Themes of Isolation and Relationship in Selected Novels of Frederick Manfred

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THEMES OF ISOLATION AND RELATIONSHIP
IN SELECTED NOVELS OF FREDERICK MANFRED

BY

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The initial appeal of the novelist Frederick Manfred for this student of American literature grew from the fact that he is a contemporary writer and that he lives in the Midwest, more precisely, in Siouxland. At first his novels seemed primarily entertaining, but interest in his work developed with an awareness of a parallel between Manfred's concepts of the isolation of man and relationship to his fellow man and modern psychological ideas. Throughout the research and study of several novels, insights have crystallized to form a clearer idea of man's search for identity and the results of that search in his life.

Most of Manfred's novels portray life in the early settlements on the plains of Siouxland. This is his home and the region he knows best. Many critics believe that he is one of the best novelists to write of this period and setting. He has the ability to present realistically the thoughts of his characters and to give a feeling of the times he portrayed.

Manfred has also expressed universality in the characters and their struggles. For example, the search of No Name, the young Indian lad in Conquering Horse, for his identity and purpose in life is a search every young man experiences.

Two themes have emerged from a continued study of the novels and have become the focus for the research in this paper. Manfred shows in the lives of his characters two realities of human experience, an
understanding of which seems essential to the healthy development of personality. These are the themes of isolation and relationship. Such a study in five selected novels of Manfred yields insight not only into Manfred's characters but also into the struggle of every man to find himself. Furthermore, as the study has grown, it seems to explain the nature of Manfred as a person, as well as a writer. When the study was completed, the heroes in the novels were familiar but it was the character and thought of Frederick Manfred that had been revealed to this writer. Particularly meaningful were his beliefs in individualism and relationship with others.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the themes of isolation and relationships in five novels of Frederick Manfred. This provides a clearer understanding of the modern concept of the individual's search for identity and an insight into the character of the author. The five novels chosen for this paper were selected on the basis of the insight they give into Frederick Manfred's beliefs about man and how he discovers his own identity. Certain aspects of his writing led to the choice of these specific novels.

First, critics agree that Manfred's novels are weak when they stray from the concerns and interests that are closest to him. For example, he is out of his element in the city or in university life. However, his writing is forceful and instructive when set in the time of the early settlements in this country and in the area known as Siouxland. His background and personal interests make him well suited to write of that period and setting. The Indian mind, because
it seemed so in tune with its environment, challenged Manfred. He utilized as subject matter the early Indian and his thinking. The critics have also observed, as will be shown in Chapter Two, that the autobiographical approach in his writing makes the thoughts and actions of his characters more understandable to the reader. He feels what he writes and he has the ability to translate those feelings to his reader.

Second, certain themes are apparent from his novels. They are most marked in those set earliest in time in the West, where isolation was, of necessity, a part of man's existence. The complementary theme of relationship naturally follows. Man, though sometimes isolated, also lives with other people in a society. In the give and take of his association with other people, a man must come to some understanding and commitment. Specifically, Manfred portrays the close family and church ties and how they affect the individual. Here a man must evaluate his own ideas against those of others and then make decisions for himself.

_Morning Red_ is an exception to the other four novels because its setting is the city in the 1930's. For the purpose of this thesis it is used for its strong emphasis on isolation and relationship.

The early settlers lived in an untamed and often alien wilderness. They had to learn to relate with nature as they found it and know what they could expect from it. A good relationship with the land was essential to life in the early West.
Finally, an understanding of the real Frederick Manfred emerges from these novels. He is a man who is bound by tradition and yet must have his freedom. He is a man who has close family bonds and is still influenced by the beliefs of a church whose doctrines he has partially rejected. He is a man who needs to be alone and who enjoys solitude. These aspects of his personality are evident in the themes of isolation and relationship in his novels.

In order to accomplish the purpose of this thesis, it is necessary to examine first the life and writing of Frederick Manfred. This will be done in Chapter Two. Chapter Three will examine the theme of isolation in the novels, and Chapter Four investigates the various means of establishing relationships. Before proceeding to this however, it is necessary to give a brief summary of the five selected novels.

1

The earliest novel, in an historic sense, is *Conquering Horse* (1959). Dated about 1800, it is the story of a tribe of Sioux Indians who rule the land before the white man came. It was a time when the Indian still had pride in his person, his tribe and his land. The Indian brave lived for two things, to increase the wealth and power of his tribe and to live in peace and harmony with the nature which sustained him.

No Name was the son of Chief Redbird. His older brother had died so only he was left to take over leadership of the tribe when his father became too old. But Indian tradition held that a lad was
not a brave, could not hunt, could not own horses, could not have
the name of a brave until he had had a special vision. This novel is
the story of an Indian lad's search for his vision and his long
struggle to fulfill that vision.

2

**Lord Grizzly** (1954) is based on fact. In about 1823, a trapper
was badly injured in a wrestle with a grizzly bear, the animal most
feared by mountain men. His condition was so bad that his comrades
left him for dead. The records disagree as to the distance but Hugh
Glass crawled from 140-200 miles to the nearest fort before he got
help. He had to tend his own wounds, and set his own leg. He had
to find his own food. He ate roots and caught wild animals when he
could. In the long crawl he tussled with the problem of what to do
with the men who had deserted him.

3

Every year Pier Frixen believed would be the year of his bumper
crop. Each spring as he planted, he looked forward to the unprece-
dented harvest in the fall. **This is the Year** (1947) takes its name
from Pier's optimism. But he never had that bumper crop. He was
sometimes able to save a little and to buy new machinery but never
was he able to have the crop which would let him relax and say "this
is it." He felt the same optimism when he married Nertha Andringa.
He was sure he would have many sons. Nertha had many miscarriages
but only one son, Teo. When Teo was still very young, it became more
and more evident that he was not interested in farming but in
mechanics. Pier lost his land and his son at the same time. Finally, he walked away from the old homestead wondering where he had gone wrong.

4

The simplest, most poignant of Manfred's novels is *The Secret Place*, originally titled *The Man Who Looked Like the Prince of Wales* (1965). Garrett Engleking was a young man who lived in the small community of Bonnie. He was easy going, well-liked and not particularly ambitious. He lost his hardware store because he gave too much credit. He married Laura Pipps, the second girl to become pregnant by him. Their baby died and they adopted two orphaned boys. Unable to face life in his community any longer, he and Laura moved to California where he faced the same problems because they were within himself.

5

*Morning Red* (1956) is as complex as *The Secret Place* is simple. The action starts in the small community of Broken Hoe where Kurt Faber is a struggling newspaperman. He is torn between ambition and an idealism that he is loathe to give up. The politicians want to use him to further their ends because of his influence on the paper and because of his stature in the community. His idealism finally gives way to his need to impress the girl he loves. He realizes, before matters have gone too far for him to turn back, that he is paying too great a price. He has to live with himself.
The scene shifts to the Cities where Jack Nagel lives with his wife Jill and their two children. Jack is the only remaining son of beer barron Earl Nagel. His older brother Clint was killed in a plane crash. His death was a heavy blow to his father for it was with Clint that he related best. It was Clint on whom he depended to take over the business. Jack had ambitions to write a play. He depended on success with his writing to impress his father and his wife. Failure to sell his play broke his spirit and drove him into upon himself to the extent that he lost touch with reality. He finally faced his father with all the resentments he had been harboring for years and killed him.

Finally the setting is the small town of Bonnie where Elizabeth Watson is the pretty but unmarried postmistress. All the small town morality is present in Liz and her mother. Their lives are aimed at fulfilling the admonitions in the Sermon on the Mount and refraining from any touch of scandal. Scandal does touch Liz's life when she accuses Jack Nagel of rape.
"I hope they become ornery and hard to handle individuals, people with courage enough to pursue independent opinions and stick to them. This will be good for my country."¹ In this hope for his children, Frederick Manfred reveals his goals and expectations for everyone. His own life is an expression of these beliefs, beliefs he came to through his home background, a variety of experiences, and his work.

Frederick Manfred as a person is an interesting combination of the free-thinking individual who needs to express himself honestly apart from outside influences and a personality who is deeply bound by influences of his background. The ties are strong, but so is the determination to be free and both are evident in his writing. Although Manfred is a free spirit and prides himself on being a non-conformist, he is to some degree tied to at least three strong influences which stem from childhood days.

The first of these is his ancestry and family. Manfred was born in the strongly Calvinistic and Frisian community of Doon, Iowa, in 1912. Except for a period of three years, he has not been far from that region since then. Although his college years were spent in

Michigan where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, in 1934, even here he was established in a heavily Dutch Reform community and spiritually close to his family. He later took correspondence courses in business from the University in Minnesota. In 1942 he married Maryanna Shorba. He and his wife and three children have made their home for a number of years at Blue Mound, Minnesota, where he built a house in the natural surroundings he loves so well.² Blue Mound is about thirty miles north of Manfred's parental home at Doon, Iowa, and part of the same geographical area.

