

Contemporary Native American Fiction (1968-2001):

Subject-ivity and Identity

Contemporain Native-Amerikaanse fictie (1968-2001):
Subject-iviteit en Identiteit

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Utrecht op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof.dr. J.C. Stoof, ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties in het openbaar te verdedigen op vrijdag 3 december 2010 des middags te 4.15 uur

door

Suzanne Elizabeth Peraino

geboren op 30 januari 1963
te Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A.

Promotor: Prof.dr. J.W. Bertens

I don't see everything I do through the lens of "First Nations citizen." Like when I order a pizza, I don't obsess for hours about how I, as a Native [...], feel about picking up the phone and ordering this pizza. (Although I do feel guilty if I order the buffalo wings. Typical white people - hunt the buffalo and take only the wings.)

- Don Kelly, Ojibway stand-up comedian

To my family, especially my children Silva, Swaen, and Gabriel.

With special thanks and love to my mother Nancy Gibson Peraino, who found every article I asked for, with the help of the Downers Grove Public Library.

Contents

Preface	7
----------------------	---

Section One: Native Subject-ivity

Part 1: Responses to (Post)Modernism: Reclaiming author-ity over the Native subject.

<u>Introduction</u> : Primitivism: the creation of the Native “impossible subject”	11
--	----

Challenging the primitivist impossible subject: two early strategies: William Apes(s) and Luther Standing Bear.....	14
--	----

Writing within the constraints of literary Naturalism and Modernism: Mourning Dove, Joseph Mathews, and D’Arcy McNickle.....	20
---	----

The analysis:

Beyond the constraints of the Euro-American Naturalist/Modernist Native subject: <i>House Made of Dawn</i> (1966) by N. Scott Momaday	26
--	----

Breaking free: Nascent postmodern parody of the Euro-American Naturalist/Modernist Native subject: <i>Winter in the Blood</i> (1974) by James Welch	36
--	----

Postmodernism: The deconstruction of the primitivist Native subject.....	46
Technologies of the Native Self.....	53
“ <i>Graduation wih Ishi</i> ” (1988) by Gerald Vizenor.....	57
“ <i>Squirrels</i> ” (1992) by Gerald Vizenor.....	64

Part 2: Postcolonial allegory: the Native subject-as-tribal-nation and resistance

<u>Introduction</u> : Postcolonialism and the concept of “the nation”	67
The Third World nationalistic literary model: The Native postcolonialsubject as tribal national allegory.....	75

The analysis:

(Post)colonial subaltern “voice”: <i>From the River’s Edge</i> (1991) by Elizabeth Cook-Lynn	80
---	----

Postcolonial activism: <i>Last Standing Woman</i> (1997) by Winona LaDuke	91
--	----

Post-colonial liberation: <i>Almanac of the Dead</i> (1991) Leslie M. Silko.....	102
---	-----

Section Two: Native Identity	111
<u>Introduction</u> : Multiculturalism: the continuing debate.....	112
The politics of color, culture, and identity.....	115
Part 1: Christianity and Native religious identity	
<u>Introduction</u> : Syncretism and hybridity: problematic metaphors of inter-cultural contact and cultural (ex)change.....	124
<i>Black Elk Speaks</i> (1932) as told through John G. Neihardt.....	130
<u>The analysis</u> :	
“The Devil and Sister Lena” (1985) by Anna Lee Walters.....	135
<i>Tracks</i> (1988) by Louise Erdrich	140
<i>Love Medicine</i> (1984) by Louise Erdrich	148
Part 2: The individual and the tribal community	
<u>Introduction</u> : The mixed-race individual and ethnic community membership.....	153
<u>The analysis</u> :	
Native identity “dissonance”: <i>Yellow Raft in Blue Water</i> (1987) by Michael Dorris	157
Native identity “distortion”: <i>Grand Avenue</i> (1994) by Greg Sarris	162
“Trauma theory” and individual and collective identity.....	169
<i>Watermelon Nights</i> (1998) by Greg Sarris	170
Part 3: Performing identity: from the multi-cultural to the multi-gender	183
<u>Introduction</u> : Native American gender identities.....	184
Performance and performativity.....	190
The oral tradition as performative tradition.....	190
<u>The analysis</u> :	
<i>The Woman Who Owned the Shadows</i> (1983) by Paula Gunn Allen.....	194
<i>Drowning in Fire</i> (2001) by Craig Womack.....	207
In Sum	223
Coda: Native children’s literature	224
<i>The Owl’s Song</i> (1974) by Janet Campbell Hale and <i>Eagle Song</i> (1997) by Joseph Bruchac	
Bibliography	239
Dutch summary and autobiographical notes.....	264

Preface

This study is a literary critical analysis of post-1960s Native American fiction and its engagement in the concepts of subject-ivity and identity in relation to both tribal- and Euro-generated socio-cultural discourses and paradigms. Subject-ivity and identity are the foci of this study as they are arguably the theoretical “hub” of post-1960s literary criticism, cultural studies, and ethnic literature (Rice and Waugh, “The Subject” 123, 125; Alcoff 5). Contemporary Native writers will be shown to evaluate and re-determine from a tribal perspective the position of their subject-ivities within modernism’s, postmodernism’s, and postcolonialism’s paradigms, and the legitimization of their identities within multicultural and gender-diverse contexts. This study covers the period 1968-2000, beginning with the publication of N. Scott Momaday’s (Kiowa) novel *House Made of Dawn* (1968).

The publication of Momaday’s novel and its winning of the Pulitzer Prize for Literature in 1969 initiated what has been called the Native American Literary Renaissance (Ruoff, *American* 76). While the term “renaissance” not only indicates the sudden increase in Native literary production, it also reflects the increase in a Euro-“mainstream” readership, which in turn has stimulated publishing possibilities. As Arnold Krupat indicates (“Foreward” viii), mainstream interest in Native cultural production had experienced previous “renaissances”: at the turn of the 20th century we find so-called “salvage” anthropology’s ambition to record “vanishing” Native rituals, songs, and chants; between the wars, there is the modernist writers’ aesthetic “discovery” of a “poetic” dimension of traditional Native songs; and in the 1960s the counter-culture welcomed reissued “forgotten” Native autobiographies from the 1930s, such as *Black Elk Speaks* (Neihardt 1932/1961). At the end of the 1960s, Momaday’s winning of the Pulitzer Prize for a novel focusing on contemporary Native issues served, however, to change mainstream audience’s perspectives regarding what Native writing was and could be: 20th century Native texts were no longer only anthropological or sociological artistic artifacts of pre-modern worldviews seeming to resonate with modern needs but were recognized as provocative and skillful expressions of contemporary realities and experience.

However, despite the publication during the late 1960s and 1970s of what Elvira Pulitano (*Transatlantic* xiv) has called “the four major Native American novels” - *House Made of Dawn* (1968) by N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), *Winter in the Blood* (1974) by James Welch (Blackfeet), *Ceremony* (1977) by Leslie M. Silko (Laguna Pueblo), and *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart* (1978) by Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa) - scholarly attention was slow in coming. The ten years after Momaday’s novel saw the publication of only one critical work on contemporary Native fiction, Charles R. Larson’s *American Indian Fiction* (1978), which categorized Native novels written between 1899-1977 according to motifs such as assimilation or relocation, and applied primarily a plot and character analysis. A. LaVonne Ruoff noted similar inattention in the academy, stating that until 1980 contemporary Native American fiction had not been included in university literature curricula (*American* vii). In 1985, Arnold Krupat expressed his frustration at the continuing lack of scholarly interest in Native literature in contemporary discursive analysis.

Native American literary composition both oral and written has not yet entered the canon of American literature and has not, for that reason, attracted the attention of our many current theorists of literature. [...] Unfortunately, it must be said that those who do study Native American literature have thus far tended to avoid critical theory as if it were indeed the French disease, a foreign corruption hostile or irrelevant to their local efforts. (*For Those* xii)

Despite this critical conservatism of the academy, before 1985 several critical analyses had been published, signaling the fields which would be of major concern to future Native

literary scholars: contemporary literary theory, multiculturalism, gender issues, and an ongoing concern with the socio-political positioning of tribal peoples in the United States. Alan Velie recognized that Native American writers were rigorously and skillfully engaging the developing literary discourses of the times in their expression of contemporary Native experience. In his seminal study *Four American Indian Literary Masters: N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Leslie Silko, and Gerald Vizenor* (1982), Velie brought Native literature into the purview of the literary critical world, emphasizing its narrative actuality and remarking in his introduction, “The major focus of this book will be to show how contemporary Indian writers have drawn on their tribal heritage and how they have been affected by modern America and European literary movements” (10). Velie’s work was quickly followed by Kenneth Lincoln’s study *Native American Renaissance* (1983), which emphasized the multi-cultural and interdisciplinary approaches which flourished during the 1980s. In the introduction he described his own work as “neither anthropology nor literary criticism, strictly speaking, but a hybrid” which approaches Native writing as “a multi-cultural event” and “a confluence of cultures” (9). In 1984 the collection of essays *Coyote Was Here: Essays on Contemporary Native American Literary and Political Mobilization* edited by Bo Schöler highlighted, as Ruoff remarks, “the political dimensions of contemporary native literature” (*American* 132). These three studies by Euro-American scholars, framing the major literary critical fields at that time, were joined by the first generation of Native writers who were also literary critical scholars. *Studies in American Indian Literature* (1983) edited by Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo) presented overview analyses of the range of Native literature, from traditional chants to contemporary fiction, coupled to corresponding lesson plans for envisioned academic courses. Allen followed this collection with *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986), a study delineating what she termed a “tribal feminist” critical paradigm and articulating a Native lesbian perspective. *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures* (1989) edited by Gerald Vizenor focused on poststructural and postmodern readings of Native texts, Vizenor himself offering his vision of a specifically Native postmodernist critical paradigm which he termed “trickster discourse.”

Since 1990, there has been a steady production of critical works applying contemporary theory to Native literature, as well as proposals by Native writer-scholars of distinctly Native modes of literary analysis. The categories structuring the following overview are not meant to be definitive but to indicate thematic or theoretical affinities between the works grouped together which correspond to theoretical fields addressed in this study. Because these affinities in these critical collections overlap at many points, other categories and associative groupings could be created to highlight other commonalities between them.

Native engagement with Euro-discourses has been explored from a variety of perspectives. In his *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* (1995) James Ruppert has proposed that Native writers “set up a dialogic relationship between Native and non-Native discourse fields to disrupt the easy engagement of the dominant literary discourse” (x). Catherine Rainwater’s *Dreams of Fiery Stars: The Transformation of Native American Fiction* (1999) has illustrated how contemporary Native writers draw on both oral tradition and postmodern developments. In *Captured in the Middle: Tradition and Experience in Contemporary Native American Writing* (2000), Sidner Larson (Gros Ventre) has applied a cross-disciplinary and anecdotal approach, discussing Native texts in relation to literary criticism, philosophy, and law while reflecting on his personal experience teaching Native literature. In *Red Matters: Native American Studies* (2002), Arnold Krupat has proposed three generalized critical paradigms which he contends represent general trends in Native literature and criticism: nationalism, indigenism, cosmopolitanism. The European scholars in *Transatlantic Voices: Interpretations of Native North American Literatures* (2007), edited by

Elvira Pulitano, have employed cultural studies, postcolonialism, and trauma theory in their exploration of indigenous experience and epistemological perspectives in Native contemporary literature.

Native contemporary epistemological, intellectual, and critical perspectives have been the primary focus of several studies. Robert Allan Warrior (Osage) in *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Intellectual Traditions* (1995) has aimed, through a comparative analysis of Vine Deloria Jr. and John Joseph Mathew, to provide a framework for a contemporary and distinctly “Native cultural and literary criticism” (xiii) through which Native issues and concerns could be better explored and expressed. With regard to distinct aspects of tribal culture which are taken to create a specifically Native perspective, Jace Weaver (Cherokee) in *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (1997) has focused on Native commitment to “community” and has interpreted Native writings in terms of what he has called “communitism,” a combination of “activism” and “community.” Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez, on the other hand, has focused on participatory aspects of the oral tradition discernable in contemporary Native fiction in her *Contemporary American Indian Literatures and the Oral Tradition* (1999). Presenting an overview and consolidation of the Native critical perspectives which have developed since the 1980s, Elvira Pulitano in *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* (2003) has appraised the woman-centered focus of Paula Gunn Allen, the tribal-centered/national separatist focus of Robert Allen Warrior and Craig Womack (Creek/Cherokee), the dialogic and postcolonial concerns of Louis Owens, and the “trickster” postmodernism of Gerald Vizenor.

Two additional issues, identity and gender, while often addressed incidentally in various works above, have been the dominant motifs in a number of book-length critical analyses. Louis Owens (Choctaw-Cherokee) in his *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (1992), drawing on a range of contemporary theory, has explored the recuperation of culture and identity in major Native novels since 1850, and Arnold Krupat in *The Turn to the Native* (1996) has analyzed from a postcolonial perspective what he terms “critical identity,” clarified in Spivakian terms as “who may speak” (xi), in contemporary Native fiction. With respect to gender, a feminist critical exploration of empowerment in relation to tribal women protagonists has been represented respectively by *Feminist Reading of Native American Literature* (1998) by Kathleen M. Donovan and by Patricia E.M. Hollrah in “*The Old Lady Trill, the Victory Yell*”: *The Power of Women in Native American Literature* (2004), while Robert Dale Parker has investigated masculinity and male gender expression in his *The Invention of Native American Literature* (2003). Non-heterosexual critical perspectives have been offered by Craig Womack who, in his *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (1999), prioritizes the consideration of gay Native writers and queer perspectives.

With the exception of Vizenor’s work, the delineation between the theoretical critical domains of subject-ivity and identity has not been considered in the above mentioned studies. While the issue of “identity” is a recurring topic in Native writings, with respect to “subject-ivity” only incidental essays address the Native subject specifically (Moore, “Myth”; Ronnow). This lack of consideration has resulted in a generalized (con)fusion of both foci under the umbrella term “identity.” This is exemplified, for instance, by Owens’s description of the shared theme in the texts he analyzes as “individual attempting to reimagine an identity, to articulate a self within a Native American context” (*Other Destinies* 22), in which “imagining” and “articulation” in relation to language and discourse, and “identity” and “self” in relation to critical and cultural contexts are implied to be theoretically similar. Even more extreme is Krupat’s implication that such foci can be seen as theoretical paradigmatic “synonyms”:

...there [is] no responsible way to ignore identity questions in the criticism of contemporary Native literature. Self, subject, individual, person, agent, or mere occupant of a “subject position,” each of us today finds her or his identity - American, Native American, gay, black, ethnic, working-class, or what have you - to be, in a more or less current terminology, a site of conflict...(Turn xi)

This study, therefore, aims to distinguish itself by paying equal attention to both these foci, plotting their expression in contemporary Native fiction in relation to the engagement of Native writers in the range of 20th century literary and cultural critical fields. This study adds to the critical enquiry of previous studies in relation to subject-ivity and identity in several ways. Firstly, it aims to present and maintain throughout its extended analysis a clear theoretical delineation of these two foci and the analytic paradigms most appropriate for each focus. The “subject” will be discussed specifically within the theoretical contexts that are mostly involved in the scrutiny of its positioning and the consequences thereof - (post)structuralism, (post)modernism, and (post)colonialism. The concept of “identity” originated within the domains of sociology and psychology and will be explored in the texts that will be discussed with respect to the formation and navigation of individual social identities, specifically in relation to group recognition and the acceptance of the individual, the effect of trauma on a tribal collective identity, and the performance of gendered identities. In addition, this study addresses certain Native subject-ivity and identity contexts which remain as yet under-explored by scholars; specifically the integration of aspects of Christianity into tribal worldviews, the impact of the re-assertion and performance of non-heterosexual genders within tribal communities, as well as the subject-ivity and identity issues of concern to and relating to Native children in Native-authored children’s literature, as briefly explored in the concluding section.

The choice of texts also expands the range of previous Native literary studies. In addition to exploring the frequently discussed works of N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Gerald Vizenor, Leslie M. Silko, Louise Erdrich, and Paula Gunn Allen, this study dedicates considerable attention to novels which have as yet not received much critical analysis such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn’s *From the River’s Edge*, Winona LaDuke’s *Last Standing Woman*, Michael Dorris’s *Yellow Raft, Blue Water*, Greg Sarris’s *Grand Avenue* and *Watermelon Nights*, Craig Womack’s *Drowning in Fire*, and the children’s texts *The Owl’s Song* by Janet Campbell Hale and *Eagle Song* by Joseph Bruchac.

This study is divided into two sections addressing Native subject-ivity and identity respectively. Each section is prefaced by an introduction to the theoretical paradigm to be considered as well as a brief analysis of certain exemplary pre-1960s Native texts engaging concepts which can be seen as precursors of these paradigms. The section concerning subject-ivity is divided into modernism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism and is framed by the paradigm “civilized self/primitive other” and the agency of the Native subject. The identity section is conceived within the framework of multiculturalism and focuses on the social identity contexts characterized respectively by multiple religions, multi-raciality, and gender diversity. In the concluding section, two Native-authored children’s book will be discussed in relation to issues of subject-ivity and identity explored throughout the thesis and the distinctive expressions of these issues in relation to the Native child protagonist.

