repertoire of structural modes and effects, because of the evidence of his own research in his prose, and finally because of his customary advocacy of dialectic and pluralism, which I suspect are

taught less often than discursive argumentation as legitimate rhetorical ends. Beyond these sufficient pedagogical reasons, McPhee's books and articles are humorous, enjoyable, informative, and moving. There is health and pleasure in reading them. I agree with George Roundy, who quotes the description of Chef Otto offered by the cook's wife from McPhee's "Brigade de Cuisine," a description which McPhee himself has envied (xvi) and most definitely earned:

> He is so good with flavor because he looks for arrows to point to the essence of the material. His tastes are very fresh and bouncy. He has honor, idealism, a lack of guile. . . . He has intelligence. He has education. He has character. He has integrity. He applies all these to his manual task. His hands follow what he is. (Giving Good Weight 261)

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