Doon is a very small town in the extreme northwestern corner of the state. Its original settlers came from Friesland, which is a northern province of the Netherlands located twenty miles north of the mainland of Europe in the North Sea. Actually, the province includes a part of the mainland and four islands off the coast.³ The Frisian people have traditionally been fiercely independent. Through the centuries they successfully resisted all invasions. Not until 1524 were they ruled by an outside power which they accepted. They were among the last people in Northern Europe to accept Christianity. They handled their own affairs and settled their own problems. "Every Frisian is a nobleman" was their slogan. Although their country is small and the records of their literature are scant, they are dedicated


to preserving their heritage. Their determination has helped them keep their language which is acknowledged by the Netherlands government as an official language. This same cultural unity has maintained itself in American settlements surprisingly well. Manfred's use of his Frisian name Feike Feikema is indicative of this.

Still binding on Manfred are the influences from his childhood of his mother and grandfather. His mother built a closeness with her sons that he still remembers. From her, a deeply religious woman, he inherited his strong convictions and his sensitivity to the feelings of those around him. His grandfather, an agnostic and a Socialist, was influential in shaping Manfred's beliefs. The closeness he felt for his family while he was young is expressed now to his own wife and children.

A part of his heritage from the Doon farm is an emphasis on the importance of hard work. As boys, all six of the Manfred offspring had to do hard physical work on the farm even while they were going to school. This philosophy followed him into adulthood, and he still believes in the importance of hard physical work.


Manfred himself is aware of the influence of his home and family. In his autobiographical poem, "Winter Count," he tells how very young he was when the world of books was already important to him and the outside world was beckoning to him and yet he felt the family emphasis on hard work.

I was barely twelve when the relatives began to pester Pa about me going to high school. 'More schoolin' will only turn him agin you, Frank. I say, make him work like my kids are gonna'. By the sweat of his brow. You're not gonna' let him go just when he's about to begin to earn his oats, are you? Making up them rimes for the principal - what'll he do when he gets through high school, write books? For godsakes! Pa had always called me his special hired hand, and he's thought a lot about keeping me home, but it was Ma who made up his mind and shut up the relatives and made me happy. 'The Lord will not hold us guiltless if we let the boy bury his talent in a cornfield. It would be nice if our son could become a domeny. Or maybe even a teacher in the Christian school' I didn't know about the minister part of it, nor even about that teacher business. but I did know I was hungry for something far away -- even to reading the Monkey Ward catalogue out in the privy Sunday mornings.7

A second major influence from childhood days is that of his family's religious heritage. Even now he has not been able to shake the strong influences of his Calvinistic background. Although he has rejected many of the religious teachings with which he grew up, they have nonetheless crept into his writing. Most of his formal education was provided in Dutch Reform parochial schools. Both grade and high

7"Winter Count," p. 27.
schools were Calvinistic in background. Here he learned the doctrine which emphasized man's guilt against an all-powerful God, the harsh discipline of a clearly revealed morality, and a blind acceptance of what life has to offer as a pre-ordained destiny.

Because of his religious training and probably even more through his mother's influence, the Bible has been a favorite book for Manfred and has shaped his thinking. He read it from cover to cover many times during his youth; it follows naturally, then, that he will quote passages or make comparisons between his own fictional characters and Biblical characters. The struggles of the people who lived in Biblical times and stories become the struggles of the people he creates for his own stories.

An understanding of Calvinism is essential to understanding the person and work of Manfred. Probably the most clear and concise way of presenting the Calvinistic doctrine is to list the five major emphases stated in the Canons of Dort. These Canons were prepared in answer to a group which rejected Calvin's doctrine of election or supralapsarianism. This group felt Calvin's doctrine left no room for the universal grace of God and the freedom of man. The Synod of Dort convened in 1618 to hear both sides. Following are the five points as stated by the Reformed Churches, that is, those who chose to adhere to the Calvinistic doctrine:

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8Walbridge, p. 206.
1. **Election.** Calvinism teaches an absolute, unconditional election inasmuch as God, according to His sovereignty, has decreed to give a certain number to Christ to be saved by Him.

2. **Atonement.** The saving efficacy of the atoning death of Christ extends to all the elect, but only to the elect, to bring them infallibly to salvation.

3. **Total Depravity.** Calvinism teaches that all men are conceived in sin, are by nature children of wrath, incapable of any saving good, and that without the Holy Spirit's work, they are neither willing nor able to seek God.

4. **Irresistible Grace.** Through the power of the regenerating Spirit, God irresistibly penetrates into the innermost parts of man and infuses new powers into man's will.

5. God's persevering grace so delivers the elect from the dominion of sin that, once they have been assured of their election, they cannot finally fall from grace.⁹

A third influence from childhood days is seen in Manfred's love for nature and the land, especially for Siouxland. This area includes southwestern Minnesota, northwestern Iowa and eastern South Dakota, the area which is the setting for most of his novels. He is proud that the name "Siouxland," which he coined, has come to be the accepted name for this region.

Manfred tasted life in the city for a brief time and was relieved and content to come back to the plains where he grew up. Disenchanted with city life, he found it stifling, boring, cruel, and hypocritical. He returned home to find security in the freedom, the spaciousness, and the honesty of the land of his youth. His love for nature and the

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rural scene is evident in his exciting and living description of the seasons, the land, and the strong impact of nature on people. His kinship with the out-of-doors is transferred to his characters. They find themselves and have the best relationships with other people by either deserting the city or by never getting there.

Although his ties to family, religion and the land are strong and have greatly influenced his person and work, it is his personal freedom and independence that allows Manfred to give expression to what he truly believes. As he says of his hope for his children, "I prefer to have them grow up inner-directed rather than other-directed."\(^{10}\) He wants for them what he has claimed for himself, the freedom to believe what he wants to believe and the freedom to express that belief as he sees it. He believes that every person should have the courage and be given the opportunity to be himself and to have freedom in his expression.\(^{11}\) He should interpret experiences and ideas as he sees and understands them, not as other people would have him understand.

In spite of his ties to family and locale, Manfred's own life gives evidence of his independent beliefs, beliefs that are the result of a life time of wide experience. He has tasted life at many levels and has seized opportunities that have taken him many places. From 1934-1937 he traveled extensively, hitchhiking and seeing the country.

\(^{10}\) Richards, p. 216.

\(^{11}\) Richards, p. 218.
He worked at any job he could find to pay his way. These experiences gave a scope and depth to his life which took him beyond the limits of home, family and school.

He has worked as a warehouse roustabout, factory hand, filling station attendant, interviewer for a public opinion poll, editor, and writer-in-residence at a university. His appetite for new experiences has been matched by his appetite for reading. He has read widely in the fields of economics, history, and philosophy. His favorite American authors are Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and William Faulkner. His favorite English authors are Geoffrey Chaucer and Edmund Spenser.

In 1940, tension, exhaustion, and malnutrition sent Manfred to a tuberculosis sanatorium for two years. This period in his life, although not one he would have sought, became a time of soul-searching. He says, "It saved me as an organism and helped make me a writer." Through this experience he discovered that hard physical work did not give him the time he needed as writer to evaluate and to think. He came to a new perspective. "It wasn't until I had to stay in a hospital for tuberculosis for two years that I acquired, or developed the 'guts' never to give up." 

What appear to be contradictions in the man Frederick Manfred are probably the combinations that have given his novels their distinctive contemporary Authors, p. 314.

13 Walbridge, p. 206.

character, and he has developed a knowledge and skill enabling him to create characters that are real people and able to express themselves.
Manfred: The Writer

A New York Times book reviewer says of Manfred's writing that "there is a ranginess, a free wheeling robustness, an engaging lustiness of style and expression." 15 The Chicago Sun calls his writing "exciting, rewarding, and dramatic as the country it describes." 16 Time book review says his "narrative has both the kick of actual life and the power of vision." 17

Frederick Manfred has been compared by critics to Ole Rolvaag, Thomas Wolfe and John Steinbeck. Although a regionalist, he "soars like Faulkner above and beyond mere provincialism." 18 His greatness as a writer lies in the fact that he deals with the essentials of life and that he writes from his own deepest and most meaningful experiences.

For this reason, Manfred would prefer to call his books rumes 19 rather than novels. He explains that a rumesmith is more likely to stick to the truth whereas the novelist invents it. Novels, he says,


16 Chicago Sun Tribune (June 28, 1959), p. 3.


19 Although Manfred uses the word "rumesmith" which is not found in the dictionary, he probably means "runesmith" from the word "rune" meaning poem or song.
are biographies made universal by relating other people's agonies. Rumes are autobiographies made universal by magnifying and relating personal agonies.20

As a rumesmith, then, he looked into his own mind and heart to understand the feelings of his characters. He realized that to portray honestly and realistically the emotions of others, he must experience as closely as possible what they felt. In Lord Grizzly, Hugh Glass forgave the men who had deserted him. Manfred said, "I couldn't. I could see intellectually but I couldn't feel it emotionally."21 It was some years after he had started this book that he experienced in his own life a situation which helped him to understand what Hugh must have felt. One strength of Manfred's writing lies in his personal involvement in the lives of his characters.