Section One: Native Subject-ivity

Part One

Responses to (post)modernism: Reclaiming author-ity over the Native subject

The indigenous peoples of the Americas entered the intellectual purview of Europeans during the Renaissance, a period of colonial expansion during which “the Enlightenment project” was forged. Contemporary cultural critics, applying poststructural interpretive frameworks to this period, maintain that Enlightenment Europe’s developing brave new humanist conceptualizations of “man,” which would come to be recognized as “the very constitution of Western subjectivity,” was formatively influenced by contact with the Native peoples of the continent “discovered” in 1492 (Quayson and Goldberg xii). This recognition of the role of “the Native” in the development of European Enlightenment humanist theories and later Euro-American national ideologies owes much of its theorization to the poststructural concept of the “subject” as critique of Enlightenment theorizations of “man.”

As poststructuralists attacked and deconstructed the humanist “subject,” Native authors modified modernist and postmodernist discourses to attack and deconstruct the subject position most responsible for the “othering” and erasure of their subject-ivities, a discursive predicament which will be termed the “primitivist impossible subject” position (Slemon, “The Scramble” 23-24). In this chapter, N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Gerald Vizenor will be seen to adapt modernist and postmodernist techniques and ideas to dismantle the overt and covert primitivist Native subject in its contemporary forms, subsequently employing these adapted discourses as springboards for their own visions of Native subject-ivities in the (post)modern world. The primary challenge for Native writers in this respect has been to address the legacy and ramifications of Euro-American representational control over “the Native” and regain author-ity over the discursive positioning of themselves as self-represented subject.

Primitivism: the creation of the Native “impossible subject”

With the coming of Columbus, Native Americans found themselves at the center of a self-referential web of nascent European Enlightenment discourses of self-definition, namely primitivism and a burgeoning humanism. Poststructuralist theorists have made it possible to theorize this self-referentiality by countering received humanist conceptualizations of “man,” with its presumed universal *a priori* autonomous integrity and ever-accompanying specter of essentialism, with a re-positioning of the humanist subject as actually an *a posteriori* “subject” owing its existence to the symbolic medium from which theories about “man” arise: i.e. language, discourse, text (Dollimore, *Radical* 250; Rice and Waugh, “The Subject” 123). Enlightenment “man,” under the poststructural microscope, was seen to consist of and be dependent on the polarization “Self/Other” in which the European socio-cultural “Self” was naturalized and universalized as “Man.” As early Enlightenment Europe began to trace its own features in its nascent humanist mirror, it conceptualized a contrasting “Other” by which to gauge its humanist state. Native peoples, subjected physically to hegemonic colonial systems, became conceptually and discursively subject-ed as Europe assigned them this “othered” subject-position to function as theoretical confirmation or critique of Europe’s sense of humanist “self” (Quayson and Goldberg xii). This societal self-critique found its discursive vehicle in the polemic mode of primitivism, a mode which will be seen to be the persistent paradigmatic “deep structure” of the Native “impossible subject.”

The idea of primitivism during the Renaissance can be seen as the variety of discourses arising from the contemplation of contemporary societal situations in relation to a conjectured “natural state” of man. The opinions as to this natural state consisted of two opposing theories: one based on a revitalized confidence in the naturally virtuous humanity of the Greco-Roman “Golden Age,” the other based on the medieval concept of the morally and socially degenerate “wild man” as man’s natural self. This internally dichotomized primitivism was the cognitive lens through which Renaissance European intellectuals attempted to understand their place in an ever widening world of oceanic exploration. As reports of newly discovered peoples reached 16th and 17th century Europe, Native Americans became increasingly entwined in the already well established primitivist polemical intellectual convention of social critique in which the vices and virtues of European “civilization” were compared with the vices and virtues of “natural man” (Berkhofer Jr. 72, 73).

Providing the inspiration for the utopia created by Thomas Moore (1478-1535) in 1516 as a critique of European society, by the 16th century Native Americans had become the primary example used by European primitivist and anti-primitivist thinkers and writers to argue their socio-critical polemics. As such, Natives became both the quintessential primitivist and anti-primitivist “subject”: the “(ig)noble savage.” The anti-primitivist Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), theorizing man’s “natural state” as constant competitive social struggle (“war”) to maintain basic “natural rights” (survival), argued in his *Leviathan* (1651), chapter 13, that Native Americans were examples of man’s originary violent anarchic state of “no government” and as such served to illustrate the need for a more authoritarian system in England to maintain “civilized” social stability. Unlike Hobbes’s use of the Native subject as “ignoble savage,” Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), in his *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (1755), used the Native American Carib as the exemplary “noble savage” uncorrupted by the decadence, inequality and artifice of Rousseau’s contemporary civil society. While much of Rousseau’s political thought was based on envisioning a better form of government by reviving the positive values of the natural state of man, the noble savage represented for Rousseau the society of man in a youthful stage of development, the more mature state represented by European society.

Hobbes’s and Rousseau’s writings illustrate the evolution of “the Native American” in the minds of Europeans as a “split” subject substantiating both primitivist and anti-primitivist conjecture concerning the “true” nature of man and the development and state of civil society. Whether as noble or ignoble savage, Natives served specifically as a means by which Europeans could understand themselves, their origins, and their futures. As Roy Harvey Pearce remarks, “what [the Indian] actually was came less and less to be a serious issue. What mattered was what Europeans should be” (136). These primitivist paradigms, significant for European intellectuals as philosophical vehicles of self-reflection and self-definition, would crystallize in the new American republic into an ideology of nation-building viewed as the teleotic “destiny” of human progress, in which the both the noble and ignoble “Native” came to represent the “uncivilized” which would inevitably be replaced by the expansion West of “civilization” (Berkhofer Jr. 93).

The roots of the American “Native impossible subject” can be located in the work of 18th century Scottish Enlightenment thinkers who were read and taught in New England at the time. These writers on history and society, such as Francis Hutcheson, Thomas Reid, Adam Ferguson, Lord Kames, and William Robertson who wrote on the North American Indian in his *History of America* in 1777 (Pearce 82), dedicated themselves to constructing “a sociology of progress,” a theory which would synthesize the Christian narrative of man’s fall from Eden, the confidence of Enlightenment civilization, and the critical questions in relation to contemporary society and human nature posed by primitivism. They attempted to explain to Christians

how they could originally have fallen and yet have come to such a high and noble state in their enlightened century. [...] The Scots held that it might be conjectured back from empirical evidence how God was revealing His Word to modern man slowly but surely, how modern man was thus slowly but surely progressing to high civilization, how he had left behind him forever his savage, primitive state. This was the grand Christian, civilized Idea of Progress. (Pearce, 82)

The Scots can be seen to have provided the philosophical and moral framework which enabled 19th century Americans to perceive a moral and intellectual universal “rightness” and rationality in their ambition to realize westward expansion and the resulting conflicts with Native peoples. Roy Harvey Pearce remarks that “Westward American progress would, in fact, be understood to be reproducing this historical progression” (48-49). Describing the concept of the frontier at that time as “an ideology of social progress,” Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. remarks that “faith in the future greatness of the nation, and the fate of the Indian and the frontier in general were all seen as connected by the White Americans of the period” (92-93). Not only did this conceptual framework posit a “Native subject” which legitimated and substantiated Euro-America’s self-defining teleotic vision, the Native in his “savage” and “primitive” state was seen to possess a destiny complementing that of Euro-America’s; as the United States “progressed” westward, Natives would either succumb to the overwhelming inevitability of the supersession of their primitive states and be destroyed by the advancement of civilization as embodied by the United States, or undergo an accelerated “civilizing” process, understood as assimilation.

While the concept of “assimilation” in relation to Natives has its roots in the missionary ideology of conversion, the predominating Enlightenment theories which most significantly influenced federal policies aimed at quickly “advancing” the Native to a state of Christian civilization were Lockian principles of landownership and the general conviction of the development of rational Man through education. The Lockian foundation of American individualism influenced many government policies which tried to encourage acculturation of the Native through land ownership and farming (Pearce 67-68, 70). With regard to the strategy of acculturation through education, the most notorious method deployed was the system of compulsory boarding schools set up at the end of the 19th century designed to accelerate the process of “progress” by estranging Native children from their cultures and assimilating them through education into Euro-American society. The credo of General Richard Henry Pratt, the founder of the first of these schools in 1879, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, indicates in a graphic metaphor the violence of both the United States’ expansion West and the corresponding envisioned Enlightenment humanist fate of its “savage others”: “Kill the Indian and save the man.”

Pratt’s motto, meant to encapsulate a faith in universal humanist commonality and integrated society, in effect indicates the atomic splitting of the Native subject in Euro-American discourse into ever proliferating impossible subject positions. With its roots in the primitivist polemic of the civilized Euro-Self and the natural Other, the splitting of the Native subject can be traced to the splitting of the primitivist natural man into the noble or ignoble savage depending on Euro-humanist self-critique. Consequently, the (ig)noble savage in America was further divided into the “Indian” and the “Man,” the Indian equaling the (ig)noble savage, and the Man equaling the absence (death/complete assimilation) of the savage-cum-Indian. This is but one of the various permutations of the division of the Native subject within various Euro-/Euro-American discourses, and each Native writer to be discussed will be shown to address this Native “impossible subject position” in relation to the Euro-discourse pertinent to their concerns. These concerns have proven primarily to be the socio-political treatment and situation of their communities and have been expressed in print since the earliest publications of Native American writings in the 18th century. Two early

writers sensitive to the detrimental ramifications of the “impossible subject position” for the socio-political realities of their contemporary communities were William Apes(s) (Pequot, b. 1798) and Luther Standing Bear (Sioux, 1868-1939).

Challenging the primitivist impossible subject: two early strategies

While early Native writers did not have the theoretical means to analyze their situation in terms of subject, textuality, and discourse, they nevertheless recognized several hundred years before poststructuralism that if objections were going to be made to the treatment of the Native American in U.S. society, detailed scrutiny would have to be applied to Euro-American misrepresentations of “the Indian” and to how these were causally linked to the detrimental socio-political reality of tribal communities. William Apess, an early 19th century Christian convert to Methodism, wrote in response to the terms “heathen” and “savage” that “it is deeply to be regretted that their character should be so grossly misrepresented [...] We were represented as having no souls to save, or to lose, but as partridges upon the mountains. All these degrading titles were heaped upon us” (Apess, “The Indians” 114, 115). Almost one hundred years later at the beginning of the 20th century, Luther Standing Bear, a graduate of General Pratt’s Carlisle Indian boarding school, would similarly write that “for nearly four centuries the American Indian has been misinterpreted as to character, [and] customs” (*Land*, 226-227). Standing Bear drew additional attention to the maintenance of these (mis)representations and intimated the reason for their perpetuation as valid.

After subjugation, after dispossession, there was cast the last abuse upon the people who so entirely resented their wrongs and punishment, and that was the stamping and the labeling of them as savages. To make this label stick had been the task of the white race and the greatest salve that it has been able to apply to its sore and troubled conscience now hardened thought the habitual practice of injustice. (*Land* 250)

Both Apess and Standing Bear appeal to the “sore and troubled conscience” of Euro-America by scrutinizing the link between the contradictory nature of these “labels” and the untenable position of the Native in Euro-American society. Writing from their personal involvement in two strains of the assimilationist venture with respect to the Native, Christian conversion and Enlightened humanist education respectively, Apess and Standing Bear applied the methodological strategy of revealing the inherent contradictory oppositionality in the bipolar vocabularies in both discourses culled from the primitivist tradition in relation to Natives as subject vis-à-vis the Euro-American subject: Heathen/Christian, and Savage/Civilized. By doing so, they aimed not to reject Christianity or humanist education per se, but to invalidate the (il)logic which maintained the impossible Native subject as a justification for the oppressive treatment of Native peoples.

William Apes(s)

The earliest major Native writer of the 19th century was William Apes or Apess. Ordained a Methodist minister in 1829, he wrote to promote the acceptance and equal treatment of Natives within the broader 19th century Euro-American Christian world. This acceptance, he maintained, was hindered by an overt racism among Euro-American Christians of all denominations. Apess (to adopt the most frequent spelling of his name) located the germination of and perpetuation of this racism in the primitivist terminology accepted within Christian contexts despite the resultant ethical hypocrisy.

In his first published work, his autobiography *A Son of the Forrest* (1829), through a witty discussion of the word “Indian,” he ambushes his audience with a challenge to a central presumption Christianity regarding race.

I have often been led to inquire where the whites received this word, which they so often threw as an opprobrious epithet at the sons of the forest. I could not find it in the Bible, and therefore concluded, that it was a word imported for the special purpose of degrading us. At other times I thought it was derived from the term *ingenuity*. But the proper term which ought to be applied to our nation to distinguish it from the rest of the human family is that of "*Natives*"- and I humbly conceive that the natives of this country are the only people under heaven who have a just title to the name, inasmuch as we are the only people who retain the *original complexion of our father Adam*. (10) [emphasis in final sentence added]

Apess's linguistic "play" indicates, as structuralist theorists would explore in the 20th century, that words are artificial signs, meaningful within and because of the linguistic system which creates lexical relationships. Not only does Apess creatively play with this system, creating his own lexical relationship *injun/ingenuity*, he indicates that lexis is inseparable from the matrix of social discourses, from the religious to the political, which bestow on their "subjects" respect or disdain, legitimacy and power. By insisting on a new referential term "Native," Apess both demands control over terms representing the Native subject and claims authority for Native people over themselves as a "discursive subjects" within Euro-American Christian discourses. This lexical move and the corresponding reasoning serve to lay the ethical foundation for the acceptance of an equitable social status for Natives in Euro-American Christian society. Apess anchors this claimed status in the wide-spread religious idea of the time which posited Natives as the lost tribe of Israel by directly linking Natives to the "natives" of the Garden of Eden through their complexion. By doing so, he deftly addresses the socially overt but theologically covert racist presumption of Biblical "whiteness" as a signifier of "Christianity" and non-white as the signifier of its opposite, the "heathen."

The term "heathen" became four years later, in "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man" (1833), Apess's linguistic target in his more explicit attack on the racist hypocrisy he sees embedded in Christian thinking, asking his contemporaries if it is "not the case that everybody that is not white is treated with contempt and counted as barbarians? And I ask if the word of God justifies the white man in so doing" (158-159). Preconditioning his ensuing logic by pointing out that "it is well known that the Jews are a colored people, especially those living in the East, where Christ was born" (160), Apess has his audience follow the logic of his rhetorical questions.

When the prophets prophesied, of whom did they speak? When they spoke of heathens, was it not the whites and others who were counted Gentiles? And I ask if all nations with the exception of the Jews were not counted heathens. (158-159)

This passage exemplifies Apess's dexterous maneuvering of his readership into the fallacious racist logic born of the marriage of primitivist terms and precepts to a Christian paradigm in which the conversion of "heathen" to "Christian" is the ultimate goal. The Native who converted to Christianity discovered that the move from "heathen" to Christian would ultimately be frustrated by the interlinked but impossible societal move from the racial category of non-white to white. By tracing the etymology of the Biblical term "heathen" to "non-Jew," Apess reconnects the "heathen" to the racial category "white" thereby attempting to confound racial categories fallaciously linked to Christian conversion.

Having explored the Christian racist logic encoded in primitivist terminology and the creation of a "heathen" Native subject which constituted an impossible barrier for Native Christian conversion, Apess targeted the concept Christian "civilization" and its primitivist opposite applied to Natives, "savagery." Here he did not conduct a lexical exegesis of the word "savagery" but adopted the received conceptualization of this term and applied it to those revered as having establishing the country's founding Christian morality: the Puritans. In

“The Eulogy on King Philip”¹ (1836) he focused on the documented extreme violence of the 18th century Puritans towards Natives, asking his audience to judge “who, my dear sirs, were wanting of the name of savages- whites, or Indians? Let justice answer” (283). An exemplary anecdote related by Apess concerned a settlement of Christian Indians and a group of Puritan “white warriors” who were “determined to massacre them all.”

...the Indians, then asked liberty to prepare for the fatal hour. The white savages then gave them one hour, as the historian said. They then prayed together; and in tears and cries, upon their knees, begged pardon of each other, of all they had done, after which they informed the white savages that they were now ready. One white man then begun with a mallet and knocked them down [...]and thus they continued till they had massacred nearly ninety men, women, and children, all these innocent of any crime.[...] And so all of my people have been treated, whether Christians or not. I say, then, a different course must be pursued, and different laws must be enacted [...] (309,310)

Re-writing “the Indian” subject as the “Christian martyr” at the mercy of the “white savage,” Apess inverted the conventions of primitivist representation in this passage, as he did throughout the “Eulogy,” in such a way as to insist on their misapplication to Natives and to proclaim the historic *and* contemporary Euro-American Christian violence and injustice concealed by this misapplication. As Barry O’Connell has indicated, while Anglo-American contemporaries of Apess had also condemned Puritan cruelty, the distinctiveness of Apess’s account was his

insistence on giving this history a contemporary resonance, connecting the past treatment of Indians to present policy and calling for change. For him, history was to be not an excuse for nostalgia or vain regret but an accounting of what had been and what might yet be done differently. (276)

Apess’s strategy of paradigmatic inversion, along with his exegetic scrutiny of primitivist terminology, were the means by which he addressed the nature of the “impossible Native subject” and its contemporary ramifications for Native communities. His goal could be described as the deconstruction of Euro-American primitivist “representational codes” (O’Connell, “Introduction” lxi) which anchored the “Native Christian subject” to a discourse of “heathen savagery,” thus legitimizing Christian racist practices towards Natives throughout history, the extreme detrimental effects of which were evident in his contemporary world. Ultimately, Apess re-deploys the rhetoric of evangelical Christianity, appealing to the Christian conscience of his readership to extract their concept of “the Indian” from the paradigm of primitivism and revise it in the light of the Christian tenets of equality and acceptance. Almost 100 years later, Luther Standing Bear would re-address the Native’s impossible subject position, not from the perspective of Christianity and Native Christian conversion, but from the perspective of Enlightenment humanist theories on the cultivation in man of what is “truly human” through education.

Luther Standing Bear

Standing Bear insisted that institutions meant to disseminate knowledge in the service of “truth” and the cultivation of a more “civilized humanity” had instead substantiated and perpetuated ignorance and contributed to a process of dehumanization in relation to the Native.

...through the very agencies [...] that purport to instruct, educate, and perpetuate true history-books, schools, and libraries all over the land- there have been graven false ideas in the hearts and minds of the people.” (*Land* 228)

¹ Chief of the Wampanoag Indians who led the “King Philip War” against New England settlers in 1675-1676.

Concluding in his *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (1933) that these false ideas serve as the social and political legitimization of the “continued subjection of the Indian” (215), Standing Bear offered his readership the possibility to re-orient towards “truthfulness” those discourses in U.S. society that had misguided Euro-Americans and created the “impossible Native subject.”

Like Apess, Standing Bear alerted his readership to the key primitivist terms and their attendant preconceptions.

White men seem to have difficulty in realizing that people who live differently from themselves still might be traveling the upward and progressive road of life. After nearly four hundred years’ living upon this continent, it is still popular conception, on the part of the Caucasian mind, to regard the native American as a savage, meaning that he is low in thought and feeling, and cruel in acts; that he is a heathen, meaning that he is incapable, therefore void, of high philosophical thought concerning life and life’s relations. (*Land* xv)

As Apess utilized the discourse of Christianity and its rhetoric, Standing Bear’s adopted perspective and rhetoric is that of an the Enlightened humanist’s faith in humanity’s “upward” and “progressive” development from “low” to “high philosophical thought.” In this passage, Standing Bear signals that primitivist precepts interwoven in Enlightenment humanist’s theorization of “progress” have created a false “Indian subject.” To rectify this situation, Standing Bear in his first two autobiographical works, *My People the Sioux* (1928) and *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (1933) proposes to re-educate “the Caucasian mind” by signaling primitivist concepts related to the Native in humanist discourses, asserting that “all the years of calling the Indian a savage has never made him one; all the denial of his virtues has never taken them from him” (*Land* 251).

While Apess used linguistic analysis and ironic inversion to undermine primitivist paradigms and precepts, Standing Bear’s strategy of re-education involves the presentation of autobiographical and ethnological facts concerning Native customs, religion, and philosophy. Explicitly addressing his audience’s “rationality,” their ability to draw logically reasoned conclusions, Standing Bear argues the “always already” presence of a humanist state, civilized society, and a Christian-like morality in Native individuals and society before contact. Preparing an argumentation strategy which based itself on the premise of commonality, Standing Bear presents his audience with what he sees as a logical fallacy: “I protest against calling my people savages. How can the Indian, sharing all the virtues of the white man, be justly called a savage?” (qtd. in Ellis, “Foreword” vii)

Throughout *Land of the Spotted Eagle*, Standing Bear counters the stereotypical characteristics associated with “heathen savages”- war-lust, laziness (non-industriousness) and object-worship- with detailed descriptions of Lakota (Sioux) family and communal life and the development of ethical and religious values, paralleling Native and Euro-American customs and thought. In his description of a certain Native ceremony, he intersperses his discussion of Native societal values reflected in the ritual with Christian homilies.

The ceremony is ethical in nature, for the practice of all virtues- kindness, generosity; truthfulness and service- are placed above gain and personal profit. The saying “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” is literally and practically observed. One really becomes his “brother’s keeper” and selfishness is utterly destroyed. (28)

Insisting in *My People the Sioux* that “we were the true Christians” (122), in *Land of the Spotted Eagle* Standing Bear repeatedly draws conclusions for the reader which underscore the always already presence of “progressive” qualities in Native society, exemplified by his remark that “I am going to venture that the man who sat on the ground in his tipi meditating on life and its meaning [...] was infusing into his being the true essence of civilization” (249-250). Addressing the contemporary impoverished and degraded state of Native America, Standing Bear insisted that the degeneration of these progressive qualities was due to a

process of dehumanization institutionalized by the turn-of-the-20th century in the system of Native education, which did not, despite its humanist groundings, approach the Native from the perspective of Enlightenment humanist “commonality” but from the impossible primitivist split Savage Indian/Civilized Man.

As mentioned above, Standing Bear had experienced firsthand this educational system pioneered by General Pratt, which aimed to distill the “man” from the “Indian.” Despite Standing Bear’s valuation of the education he received at the Carlisle Indian School as strategically necessary for negotiating the demands of Euro-American society, he insisted that the success of this education was measured not in terms of mental, physical, and spiritual development but by its ability to fabricate from the fake Indian savage a fake white man, remarking that Natives sent to these boarding schools were “made over” into “the likeness of the white race” (*Land* 251). Standing Bear argued that Indian children were taken to boarding schools “not to exchange languages and ideas, and not to develop the best [ethical] traits” but “to copy, to imitate” (*Land* 236), relating that as a new 14 year-old student at Pratt’s boarding school, after having his hair cut and changing into Euro-American clothing, he felt “that I was no more Indian, but would be an imitation of a white man” (*My People* 141).

Maneuvering his argumentation to focus on Euro-Americans, in *Land of the Spotted Eagle* Standing Bear insisted that the creation and maintenance of this fake Indian subject was “a process detrimental to both races” (251) in that it required that Euro-Americans maintain a correspondingly “fake” history of their own country and subsequently a fake image of themselves.

If the public were a thinking public the very fact that history is so palpably prejudiced - the white man always right, the Indian always wrong - would arouse a doubt; would demand a fair accounting for the sake of history, for true knowledge, and respect for truth. (169)

Once again Standing Bear appealed to the rational abilities and Enlightenment humanist sensitivities of his Euro-American readership as he led his audience to his reasoned proposal for cultivating “true knowledge, and respect for truth” in America: Natives should take control of the discourse-producing system which had perpetuated Native’s “impossible subject position,” i.e. education.

Initially addressing the needs of the Native community, he insisted that “Indians should teach Indians. [...] Why not a school of Indian thought, built on the Indian pattern and conducted by Indian instructors?” (252, 254). Such curricular authority would eventually lead to discursive author-ity as Native educators would feel duty-bound in the name of “truth” to write their own histories

The Indian, by the very sense of duty, should become his own historian, giving his account of the race- fairer and fewer accounts of the wars and more of statecraft, legends, languages, oratory, and philosophical conceptions. No longer should the Indian be dehumanized in order to make material for lurid and cheap fiction to embellish street-stands. Rather, a fair and correct history of the Native American should be incorporated in the curriculum of the public school. (254)

This passage claims that only Native author-ity over the discourses which have produced the Native “impossible subject position” will lead to a more enlightened discourse on the Native subject as a subject of American history and culture. Furthermore, Standing Bear insists that the only way for an enlightened humanist education to realize its ideals in America is not only for Natives, “by the very sense” of Enlightenment humanist duty, to rewrite their own history in the service of “fairness” and “truth,” but for Euro-Americans, by the very same sense of Enlightenment humanist duty, to include this rectified history in the curriculum of Euro-American schools, remarking that “The mothers and fathers of this land do their children an injustice by not seeing that their offspring are taught the true history of this continent and its

people...” (228). Through a “rational” re-education of his audience, Standing Bear, using a strategy similar to that of Apess, appealed to a “truer” humanism in Euro-American society, calling on Euro-Americans to “look upon the Indian world as a human world; then let him see to it that human rights be accorded to the Indians” (251).

In their (literary) attempts to achieve a more empowered socio-political position for their Native communities by dismantling the impossible primitivist Native subject created and maintained by Christian and humanist (il)logic, the dialectic tactics used by Apess and Standing Bear could be criticized as a simple inversion of the Rousseauian primitivism in which “natural man” is always already civilized and moral (i.e. Christian), a progressive state which “civilized man” has yet to attain. However, Jacques Derrida has shown that a “simple” inversion is never a simplistic reversal of positionality by which binary relationships remain intact, but is the first stage in the process of deconstructing normative hegemonic structures. Discussing Jonathan Dollimore’s interpretation of Derrida, Benita Parry writes

That a radically subversive move can be effected through the inversion and active alteration of categories by which the hegemonic ideology produces and marginalizes a dominated or deviant group, has been argued by Jonathan Dollimore: ‘Jacques Derrida reminds us that binary oppositions are ‘a violent hierarchy’ where one of the two terms forcefully governs the other. A crucial stage in their deconstruction involves an overturning, an inversion ‘which brings low what was high.’ The political effect of ignoring this stage, of trying to jump beyond the hierarchy into a world quite free of it, is simply to leave it intact in the only world we have. (“Problems” 30)

Applying this theoretical context, Apess’s and Standing Bear’s “construction” of a Native subject via an inverted primitivism cannot be read primarily as a self-constructive strategy (as was the self-reflexive, self-definitive purpose of Euro-primitivism with its paradigmatic binaries), but as a *deconstructive* attack on the Native “impossible subject” position within Euro-American discourse. Both Apess and Standing Bear do not simply reverse the primitivist binaries but create a discursive equation in which the Euro-self-defined “Christian civilized” *equals* the Euro-authored “heathen savage.” In doing so, they challenge the Self/Other discourse which is fundamental to the Euro-American “subject,” dependent as it is on its “impossible” Native counterpart. In this respect, Barry O’Connell’s interpretation of Apess can be seen as equally applicable to Standing Bear.

The very terminologies of an Americanist discourse, which value Euro-American precisely through implied contrast to their Indian opposites, are expropriated, inverted, or used as though they could characterize Indians as aptly as Euro-Americans. This [...] confounds savage and civilized, pagan and Christian, devil and saint, villain and hero, the polarities upon which Euro-American culture has built its sense of legitimacy, of its superiority to Native and African Americans. The binary logic of “us/them” is riddled by Apess’s words. (“Introduction” xxi-xxii)

Instead of the ambition to create, as might be concluded from their texts, a more Christian Christianity or a more universal “universal Humanism” in which Natives could achieve equality on Euro-American terms, both Standing Bear and Apess attempt to pit Euro-American discourse against itself, and by driving it to the limits of its own logic, achieve an autonomous space both for Native discursive author-ity and its counterpart, socio-political self-determination (Ruoff, “Reversing” 213). Their discursive mode can be seen to reflect what Mary Louis Pratt has termed “autoethnographic” writing, which involves

selective collaboration with and appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or the conqueror. These are merged or infiltrated to varying degrees with indigenous idioms to create self-representations intended to intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding. Autoethnographic works are often addressed to both metropolitan audiences and the speaker’s own community. (“Arts” 35)

The bi-cultural and bi-directional messages in both Apess's and Standing Bear's texts emphasize Native self-authorship and self-determination not because they disagreed with the tenets of Christianity, the potential value of Euro-education, or the necessity of social integration, but because they were witness to the hypocrisy of mainstream culture in relation to their communities, what could be called the "cultural logic" of "assimilation," in which persistent primitivist misrepresentation of their cultures led to and maintained the devastating practical realities of their communities. While both writers were witnesses to the "failure" of Euro-American assimilationist ambitions for Native Americans, the development of scientific methodologies during the 19th century was providing scientific "explanations" for this failure, the most influential being the Victorian theorization of "evolution" (Dollimore 255).

Although credited with the concept, Charles Darwin did not use the word "evolution" in his seminal work *On the Origin of Species* (1859) in which he delineated his theory of "descent with modification" (i.e. change to fit environment through natural selection). It was Herbert Spencer in his works *First Principles* (1862) and *Principles of Biology* (1864-67) who discussed Darwin's theory in terms of organic "evolution" and an implied "progress." Transposing his biological theories to society, Spencer developed the concept of Social Darwinism which "ranked human groups and cultures according to their assumed level of evolutionary attainment, with (not surprisingly) white Europeans at the top and people dwelling in their conquered colonies at the bottom" (Gould 37-38). This theory of evolution, as Berkhofer Jr. has remarked, "dominated scientific thinking in the 19th century, and evolutionism became the foundation of one science after another" (49). Natives became the focus of such burgeoning scientific disciplines as ethnology and anthropology as the American Ethnological Society (established in 1842) and the Smithsonian Institution (established in 1846) dedicated much of their research to gathering information about the "vanishing" Native tribes. Fitting neatly into the social Darwinian paradigm, the "failure" of primitive Natives to assimilate to Christian civilization could now be explained as the inability of a (social) organism to "evolve" biologically and "progress" societally to a "higher state" (Pearce 129-130). As the European conceptualization of the world underwent a paradigmatic shift, as Pearce summarizes, from the "seventeenth-century dependence upon Genesis [...] to nineteenth-century dependence upon natural law," this shift was applied to the Native subject whose presumed fatal inability to adapt to U.S. society could now "be rationalized and comprehended in predominantly naturalistic terms" (71). Social Darwinism and related theories such as recapitulation and biological determinism offered new scientific metaphors of "evolution" and the "(non)survival" of "(un)fittest" which supported primitivist paradigms of European and Euro-America civilization and its "others." Within the metaphors of this new discourse, Native peoples were deemed to be "vanishing," their lifeways doomed to extinction due to the changing environment and their (in)ability to "evolve" or adapt to their inevitable assimilation into modernity. In literature, these Darwinistic theories were more generally reflected in the style termed naturalism.

Writing within the constraints of literary Naturalism and Modernism

Literary naturalism in the United States developed in the 1890s and was influenced by French literary naturalism (1850s-1880s) with its rejection of "free will" in favor of a more Darwinian and deterministic view of human behavior. Generally, naturalist fiction portrayed man's futile struggles within a monolithically powerful environment (the city or nature), armed only with her/his limited human "nature" primarily understood as an inherited mix of passions and instinct. While these often fatalistic explorations of "man" in a Darwinian-like state of deterministic struggle are now being reappraised for their investment in the ultimate value of human experience and their potential for social critique (Howard, *Form and*

History), with respect to the “Native subject,” early 20th century Euro-American literature influenced by naturalism has been seen to follow the precepts of Social Darwinism and its covert “primitivist” foregone conclusion that the “Native subject” was forever vanishing in the wake of civilization and modernity. As Louis Owens remarks, the Native subject was the “quintessential illustration” of “naturalistic despair.”

My favorite example of this iconography of the Vanishing American in American modernism is Faulkner’s “Chief Doom,” or “l’Homme,” whom Faulkner called “a man of wit and imagination” and who (being a man of foresight, we assume) anglicised his own name to “Doom.” [...] Hemingway’s doomed Indians, for their part, drink uncontrollably, are sexually “loose,” are close to nature (as guides for white men), and cut their throats as Indian babies are born in a nicely neutralizing metaphor. (*Mixedblood*, 81-82)

Leslie Fiedler in his analysis of the Native in Euro-American literatures also remarks that Faulkner’s “Indians (the old Ikemotubbe, for instance, of his short stories) are vanishing by definition, disappearing as fast as the forests of the American past” (*The Return* 179). For D.H. Lawrence, the “Red man” had already vanished, existing now primarily as angry ghosts inhabiting the American landscape as “grinning, unappeased, aboriginal demons” praying on the psyche of the European and Euro-American (56). It is in this last form, the Native as indigenous “force” affecting the Euro-American psyche, that European and Euro-American modernists, gravitating to Taos, New Mexico, after 1915, theorized the “Native” in relation to “modern man.” Through European modernism’s revived aesthetic interest in “primitive” cultures, in the American Southwest the naturalist’s “vanishing Native subject” underwent a transvaluation, becoming the modernist’s “indigene”- a conduit to an authentically American experience and aesthetic.

American modernist primitivism and the “Indigene”

The Taos landscape and indigenous cultures became the focus of attention of modernist artists first through the 1915 colony of expatriate artists, the Taos Art Association, and then through the efforts of the east coast socialite and patron of the arts Mable Dodge Sterne (later Luhan). Moving to Taos in 1917, she encouraged a variety of European and Euro-American artists and writers such as Willa Cather, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Aldous Huxley to come to her Taos “salon” (Pfister 166-177). Among these artists were D.H. Lawrence and Carl Jung, who re-expressed a concept which had occupied American thinkers throughout U.S. history- the transformative, “indigenizing” effect of the land on its inhabitants.

Attitudes concerning this potential transformative effect had always been of a dual nature. On the one hand, American thinkers from the Puritans into the nineteenth century had been concerned about the possible “degenerative” effect of the “wilderness” or “frontier” on the colonists and pioneers who were moving Christian “civilization” west (Pearce 222; Drinnon). On the other hand, the American natural landscape was seen to be invested with intimations of transcendence, the American Transcendental Movement, represented in the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau, discerning in nature the reflection of a higher morality, spirituality, or state of “oneness” to which man should aspire to take part in.

The modernist painters and writers who made their way to Taos, New Mexico during the first decades of the twentieth century also expressed a sense of the transformative power of the Southwest. Through the landscape, the music, and artistic designs of the indigenous peoples, these modernists professed an experience of “indigenization.” This indigenization did not mean, however, becoming more like the “indigene” but indicated the possibility to become, *through* the indigene, more authentically “American.” According to William Carlos Williams, an American was not to become an Indian “but the reverse; to be himself in a new world, Indianlike” (137-38). Williams, “engaging ‘the Indian’ repeatedly in his refiguring of

history” believed “that American civilization must adopt an aboriginal element in order to find roots in the New World”(P. Deloria 198; Schubnell 84).