John Milton observes that Manfred, because he writes autobiographically, writes from the inside rather than from the outside.22 Therefore he writes from the heart and puts aside all artificiality in order to get at the core of life. This permits the reader an insight into the character without his becoming personally involved.

The stimulation of certain authors is evident in Manfred's novels. He has always been, and still is, an avid reader. The Bible probably made the greatest impact on him, since he read it through


21"Interview," Critique II (Winter, 1959), 40.

22Milton, p. 106.
several times. Shakespeare is present in obvious references and in some of his characterization. Manfred admired the robustness of Shakespeare's characters. Both Walt Whitman and Ole Rolvaag at an early point in Manfred's writing were important influences on him. He felt he outgrew them, particularly Rolvaag.23

Critics observe that when Manfred writes of the historical period with which he most closely identifies, and when his setting is the plains of the Midwest, his novels soar. When he writes of college, the intellectual life, or the city, he is out of his element. The highest praise of the critics comes for his novels of early history of the midwest.24

He feels a kinship with certain writers who focus on the same time period in which he is interested. In their mutual attempts at a preservation of the history of the first establishment of a nucleus civilization here in the midwest, Manfred sensed a closeness with Herbert Krause, writer and teacher at Augustana College in Sioux Falls. Wright Morris, a Nebraska writer whose novels are placed in the early west, saw the same type of man pioneering the west as Manfred, who said of him, "I like the people he describes because I'm acquainted with them."25

23"Interview," p. 36.


James Austin states that the opening of the West, as pictured by Manfred, has epic magnitude. This is not a history that is authen­
tic in detail but authentic to a vision—the vision the early Americans had when they were building a country.\textsuperscript{26} The stories, the characters and the symbols had to do justice to the broad scope of Manfred's vision of a new nation. The validity of the legends was not strictly from the history books but symbolized the American experience. These tales, then, become not one man's experiences but any man's or all men's. Without Manfred's sense of history, his novels would lose depth and scope.

Manfred's goal in writing of the early history of our country was to get at the "usable past" of Western man. Our own "usable" or meaningful past comes from the early pioneer. What we are and what we have is due in large part to what they did and who they were. The dreams we have they had first. However, as Manfred unfolded the story of his pioneer heroes, he "sensed a thinness in them." He could not deepen them because they lacked a usable past.\textsuperscript{27} There was no culture to back them up. For instance, Hugh Glass in \textit{Lord Grizzly} represented the first real contact of the white man with the uncivilized West.

\textsuperscript{26}James C. Austin, "Legend, Myth and Symbol in Frederick Manfred's \textit{Lord Grizzly}," \textit{Critique}, VI (Winter 1963-64), 124.

\textsuperscript{27}"Interview," p. 36.
John R. Milton has called Manfred the "Voice from Siouxland." Manfred has "inherited and retained a deep love for the land and the people who live on it." He feels a sense of history, of how much of what we are and have today must be credited to the struggles and determination of the early pioneers. He conveys, along with this sense of history, a love for the land uncorrupted by civilization. Manfred's feeling for the region gives the reader a strong conviction of the rightness of the story and of the place.

His love for the land has sometimes carried him to the point that nature, in his novels, is so powerful that the characters are overshadowed. But a "giant standing in the shadow of a mountain is still bigger than a pygmy by an anthill."

Manfred's love of nature and his disenchantment with the city is borne out in what he feels each does for man's fulfillment of his own identity. He reproves the artificiality of man who has lost sight of the land and of his soul. He speaks of New York City as being spiritually and physically unhealthy. Hugh Glass who left a big city in the east to come to the untamed west exemplifies the struggle of civilized man. In Hugh, civilization, savagery, and animal nature meet. There is fulfillment where the three elements are reconciled. This, says Manfred, is the destiny of America.

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28 Milton, p. 104.
30 Milton, p. 104.
31 Austin, p. 129.
Many characteristics, but mainly its openness, have motivated Manfred to use material from the American West. There is room to reach out so a writer need not feel hampered. There is time to brood on things in an easy and casual fashion. The richness of the soil and the wildness of nature are still left. Men learned here to be inventive, to get along. All this makes for ruggedly individualistic people.

As Manfred said, "Being in the west is a way of identifying oneself." "We have to be our own kind of roughnecks in this country before we can develop our set of manners." He still senses today, in nature, the "talking of the Old Ones"; he sees what they saw. As James Austin put it, Manfred's writing is nourished in the author's feeling for history and local color.

In his emphasis on nature, Manfred shows its importance to man's finding himself. He states that there is something going on in the relationship of a human being to his environment. Eventually it makes his soul. At birth, all a person has is the nervous equipment to have a soul. After that, environment makes him what he becomes. And this becoming is all tied up with lonesomeness. That is why being in the west is a way of identifying oneself; one cannot get too sociable. Manfred has said that he enjoys being lonesome. "I like people and, on the other hand, I like being alone and I like people who like being

33 "Interview," p. 36.
34 Austin, p. 122.
alone. I like lonesomeness."\textsuperscript{35} His kinship with Faulkner is in the lonesomeness of their characters.

Man's endurance is the product of his lonesomeness. \textit{Lord Grizzly} has been compared with Hemingway's \textit{Old Man and the Sea} in Hugh's will to endure. What makes man more than animal is the will to endure. Even someone like Elof in \textit{The Cherry Tree}, who is in no sense a hero, must go on reaching and searching for that is man's hope. "Man's origins are holy and man must endure, must struggle hopefully, must continue the tradition.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35}"Interview," pp. 53, 47.

\textsuperscript{36}Milton, pp. 109, 106.
CHAPTER THREE

ISOLATION AND RESPONSE

Isolation: Condition of Man

"Loneliness is a condition of human life, an experience of being human which enables the individual to sustain, extend and deepen his humanity. Man is ultimately and forever lonely."¹ All of Manfred's heroes in the works selected have in common their isolation, their aloneness.

In their lives, these heroes show that man is isolated, that his isolation is a part of his humanity whether he recognizes it or not. Manfred analyzes both the form of isolation and man's response to it.

Sometimes the isolation is physical, a bodily separateness from other people. This may evidence itself in the fact that a character looks or acts differently from other persons. The appearance of Hugh Glass in Lord Grizzly sets him apart from his comrades. At the time of his becoming a mountain man, he had a full beard whereas all his companions were clean shaven. His age and experience, older by many years, made him unlike the other men. Or the separation might be spacial. Jack Nagel in Morning Red was physically isolated from family and friends when he was put in an institution. Either way, the individual was kept from relating himself meaningfully to others.

Another form of isolation is mental or psychological. A character's past, his personality, or his abilities are different from those of other people giving him a self-concept which draws him apart. Jack Nagel's family isolated him from the time he was very young by their lack of understanding and their judgment of his actions. Hugh Glass imposed a psychological barrier between himself and the other mountain men. He had a past about which he told no one and yet which had a strong influence on his actions. His actions then were often misunderstood.

Isolation might be imposed by others. Garrett Engleking in The Secret Place felt alone when his community imposed on him standards by which he could not live, or a man might be alone by choice and for his own reasons. Jack Nagel, rather than face reality which was too painful for him, chose to withdraw from all human contact.

Pier Frixen in This is the Year chose psychological isolation when he placed a barrier between himself, his family and his land. He imposed his will on them, driving them further and further away. Kurt Faber, a newspaperman in Morning Red, was psychologically isolated by choice. He chose to live by his ideals, which cut him off from the people who could best further his career. When he made his choice, however, isolation was imposed on him by those who could not or would not understand his motives. Hugh Glass, after the isolation imposed on him by his friends when they deserted him, chose isolation from all people. Conquering Horse, from the book of the same name, knew the good that could come of being alone and he chose isolation. By
choice he left his tribe to find his vision. By choice he endured the pain and torture of the sun dance. By choice he entered the wilderness alone to fulfill the challenges of his vision.

All men are isolated. The difference lies in the degree of isolation and whether it is by choice or imposed by others.
Isolation: Man's Response

Having established that isolation is the condition of man, Manfred goes on to say that in his aloneness, a man either breaks or goes on to become a strong individual, sure of what he believes. If he emerges with his integrity intact, it is because he has purpose and he is allowed freedom to pursue that purpose in his own way.

Clark Moustakas, psychotherapist at the Merrill-Palmer Institute in Detroit, uses the modern sociological analysis of loneliness:

There is no solution to loneliness but to accept it, face it, live with it, and let it be. All it requires is the right to emerge in genuine form... ²

Loneliness keeps open the doors to an expanding life. In utter loneliness, one can find answers to living... or see a new path or direction. ³

Essentially, this is what Manfred illustrates in his novels. Every man lives alone. One man is different from another in his isolation only in his response to it. If he uses it to discover his own identity, it strengthens him. If he becomes alienated from what he basically is, it breaks him.