Becoming “Indianlike” was effected, according to the influential theses of D.H. Lawrence and C. G. Jung, by the integral influence of a specific geography on the psychology of the inhabitants of that place. Lawrence’s concept of the “spirit of place,” and Jung’s “the *genius* or *spiritus loci*” both believed the land to have an indigenizing influence on the psyche of those who lived there (Schubnell, 81, 82). Natives, who had lived in a specific geography since “pre-history,” were seen as the direct human, societal and cultural embodiment of this process. The anthropologist Mary Austin, focusing much of her anthropology on Native songs, even postulated “the existence of an American rhythm which affects the artist on an unconscious level.”

The spirit of place, she argued, influenced the Indian poet through rhythmic impulses. And, she believed, non-Indian artists, exposed to the same impulses, would have to react as the natives did, thus creating a truly American art. (Schubnell 83)

James Ruppert discusses how this vision of a “truly American art” had appealed to Imagist poets who thought to recognize their own artistic aspirations in the traditional Native songs being published at that time in the well respected periodical *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. The similarities between Indian poetry and the Imagists were being so strongly drawn that Carl Sandburg quipped “Suspicion arises definitely that the Red Man and his children committed direct plagiarism on the modern Imagists and Vorticists” (qtd in Ruppert, “Discovering” 250). Ruppert additionally remarks that regionalist writers who wished to reinvigorate a sense of land and community saw in these indigenous expressions “a singularly *American* poetry of landscape, a poetry in which the unity of people and environment was at the core” (“Discovering” 249, emphasis added). As these early 20th century American artists were straining to define themselves against the often overpowering cultural influence of Europe, those who came in contact with the indigenous cultures of the Southwest saw in Native song, painting and music the potential source of an as yet untapped and much needed American authentic aesthetic expression, as well as sense of “indigenized” American experience rooted through the Native subject as “indigene” in the land.

This Euro-American authored Native subject, emblematic of American modernity and distinctivity, can be seen to have been forged from an eclectic fusion of modernism and naturalism in which the impossibility of the Native’s subject position in American discourse once again becomes apparent. Naturalism’s logic insisted that the “Native,” as the social-Darwinian “primitive man” would not thrive in Euro-American contexts of civilized, inexorable, and often aggressive progress. As “traditional” man vanished in the wake of modernity, the modernist’s “indigene” could live on as a “force” authenticating Euro-American subject-ivities. While Native writers of the 1960s such as N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, and Gerald Vizenor will be seen to critique this impossible Native subject paradigm that ultimately puts the Native subject under erasure, naturalism and modernism offered Native writers of the 1920s and 1930s literary modes by which they could begin to address exactly this process of erasure and to analyze the complexity of their contemporary situations. For these Native writers, the modernist concern which came closest to representing the multiplexity of their impossible subject position was the concept of “alienation.”

The Native and the Euro-modernist alienated subject

Alienation as a modernist theme was most notably developed in the European strain of modernism in relation to the European subject and the perceived fragmentation of societal value-structures previously experienced as unified. The European strain of the modernist

“alienated subject,” no matter how “etherized” or self-estranged, remained congruous with and indicative of the challenges of a radically changing world, assuming the condition of universal human experience in relation to the movement of “history” towards “modernity.” Naturalism’s expression of the (im)possibility of human agency within these contexts of radical change did not herald the end of Euro-American society but portrayed the “evolution” of society. However, while the Euro-modernist alienated subject was understood as representing the *Zeitgeist*, a psycho-social baptism of fire into the modern condition, Native alienated subjects were not understood by Euro-modernist audiences as complex expressions of complex contemporary situations, but were read as portrayals of a “vanishing” people doomed to a naturalist fate. Christopher Schedler points out that the Native novelists of the 1930s such as Mourning Dove, John Joseph Matthews, and D’Arcy McNickle were read “primarily through the lenses of naturalism and social realism, modes which privilege a tragic view” (127).

Alienation with respect to the Native subject became most recognizably represented in Native-authored literature as the psychological stress experienced by the Native individual who attempted to participate in both persisting tribal traditions and mainstream Euro-American society. Naturalism in this context was presumed to teach that the inevitable fate of the “modern Native subject” was to either reject the “Native” in order to adapt to modernity, or by embracing Native traditions deny modernity and become an “anachronistic subject” whose fate was extinction. Native modernist writers of the 1930s, desiring to express their experience, had to address both the complexity of socio-cultural “inbetweenness” in relation to their tribal and non-tribal communities, as well as address the Euro-American presumption of the incongruity between “Native tradition” and “American modernity,” the presumption that the “modern Native subject” was an impossibility, a “self-destructing” oxymoron. This situation is illustrated in the predicament of the protagonists in the following novels who struggle to navigate both the realities of cultural “inbetweenness” and the demoralizing Euro-American modernist discourse perpetuating their impossible subject position.

Three Native American modernist writers: Mourning Dove, Joseph Mathews, and D’Arcy McNickle

Prior to the twentieth century, only three novels by Native Americans had been published: *Joaquin Murieta* (1854) by John Rollin Ridge (Cherokee), *Wynema* (1891) by Sophia Alice Callahan (Muscogee), and *Queen of the Woods* (1899) attributed to Simon Pokagon (Potawatomi). The 1920s and 1930s saw a marked increase in Native fiction, Native novelists such as Mourning Dove (Colville/Okanogan), Joseph Mathews (Osage), and D’Arcy McNickle (Cree/Salish) publishing their portrayal of the Native subject in terms of contemporary situations and inherited traditions. In their works, these writers wrestled with the representation of contemporary Native experience at a time when no writer could as yet envision a Native subject beyond the prevailing modernist concerns and constraints. Mourning Dove’s *Cogewea, The Half-Blood* (1927) has been described by A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff as the first Native-authored novel to introduce “the theme of the mixed-blood’s attempt to find his or her place, a concern that dominates much of the fiction written by American Indians in the 1930s and in the 1970s” (“Old” 162). In Mourning Dove’s novel, her protagonist, the mixed-blood cowgirl Cogewea, expresses how the “breed” in the 1930s experienced the antagonism of cultural polarization.

“Yes, we are between two fires, the Red and the White. Our Caucasian brothers criticize us as a shiftless class, while the Indians disown us as abandoning our own race. We are maligned and traduced as no one but we of the despised ‘breeds’ can know.” (41)

Throughout the novel, Cogewea struggles to remain aloof from and live beyond this paradigm of inbetweenness. The “breed” is the subject of long discussions which Cogewea has with various characters: her mixedblood suitor Jim, her white suitor Densmore, her fullblood grandmother. It is discussed in relation to government policy, is the theme in related stories from the oral tradition told by her grandmother, and is the degenerate central character in a Euro-American novel Cogewea reads with disgust. Cogewea reveals that she understands her subject position to be constructed from various discourses which determine the parameters of the mixedblood subject’s agency when, in an attempt to be the master of her own subject position as “breed,” she decides to enter two horse races at a rodeo- both the horse race for white women, and the race for Indians. She wins both races, but her bi-cultural passing is discovered and she is disqualified from both events. While Cogewea’s actions indicate the need for Natives to gain control of their subject position within Euro-American discourses and constructs, her situation reflects the complexity of this position for contemporary Natives in that it involves adual subject positionality.

Cogewea’s attempts to liberate herself from discursive constructs of “the breed,” to transcend her discursive environment, seem only to lead her to a naturalist conclusion- that she must as yet remain in her immediate environment in order to thrive. She exclaims to Jim, “We despised breeds are in a zone of our own and when we break from the corral erected about us, we meet up with trouble. If only the fence could not be scaled by the soulless creatures who have ever preyed upon us” (283). Jim, eager to marry Cogewea, offers her a vision not of resistance but of acceptance: “S’pose we remain together in that there corral you spoke of as being built ‘round us by the Shoyahpee [whites]?” (283).

Despite the fact that Mourning Dove, on the last page of the novel, provides a *deus ex machine* for Cogewea in the form of a large inheritance in order to create a sense of triumph and to provide a happy ending to conform to the requirements of the novel’s romantic genre, this technical device does not diminish the novel’s concern about the future of the mixedblood (Weaver, *That the People* 110). Cogewea’s metaphorical “corral” seems to presage D’Arcy McNickle’s title *The Surrounded* (1936), both images indicating a thwarted Native agency. Most tellingly, Cogewea’s metaphor describing white and Native relations, that of predators and prey, provides the novel with a manipulated naturalist image not communicating the fatalistic acceptance of a “natural order of things” but expressing frustration with an oppressive condition, the (im)possibilities of the Native subject within Euro-American contexts of modernity and naturalism.

Despite the intrusive and heavy-handed influence of Mourning Dove’s editor Lucullus McWhorter, contemporary Native critics have seen issues and themes in the novel which would become, during and after the 1970s, significant indications of recuperated and reevaluated Native subject positions. Louis Owens emphasizes Mourning Dove’s creation of the ranch as a “borderland space” and her emphasis on “mixedblood status” celebrates hybridity as a Native subject position, concluding that Mourning Dove creates a “mixedblood world that is vibrant, exciting, infinitely mutable, and rich with life” (*Mixedblood* 30-33; *Other* 42). Jace Weaver writes that Mourning Dove’s portraits of the various mixedblood characters “militate against essentialism and demonstrate the role of culture in racial/ethnic identity” (*That the People*, 1-7). The strength and independence of Cogewea’s character in a primarily male world inspired Paula Gunn Allen to call the novel “deeply feminist.” Furthermore, Allen sees in the novel the intimation of things to come:

Mourning Dove is awkwardly successful in this novel, employing a complex interweaving of modern and traditional themes [...] not duplicated again until N. Scott Momaday published his novel *House Made of Dawn* in 1968. (“Introduction” 11)

Mourning Dove's contemporary, John Joseph Mathews, also explored the "inbetweenness" of the Native subject in his novel *Sundown* (1934), portraying the effects of both mixedbloodedness and assimilation on the protagonist Chal Windzor, the son of a mixedblood Osage father and fullblood Osage mother. Rich from the oil boom on his reservation in northeast Oklahoma, Chal goes to the state university where he becomes ashamed of his Indianness and decides to pass as Spanish. Returning to the reservation after the suicide of his father, he attempts to confront his discomfort with and problematic attraction to Osage culture, but fills his days with drinking, women, and fast cars.

Chal is clearly "caught between cultures," Robert Dale Parker describing Chal's attitudes to both Osage traditional culture and Euro-American "modernity" as conflicted: "Chal can never resolve his attraction to Osage culture with his embarrassment over its appeal to him, just as he can never resolve his attraction to the bustle of economic 'progress' with his horror at the encroachment of white culture and modernity" (22). Dissipation, aimlessness, and inertia characterize Chal at the end of the novel in which both "the Indian" and "the Man" seem to have been "killed" by the dynamics of the assimilationist's vision.

Christopher Schedler does not dismiss Mathews's modernist-cum-naturalist vision in relation to the dissolution of his Native subject caught, as Owens describes it, in a "deracinated no-Indian's-land" (*Other* 25). However, Schedler does wish to foreground "Mathews' ironic and humorous questioning of received traditions, both Osage and Euro-American, reading Mathews' novel "as an experiment in new ways of expressing a modern American Indian Identity" (Schedler 128). Robert Warrior also argues that "Mathews's novel and his other works are attempts to challenge the language of victimization, tragedy, and alienation" (*Tribal* 56) through his critical look at the pitfalls of both his contemporary Osage and Euro-American culture, hinting at, through Chal's inability to "choose" one or the other, the need for "the possibility of an alternative" (*Tribal* 83). Warrior's remarks indicate that while modernist and naturalist paradigms dictated the "fate" of the contemporary Native subject, they also were vehicles for Native writers to insist on a need for changed perspectives.

D'Arcy McNickle's novel *The Surrounded* (1936), which also envisions a fatalistic end for its Native subject, has been seen as a similar call for a "wider vision of political and imaginative possibility" in relation to the Native subject in contemporary contexts of modernity (Parker 79). Written two years after the end of the Dawes Act and the beginning of President Roosevelt's "Indian New Deal" which called for more tribal self-determination, the novel can be seen as an evaluative portrayal of the debilitating legacy of Native/Euro-American misguided interactions.

Returning to the Flathead reservation after travelling as a violin player, Archilde Leon (half Salish, half Spanish) appears to have assimilated Euro-American derogatory attitudes towards Native culture. Despite the fact that through listening to old Salish stories he begins to appreciate the significance of his Indian heritage, McNickle underscores the barriers of non- and mis-communication that separate Archilde's two worlds, exemplified by the refusal of his Salish mother and Spanish father to interact with each other.

...it would seem [that] communication between Indian and white worlds is impossible- [...] Repeatedly in the course of the novel understanding fails, communication leads to confusion, and individuals find themselves trapped in a kind of mute isolation. (Owens, *Other* 68)

Indeed, through a series of misunderstandings and accidents, Archilde is accused of murder and is taken to jail. As Owens describes the series of mishaps which lead to Archilde's arrest, it is "as if [the Indians] are in the grip of an incomprehensible fate," seemingly "both helpless to control their own destinies and hopelessly trapped in that condition" (*Other* 65, 66). McNickle's Natives are surrounded by the mountains and by Euro-American culture, and the

novel can be seen as a plea, through negative example, for the governmental policies of Native self-determinism developing at this time.

However, Owens has compared *The Surrounded* with its manuscript version, *The Hungry Generation*, and found that the manuscript narrative was “quite different in its implication” (*Other* 74). The title immediately communicates a different spirit and vision for its Native subjects- that of Native agency and ambition rather than captivity and immobility. Clearly influenced by Hemingway, the more cosmopolitan Native protagonist of the manuscript version is not “lost” or “surrounded.” In the manuscript, Archilde travels not through Oregon but to Paris and experiences the milieu of the Lost Generation. His return to the reservation does not conclude with his arrest but with the dismissal of the charge of murder and with Archilde inheriting his father’s ranch.

While a publisher’s rejection letter praised McNickles’ manuscript of *The Hungry Generation* as heralding a “new” Native literature to “rival that of Harlem,” the novel finally accepted for publication was not the manuscript exploration of the Native subject successfully situated in European, Euro-American, and tribal worlds (Owens, *Other* 62). The narrative deemed “acceptable” in terms of publication was in effect an affirmation and confirmation of the entrenched discourses of modernism and naturalism as it sketched a “pre-conditioned” and projected fate of the Native subject rather than new contemporary possibilities for a complex Native subject position.

One can argue that Mourning Dove, Mathews, and McNickles did not portray Native protagonists “paralyzed” in the modernist sense of the individual floundering in cultural traditions run dry. Using modernist paradigms as a form of protest, they portrayed the frustration of intelligent Native individuals struggling with the impossible subject position imposed upon them, waiting for a world beyond the primitivist-cum-modernist “choice” of two worlds- the “traditional” and the “modern”- and waiting for a vision of a future beyond the primitivist-cum-naturalist trope of inevitable “extinction” of the “primitive” Native as he adapts and assimilates to “civilization.” It would be N. Scott Momaday’s first novel, *House Made of Dawn* (1966), which would “imagine the ideological equipment that might merge living Indian culture” with contemporary challenges, and envision a Native subject beyond the restrictions and fatalism of modernist paradigms (Parker 763).

Beyond the constraints of the Euro-American Naturalist/Modernist Native subject

***House Made of Dawn* (1966) by N. Scott Momaday**

In his “The Shattered Modernism of N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn*,” Larry Landrum has argued that “though the text appeared over a quarter of a century ago, it is more controversial now than when it was published” (763). The central critical dilemma pinpointed by Landrum is that Momaday’s novel, which is seen to have expressed as never before a distinctly Native subject-ivity, in so doing has employed modernist aesthetic techniques, thereby situating the novel at the intersection of the ongoing theoretical discussions concerned with the (im)possibility of subaltern cultural expression in relation to the metropolitan center’s “approved” modes of discourse. Louis Owens (“As If an Indian”²³; *Mixedblood* 62-65) finds the novel’s international acclaim and Pulitzer Prize a disconcerting indication of this quandary: Has the novel creatively communicated a distinctively Native subject-ivity despite its aesthetic modernist “layer,” or has it reproduced with deft modernist skill what the “privileged center” recognizes and accepts as “authentically” Native?

The novel’s non-linear narrative chronology and incorporation of fragments of traditional Navajo and Pueblo oral myths encourage a close comparison of Momaday’s novelistic techniques and modernist literary experimentation (Ruppert *Mediation* 153;

Schubnell 68-70). Louis Owens points out that mainstream audiences used to New Critical methods of reading can “understand” the novel from the “generic” interpretive orientation of modernist primitivist mythopoeia.

Momaday structures his novel not according to the paradigms of classical and Christian mythology per Joyce, Eliot, Faulkner, and all the icons of modernism, but rather in accordance with Pueblo and Navajo mythology. Just as Eliot recognized that in *Ulysses*, Joyce (and Eliot, himself, of course in *The Waste Land*), was incorporating mythological structure to organize the chaos and futility of modern existence, Momaday is constructing his novel upon the mythic paradigms of inherited culture. (Mixedblood 63)

Concurring with this appraisal of Momaday’s use of Native mythical elements, Susan Scarberry-García has discussed how tribal sacred stories in the novel are removed from ritual- and tribal-specific environments and “recontextualized,” connecting them “associationally, thematically, and symbolically” (67). Scarberry-García remarks that Momaday’s Native mythic framework is a “unification of Navajo words and Pueblo events” (85), exemplified by the final scene in which Abel sings the Navajo Night Chant during the Pueblo ritual dawn run. This seeming “synthesization” of distinct mythical systems can arguably be seen as the mythopoeic superstructure of Momaday’s novel.

Mythopoeism, which has been called “the underlying metaphysic of much modernist literature” (M. Bell 1-2), is a central aesthetic in Momaday’s work. Remarking on the “concern for the myth-making impulse” in his works *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) and *The Names: A Memoir* (1976), Momaday states, “I am very concerned to understand as much as I can about myth-making [...] I regard what I’m doing as an inquiry into the nature of myth making” (Schubnell (ed.) 187, 188). Momaday’s mythopoeia, despite being arguably modernist by method, will be shown to challenge modernist mythopoeic sensibilities in relation to the Native subject. Through the character of Angela St. John, Momaday will scrutinize the modernist primitivist desire for and appropriation of the “indigene.” In addition, Momaday’s mythopoeia, clearly Native by content, will be shown to emphasize the viability of inherited culture in relation to the challenges of “modernity.” Through the character of Abel, Momaday will portray the Native agential subject successfully moving beyond the paralysis of previous fatalistic naturalist paradigms.

Momaday’s protagonist, suffering from traumatic shock syndrome, returns from WWII to his grandfather’s house in a Southwestern pueblo and attempts to enter into the life of the village. He has a brief affair with a visiting Euro-American woman, Angela St. John, although she is married and newly pregnant. The affair ends abruptly when Abel is arrested for killing an albino Native villager during a traditional festival. The narrative continues seven years later after Abel has served his jail sentence for the murder. Now living in Los Angeles, Abel is befriended by a Navajo youth, Benally, who has successfully adapted to city life. Abel, however, is unable to adjust and after a near fatal confrontation with a sadistic policeman, Martinez, Abel returns once again to the pueblo. Shortly thereafter, his grandfather dies and the reader is left with a vision of Abel participating in an ancient Pueblo traditional dawn race, singing under his breath the Navajo Night Chant from which the novel gets its title.

The mythopoeic landscape, the indigene, and Angela St. John

One of the most compelling elements of Momaday’s novel is his creation of a landscape infused with a mythic dimension. Owens points out that the first paragraphs of the Prologue’s symbolic description of the land and the first chapter’s more realistic but abstractly timeless description of the setting for the novel are linked through the imagery of the ritual

prayer the Night Chant (*Other* 94). These passages are quoted here at length to illustrate Momaday's mythopoeic literary style.

From the Night Chant:

House made of dawn,
 House made of evening light,
 House made of dark cloud,
 House made of male rain,
 House made of dark mist,
 House made of female rain,
 House made of pollen,
 [...]
 May it be beautiful before me,
 May it be beautiful behind me,
 May it be beautiful below me,
 May it be beautiful above me,
 May it be beautiful all around me,
 In beauty it is finished. (134-135)

From the Prologue:

There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting. There were many colors on the hills, and the plain was bright with different-colored clays and sands. Red and blue and spotted horses grazed in the plain, and there was a dark wilderness on the mountains beyond. The land was still and strong. It was beautiful all around. (7)

From the opening of the first chapter:

The river lies in a valley of hills and fields. The north end of the valley is narrow, and the river runs down from the mountains through a canyon. The sun strikes the canyon floor only a few hours each day, and in winter the snow remains for a long time in the crevices of the walls. There is a town in the valley, and there are ruins of other towns in the canyon. In three directions from the town there are cultivated fields. [...] Now and then in winter, great angles of geese are the same color and the air is hard and damp and smoke rises from the houses of the town. The seasons lie hard upon the land. (9)

The description of the landscape of the opening of the first chapter is imbued with a mythic dimension evoked by the Prologue and Night Chant. This "mythically imbued environment" will be shown to instigate in Angela St. John the Jungian/Lawrencium transformation discussed above: that a primal quality inherent in the land changes and forms the psyche of those who live there.

The conceptualization of the spiritual power of geography and its influence on human experience have been considered by Silko as well as the modernists at Taos as constituting a Native American sensibility, independent of Euro-American influences (Arnold (ed.) 180). However, attempting to accommodate both the overlapping and independence of the modernist and traditional Native perspectives with regard to sacred geography in *House Made of Dawn*, Matthias Schubnell in his discussion of Angela is careful to point out that while Momaday and Lawrence were "kindred spirits," the "comparison of his work to individual writers who shared his interests in the relationship of man and earth does not suggest any direct borrowing" (92). Schubnell's analysis, while insightfully revealing the similarities of these so-called "kindred" perspectives of the indigenizing power of the land, does not address the possible *function* of their overlap in Momaday's novel. Angela's experience within Momaday's mythopoeic context will be shown to function as Momaday's indication of the *limitations* of the Jungian/Lawrencian model within modernist primitivism.

During Angela's summer at the pueblo, her sexual relationship with Abel and her increasing sensitization to the mystical influences of the Southwestern landscape seem to instigate a transformation in her. She seems to shed her personal malaise, achieve a renewed sensuality, and experience a hint of an "indigenous reality." She believes to glimpse this other "reality" as she witnesses a traditional dance at the pueblo.

It had seemed to her that the dancers meant to dance forever in that slow, deliberate way. There was something so grave and mysterious in it, those old men chanting in the sun, [...] The dancers had looked straight ahead, to the exclusion of everything, [...] It was simply that they were grave, distant, intent upon something that she could not see. Their eyes were held upon some vision out of range, something away in the end of distance, some reality that she did not know, or even suspect. What was it that they saw? Probably they saw nothing after all, nothing at all. But then that was the trick, wasn't it? To see nothing at all, nothing in the absolute. To see beyond the landscape, beyond every shape and shadow and color, *that* was to see nothing. That was to be free and finished, complete, spiritual. [...] if only she could see it, there was neither nothing nor anything. And there, just there, *that* was the last reality. Even so, in the same attitude of non-being, Abel had cut the wood. (37-38)

One can read in this passage a modernist conceptualization and experience of the land and the "indigene" as described above, a conceptualization in which the indigene has direct access to the metaphysicality of the land. Angela understands the Natives as embodying what could be called a "primal" state of mind, an indigenous metaphysical state characterized as a great "nothingness," i.e. a state of pure (non)beingness, "free, finished, complete, spiritual."

It is difficult to judge the tenor of this passage, and other similar passages, in relation to Angela's (in)sensitivity to the spirituality and culture of her surroundings. The complexity of this passage is indicated in the language in which the potential existentialism of these ideas is balanced in terms resonant with a growing appreciation during the late 1960s of philosophies of the Far East, specifically Zen. Indeed, Momaday's language does not indicate direct criticism of Angela's intimation, even in this form, of the depth of Native experience. It is for this reason that critics such as Owens have seen the novel as sympathetically portraying Angela's developing insights into Native experience. Nevertheless, when read carefully, it can be seen that while Momaday does not completely reject this characterization of Native experience, he does indicate its modernist limitations. While Angela briefly suspects that the visions of the dancers are rich and of "some reality that she did not know, or even suspect" she rather quickly decides that they "probably see nothing after all." In addition, by this point in the novel, the reader already knows that Abel has been seriously traumatized by the loss of his mother and brother during his early years, by recent war experiences, and by his difficult return to the village. To describe his state as a perfect "attitude of non-being" is to see the desperately naive and insensitive myopia in Angela's, and by extension modernism's supposed intimation of an indigenous experience and the realities of contemporary Native life.

Another dimension of Angela's self which seems to be affected by the force of the indigenous environs in a particularly "modernist fashion" is her sexuality. Schubnell accents the Lawrencian tenor of Angela's sexual awareness by drawing comparative lines between various female characters in several short stories by Lawrence (specifically "The Princess," "St. Mawr," "The Woman Who Rode Away," and "Sun"), and Momaday's portrayal of Angela. Schubnell remarks that

All these stories have in common female protagonists whose sexual lives have been deadened in one way or another. The underlying cause is, in Lawrence's terms, a decadent and sterile modern civilization. None of the three characters achieves a satisfactory revitalization, but Lawrence had no doubt that the potential for rejuvenation lies in the spirit of aboriginal America. (89)

Schubnell sees Angela in *House* as "part of a similar pattern" (89). Although quite beautiful and from a wealthy environment, she experiences her own body as "vile and obscene" and is also disgusted by the idea of the "monstrous fetus form" growing within it (63). Despite her

discomfort with her sexual self, she is drawn to the sexuality of Abel, a sexuality which is clearly connected to the land and natural world through the potency and symbolism of the bear and badger.

He was dark and massive above her, poised and tinged with pale blue light. And in a split second she thought again of the badger at the water, and the great bear, blue-black and blowing. (62)

The bear is a central motif in the mythopoeic weave of the novel, its significance in Native culture indicated throughout the novel as different characters relate various bear stories and myths from Navajo, Pueblo, and Kiowa traditions, ranging from a sacred creation narrative, an animal-human marriage myth, a “just so” tale, to a personal hunting story (Scarberry-García 46-83). While Angela likens Abel to a bear, she gives no indication that she is aware of its mythical significance in Native traditions. Nevertheless, she seems to experience the transformative “indigenizing” effects of this close encounter with, in effect, the literal embodiment of mythopoeia in the novel: Abel as bear.

After her sexual encounters with Abel, she begins to feel reconnected to her body and the physical world around her, her experience of nature seeming to correspond to her rejuvenated sensuality and physical desire for Abel.

She listened [...] to the sound of thunder and of rain that fell upon the mountain miles away, that split open the sky and set an awful tremor on the tress. She heard the touch of rain upon the cones of evergreen spines, heard even the laden boughs bending and the panes of water that rose and ran upon the black slopes. And this while [...] the heat of drought lay outside upon the windows and the walls. She had a craving for the rain. (68)

Despite the fact that Owens believes that Angela “moves toward integration and health” as she learns to see “the interconnectedness of all things in the Indian world” (*Other* 107), it is exactly here that we can read Momaday’s comment not only on the positive indigenizing potency of the mythically infused landscape on all those who can be open to it, but also the *limitation* of the Euro-American modernist experience of this “indigenization”- namely as a form of “therapy” for the ills of “civilization” rather than as an insight into the world of the indigene. Indeed, Schubnell states that Angela’s growing sensibility to the natural world has a “therapeutic” effect on her (92). It is specifically this effect which has been seen in other modernist works as the primary function of the “indigene” and its Euro-internalization (through a sensuality linked to mythically changed environments), Michael Bell concluding in his discussion of Lawrence’s *The Rainbow* that a significant dimension of Anton Skrebensky’s experience of Africa “is a remarkable diagnostic dramatization of the inner structure of a colonial exoticism as the return of the repressed” (153).

In *House*, Angela’s character development similarly remains within the bounds of her no-longer-repressed sensual self, Larry Landrum remarking that “sex with Abel brings her imaginatively closer to some form of cultural difference, but its effect is confined to her imagination” (772). Indeed, Momaday indicates that Angela’s supposedly indigenized sensitivities remain limited and partial, due to the Euro-American modernist paradigm which still frames her experience. This can be discerned in her attempt to give a mythic context to her experience, i.e. in her own mythopoeism.

While Abel is recovering from his near fatal beating by the sadistic policeman Martinez, his friend Benally describes Angela’s visit to the hospital where she tells Abel a story she has made up for her seven year old son, Peter.

Peter always asked her about the Indians, she said, and she used to tell him a story about a young Indian brave. He was born of a bear and a maiden, she said, and he was noble and wise. He had many adventures, and he became a great leader and saved his people. It was the story Peter liked best of all, and she always thought of *him*, Abel, when she told it. (169)

Angela's story augments the array of bear narratives in the novel, placing herself, Abel and her son in a self-fashioned mythic context. This story adds to the mythopoeic fabric of the novel, although not unproblematically. While many Native oral traditions have stories of animal-human marriages, Angela's story has also been seen both as representing the European folk-tradition which contains similar bear stories (Scarberry-García 51-53) and as exemplifying a "generic" fairytale structure disconnected from any cultural landscape, as "rootless as a Disney cartoon" (L. J. Evers, "Words" 317).

In her desire to retain the "indigenized" sensibilities gained from her sexual relationship with Abel, Angela has mythopoeically "married" herself to the indigene. Susan Scarberry-García notes that "whereas it is apparent that Angela has failed to imagine a specific landscape for her story, she has imagined herself into the story, thereby symbolically connecting herself to Abel and Peter and to native tradition" (52). Scarberry-García's remark hints at the central modernist "flaw" of this personalized myth-making; Angel's story becomes "generic," a myth without a specific cultural landscape. While Ben generously sees Angela's story as sincere and touching, the language of Angela's story as related by Ben indicates a naivety of vision, revealing once again that while Momaday's text sympathizes with Euro-American modernist mythopoeic sentiments, the novel is also quite clear as to the severely qualified "insight" into Native perspectives gained by such sentiments. Momaday juxtaposes Angela's story, with its clichéd Indian attributes "noble and wise" and generic "Indian" themes (about a "great leader" who "saves his people") with a bear myth based on narratives from Navajo oral tradition which Ben relates immediately following Angela's story. Also an "animal-human marriage" narrative, Ben's complex myth is less accessible to a non-Native reader in its tribal-specific imagery, and in the absence of a happy or tragic conclusion with its accompanying significance of a mainstream moral.

Ben's traditional story exemplifies Momaday's technique of mythopoeic composition and its function in relation to modernist primitivism. Scarberry-García reveals that Momaday has fused two Navajo bear myths together to form the one Ben relates (46). She recognizes that Momaday is not primarily interested in reproducing anthropological/ethnological records of collected myths, nor is he interested in making the tribal narratives interwoven into his text transparent or accessible to his audience as such (117). Momaday's creative literary mythopoeia primarily aspires to evoke a Native-centric vision, a self-referential worldview without signposts for the non-Native. Despite these potential barriers to understanding, Ben's bear story is meant to lead the reader imaginatively and mythopoetically deeper into Navajo inherited culture. By comparison, Angela's story reflects a modernist primitivist appropriation of tribal myth as she attempts, through her own mythopoeism, to connect herself to the "authenticity" of experience embodied by the "indigene." What she has achieved is simply a shallow, generic children's story with herself at the center. In her "myth," actual indigenous contexts are conspicuous by their absence.

Angela's mythopoeia reflects a specifically modernist preoccupation in which, as Michael Bell remarks, "modernist writers turned away from the metaphysical problem of grounding and sought in myth a mode of *self*-grounding" (21, emphasis added). Angela is not concerned with Abel's community, the land, nor her metaphysical place in these environments, the very elements which form the "metaphysical grounding" valued by Native peoples with respect to their mythic traditions. She is focused only on her own sense of "being," her own body/sexuality, her own imagined role in relation to Abel. Angela's story, therefore, illustrates Momaday's final judgment as to modernist primitivism: that the Native subject as "indigene" is only meaningful for modernists in the service of and within "a white consciousness rather than within its own culture" (M. Bell, 153). Abel's seeming "empty" reaction to Angela's bear story can be seen to mirror the absence of the Native as subject in

the modernist appropriation of the “indigene,” Benally observing “I couldn’t tell what he was thinking. He had turned his head away, like maybe the pain was coming back, you know”(170).

While Momaday’s Native mythopoeic environment serves to critique through Angela a typical modernist drive towards Euro-centric “self-grounding” or “self-authoring” via the “indigene,” the same Native mythopoeic environment will enable Abel to discover his own mode of self-grounding and mythic self-author-ity which breaks through the previous modernist primitivist paradigm of the incompatibility of tribal inherited culture and modernity and denies naturalism’s foregone conclusion concerning the fate of “deracinated” Native subject.

Abel’s “illness” and the restoration of Native agency

As mentioned above, Abel *seems* to be the perfect modernist individual, traumatized by the “modernity” of a world which has lost faith in the traditions which had previously constituted its metaphysical foundations. Within the interlocking modernist/naturalist paradigms framing Native subject-ivity, Abel seems to be battered by social and historical forces greater than he is. Called a “long hair” (a traditional Native) by his friend Benally, Abel is initially similar to Mathews’s and McNickle’s protagonists caught between Native traditions and Euro-modernity, Able being “lost” between the rural reservation and the urban “jungle” of Los Angeles. However, Momaday surrounds Abel with a variety of Native characters who have not become victims of such paradigms but have successfully engaged “modernity” through a variety of contemporary forms of inherited tradition. His grandfather Francisco has navigated the colonial situation by practicing both Christian and Native religions. Tosamah in Los Angeles, a “preacher” in the Native American Church, draws ethical lessons from a mixture of Native and Biblical narratives. Benally, a young Navajo man who has successfully relocated to the city, seems to have cut his ties with Navajoland and community but retains a role in the novel as traditional storyteller and healer.

While such “new” cultural practices have been categorized and labeled by various discourses - “mimicry” in (post)colonial discourse, “syncretism” in anthropology, “hybridity” in (multi)cultural studies - many Native writers have stressed that these contemporary cultural forms do not imply cultural compromise or “inbetween-ness” but exemplify the very nature of cultural continuity, in which “change” signifies the ongoing vitality and viability of inherited traditions. (Owens, *Dark* 211, 213; Silko, *Ceremony* 126; Joseph Bruchac qtd. in Friedman 118). It is in this respect that these characters can be seen to reflect various strategies which successfully situate “the Native subject” as the inheritor and guardian of tribal culture within a discourse of “modernity.” These characters are not portrayed by Momaday as having “chosen between” two cultures, nor have they succumbed to the assimilationist pressures of colonial history and postcolonial situations on the reservation, nor of contemporary urbanization. These characters can be seen a role-models for Abel who must discover his own contemporary “Native subject” position in relation to inherited culture and the navigation of modernity.