Manfred's characters react in different ways to their isolation. If they are allowed to face themselves honestly in their isolation and then act on what they have learned, they emerge intact and strong. If they cannot honestly be themselves, they are crushed. An analysis of the response to isolation in the five novels bears this out.

²Moustakas, p. 48.

³Moustakas, p. 102.
Much of Hugh Glass's isolation was self-imposed. Thus he coped with the demands of his life and lived with the consequences of his self-imposed isolation. His beard separated him from his comrades but he was stubbornly attached to it. The white man's beard offended the Indian who did not grow hair on his face. On this account, the mountain men, not wanting to antagonize the Indian, shaved their whiskers. Hugh saw his beard as a symbol of manhood and refused to shave. On one occasion when he was asked to shave his beard to prevent offense to the Indians, he replied, "Major, I tell ee, We made a mistake when we let the wimmen talk us into kissin' 'em, smoozlin' 'em face to face. The Indian wimmen never did it and was the better for it. And then we made a mistake when we let them talk us into shavin' so we'd look like nice little boys again. It's no wonder the country is so full of wet-behind-the-ears greenhorn kids."5

Hugh isolated himself psychologically from his companions in his refusal or inability to reveal his past. Many of the actions for which he was criticized were founded on experiences out of his past, and he was often misunderstood. He made no effort to correct what were frequently wrong interpretations of his actions. When an officer told him that he (the officer) knew how Hugh felt, Hugh angrily answered, "General, you're a liar! You don't know how I feel.


5Lord Grizzly, p. 87.
Because if you did you'd take my part." But then Hugh made no effort to correct the impression he had left.

The isolation Hugh could not understand or accept was imposed on him when his comrades left him to die. To be so deserted was inconceivable to him. The mountain men's code dictated that they would never leave a man in danger or in need. He had saved his friends many times, and he could not believe that they would leave him. His desertion by his friends, Jim and Fitz, thus isolated him from human companionship and more essentially at this time, human help. He had been mauled by a grizzly bear and his body was badly mangled. He had no food and no gun or knife with which to get food. There were 200 miles between him and help and he would have to crawl those miles alone. To complicate his problem, unfriendly Indians were swarming through the area. But the will to live was strong in Hugh so "he began the terrible odyssey on the evening of the ninth of September, the ninth day of the Moon of Maize Ripening." Until he reached the fort, he was alone to tend his wounds and to find food. These problems he faced and solved but he could not solve the problem of his friends' desertion, the harsh isolation imposed upon his soul by this apparent treachery.

At the end of the story we find Hugh looking into the eyes of the friend who had deserted him. Fitz, wanting Hugh to understand,

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6 Lord Grizzly, p. 247.

7 Lord Grizzly, p. 116.
told him how it happened. But Hugh just climbed on his old mule, Heyoka, and rode away, shaking his head. He was off to build himself a little cabin out in the woods, away from the fort. Before he left, he gave some advice to a greenhorn mountain boy: "And let me tell you somethin' else. If'n you're intendin' to make a go of it out here in the middle of nowhere, stick to your own business." Unable to understand or accept their desertion, he left his friends and chose only nature, the only relationship he could understand and rely on.

Kurt Faber of Morning Red had to face the isolation that his own ideals would impose on him. As a newspaperman in the community of Broken Hoe, he was offered a thousand dollar bribe for not printing a story of a beating of a friend. "You couldn't give me enough," he told the man and he refused the bribe. His ideals isolated him from friendship, marriage, and his ambitions for his future.

Kurt was given many chances to become part of the syndicate which ran the politics in his city. The politicians had a strong hold on the power structure in the cities of the 1920's. Anyone who wanted to make money or improve his status was obliged to cooperate with them. As Hildebrand, Kurt's employer, said, "It's a case of sharks swallowing gamefish and gamefish swallowing minnies." It

8Lord Grizzly, p. 269.
9Frederick Manfred, Morning Red (Denver, 1956), p. 69.
10Morning Red, p. 59.
was "dog eat dog" and any one wanting to survive had to be on the side of the strongest forces. Kurt deliberately chose isolation rather than this power struggle. He could live with it because he was true to his own ideals, he was truly himself.

Jack Nagel, in the same novel, spent most of his life in isolation imposed on him by others. Finally, unable to find his own identity in his loneliness, he chose complete isolation. He withdrew more and more from the real Jack Nagel until he had no concept of what he was really like. His alienation was from himself.

His family isolated him, when he was a child, because his interests were different than theirs. Clint, his brother, and Fannie, his sister, did not include him in their games. They were active and outgoing. Jack was quiet and introspective. Their teasing drove him in on himself. They never let him forget that he had sucked his thumb long past the age when a person should have quit. His mother, the one person who had loved him for what he was, died when he was quite young. The one parent left, Earl Nagel, measured success in terms of money and power. These had to be gotten with the drive and determination which Jack did not have. His father, treating him as if he were inadequate for lacking these abilities, cut Jack off from acceptance.  

Try as he might, Jack could never get close to his family.

When he was accused of rape, society isolated him by putting him in jail.  

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11 *Morning Red*, p. 28.

by lack of understanding and judgment. Solitude was the only safety Jack knew. Because he did not know how to cope constructively with his isolation, Jack lost touch with any reality in his life.

Jack withdrew from all reality when he sensed a breach within himself. This happened in an incident regarding his writing. He hoped to prove himself by writing a successful play. When it was finished he desperately wanted to have it published. The letter commending his writing but rejecting his play was the final isolation for Jack. He could not even be true to his ambition. From then on he withdrew completely, feeling at odds with his family, his community, and even himself. Jack, like everyone else, was isolated. However, he was not strong enough to maintain his own self-identity and he lost contact with other people and finally with himself.

This is the Year is the story of Pier Frixen whose closed mind alienated him from his family, and his land. The tragedy in his aloneness was his lack of awareness of his bleak existence.

A closed mind came naturally to Pier because of the pride and independence of his Frisian heritage. Therefore, most of Pier's isolation was self-imposed. The world of new ideas contained in books was closed to him because he had not gone to school to learn to read and write. His father, Alde Romke, did not want his son "contaminated by the worldly Americans." His father would have taught him but

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14Feike Feikema, This is the Year (New York, 1947), p. 20.
he was always too tired after a day's work. When his wife, Nertha, offered to teach him, he balked. He felt that he had gotten along so far without knowing how and he could continue to do so.\textsuperscript{15} There was a breach between him and his friends because the newspaper opened ideas to them that he could not have. There was an ever widening breach between him and his son, Teo, whose world was enriched and deepened by the books he read.

Once, Teo read a story to his father. It was about Cyclops, a one-eyed giant who visited Ulysses and his men. When the giant was asleep, Ulysses put out his eye with a hot poker, leaving him completely helpless.\textsuperscript{16} Pier saw a relation to his own life. He felt much like that blinded giant. A world lay outside his brain that would always be dark to him. Teo would see it because he could read. Pier rationalized his not reading by saying, "Aw, who the hell cares to read the paper? They're mostly full a lies anyway."\textsuperscript{17} And the breach between himself and others widened because Pier did not realize the consequences of his failure to grow and to think new thoughts.

Pier's alienation from the land was caused in part by his inability to read and in part by his pride, but always by his own

\textsuperscript{15}This is the Year, p. 64.

\textsuperscript{16}This is the Year, p. 231.

\textsuperscript{17}This is the Year, p. 384.
decision. "Maybe I'll be sorry . . . but it'll be my own choosing." When Mr. Pederson, the county agent, tried to talk him into contour plowing to preserve the land, Pier answered that he could take care of his own affairs and dismissed Pederson's ideas with, "'of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.'" Pier rejected ideas he did not understand on the basis of his stubbornness rather than on their merit. He thought he knew all the answers. He snorted at Pederson's ridiculous idea that Pier should grow to know his land as a man grows to know his wife. Pederson said that the land breathes, eats and bears like a woman and must be understood or lost. This idea was not within the sphere of Pier's experience and he rejected it.

Pier's isolation was mainly from the man he could have been. He never gave his heart and mind the chance to grow and expand and change. When he lost his farm and he saw everything being sold, he wondered what had been wrong.

Why hadn't he and the land been able to get along? Why? . . . He had loved Siouxland. He had wanted it. . . . Ae, he had tried to catch his anchor into the soils, had tried to get his roots down so deep that neither the wind nor flood, heat nor cold, could ever tear him out again . . . and had failed.

Did a man have to die before he became a part of the old lady earth?

18This is the Year, p. 469.
19This is the Year, p. 26.
20This is the Year, p. 25.
21This is the Year, p. 611.
The isolation became real to him when it was complete. His wife was dead, his son was gone, and his farm was sold. But the breach had been growing for years. And because Pier refused to grow in his thinking, he could not deal successfully with his isolation.