However, for Abel to achieve this Native subject position beyond the constraints of the modernist paradigm, Momaday has Abel confront a foundational characteristic of the modernist “Native subject,” its seeming paralysis and lack of agency. As discussed in relation to Mourning Dove, Mathews and McNickle, the Native modernist subject is typified by an inefficacy, surrounded and corralled by the constrictions of the non-Native world and its precepts. While Abel’s successful development beyond this modernist paralysis has often been discussed in terms of his successful *reintegration* through ritual into the tribal worldview (Velie, “American” 254; Lincoln, *Native* 121; Owens, *Other* 95) it will be shown that

Momaday's focus is primarily on the theme of *restoration*, specifically the restoration of Native agency in the contemporary world. This restoration of agency will be characterized by the insistence on the author-ity of Native traditions to create viable contemporary cultural contexts for the contemporary Native subject.

Abel's condition, while ostensibly "modernist," is developed by Momaday within a Native epistemological paradigm of "sickness" and "health," specifically that of the Navajo understanding of illness, its sources, and its "cure." Navajo healing ceremonies (Chantways and Beautyways), alluded to in the novel by the Night Chant, are meant to reestablish in the "patient" a condition of harmony, order, and control in relation to his/her environment and the Navajo deities (Gills 152-154; Scarberry-García 8-12). While it is beyond the scope of this analysis to do justice to the Navajo understanding of illness, in relation to the novel the Navajo "epistemology of health" has been understood, as mentioned above, in general terms as addressing the concepts of alienation and integration, as described by Paula Gunn Allen in her discussion of *House Made of Dawn*.

The primary purpose of these rituals [Chantways] is healing, based on the Navajo understanding that health depends on an integrated psyche. In the Navajo system, an isolated or alienated individual is a sick one, so the healing practice centers on reintegrating the isolated individual into the matrix of the universe. (*Sacred* 88)

More pertinent to this analysis, however, is the emphasis placed by the anthropologist Christopher Vescey on another dimension of the Navajo understanding of their rituals in relation to illness, that involving agency and control. As described by Vescey, "when Navajos lose control over their surroundings, they fall ill" (124).

In general, traditional Navajos think that their diseases come about through a lack of human awareness, consciousness, and control. [...] They present to their maleficent foes- ghosts, witches [...] a visage of weakness and incapacity, vulnerability to sickness. [...] Navajo ritual [...] is regarded as concerted activity on the part of knowledgeable, effective humans to influence the course of events in a dangerous world. (124, 122)

Able's dilemma and development can be seen to reflect this Navajo paradigm of illness and health, in which the source of Abel's dis-ease is not a presumed alienation from his community but his inability, as a member of that community, to appropriately respond to and "influence the course of events in a dangerous world." These dangers which must be managed are represented within a "traditional" context by the Albino on the reservation and within "modern" urban environs by the policeman Martinez in Los Angeles. Throughout the novel Abel does "act," but his responses to conditions he experiences as threatening draw him further into situations which negate his agency and control (jail, then the city, then serious physical injury). He is in effect not active but *reactive*, responding to his environment in what finally proves to be a *passive* manner.

On the reservation, during the village's festivities, the Albino's repeated provocation of Abel causes Able to identify the Albino as an "evil" force specifically challenging and compelling Abel to attempt to vanquish it. Abel reiterates his conviction during the murder trial as he enigmatically professes that he killed the "snake," Benally understanding him to mean "witch" (136,137). After serving a seven-year jail sentence for the murder of the Albino, Abel moves to Los Angeles, where he meets the sadistic policeman Martinez, associated with the Albino through shared snake imagery. Martinez presents Abel with a similar personal challenge, making Abel the target of verbal abuse. This time the eventual physical confrontation does not result in the death of Martinez but has near fatal consequences for Abel. While Abel identifies the Albino and Martinez as "maleficent foes" according to Navajo and Pueblo epistemological frameworks, his responses to these assaults on his "health" produce a chain-reaction of events leading him further and further into personal

dissolution and inefficacy. In modernist and naturalist terms, Abel seems to be trapped in a determinist paradigm of the “Native subject” as “doomed,” the inevitable victim of the paralysis of “inbetweenness,” being an estranged WWII veteran on the reservation and a “long hair” (traditional) in the city, unequipped to respond to modernity’s witches. However, while Abel struggles with the ineffectiveness of his actions in his contemporary situations, as Mathews’ and McNickle’s protagonists did, Momaday’s mythopoeic environment directs Abel towards the process of restoring agency, the Night Chant standing as a signpost at the mythopoeic heart of this process.

As mentioned above, Abel’s singing of the Night Chant at the end of the novel has been seen as effectuating Abel’s successful *reintegration* into the worldview of the tribal community. However, in relation to the Night Chant, Abel’s ritual act begs various questions: *which* community is Abel reintegrated into- the Navajo from which the Night Chant originates or Pueblo with which Abel identifies through his mother and grandfather; *what* ritual is actually performed, as Abel does not undergo the actual Chantway ritual associated with the prayer but performs the Pueblo ritual run while singing the Navajo prayer; and finally, *what* has changed or is being restored to make this moment of ritual action successful as opposed to the disastrous outcome of Abel’s participation in the earlier Pueblo ritual festivity. While these questions indicate the problematic of Momaday’s modernist mythopoetic technique, that of cultural eclectic appropriation and its consequential disassociation of cultural artifacts from their meaning-producing contexts, the chant can be seen as pertinent not as a universalized indigenous ritual event but as a mythopoeic imperative.

The “imperative verbal mode” of such chantway prayers has been discussed in studies by Gladys Reichard and by Sam D. Gills as a central “semantic structure of the prayer *act*” [emphasis added] which can “render real effects in the world” (Gills, 149, 144). Both Reichard’s and Gills’s works focus on the repetitive imperative statements of chantways, such as exemplified in sections of the Night Chant incorporated by Momaday into the novel .

Your offering I make.
I have prepared a smoke for you.
Restore my feet for me,
Restore my legs for me,
Restore my body for me,
Restore my mind for me,
Restore my voice for me,
This very day take out your spell for me.[...] (134-135)

The Night Chant, through its imperative “restore,” can be seen in relation to the concept of health-as-control discussed above in its insistence that the patient’s control over his/her physical body be restored. The restoration of control over the physical self can also be seen as corresponding to a restored control or agency with respect to the Self - as- Subject: the restoration of author-ity over the Native subject and the subsequent re-situating of the Native subject within a self-determined mythically structured worldview. As Gill states, the prayer act is “not simply a curing act, but [...] performs the acts which institute and maintain a particular way of life” (153). The imperative of the Night Chant is, therefore, the imperative of “agency” for Abel, who must institute and maintain for himself a Native-based metaphysic of agency/control with which to respond to the challenges of modernity. Two interconnected images are offered by Momaday as the forms this Native agency and control can take: “outwaiting” and the Pueblo Dawn Runners.

The significance of “outwaiting” is indicated by Momaday’s omniscient narrator who offers a description of the history and culture of the Pueblo peoples.

The people of the town have little need. They do not hanker after progress and have never changed their essential way of life. Their invaders were a long time conquering them; and now, after four centuries of Christianity, they still pray in Tanoan to the old deities of the earth and sky [...] They have assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, but have held on to their own, secret souls; and in this there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting. (55-56)

In this description, “outwaiting” replaces previous depictions of the Native peoples and their cultures as “waiting” to die out, i.e. “vanishing” in the wake of progress. Outwaiting, in this respect, is not acceptance and accommodation but resistance to and management of oppressive situations, becoming a successful Native strategy of survival in the face of the attempted cultural erasure attendant on the “invader’s” hegemony. The success of this strategy is referred to as an “overcoming” at the end of a “long outwaiting,” indicating that Natives will ultimately *control* and master situations which seem beyond their control. Thus the concept of “outwaiting” characterizes the Native subject not as passive victims of a colonial past but as active agents of tribal futures.

“Outwaiting” is presented as a collective agential force, the foundation of tribal resistance and survival throughout many generations. However, Abel must discover for himself a contemporary mode of personal action which will draw on this force of “outwaiting” to foster his control and mastery over the maleficent forces in his world which are making him “ill.” This mode of action is presented to Abel in the significance of the Pueblo Dawn Runners.

While Abel lies on a shoreline, badly beaten by Martinez, he hallucinates, remembering a vision from his past.

...he could see them in the distance, the old men running after evil, their white leggings holding in motion like smoke above the ground. They passed in the night, full of tranquility, certitude. There was no sound of breathing or sign of effort about them. They ran as water runs. (96)

This image of the Pueblo Dawn runners frames the novel, foreshadowed in the Prologue and returning at the conclusion as the culmination of Abel’s development. Momaday has commented on the centrality of this event in relation to the novel, stating “the book itself is a race. It focuses upon the race, that’s the thing that does hold it all together” (qtd. in Schubnel (ed.) 31). The significance of the Dawn Runners to Abel as teachers of how to manage and control a dangerous world lies in their response to “evil.”

The runners after evil ran as water runs, deep in the channel, in the way of least resistance, no resistance. His skin crawled with excitement; he was overcome with longing and loneliness, for suddenly he saw the crucial sense in their going, of old men in white leggings running after evil in the night. They were whole and indispensable in what they did; everything in creation referred to them. Because of them, perspective, proportion, design in the universe. Meaning because of them. They ran with great dignity and calm, not in the hope of anything, but hopelessly; neither in fear nor hatred nor despair of evil, but simply in recognition and with respect. Evil was. Evil was abroad in the night; they must venture out to the confrontation; they must reckon dues and divide the world. (96)

Similar to the concept of “outwaiting” as a form of non-resistant resistance to the evils of colonialism, the race represents a metaphysic in relation Native agency and its role in “the design of the universe;” the runners chase evil not to destroy or engage it but to confront it, and through constant surveillance, to contain and control it. The Dawn Runners signify the need to monitor the contemporary forces which threaten to disintegrate the Native agential subject. Likewise, Native foundational myths and mythopoeic processes as the foundation of the “healthy” Native subject must also be monitored and kept alive through the collective dedication to control and self-authorship, otherwise Native discourses and the Native subject

will become appropriated, re-contextualized and ultimately made anachronistic and inactive within Euro-American modernist paradigms, inoperable in the contemporary world.

The Dawn Runners and their relationship to “evil” can also be seen to indicate a Native *moral* paradigm. They indicate an understanding of man’s consequential actions and responsibility in a world in which “evil” exists, in which evil when not monitored will make one “sick,” lose control, and succumb. One can argue that Momaday’s mythopoeism directs the reader to a “Native morality” which lies at the heart of Momaday’s Native agential self-authoring subject and Momaday’s own sense of what it means to be an American Indian.

In one of the discussions yesterday the question “What is an American Indian?” was raised. The answer of course is that an Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself. And it is a moral idea, for it accounts for the way in which he reacts to other men and to the world in general. (“Man” 162)

Written at a time when Native culture was viewed by the world at large as “extinct” and its worldviews defunct, Momaday created in *House Made of Dawn* a Native mythopoeic environment as a viable contemporary foundation for a resilient Native-based morality from which the Native subject could “author” successful responses to contemporary challenges.

While Momaday envisioned a Native agential subject beyond the paradigms of modernist primitivism and naturalism, it must be remembered that at the time there was as yet no clear conceptualization of a corresponding literary aesthetic mode beyond modernism. It is indeed just at this point in time that the awareness of the limitations and pitfalls of modernist visions were being charted in relation to a new mode, the postmodern. James Welch (Blackfeet/Gros Ventre) will be shown to use modernist elements to suggest a context for the malaise and situation of his protagonist while undermining these very paradigms through the nascent postmodernism of the 1970s, recognizable in his distinctive use of parody.

Breaking free: Nascent postmodern parody of the Euro-American Naturalist/Modernist Native subject

Winter in the Blood (1974) by James Welch

“The tease must reverse modernist theses...”-Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses* (23)

Written eight years after *House Made of Dawn*, James Welch’s first novel *Winter in the Blood* (1974) shares with Momaday’s novel a relationship, both of admiration and criticism, with modernism and modernist writers. Furthermore, James Welch’s first novel engages an additional intimation of a “new cultural formation” and new aesthetic mode which were just beginning in the mid 1970s to be termed “modern” (Bertens, *The Idea*, 15; Bertens “The Debate” 4,5). A distinctive aspect of the novel which is a key factor in its nascent post-modern dimension is a pervasive narrative ambiguity which Robert Gish calls the novel’s “deliberate confusions” (53). This ambiguity seems to cause the unnamed protagonist’s subject position in the novel to waver between the comic and the tragic. As Kate Vangen states, the novel possesses “the rare quality of being able to be read from cover to cover as overwhelmingly tragic or as essentially comic” (194). It will be argued that this ambiguity as used by Welch is typical of a parodic mode which would later be identified as a major postmodern mode of self-reflexivity and ironic representation (Hutcheon *The Politics* 101; Hutcheon *A Theory 2*; Hutcheon *The Politics* 93).

Central to this analysis is the identification of the humor in the novel as a specific, “highly ironic and self-reflexive mode of *Indian* humor” (emphasis added) understood by many Native writers as “teasing” (Ruppert, *Mediation* 60). Native teasing, discussed by Keith Basso, Vine Deloria Jr., Gerald Vizenor, has been described as a form of ironic representation

which parodies the target for various reasons, from social control to the affirmation of bonds of intimacy. Welch's Native "literary teasing" in the novel will be shown to function as a postmodern parodic comment, ironizing, problematizing, and de-naturalizing modernist conceptions of and representations of the Native subject.

Humor in the Blood?

Welch's unnamed protagonist lives on the Blackfeet reservation in Montana with his grandmother, Teresa his mother, and his stepfather Lame Bull. Throughout the novel, the protagonist struggles with emotional numbness caused primarily by the death of his father and brother. Returning home after a drinking binge, the protagonist discovers that his Cree girlfriend has left him. During the course of the novel, he travels back and forth between the reservation and the city of Havre and is drawn into farcical escapades while attempting to find his girlfriend and convince her to come back to the reservation.

Although this is not immediately evident from a comparison of plot descriptions, *Winter in the Blood* shares many elements with *House Made of Dawn*, both protagonists having lost a parent and a sibling, both feeling unable to communicate with family members, and both novels following the protagonist from the reservation to the city and back again (Velie, *Four* 98-99). The primary similarity between the two novels is the general engagement with and critical comment on the modernist "alienated Native individual" suffering from personal and implied cultural malaise and paralysis, alienated from his community, family, culture, and ultimately from himself. Welch's protagonist describes his own mental state and relationship to the world in terms of a "distance."

Coming home to a mother and an old lady who was my grandmother. And the girl who was thought to be my wife. But she didn't really count. For that matter none of them counted; not one meant anything to me. And for no reason. I felt no hatred, no love, no guilt, no conscience, nothing but a distance that had grown through the years. (2)

The pervasiveness of this mood has led certain critics such as Velie (*Four* 80) and Kathleen M. Sand to see the state of the protagonist in existential terms, as illustrating but not questioning modernist paradigms of deracination.

The narrator of James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* suffers the malaise of modern man; he is alienated from his family, his community, his land, and his own past. He is ineffective in relationships with people and at odds with his environment, not because he is deliberately rebellious, or even immaturely selfish, but because he has lost the story of who he is, where he has come from. [...] living in the margins of conflicting societies. He is an Indian who has lost both tribal identification and personal identity. ("Alienation" 97)

As discussed above, Native writers have remarked, however, that critical perspectives favoring modernist paradigms presuppose the "tragic" as a normative Native subject position, which creates a critical blind spot with respect to comic narrative dimensions as fundamentally significant to Native subjectivities. Owens states that "unaware of the crucial role of play and humor in Native American cultures, readers groomed by stoic stereotypes will miss much in Vizenor and most other Indian novelists" (*Other* 15). Craig Womack remarks that "Non-Natives are often unable to connect comedy with Indian people because of the America guilt complex over Indians and the oft-embraced tragic view of the vanishing American" (*Red* 136). Welch himself admits that the comic dimension of *Winter in the Blood* is rarely recognized, remarking that

"many people...are afraid to laugh with that book, and I can't understand why. They think it's Indian and they think it's about alienation and so on and, therefore, there should be no funny moments in the novel. But I

intentionally put comic stuff in there just to alleviate that vision of alienation and purposelessness, aimlessness.” (McFarland, “An Interview” 9)

This comic approach, as ironic insight into complex and often oppressive situations, is often seen as “survival humor” (Gleason 128) and is considered by Native writers to be a distinctive element in Native contemporary literature.

The Native “tease” as nascent postmodern parody

“Teasing” has been seen as the foremost style of humor in tribal communities. As Welch explains in relation to the humor in *Winter in the Blood*,

“a humor based on presenting people in such a way that you’re not exactly making fun of them but you’re seeing them for what they are and then you can tease them a little bit. That’s a lot of Indian humor- teasing, and some play on words; Indians are very good at puns. So I think some of it [the humor in the novel] might have to do with that traditional Indian sense of humor that has survived for hundreds of years; teasing was always a great part of Indian humor, plus, I think, some of my own distorted sense of humor.” (Coltelli 192)

This interpersonal teasing, with its parodic and satirical word play, which acknowledges and relativizes aspects of a situation or person (“seeing them for what they are”), functions similarly with respect to intercultural tensions. This is reflected in Keith Basso’s study of the Apaches’ joking imitations among themselves of the blunt and insulting mannerisms of Euro-Americans in social situations with Natives. Basso’s analysis of Apaches pretending to be a white man or pretending that the Native target of the tease is white reveals that teasing and “joking” parodically perform the experience of and insight into the tensions, complexities, and ironies of intercultural contact and interaction.

...Western Apache joking performances [are] vehicles for a kind of micro-sociological analysis that Apaches practice upon themselves and a complex human “problem” whose presence in their lives is a source of pressing concern... [i.e.] what can happen to dignity and self-respect when two systems of sharply discrepant cultural norms [and unequal power relations] collide in social encounters. (17, 82)

Significantly, “teasing” in this respect can function in a manner similar to postmodern literary parody in that they both ironize the target “text” they imitate, the general target text being the complexities of “the Native” in relation to “the Euro-American,” or more apropos this analysis, the “Native subject” in relation to Euro-American representations and modernist discourses. The relationship between Welch’s Native “teasing mode” and a nascent postmodern parodic mode can be contextualized by a brief look at how narrative elements in Welch’s novel reflect the literary discussions of that period.

Welch uses various humorous “styles” to alleviate the predominance of the existential mood of “distance” in the novel. These styles range from surreal scenes (a woman at a bar seems to be blowing smoke rings without smoking a cigarette), to farce (the protagonists hapless encounters with a Euro-American called the “airplane man”), to slapstick (an old man eating breakfast at a diner suddenly dies and falls face-first into his bowl of oatmeal), to “cartoon” humor (the description of a fly drinking drops of spilt wine and getting drunk). The novel’s variety of comic techniques combined with parodic “literary quotation” and narrative ambiguity, discussed below, can be seen to reflect a style which was being differentiated from “late modernism” by Ihab Hassan at this time as a new postmodern aesthetic. Margaret Rose summarizes the attempt Hassan made to distinguish late experimental modernism from “post-modernism,” specifically in relation to parody.

When classified under “Postmodernism” by Hassan, and together with a mixture of modern and late-modern forms including “radical irony, self-consuming play, entropy of meaning, comedy of the absurd, black humor, slapstick, camp, and negation,” parody is described as “insane” in what can further be characterised as a “late-modern” manner.

Hassan’s 1971 list of modernist and “postmodernist” characteristics also gives an additional description of parody as a “postmodernist” form which opposes “Modernist Experimentalism” and places it in the category of “Postmodernism” together with a mixture of modern and late-modern forms which include “open, discontinuous, improvisational, indeterminate, or aleatory structures,” “simultaneism, fantasy, play, humour, happening, “ and “increasing self-reflexiveness, intermedia, the fusion of forms, the confusion of realms.” (208)

While it is beyond the scope of this study to enter into an analysis of Hassan’s theory, it is pertinent to note that most of the elements listed above as indicating a new postmodern literary style can be found in *Winter*, especially when these elements are seen to coalesce around the central technique of parody, a technique which would later be seen as “central to postmodernism” (Hutcheon, *The Politics* 93). Welch’s Native tease as postmodern parody will be seen to target modernist paradigms of the Native subject, “seeing them for what they are,” i.e., prescriptive “tragic” paradigms. To modify Linda Hutcheon’s description of postmodern parody (*The Politics* 94), one could say that the Native tease as “postmodernist parody is a value-problematizing, de-naturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representation” of the Native subject.

Literary and parodic quotation: evoking expectations of the “Indian Waste Land”

The workings of Welch’s parody/tease can be seen to reflect Margaret Rose’s discussion of how parody manipulates the reader’s expectations.

...parody can play upon the expectations of an imagined reader or the recipient in the construction of its parody. In this sense the discussion of the reader and parody has to be concerned not only with the external reader’s reception or recognition of a parody, but with the parody’s own internal evocation of the expectations of the reader. (38)

Welch initially encourages his readers to experience the novel as a portrayal of an Indian Waste Land, specifically through Welch’s use of literary quotation of and allusion to T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922).

Owens remarks that the protagonist moves through a bleak “Montana wasteland,” the “drought-stricken landscape, mirroring in its sterility the inner state of the narrator” (*Other* 128), as the protagonist’s thoughts at the opening of the novel illustrate:

It could have been the country, the burnt prairie beneath a blazing sun, the pale green of the Milk River valley, the milky waters of the river, the sagebrush and cottonwoods, the dry, cracked gumbo flats. The country had created a distance as deep as it was empty, and the people accepted and treated each other with distance.

But the distance I felt came not from country or people; it came from within me. I was as distant from myself as a hawk from the moon. [...] My throat ached with a terrible thirst. (2)

Here the protagonist’s awareness of the summer’s drought is eliotically linked to his sense of “distance.” This association of the “parchedness” of both land and characters is further supported by remarks such as “It never rains anymore” (4), and the protagonist’s dream that his mouth “was dry and hollow of words” (52), arguably a reference to Eliot’s “hollow men.” Counterbalancing these images is the significant amount of water in the novel, reference being made to a past flood and driving rain which is associated both with the death of the protagonist’s brother and with the “resurrection” of the protagonist as he tries to free a cow during a storm from a muddy slough. This water imagery can be seen to similarly evoke *The*

Waste Land's visions of water's ominous powers of destruction and regeneration (Williamson, 147-151).

Welch humorously alludes to Eliot's mythopoeia in the association of the protagonist with the Fisher King, adding a whimsical dimension to the implied psychological, sexual, and by extrapolation cultural "sterility" of the protagonist's state (Owens, *Other* 132; Weston 60). Many scenes in the novel connect the protagonist to the reservation's fishless river. Early in the novel, he takes a hook with spoon sinker to try his luck in the milky lifeless river with a rather baffling history.

Everybody had thought that the factory caused the river to be milky but the water never cleared. The white men from the fish department came in their green trucks and stocked the river with pike. There were enthusiastic and dumped thousands of pike of all sizes into the river. But the river ignored the fish and the fish ignored the river; they refused even to die there. They simply vanished. The white men made tests; [...] they dumped other kinds of fish in the river. Nothing worked. The fish disappeared. Then the men from the fish department disappeared, and the Indians put away their new fishing poles. But every now and then, a report would trickle down the valley that someone, an irrigator perhaps, had seen an ash-colored swirl suck in a muskrat, and out would come the fishing gear. Nobody ever caught one of these swirls, but it was always worth a try.

I cast the spoon again, this time retrieving faster. (6)

Coming as it does early in the novel, this scene indicates an interplay of modes which will be maintained throughout the novel in which possible "tragic" interpretations of the "vanishing" of fish and Indian's way of life are relativized by an affirmative or humorous mode- the vision of the disappearance of whites and the readiness of contemporary Natives to keep optimistically watching the river for the return of the fish.

This discrepancy between "tragic/pessimistic" and "comic/optimistic" interpretations both applied to an instance of literary quotation point to, as Margaret Rose indicates, another type of quotation, parodic quotation.

The use of quotation to establish comic discrepancy or incongruity as well as contingency between texts distinguishes parodic quotation from most other forms of quotation and literary imitation and often suggests the presence of a more critical attitude on the part of the parodist to the naive imitation or reception of other texts. (79)

The sense of this "comic discrepancy or incongruity" which indicate the novel's "parodic quotation" in relation to the Fisher King is supported throughout the novel as several of the scenes mentioned above as examples of Welch's comic styles are centered around discussions of the fish in the river. The woman blowing smoke-rings without a cigarette talks about fishing in the river with the airplane man who insists, despite the protagonist's protests, that he had caught several fish the day before (46). After the protagonist asks an old man if he had ever known the river to have fish in it, the man chuckles knowingly and falls dead into his bowl of oatmeal (87-88). During the final humorous scene of the novel, the ambiguity surrounding the question of whether the protagonist has gained insight into the events of the novel is reflected in his musings during his grandmother's funeral that it would probably be a good day for fishing. The protagonist is repeatedly put into situations in which fishing, emblematic of the Fisher King, is alternately a metaphor of sterility or the focus of absurdist discussion. It is especially the unresolved ambiguous nature of the reference to fishing in the final funeral scene, to be discussed in more detail below, which will be shown to retroactively infuse Fisher King allusions in the novel with a postmodern parodic dimension.

Through allusion to and parodic quotation of *The Waste Land*, the novel's Native subject-environment presents itself as an intertextual dialogue with modernist literature and themes. This dialogue consists of both a recognition of a shared modernist experience and indicates through parody/teasing the limits of such mutuality. The importance of exploring these limits is revealed when modernist paradigms of alienation and deracination, taken as

indications of a “universal” human condition and mood, threaten to put the Native subject under erasure. This is reflected in the comments of one early reviewer.

“Winter in the Blood” is by no means an “Indian novel.” There is nothing in it- character, incident, language or emotion- which will not be familiar or quickly comprehensible to any middle- or working- class white or black [...], or other minority member, literate country-club social chairman included. What it is is a nearly flawless novel about human life. (qtd. in Vangen 204)

It is this uncritical projection of universalized Euro-modernist experience onto the Native subject which causes the “wasteland-izing” of and subsequent erasure of the Native subject, exemplified by Kate Vangen’s remark that initially the readers and critics of *Winter in the Blood* claimed that the novel “contained nothing particularly ‘Indian’” (194). The novel, however, works against this conclusion in a manner resonant with Linda Hutcheon’s description of parodic metafiction which both “orients” and “disorients” the reader (*A Theory of Parody* 92). This (dis)orientation creates an ambiguity in the text, fertile with congruities and incongruities, from which modernist representations of the Native subject can be “teased.”

Two scenes which exemplify this postmodern tease involve seemingly revelatory moments for the protagonist. The first to be discussed is his inference that the old man Yellow Calf is his grandfather, indicating a stronger genealogical connection to the Blackfeet than the protagonist had previously thought. In the second scene, the protagonist seems to overcome his emotional inertia and “distance” while rescuing a cow from a mud-filled slough. Both scenes are presented as epiphanal in that the protagonist suddenly seems to gain insight into his situation and condition. While these epiphanies are not parodied as meaningless in relation to the protagonist, the dimension of ambiguity in the novel both evokes and undermines the applicability of modernist interpretations of the significance of these revelations in relation to the complexity of Native contexts.

Yellow Calf and the substantiation of the Native subject

The first “epiphany” involves a story told to the protagonist both by his grandmother and by the old man Yellow Calf concerning a hard winter during their youth when their tribe, the Blackfeet, were being pursued by soldiers. Due to certain discrepancies in Yellow Calf’s and his grandmother’s version, the protagonist realizes that it must have been the young Yellow Calf who had helped his grandmother, abandoned by her tribe, through that winter. In a “Joycean” moment (Velie, *Four* 92) instigated by the horse called Bird, the protagonist has a “revelation” as to his mother, Teresa’s, parentage.

I thought for a moment.

Bird farted.

And it came to me, as though it were riding one moment of the gusting wind, as though Bird had had it in him all the time and had passed it to me in that one instant of corruption.

“Listen, old man,” I said, “It was you- you were old enough to hunt!”[...]

I began to laugh, at first quietly, with neither bitterness nor humor. It was the laughter of one who understands a moment in his life, of one who has been let in on the secret through luck and circumstance.

“You... you’re the one.” I laughed, as the secret unfolded itself. [...] And the wave behind my eyes broke.[...]

“And the half-breed, Doagie!” But the laughter again racked my throat. *He wasn’t Teresa’s father; it was you, Yellow Calf, the hunter!* (158,159)

The protagonist’s use of the derogatory term “half-breed” to refer to his mother’s presumed father seems to imply that the protagonist’s “epiphany” hinges on the revelation of a stronger “full-blood” connection to Blackfeet culture and history. This likewise implies that these two linked elements, “blood” and tribal culture, are key in the substantiation of Welch’s Native

subject. This implied connection has been discussed by, among others (Sands 102; Owens, *Other* 143), Sean Teuton who, focusing on the process of the protagonist's presumed recovery throughout the novel of his sense of being Blackfeet, insists that "at the trilling moment of his discovered tie to Yellow Calf, [the protagonist] finds immediacy in a stable center of value composed of his ancestry [...] and his sense of alienation all but disappears" (644). While this supposition is not directly challenged by the narrative, the ambiguities of the text undermine interpretations of the protagonist's epiphany as indicating the "lack" and subsequent "recovery" of a more "stable" Native subject-ivity as a direct function of blood quantum.

The characterization of Natives in terms of what they lack has been seen to have its roots in early descriptions of Natives within the primitivist tradition as the "opposite" of Europeans- i.e. as lacking the accoutrements and qualities of "civilized man" (Stromberg 97; Berkhofer, Jr. 26-27). The modernist version is illustrated by Paul Eisenstein's article in which he compares Hemingway's techniques of "omission" with what he sees as Welch's "impression of omission."

Welch wants to imply the historical/ancestral cause of the narrator's malaise, that is to say, how this thirty-two-year-old man's inability to connect is, at least in part, determined by the void which characterizes his and other Native Americans' (and the dominant culture's) historical consciousness. What this consciousness ought to consist of [...] is omitted for the first three-fourths of the book. (Eisenstein 5)

Apparently, according to Eisenstein, one of the central defining characteristics of the protagonist in *Winter* (and other Native Americans it seems) is the "void" of "historical consciousness" and a "lack of cultural history" (8) linked to implied vagaries of ancestry. Within this modernist paradigm, Natives are per-definition deracinated and "culturally dispossessed" (Eisenstein 9), only the tragic void can be the substance of the Native subject; what is presented in the novel as "ambiguity" is read as "lack" by Eisenstein.

However, as indicated in the quote above, Eisenstein himself must admit that his supposed "void" cannot actually be detected in the novel until, near the conclusion, the significance of Yellow Calf's story is interpreted as such. Eisenstein states that "that the narrator's problem stems from a lack of cultural history is hardly apparent in the novel's opening pages" (8). Indeed, it can be seen that the protagonist was not ignorant of Blackfeet cultural history before this "epiphanal" moment, his knowledge of his own family and tribal history proving to be quite thorough (156-160) as he discerns the discrepancies between his grandmother's story of that winter and Yellow Calf's version. Moreover, the presumption that the protagonist's "mixedbloodedness" had disconnected from the "stable center" of Blackfeet values until this point in the novel is not born out prior to nor subsequent to this scene. In actual fact, after Yellow Calf's revelation, the protagonist's "degree" of Blackfeet "blood" remains unknown: While the protagonist's mother is revealed to be "fullblood," the precise tribal connections of his father First Raise remain unspecified. Remarking in general on the ambiguous import of Yellow Calf's story on the protagonist, Alan Velie writes

There is little resolution in the book [...] the hero discovers the identity of his grandfather and the unhappy history of his grandmother. The book does not end with this discovery, however; nor does the information appear to have much impact on the narrator's subsequent behavior. (*Four* 92)

While the *information* clearly emotionally affects the protagonist (one cannot deny the importance of familial ties and cultural foundations), interpretations of the *effect* of this information with respect to the modernist vision of "Native subject" character resolution - i.e. the "filling" of the Native subject's "void" or resolving, as Vizenor terms it, the "mania of lost connections" (*Fugitive* 95) - is made inconclusive by the narrative ambiguity which questions

the very existence of a Native subject “lack” to begin with. The reader is thus oriented and, upon closer inspection, disoriented in relation to the nature of the protagonist’s “epiphany.”

While Yellow Calf cannot be seen to fill a preconceived modernist Native “void,” Yellow Calf is, however, significant to the protagonist in the communication of a Native subject position and perspective in relation to the complexities and complex ironies of historical and contemporary situations. Associated with the Creator Trickster of Blackfoot mythology called “Old Man” (Thackeray, “Crying”), Yellow Calf offers the protagonist a peculiar vision of the world.

“[The deer] are not happy with the way things are. They know what a bad time it is. They can tell by the moon when the world is cockeyed.”

“But that’s impossible.” [...]

“You do not believe me.”

“It’s not a question of belief. Don’t you see? If I believe you, then the world is cockeyed.” (68-6)

Even though the protagonist resists seeing the world as Yellow Calf sees it - logically abnormal, absurd, askewed - this is the type of world he finds himself in, as reflected in the unexpected and unpredictable chains of events which degenerate into various surreal, farcical, and slapstick scenes (such as his escapades with the airplane man). The protagonist’s laughter in response to the realization that Yellow Calf is his real grandfather, in this respect, is the shock of recognition of the “cockeyed” contingencies of his ancestry and his present situations.

These scenes involving Yellow Calf can be seen to portray the Native subject as situate in a Native American contemporary reality characterized as “cockeyed,” in which the contingencies of history inexplicably and surprisingly impact on the present. The complexity of living under the influence of these contingencies is evoked by Welch as he once again maintains the dimension of ambiguity with respect to what the actual impact of these contingencies is, leaving unresolved the influence of Yellow Calf’s information on the protagonist.

Rescuing the Cow

While the Yellow Calf scenes can be seen to address the situating and positioning of the Native subject, the second “epiphanal” experience to be discussed, involving a cow stuck in a muddy slough, can be seen to similarly address the Native subject’s “agency.” The cow which the protagonist attempts to rescue near the end of the novel is strongly associated with, if not identical to, the cow which years earlier had broken away from the herd and subsequently caused his brother’s death (166). As the protagonist reluctantly struggles in the rain to free the cow, his muscles cramp and he finds himself lying in the mud, unable to move. The protagonist then curses all the people and situations he blames for his current “paralyzed” condition, among them his horse Bird, his neighbors and his stepfather Lame Bull who are not there to help him, and his mother who is the head of what he thinks is a “worthless” family. Stating that everything is “a joke” and that everyone is being “taken for a ride,” he suddenly exclaims “This greedy stupid country“(169). This last remark, incongruous in relation to his list of other more mundane complaints concerning his muddied “paralyzed” state, seems to reveal a more fundamental cause of the paralysis of the Native subject.