The loneliness of Garrett Engleking of The Secret Place had its source in the basic difference between what Garrett believed was right for him and the rules the community imposed on him. He discovered at every turn that all his natural impulses were wrong. With these discoveries came guilt and frustration, and the breach between himself and others widened.

In spite of the fact that Garrett was well-liked in the community of Bonnie, he faced its judgment for some of his actions. He was easy going, hard working, and dependable. The children liked him because he played ball with them. He sympathized with the less fortunate and gave them credit at his store, eventually losing his business because he trusted people.

Laura and Garrett brought the judgment of the community on them when she became pregnant. They faced this judgment when they went before the church board. But Garrett had difficulty accepting the decision of the community. He felt his love for Laura was right and yet he confessed to a sin. He believed one thing and of necessity had to act otherwise.

He could not live according to his own convictions. He could not deny himself but neither could he deny the power of the community over him. These two could not be compromised and Garrett lost all
sense of purpose. Garrett and Laura loved two orphan boys and wanted them for their own. These same boys were damned by the church board because they had not been baptized. These two conflicting purposes—Garrett's love of people and church's insistence on doctrine—tore him apart. His isolation destroyed him because he was unable to hold firm to what he believed.

Isolation made a man of Conquering Horse because he was not fragmented. What he believed and what he was able to live out were one and the same. He was at one with himself, and out of his isolation he gained new insights and awareness which strengthened his convictions. Although his isolation was long and difficult, Conquering Horse faced it. He saw it as part of his belief that "all life is one huge flow." It was part of a complete pattern, and if he lived true to himself, even his failures served a purpose.

He wanted to make his tribe known and to be known himself, and to this end he expended all his efforts. Because of his singlemindedness and because his people allowed him the freedom to find his own way, he emerged as a whole genuine person from his isolation.

The Sioux Indians used isolation, putting it into the pattern of their lives as a means by which a young lad could find his own identity. Every young Indian boy had to leave the tribe and go off by himself without food and water.22 In an isolated place, he waited until a vision, sent by his god Wakantanka, told him what he must do. Well

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aware of the suffering and torment of soul awaiting him, the lad welcomed his vision for what it would bring him--his purpose in life. The custom of the tribe of withholding position, ownership of horses, and even a name until the lad had his vision, indicates the importance they attached to this event in his life. One had no name until one had a distinctive sense of one's own purpose and destiny.

No Name endured the isolation four times before his vision came. It took the form of a stallion which asked him what he wanted. He said, "I wish to do a great thing for my people. If I can do this, perhaps I shall be known." After telling No Name what he was to do, the stallion counseled, "Remember this... Life is a simple thing when once it is accepted wholly." Whatever came his way No Name accepted as part of the larger plan of his life, even when he did not understand.

No Name experienced further isolation, always choosing it and being supported by his friends. He chose to endure the torture of the sun dance, knowing it would prove his bravery to himself and his tribe. His friends supported him by their presence.

The strange and difficult mission given him by his vision was not questioned by his family or his friends. They accepted that he had to work out his purpose as he saw it, unusual though it might seem to them. This acceptance of his decisions freed No Name in his solitude to work out his answers in his own way.

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23 *Conquering Horse*, p. 104.
24 *Conquering Horse*, p. 107.
25 *Conquering Horse*, p. 108.
Isolation made No Name a complete, genuine, whole person because he followed his vision, working it out day by day, and because his decisions were his own. True to his purpose, he maintained his identity.

Manfred's characters were made or broken by isolation depending on their dedication or their freedom to work out their purpose in life. Garrett and Jack Nagel were crushed because they did not have the strength or understanding they needed to cope with outside pressure. They lost the meaning in their lives. Pier Frixen refused to allow himself to develop as a knowing and feeling person. Although he lived and worked and grew older, his attitudes and ideas remained stagnant. The isolation was within himself because of his refusal to grow.

Kurt Faber, Hugh Glass and Conquering Horse emerged victorious and intact. They knew what they believed, and, despite outside pressures or disappointments, they remained true to their purpose and emerged as whole and genuine individuals, even though they might not have succeeded in the community.
CHAPTER FOUR

RELATIONSHIP: FAMILY, CHURCH, LAND

The Family

Isolation and its importance in the development of one's identity is not the only influence a person must cope with. He needs to learn how to live with other people whether that be in the close family situation or more broadly in his community.

Manfred is keenly aware of the importance of the family relationship in the development of a personality. He agrees in essence with Dr. Kimball Young, a noted authority in social psychology and family relations, who states that the family structure, to be effective, must have the following:

1. giving and receiving of affection;
2. assumption of equality of husband and wife;
3. democracy and family decisions;
4. personality development of each member as family objective; and
5. freedom of self expression.¹

The family as a group of individuals dependent on one another is concerned not only with producing children and training them but with the emotional security of each member, their mutual respect, and the comradeship within the group. The family must be a living, changing, and growing group.²


²Cavan, p. 11.
Manfred develops and illustrates in his work the concept of the successful family based on a successful marriage. Husband and wife must have a changing and growing relationship. Each brings to the marriage his own heredity, personality, and experience. Only insofar as each takes the other into consideration will the individual have the freedom to be himself.

However, Manfred also shows in the lives of some of his characters that family ties have often been misunderstood and abused. Rather than acting as support for members of the family, the relationships in some families are so selfish that they destroy the individual's concept of himself. The family, or members of it, become critical judges rather than loving companions. When this concept of family is at work, its members are not helped to become the people they should be. Its members have little status as individual personalities in the family, and this diminishes understanding of themselves as individuals in relationships with other people. What Manfred does in his works, then, is to show both the potentialities of family life as conceived by social psychologists and examples of its failure. This chapter will study the specific family relationships of husband and wife and that of father and son in the five novels selected.

According to Manfred, family ties have been grossly misunderstood and abused. Where the family purpose has been wrongly interpreted, the family has failed in its mission and its members suffer.

Meaningful family ties were denied Jack Nagel in the novel Morning Red. He received neither support nor understanding from those
closest to him. Since his family did not understand him, their attitude toward him was critical and demeaning. They rejected him rather than accepted him.

As a young boy, his brother and sister teased and baited Jack because he was not like them. They were active and outgoing; he was quiet and introspective. He learned early that he was not acceptable to those who knew him best.

The actions of his family taught him that love and encouragement were not naturally forthcoming but must be earned. He must fit a pattern before he could be accepted as a person in his own right. His sister, his father, and, later, his wife, thought of Jack, not as he was, but as they wished he were. Dad Nagel lost the son he loved in a plane crash. Later he told Jack that Clint's death "almost drove him crazy." Jack felt he should have been like his brother to win his father's approval. Dad Nagel's beer empire was of first importance to him. On that account he could not or would not understand Jack, who was not interested in the business. Communication became more and more inadequate between the two, and each went his own way, finding it easier to avoid the other than make the effort to understand. Thus his own family life failed him.

His wife, Jill, denied him the respect and companionship he needed as a husband and as a person. She was "martyr to a cause she

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3Morning Red, p. 28.

4Morning Red, p. 589.
didn't believe in." Try as she might, she could not understand him. She admitted to Jack's doctor that he had always acted a little odd, meaning that he did not act as she wanted him to. Jack had failed to be the person she wanted and needed him to be. She could not accept him as he was.

His family overlooked the fine qualities he had. He was a designer and builder of beautiful furniture, and he was a writer of some potential. He also had capability in beer brewing, having won a prize at an international fair in Europe. He was gentle and considerate but his father and his wife had overpowering needs of their own. His father needed a son to take over the business, and his wife needed a successful husband to give her a place in society. Therefore, they overlooked these qualities and saw only where Jack had failed them.

However, Jack was reminded constantly of having failed as son and husband and withdrew from these destructive relationships. The only common ground Jack had with his family was his name. "After all, we're all Nagels together." He turned to something that demanded nothing of him, his reading. Edgar Allan Poe spoke to his loneliness; Jack's kinship with this writer grew while the world of reality diminished. A poem by Edgar Allan Poe kept running through his mind:

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I dwelt alone
In a world of moan,
And my soul was a stagnant tide,
Till the fair and gentle Eulalie became my blushing bride—
Till the yellow-haired young Eulalie became my smiling bride.9

When his family ties threatened to destroy Hugh Glass he chose to leave his wife and sons rather than lose his independence. His marriage lacked the comradeship and satisfaction it should have had for him. Mabel destroyed Hugh's manhood. She nagged him and called him a worthless bum who could not stay with a job and always got into fights. Little by little Hugh's independence broke down. When he saw shame for himself in his son's eyes, he knew it was time to leave.10 Unless he could be a man himself, he could not teach his sons to be men. Hugh was a person whose manhood and independence were essential to his survival. He had to leave his wife or die.

When he left his wife, Hugh deprived his sons of a father. Realizing his responsibility, he suffered from guilt for years. Although his wife was a "rakehellion," he knew that his boys deserved a father, and he had left them when they needed him most.11 In the young mountain men he saw his own sons. He tried to live up to his responsibility as a father by looking out for them. But he had forfeited his right to be a father. His guilt over deserting his sons haunted

9Morning Red, p. 25.
11Lord Grizzly, p. 134.
him just like the grizzly bear that followed him at the end of his long journey. He knew it was there but he could not confront it openly.

Hugh took an Indian wife, Bending Reed, with whom he shared a genuine understanding. She demanded nothing of him. Although they were completely unlike in background and culture, there was a mutual respect and comradeship that each came to rely on. Hugh found in his second marriage the support and the respect his first marriage lacked. He was free to live his life as he wanted.

Pier Frixen's relationship with his family was barren. He did not allow his wife and son the flexibility they needed to become people in their own right. His ties were to things, not people; to heritage, not the present. These ties prevented him from establishing the kind of a family life essential to man. Pier was proud of his Frisian heritage and he thought often of the accomplishments of his ancestors, a hard-working, strong people. He was proud, too, of the land on which his father had settled when he came to this country.

Pier neglected his family and his responsibility to them, however. He never gave them the support and understanding they needed. When his own father demanded respect, Pier said he would get it when he had it coming. Pier's father, who believed that a man's hands were

\[12\text{Lord Grizzly, p. 239.}\]

\[13\text{This is the Year, p. 42.}\]
"smarter'n any machines," had lost touch with the times and the need for change. Pier belittled his father for being old fashioned. He severed ties almost completely when he moved his parents out of the house and into town. Since they were no longer useful to him, he believed they must be put out of his life.

The father-son relationship was authoritarian; there was little interaction between father and son. The elder gave the orders with no concern for the feelings of the other, and the younger did as he was told. Since the ties were held together by authority, when the authority was gone, the ties were gone. Most learning in a family is by example. Although Pier did not want to be like his father, he became more like him every day.

Pier never experienced a close relationship with his wife because he did not give her the affection a wife needs. He made all the decisions and he hindered any expression of her will. The relationship should have changed as they came to new understandings of each other. But this ideal was not attained in the Pier-Nertha marriage.

Pier and Nertha's alliance was cemented just after they were married. He would provide food and shelter for her and she would bear him many sons. He did not see Nertha as a person with feelings, ideas, and hopes for the future. When she asserted herself in any way he became angry and "longed for a world where the woman would be safe in her place forever."
Nertha's nature changed after they had been married a short while. She became apathetic and lifeless. Pier was irritated and wished she were as she once was, "a green-eyed virgin," and he longed for what she could be, "the smiling mother of many red-haired sons." He hated her for depressing him with her broken will, and more and more often his temper flared. He guessed her true nature was coming to the top like cream—or scum. He could not see that he had anything to do with his wife's unhappiness. What he did not realize was that while he took from her, he never gave of himself in understanding her or listening to her or accepting her. His affection was given when she obeyed him. Pier made all the decisions and he became angry when Nertha voiced an opinion contrary to his own.

He especially resented her interference with their son, Teo. A wife should be busy having sons. It was not her place to decide what was best for the one son they had. Nertha saw Teo as a little boy who needed to have fun. Pier saw him as a farm hand who could help him in the field.

Peter Puddicombe, the town ne'er-do-well turned successful, told Pier that men did not know how to treat their women. He said they raped them and left them stunned, wondering "what next?" Peter predicted that Nertha would hate Pier before they had been married a

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17 This is the Year, p. 25.
18 This is the Year, p. 88.
19 This is the Year, p. 209.
year.²⁰ As usual, Pier heard only what agreed with his own thinking and he dismissed these words, little realizing how prophetic they were.

After talking to Nertha, a doctor told Pier that he had been mistreating his wife. Unless he gave her some enjoyment, her apathy would increase.²¹ Pier needed new understanding, but since his mind had been set years before, he became angry and dismissed the advice as folly.

Had Pier taken advice or had he tried to understand the character of his wife, their life together might have been fruitful. They might have shared a relationship that would have given new understanding to both of them.

However, Nertha died of suffocation. She never received the affection she needed. She was not allowed to raise her son. And she was forbidden expression of her viewpoint unless it agreed with her husband's.

Teo's life was like the grass Pier found growing under a fence. It had not been cared for and little sunlight reached it.²² Teo thrived with no understanding from his father. He needed to learn from his parents that he was a person with status. However, he was important only for the work he could perform. Only when he worked

²⁰This is the Year, p. 209.
²¹This is the Year, p. 328.
²²This is the Year, p. 612.
long and hard, did his father accept him. Any expression of his will angered his father. Teo's interests meant no more to Pier than that they kept him from his field work. Teo's reading and fascination with machines were a sign of laziness to his father. Pier drove his son from him because he encouraged only what made Teo his carbon copy. It was intolerable to Pier that his son should know more of life than he.

When Nertha died, the shallow relationship of the father and son became plain. Pier was startled when Teo suggested that he, too, was hurt by his mother's death. Pier, in his insistence on complete obedience, had forced his son to keep his feelings to himself.

Teo needed love, encouragement and guidance from his parents to know his own sense of worth. Pier's emphasis on hard work limited Teo's sense of values and gave him an insecurity about himself.

The Indians in Conquering Horse used the family as an important means for persons to find themselves. The pattern a person should follow was not a selfish one nor an immediate one but part of all of life and related to the community. Only Wakantanka, their god, knew ultimate goals.

The Indians of No Name's tribe in Conquering Horse were steeped in tradition. They carried on, by word of mouth from father to son, the heritage in which all that was important to the life of the tribe was symbolized. Their traditions stressed the importance of the individual and the importance of the group, of the tribe as a whole.
They saw the person as capable of self-direction, needing only encouragement to work out his own destiny with his own abilities and shortcomings. They knew each person needed a goal in life which he had to work out for himself. The family became the instrument by which a person gained the security to work out his purpose. Whatever his age, each person had his position and importance in the family.23

Because of all they had experienced and all the wisdom they had acquired, the elders were respected and often asked for counsel. Although each played a different role in the marriage, husband and wife strongly supported each other. Parents, by their examples, gave their children love, support, a sense of value, and encouragement to live up to their goals. The elders wisely gave up their authority as soon as their sons proved they could assume it.

No Name's father, Chief Redbird, was old. He was past sixty when his son was not yet eighteen. The attachment between father and son, however, became stronger as the years went by.

Redbird taught his son in three important ways. He taught him first by example, by being a person his son respected and wanted to emulate. No Name hoped he would be like his father when he was old. He had dignity and the manners of a person well-born.24 In the years after his father was gone, No Name often consciously tried to imitate his father's dignified and thoughtful ways. He remembered his father's

23This may not be a sociologically accurate picture of Indian Tribal life, but it is the way Manfred presents it.

24Conquering Horse, p. 24.
generosity in sharing his horses with less fortunate members of the tribe. He treated his wife firmly but gently as his father would have done. When he faced danger, his father's bravery was a constant reminder and gave him courage.

Secondly, Redbird consciously taught his son the things he would need to survive and live a full life. He taught him his own worth by understanding the problems he faced. Redbird taught his son to look for signs of danger, whether that danger be from wild animals or enemies. The son learned his lessons well and they helped save his life many times. As soon as No Name was old enough to understand, his father taught him the importance of taking responsibility in the care of the horses.

Finally, Redbird taught No Name the importance of retiring graciously when he was too old to be effective. He had the dignity to step down when he was too old to lead his tribe. His son had proved his bravery and his sense of responsibility and would become the new leader. "The new has come, let the old go."25 There would be no conflict between father and son.

Conquering Horse and his wife, Leaf, lived by the rules that make a stable marriage even though they never articulated them. Their love was secure because each was concerned for the other's feelings. They shared the building of their home and family.

He gave her the security of his love by providing for her, protecting her, and taking her into consideration in his decisions.

25Conquering Horse, p. 264.
She let him be the head of the house. She kept her place, knowing he needed her obedience and weakness to make his strength. He saw her as a good wife because she accepted what came her way. He learned a bitter lesson when he forced her before they were married. He turned from her in disgust as Leaf had predicted. He learned that the relationship was much more important than the act itself.

Man and wife, they shared the struggles of the fulfillment of his dreams for his tribe. They shared the difficulties and the glory that came their way. They rejoiced when their son was born, already seeing in him the hope for the future, knowing that one day he, too, would wait for his vision. Ironically, it is in the Indian family relationship that Manfred sees the greatest fulfillment of the individual.

The modern psychologist believes that "the family lives as long as interaction is taking place and only dies when it ceases." Manfred's characters live out this idea of flexibility and growth in their relationships. Where they are wrongly understood or where people are manipulated, unhappiness and tragedy result. Where family is a place of give and take, of responsibility and love, happy and fulfilled people are the result.

Jack Nagel's family did not see him as a person with worth beyond what he could do for them. He was not encouraged in his hopes and

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26 Conquering Horse, p. 194.
27 Conquering Horse, p. 62.
28 Conquering Horse, p. 260.
29 Cavan, p. 15.
ambitions because they were different than those of his father and his wife. His constant striving to please was fruitless and he gave up.

Hugh had the courage to walk away from an impossible situation which saved him as a man. The heart of Hugh was his independence. When his wife took this away from him little by little, he had to leave or die.

Pier's inflexibility killed his relationships with his wife and son. He appreciated them only as they served his needs. His heritage and his own closed mind made him what he was. Pier did not grow in understanding. As a result, his wife died and his son left.

Conquering Horse saw his family as beings who loved and served him. But he also saw himself as responsible for their happiness and welfare. The security in this home was a living and growing relationship allowing each member to become the person he wanted to be.
The Church

A second way in which man can establish a relationship outside of himself is through religion. This country was pioneered by many people who professed a belief in Christianity. They believed that people have supreme value under God and that it is God's will that everyone live to his fullest.\(^{30}\) The Christian Church frequently became the center of the community to guide those with problems and to help those in need. Most important, the church set up standards by which people could judge right from wrong.

Manfred's characters frequently had difficulty resolving the differences between their own needs and instincts and the rules of the church or organized religion. They found little help for their problems. On the other hand, the church had a strong hold on the lives of everyone in the community. So strong was the hold, in fact, that few could escape the influence and the judgment of this institution.

Pier Frixen's faith in God was, like his attitude toward his family and his land, inflexible. Rather than a challenge to him, his faith was a blind acceptance of whatever came.\(^{31}\) His submission made his faith dead rather than a warm and vital relationship with God.


\(^{31}\)This is the Year, p. 469.
in which he had freedom to use his own intelligence to work out God's purpose. He accepted as inevitable anything that happened to him. It followed, then, that he missed many opportunities outside a narrow sphere of understanding.

Manfred has used his novel *The Secret Place* to show very pointedly that the church has failed the members of the community it was established to serve. Because the emphasis is so strong, this book is primarily used for the comment on relationship through the church.

Garrett Engleking's community was ruled by the church. It was the ultimate authority in the lives of everyone in Bonnie; it was the stable point by which all actions were measured. Proclamations from the church were as binding as if they came from God.

The dictates of the church consistory were blindly accepted. The men who made the rules and the judgments, however, were people with failings and needs of their own. Garrett was a victim of the dictates of the Little Christian Church, ruled by a consistory of elders and deacons. These men saw it their duty to keep the people of the town within "God's Will." They did this by enforcing rules they themselves had set up.

The decisions of the consistory touched every facet of the lives of the Bonnie citizens. Consciously or unconsciously the people were directed in their actions by these few men. It was like the spider web in Laura's dream. Every time the boys and girls lined up for the foot races, spiders came along and tangled her legs with little silk
ropes. "I just couldn't run."\textsuperscript{32} Garrett dreamed that he was hobbled in baling wire. The young people subconsciously felt the restrictions and judgments the community held over their heads for any misconduct.

Garrett had difficulty over and over again matching his own instincts with the teaching of the church. At every turn he was thwarted and heaped with guilt. The church affirmed that children of God were happy and were the people who lived whole-heartedly. And yet he saw repeatedly the rules taking the joy and meaning out of everything. The church affirmed that man was made in God's image and that he was part of God's creation to be accepted as he was. Yet he saw the church sitting in judgment on whatever was meaningful to him.

Loving June Memling was real and natural for Garrett, as natural as the plums falling off the tree when they were ripe. When June asked Garrett why they had made love when they knew better, he said, "Why does oats grow in the spring? Or birds make nests? Or rabbits have little rabbits in the meadow? God's Will."\textsuperscript{33}

Later, after June had died, there was Laura. He saw that what they had done was a God-given right.\textsuperscript{34} Either his Christian conscience had gone to pieces or he had been wrong to stay away from girls.

The church board and church members believed differently, however. His aunt and uncle, good church members, said that a covenant child

\textsuperscript{32}Frederick Manfred, \textit{The Secret Place} (New York, 1965), p. 75.

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{The Secret Place}, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{The Secret Place}, p. 80.
behaves himself and that a Christian man is able to wait. Deacon Abt said that the Devil must have told them to do it.\textsuperscript{35}

Garrett and June were torn between what they felt was good and real and what the church said was right. The church said "wait" and the urgency in them said "now." They loved each other freely and naturally. Afterwards they pondered their guilt. June said that her father wanted his girls to grow up "good Christians."\textsuperscript{36}

When it became known that Laura was pregnant, she and Garrett had to face the church consistory. This was a group of twelve men, chosen to be a replica of Jesus' twelve disciples.\textsuperscript{37}

Deacon Abt asked Laura how "a nice Christian girl" could do such a thing. To her answer that she and Garrett were in love, he said that only married people did those things.\textsuperscript{38} These men interpreted only the acts, not the needs or the feelings of people involved. They said certain actions were wrong but never gave a reason that took the person into consideration.

Garrett, having been told by the church that he had done wrong, confessed to the church board. The board, on the other hand, did no more than sit in judgment and accept his confession.\textsuperscript{39}

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\textsuperscript{35}The Secret Place, p. 109. \\
\textsuperscript{36}The Secret Place, p. 57. \\
\textsuperscript{37}The Secret Place, p. 103. \\
\textsuperscript{38}The Secret Place, p. 105. \\
\textsuperscript{39}The Secret Place, p. 113.
\end{flushright}
An aftermath of the judgment of the congregation was the guilt Garrett and Laura carried when their baby died.\textsuperscript{40} They found no answer to their guilt and the church provided none.

In God's eyes each person had supreme value--so the church said. Garrett valued people and he showed it. In his hardware store he gave credit to those who were unable to pay cash. He was told by a good church member that he was a fool. He was soft-headed rather than soft-hearted when he did not insist on cash.\textsuperscript{41}

"It is the will of God that each of His children shall live life to the full."\textsuperscript{42} The church taught that and Garrett believed it. But what a battle he fought with the church when he and Laura wanted to adopt two orphans! The decision of the adoption was in the hands of the church consistory. Garrett found out immediately that the board was interested in the children's background rather than the children themselves. They pushed aside the pictures without looking at them and asked if the children had been baptized. Garrett said that did not matter, because, as parents, they would raise the children in the church. Elder Highmire said, "Our church can't just accept any old kid that comes along. We have to know if they were born covenant children or not."\textsuperscript{43} Deacon Abt added, "If you can't show us that those

\textsuperscript{40}The Secret Place, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{41}The Secret Place, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{42}Witmer, p. 211.

\textsuperscript{43}The Secret Place, p. 131.
two orphan kids ain't full pedigreed covenant children, we can't have them. They're of the devil."\textsuperscript{44} And the vote went against Garrett and Laura.\textsuperscript{45}

Garrett's love for and need of people were taken from him by the church. The bond of this heritage was so strong that he could not break it. On the other hand, his life had become cold and empty. One day "very tired of it all, Garrett closed his eyes and died."\textsuperscript{46}

Manfred seems to be saying that the traditional church's interpretation of man's life is inflexible, inadequate and dead. It is out of touch with man's real needs and with any answers man can use.

Manfred is rejecting many of the doctrines he learned in the Calvinistic church in which he grew up. The church taught the sovereignty of God and then interpreted this to mean the dictates of the church board. The church taught that all men are conceived in sin and proceeded to determine who would suffer for these sins and who would be saved. The church taught that there is salvation for the elect and then decided by their own rules who those elect were. The rest were damned.

\textsuperscript{44}The Secret Place, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{45}The Secret Place, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{46}The Secret Place, p. 173.
The Land

Manfred shows in the lives of his heroes that man has been given dominion over the earth. Along with the privilege of ownership and dominion, however, comes a responsibility to be a steward, to have the greatest respect for the laws of nature. A misuse of the land deprives man of its benefits.

Manfred's characters, when they live in harmony with nature, find their own identity and their own goals fulfilled. When they misuse the land, their purposes are thwarted.

To understand these characters and their vastly different interpretations of nature, one must understand first a little of the heritage and the culture they lived in and the flexibility or inflexibility of their personalities. Pier Frixen, Hugh Glass, and Conquering Horse afford good insight into the theme of man's relationship to the land. Although Conquering Horse appears earlier chronologically, his relationship to the land was most rewarding. Even though Pier Frixen had available to him a greater store of scientific knowledge of the land, his relationship to it was very poor.

Pier came from the same stern, inflexible, Frisian and Calvinistic heritage that Manfred, himself, knew. From his father he inherited a deeply-rooted pride in his past. He was proud of ancestors who came to this country and carved out a place for themselves in an alien land, fighting the weather and the earth for their existence. From them he gained the philosophy that only through hard work would the earth yield the crop he needed to survive.
The Calvinistic doctrine taught him an acceptance, without question, of whatever came his way, whether it be poor crops, illness or death. From his father and his Calvinistic background he acquired a strong sense of stewardship. He was duty bound to produce a crop and he was duty bound to use his time well. Driving himself and his family to work hard was a natural result. Pier's life was narrow and included only what his narrow viewpoint could comprehend. The land became subordinate to God's will for it, which man must accept. For this reason Pier rejected knowledge from books.

His farm was Pier's whole life. "He loved the land. The prairie seas, the sloping surfaces, caught his masculine eye. The vast earth was a wonderful giant woman. Her massive curves stirred the timeless bull in him." Each year he would say, "This is the year of the bumper crop" and then every effort was bent to make the land produce that crop. It was for what she would bear that he loved his land. Each year he looked for the bumper crop that to him meant success. When she did not bear fruit, he hated her.Each year he looked for the bumper crop that to him meant success. When she did not bear fruit, he hated her.

His relationship with his land was not of the present but always of the future when his bumper crop would come in, or of the past when the spirits of the people of another time had lived there. For Pier, the land had a life and personality all its own. He could look at the land and it came to life with the spirits and ghosts of all the people

47 This is the Year, p. 21.

48 This is the Year, p. 333.
who had lived there. In the old country it had been the spirits of the Frisian ancestors; here it was the spirits of Indians. The feeling of the past was strong in him, like a religion. This was holy land. "Pier studied the Indian mounds, tried to push back the mists of time, tried to see the ancient face to face." A small mind is satisfied with what it has. Pier's narrow view of life shut him off from anything new. Mr. Pederson, the county agent, hoped out loud to Pier that he would not make the same mistakes with his land that his father had made. He suggested that the land was Pier's working mate and he should find out more about her. Pier had no time for Pederson's new ideas. No one knew the land better than he.

To Teo, his son, he summed up his philosophy about the farm and what it meant. It was his interpretation of a story Teo told about Hercules. "It's simple," said Pier, "... when a man touches the earth, digs into it, he's bound to raise himself a crop, an' from his crop get strength."

He worshipped the past and lived for the future; the present held nothing. He could not enjoy the moment and he had no patience. He

49This is the Year, p. 21.
50This is the Year, p. 610.
51This is the Year, p. 26.
52This is the Year, 232.
pushed and shoved and ranted for one purpose. Nertha, his wife, said "I think I married a monster. A thing more beast ... than man. Always rammin' his head against things." There was no flexibility in Pier. He broke people as he broke the land.

The symbol of Pier's struggle was the land itself. He knew firmly within himself what the land held and how to get it. Because he felt he knew the land so well, he was not open to new understanding, and he ultimately lost the land.

Hugh Glass was of a different tradition. He had little heritage to cling to, but was a free spirit. He was the pioneer spirit, hoping to carve his future out of the rugged frontier with no help other than what his two hands and his gun, Bullthower, could afford.

Hugh saw nature as a challenge to be met every day. Meeting this challenge honestly and bravely was what made a man. It provided him with a livelihood and a spiritual sustenance in its natural wilderness.

Hugh's relationship with the land was that of the pioneer who knew that his very existence depended on his ability to face the challenge this country offered. He would face and strive with anything in this wilderness. He wrestled a grizzly and came through the victor. The bear skin even provided protection to him on his long crawl back to the fort.

For Hugh it was not an alien but an understandable wilderness. Hugh knew the land and where and how to find food. To those who understood the land, all that they needed to live was provided.

53This is the Year, p. 241.
Because the wilderness held many dangers, the mountain men had to look out for each other to survive. It drove men to a concern for one another not found in the city where each man took care of himself.

Conquering Horse, who was known as No Name when he was a boy, lived in the time before the white man came. Life was of one piece to him and his tribe. They saw meaning and purpose in everything. Their god, Wakantanka, spoke to them in all that happened to them, in the weather, in their dreams, and in death. Nature provided all of life, all they needed for food, shelter and clothing. But more than that, Wakantanka was found in nature. He gave meaning to all of life. If god was everywhere, purpose was everywhere.

Once, No Name saw his enemies, the Omaha, coming close to where he was hiding. His eye caught the movement of a spider trying to catch a fly in his web. No Name felt it was a sign. If the fly escaped, he too would escape.

The Indian was guided in day to day decisions by the signs he saw in nature. Since he did not know what the next day held, he lived for the moment. The present was important to him because it was all he was certain of. If he were true to himself and his purpose at a particular moment, the future would take care of itself. He was flexible in his outlook because he did not know what was going to happen; he would cope with the future when it came. The Indian was patient, knowing the present was sufficient. Wakantanka had the future and he would guide him to his ultimate goals.
The white stallion was the symbol of No Name's struggle to find his purpose in life. He never knew until the end what the purpose held so his mind was open to opportunities and new meanings each day. He was part of the land.

Manfred portrays man as needing isolation and relationship to be a complete human being. As Clark Moustakas expresses the same idea, "Being lonely and being related are dimensions of an organic whole, both necessary to the growth of individuality and to the deepening value and enrichment of friendship."54 Loneliness, rightly understood and rightly used helps a person to understand his own unique qualities, good and bad, and make the most of them. He comes to grips with his problems fully aware that ultimately he has to work them out alone.

His loneliness, however, has given him a richer appreciation for the friendship and companionship of others. Man needs both facets of his being, his aloneness and his relationships, to know his own capabilities and realize his fullest potential.

Family and church, says Manfred, can provide potentially meaningful relationships. But because their nature and purpose has been misunderstood and abused, the relationships they provide often alienate a person from himself and other people. Nature provides the only relationship that allows and encourages man to know isolation in an encouraging atmosphere and the give and take of relationship.

54 Moustakas, p. 103.
A study of the themes of isolation and relationship in the writings of Frederick Manfred lead to the conclusion that ideas come to life only as they influence the thinking and lives of people. Therefore it is understandable that the findings on these themes as presented in this paper are inseparable from the person of Frederick Manfred. "All of life is one huge flow" was the philosophy of the Sioux Indians. With this conclusion of the thesis, this writer has come full circle, beginning with Frederick Manfred, the man, and ending with Frederick Manfred, the man. In that circle, an understanding of the real man has been emerging.

Manfred's thinking, which was unknown at first, was revealed in his novels. Slowly, many themes emerged from the lives of the characters, mainly those of isolation and relationship. It became apparent, too, that not some, but all the characters experienced loneliness and they all needed supportive relationships to become the people that their visions and their abilities destined. Dissimilar as they were in backgrounds and personalities, they had these experiences and needs in common. The experience of isolation and the need for relationships are universal.

This universal idea, though important, needed to come to life in people. This it did in the life of the author of the novels. Manfred's life expresses his own need for isolation and relationship. Essential to his being himself is his need to be alone, to have some unshared moments. On the other hand his family ties are close and important to him. Starting with Manfred, and not knowing where the search would end, it comes back to Manfred, but with insights into his philosophy of man.
The contemporary novelist Frederick Manfred writes primarily of the early settlements in the region of the Midwest known as Siouxland. For the purpose of this thesis, five of his novels were selected in which to study the effect of isolation and relationships on the lives of the characters. The novels used were: *Conquering Horse*, *Lord Grizzly*, *This is the Year*, *The Secret Place*, and *Morning Red*.

Manfred is proud of his independence. He is, nevertheless, strongly influenced by childhood church and family ties. The critics agree on Manfred's ability to portray realistically life in the early west and on the sense of history which gives depth to his writing.

The hero in each of the selected novels, by choice or necessity, lived in isolation. Depending on his own reaction to his aloneness, the isolation made or broke him as a human being. Jack Nagel in *Morning Red*, Pier Frixen in *This is the Year* and Garrett Englekig in *The Secret Place* were broken because they lacked the strength or the understanding to cope with their isolation. Hugh Glass in *Lord Grizzly*, Kurt Faber in *Morning Red* and *Conquering Horse* in the book of the same name became stronger because of their response to the challenges of loneliness.

Manfred evidences in the lives of his heroes the necessity of healthy relationships if a person is to become the person he could be.
Specifically, he illustrates how people relate to family, church, and nature. He seems to feel that the family and church have not always given support to their members. Often these groups have sat in judgment rather than allowing individual freedom. Nature, rightly understood, can be a means of establishing man's relationship to the whole of creation, as was the experience of No Name in *Conquering Horse*.

The conclusion of this paper is that Manfred's novels portray man as needing maturing experiences with both isolation and relationship if he is to realize his own potential as a human being.

The person of Frederick Manfred is revealed through the lives of the characters in these novels. Through these characters his readers see the effects of isolation and relationships on his life.
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APPENDIX

Following is a list of most of Frederick Manfred's published works listed in the order of publication. The first five were published under the pen name "Feike Feikema."

**Golden Bowl.** New York: Doubleday, 1944.


**This is the Year.** New York: Doubleday, 1947.


**World's Wanderer** - a trilogy. New York: Doubleday. Includes the following:

- **The Primitive.** 1949
- **The Brother.** 1950
- **The Giant.** 1951


**Conquering Horse.** New York: New American Library, 1959.


Name changed to **The Secret Place.**


Book of short stories.

* Novels selected for this thesis