However, the socio-political dimension of the protagonist’s frustrated condition implied by this last remark is actually almost completely absent from the novel. In relation to U.S. policy, during the course of the novel, the protagonist has one “affirmative action” experience in which he was hired to fulfill ethnic quotas. Nevertheless, while this episode is offered as disillusioning for the protagonist, it is not portrayed as weighty enough to cause

paralyzing cynicism. While such political contexts are clearly oppressive and restricting with respect to Native agency in their own affairs and lives, through parodic juxtaposition of the mundane and the socio-political within the context of the pathos of the novel's situation (bordering on self-pity), Welch "teases" the modernist propensity to portray the Native subject as non-agential (i.e. a helpless or passive victim) in relation to these political contexts.

Indeed, Welch seems to "resurrect" his protagonist from the mire of victimization as the protagonist lies in the mud considering his next move: "My arms began to tingle as they tried to wake up. [...] My neck ached but the strength was returning. I crouched and spent the next few minutes planning my new life" (169). The protagonist seems literally to be reborn from the mud and rain, reviving to continue the struggle to liberate the cow, the symbol of all his frustrations. Though the protagonist feels more committed to his task, Bird slips and falls, landing the protagonist once again in the mud. On his back in the mud and rain once again, the narrator this time does not feel paralyzed, but serene.

...I wasn't uncomfortable. [...] I wondered if Mose and First Raise were comfortable. They were the only ones I really loved, I thought, the only ones who were good to be with. At least the rain wouldn't bother them. But they would probably like it; they were good that way [...] Some people, I thought, will never know how pleasant it is to be distant in a clean rain, the driving rain of summer storm. It's not like you'd expect, nothing like you'd expect.(172)

This moment of serenity is a counterbalance to the previous moment of disillusionment and anger in the mud. Thoughts of his father and brother, conspicuously absent from the previous muddy tirade, seem to reconcile the protagonist to their deaths, and the protagonist's sense of "distance" is transformed into a positive experience. This feeling is the same "clean" distance he had seen in Yellow Calf's eyes "...the old man's distance was permanent [...] a world as clean as the rustling willows, the bark of a fox or the odor of musk during mating season" (151)

While there is no parodic teasing in this passage concerning the protagonist's brother and father, the protagonist's emotional "thaw" and "resurrection" is infused with an ironic dimension by the narrative ambiguity concerning the efficacy of his revived agency, represented by the fate of the cow. While lying peacefully in the rain, the protagonist hears "Bird grunt twice as he tried to heave himself upright [...] The cow in the slough had stopped gurgling. Her calf called once, a soft drone which ended in a quizzical high note" (172). This remark is inconclusive as to the cow's survival, and consequently as to how the moment is to be interpreted. If the cow is dead, the serenity of the protagonist lying in the rain has a wry undercurrent of failure and inefficacy, the reconciliation with the death of his loved ones infused with a sense of hopelessness. If the cow is alive, the protagonist's serenity brings with it a sense of success and emotional rejuvenation. As the mood of this scene hovers between the implications of "success" and "failure," the ambiguity can be seen again to tease modernist paradigms in the manner described by Vizenor: "a tease that would [...] liberate the reader from racial causes and the declaration of grand motivations" (*Hotline* 8).

Welch seems to mock the modernist "grand motivations" which might be applied to the Native agential subject as "victim" struggling to overcome historic, political, or personal circumstances, either heroically succeeding or tragically succumbing to the same. Any conclusive interpretations of this scene are suspended due to its narrative ambiguity. As Robert Gish has noted, critics have struggled to "see the novel as either tragic or comic [...] either one thing or another" (45). In this respect, the novel can be seen to practice what will later be recognized as a postmodern literary technique in which a text encourages two opposing interpretations in order to reveal the constructedness of both visions.

The final ambiguity

While the suspension of resolution through parodic “teasing” and ambiguity as discussed above is maintained throughout the novel, it is only during the final scene that the novel can be seen to express a perspective beyond modernism. As Linda Hutcheon writes, the distinction between modernism and postmodernism does not lie solely in the ironic or parodic stance but “it is more that postmodernism’s irony is one that rejects the resolving urge of modernism toward closure” (*The Politics* 99). The final scene of the novel, the protagonist’s grandmother’s funeral, has been called “one of the most humorous in the book” (Vangen 202-203). Among other comic elements, the reader is presented with the vision of the protagonist’s stepfather jumping up and down on the bright orange coffin to force it into the too small grave. The protagonist watches the funeral with the same day-dreamy detachment he has felt throughout the novel and ponders his future actions.

The air was heavy with yesterday’s rain. It would probably be good for fishing. [...] Next time, I’d do it right. Buy her a couple of crèmes de menthe, maybe offer to marry her on the spot. (175).

The rich irony cultivated throughout the novel through the use of parodic quotation and the ambiguity surrounding the protagonist’s “epiphanal” insights into his condition and agency now becomes self-referential. These final thoughts of fishing in a purportedly fishless river and marrying a woman who has been trying to avoid him become a meta-textual self-parody, the text teasing itself. Suspended questions as to the protagonist’s character development remain, due to these few sentences, in a state of perpetual, irresolvable interrogation as to whether these final remarks indicate “comic” resolution, i.e. insight into his situation and a commitment to action, or a “tragic” conclusion, i.e. a perpetual naiveté and stasis.

This final scene of the novel is in effect the “last chance” for the reader to resolve the novel’s parodic, teasing, and (dis)orienting ambiguity along modernist new critical lines in which “irony and ambiguity may delay the final resolution of the interpretive process, but [...] do not prevent it” (Booker 21). While it has been noted that modernists and New Critics “would not endorse an irony which precluded resolution” (Booker 21), this is exactly what happens in *Winter*, and thus the novel is retroactively infused with a nascent postmodernism. Welch’s utilizes parodic techniques to create a meta-textual self-referentiality which ironizes representations of the Native subject and denies modernist resolution.

The final funeral scene indicates that the novel not only parodies modernist paradigms of the Native subject but refuses any non-ironic formulations of its own. Nevertheless, this final suspension of the Native subject position must not be seen from the perspective of nascent postmodern “dispersed subject.” In relation to a tribal vision of the Native agential subject in the novel, the cultural import of Native humor must be taken into account. The perpetual “teasing” of the text, through its pervasive ambiguity which encourages double or ironic interpretation, has been seen as characteristic of Native linguistic play. Just as the humor in *Winter* has often been overlooked, Welch discusses how Native humor in general is difficult to recognize and translate into literature.

“Indians are notorious for teasing each other and that really generates the humor. But that is the kind of stuff that really is hard to put down in writing. I’ve been in trailer houses full of Indians and there would be all this teasing going on and the walls practically coming down because everybody is laughing so hard. But if you were to record it and then write down exactly what was said, a lot of times it would be hard to find out what was so funny. [...] A lot of Indian humor is very witty, really witty, plays on words and so on. But it is interesting. It would be an interesting experience to see if you could transcribe that, an evening like that, into print, if there would be anything at all funny. [...] if you read some of the Indian humor that goes on amongst Indian people, you’d have a hard time pointing your finger at something that was really funny.” (McFarland, “An Interview” 11-12)

The Native humor in *Winter*, in this respect, can be seen as a specific form of creative communication with and *within* the Native community. Welch's humor places the "significance" and "meaning" of the text- the protagonist's situation and potential future "agency"- outside of the purview of Euro-American paradigms, situating it within the cultural codes of Native linguistic and narrative "play." As Meg Armstrong remarks, "knowledge in *Winter in the Blood* is given in the form of an "inside joke" (Armstrong 271). This "inside joke" will be understood, Welch maintains, by the Native community who recognize in the text the reflection of their own humor, their own self-authored modes which position the Native subject outside "teased" modernist and naturalist paradigms and situate it at the intersection of historic and familial contingencies, navigating the irresolvable complexities of the present and facing the indiscernible potential of the future.

Postmodernism: The deconstruction of the primitivist "Native subject"

"This is the way the world begins, this is the way the world begins," the sergeant chanted, "this is the way the world begins, not with an anthropologist but with mongrels and tricksters in a language game."

-Gerald Vizenor, *Trickster of Liberty* (xviii)

Momaday's and Welch's efforts to move the Native subject beyond modernist paradigms was in sync with their literary theoretical and cultural critical times, which despite a wide range of sometimes disparate aesthetic strategies, was characterized by the desire to transcend what was seen as "the self-imposed limitations of modernism, which in its search for autonomy and purity of timeless, representational truth has subjected experience to unacceptable intellectualizations and reductions" (Bertens, *The Idea* 5). During the 1970s, postmodernism would emerge as a new cultural critical mode, differentiated from late modernism and significantly influenced by the textual and linguistic analytical methods of French poststructuralists. However, it would be in the 1980s, when postmodernism had been significantly influenced by cultural studies and the breakaway field of postcolonial studies that Native writers would explore and evaluate its potential in relation to their various creative agendas.

While Welch in his later novels did not continue to develop the potential of the fusion of Native humor and postmodern literary techniques in the service of Native subject-ivity and agency, it would be Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa) who, during the late 1970s and into the 21st century, would use these new discourses to undermine various Euro-American Native subject paradigms which he collectively termed "the Indian," later typographically altered to the *indian*. As will be discussed below, the *indian* reveals itself under Vizenor's postmodern scrutiny as "invention" and "simulation" which, whether arising from Euro-American (modernist) precepts or neo-traditional tribal cultural revivalism, are ultimately primitivist in origin.

The *indian* is a case of cultural nostalgia, [...] Nostalgia, remorse, the row of tradition over reason, are the natural deconstructions of the *indian* as simulation of modernity. (*Fugitive* 38-39)

Before discussing Vizenor's Native subject in relation to his use and modification of postmodern cultural critique and literary techniques, attention must be paid to the role the primitivist "Native subject" played in provoking the development of a seminal postmodern analytical technique mentioned in the quotation above, namely Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the West's proclivity for binary thinking.

Jacques Derrida and structuralism

Binary oppositional thinking, which has been discussed above in relation to the legacy of primitivism, has come to be recognized as foundational to most Western thought. The West's tendency towards dualistic thinking has been seen to have its roots in what has been described as "the most fundamental assumption of Western philosophy," Aristotle's principle of noncontradiction in which it is proposed that "a thing cannot both have a property and not have a property." This was recognized by Friedrich Nietzsche as leading to an "either/or" logic, which itself, as Jacques Derrida would later continue to reason, has led to "the division of all aspects of life into binary sets of opposed categories" (Booker 59). During the first half of the twentieth century, this tendency of European and Euro-American thinking culminated in the theory of structuralism which proposed that binary oppositions formed the deep structures at the heart of most cultural patternings (Bertens, *Literary Theory* 55, 60). Although originating in the field of linguistics, structuralism had in fact systematized an important epistemological framework in Western culture and thus appeared applicable in many areas of Western disciplined scrutiny, including sociology, psychology, and anthropology.

It would be the Native subject as represented in the discourse of structural anthropology which would prove to be a seminal focus for Derrida's developing deconstructive approach to the West's binary thought patterns. This approach systematically revealed that concepts which are seen as binary are not polar opposites but are in reality mutually substantiating. Furthermore, Derrida pointed out that binary or dualistic thought "inevitably leads to hierarchization, with one pole of a binary opposition being valued over the other" (Booker 60), a process usually camouflaged by structuralist analysis. Through close reading, Derrida unraveled or "deconstructed" the logic of the text, revealing its reasoning to be inherently flawed due to the presupposition of oppositional binary concepts upon which the text had constructed its logic. In relation to the structural anthropological text *Tristes Tropiques* (1961), the untenable nature of Claude Lévi-Strauss's Native subject's "natural" "illiterate" state as set in opposition to civilization's "literacy" would, with a little pressure from Jacques Derrida in *On Grammatology*, significantly assist in causing the fault-line of Western dualistic thinking to fragment.

The deconstruction of the primitivist "Native subject"

In 1967, Jacques Derrida published *Of Grammatology* in which he intended to "focus attention on the *ethnocentrism* which, everywhere and always, had controlled the concept of writing" (3) and on the West's "phonocentrism," the prioritization of speech over the written word. Derrida's engagement with the Native subject in relation to this ethnocentrism sits at the literal center of *Of Grammatology* in the form of a deconstructive analysis of Claude Lévi-Strauss's description of the Nambikwara tribe. Coming after the first section's discussion of Ferdinand de Saussure's phonocentrism, it precedes the well-known deconstructive analysis of Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Language* in which speech, coupled to the primitivist's nature/culture binary, is considered the "originary" and most "natural" condition of language, while writing is deemed derivative and degenerative, associated with the artifice of "culture." Derrida's analysis of Lévi-Strauss's portrayal of the Nambikwara as primitivist "Native subject" sets the stage for his dismantlement of Rousseau's primitivism as the nature/culture opposition is "shown to deconstruct itself even as Lévi-Strauss yields to the Rousseauistic dream of an innocent language and a tribal community untouched by the evils of civilization." (Norris 35-38).

In the section “The Violence of the Letter: From Lévi-Strauss to Rousseau,” one of Derrida’s foci is the chapter “A Writing Lesson” from Lévi-Strauss’s *Tristes Tropiques* (1961), the latter’s well-known anthropological study-cum-travel journal of his time spent in South America with, among others, the Nambikwara tribe. Lévi-Strauss describes a scene in which the head of this “illiterate” tribe, using Lévi-Strauss’s gifts of pencil and paper, seems to imitate writing in order to impress his followers with his authority and the prestige of his function (Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes* 298). This scene leads Lévi-Strauss to ponder the role of writing as “a feature of civilization” (300). Theorizing that “the only phenomenon with which writing has always been concomitant” has been colonization and empire-building because it facilitates the exploitation and enslavement of tribal peoples (299), Lévi-Strauss believes to have observed that his introduction of writing into the midst of the “non-literate” Nambikwara has not only done violence to their natural state but has planted the seeds of civilization’s modes of authoritarianism and oppression.

Derrida does not address, let alone deny, the violence of colonization and writing’s role in the oppressive processes of empire-building (106). Nor does he discuss the nature or state of the “Native subject” in relation to colonization or cultural recuperation. In fact, in his analysis of “The Writing Lesson,” Derrida shifts the analytical view away from the nature of the “Native subject” proper (Lévi-Strauss’s professed focus) to Lévi-Strauss’s use of the Rousseauian primitivist “noble savage” paradigm, which according to Derrida prescribes the nature and state of the Nambikwara. Derrida, quoting Lévi-Strauss, writes that the Nambikwara become in *Tristes Tropiques* a Rousseauian “innocent community [...] a micro-society of non-violence and freedom, [...] fully self-present in its living speech, only such a community can suffer, as the surprise of an aggression coming *from without*, the insinuation of writing, the infiltration of its ‘ruse’ and of its ‘perfidy.’ Only such a community can import *from abroad* ‘the exploitation of man by man’” (119). Derrida’s deconstructive method reveals that the Nambikwara are made to fulfill certain primitivist “prerequisites” by Lévi-Strauss in order to “prove” his conclusions in relation to writing and civilization: 1) the Nambikwara are “without writing,” 2) the Nambikwara are “good,” 3) the Nambikwara’s goodness will be corrupted through the introduction of writing (civilization).

In relation to the presumed “illiteracy” of the Nambikwara, throughout *Of Grammatology* Derrida makes objection to the exclusive application of the West’s understanding of writing in “the narrow sense of linear and [alphabetic] phonetic notation” (109). Derrida remarks that there are many other writing system which “preceded the alphabet” or use other means (e.g. pictographic, hieroglyphic) of signification (129). However, while Derrida indicates that alphabetic writing is “scorned” as degenerate in relation to speech by Rousseau, Saussure, and Lévi-Strauss, the “dignity of writing is refused to nonalphabetic signs” (110). Derrida points out that it is the West’s model of writing that is applied to the Nambikwara, and Lévi-Strauss dismisses the Nambikwara’s word for “writing” as indicating only the gesture of writing, i.e. “drawing lines” (123). Derrida asks “up to what point it is legitimate not to call by the name of writing those ‘few dots’ and ‘zigzags’ on their calabashes, so briefly evoked in *Tristes Tropiques*” (110). Having indicated “access to writing in general” has been “refused to the Nambikwara” through the exclusive application of the West’s model, Derrida applies his own concept of “arch-writing” to the Nambikwara’s use of proper names, indicating that the same processes are at work in both these “systems of appellation,” e.g. differentiation, classification, codification (Norris 39).

The second primitivist prerequisite for the “Native subject” which Derrida addresses is a natural state of “goodness”: “the Nambikwara, who do not know how to write, are *good*, we are told” (116). This presupposition is quickly questioned as Derrida juxtaposes Lévi-Strauss’s declarations of the “unconditional affirmation of the radical goodness of the Nambikwara” (118)- i.e. “their ‘great sweetness of nature,’ ‘the most... authentic manifestations of human

tenderness,” (116)- with textual examples of their violence and their reputation among other tribes, European missionaries, and other anthropologists, as aggressive and dangerous (135). Derrida points out that “fundamental goodness” and “original innocence,” traditionally concepts struggled with in philosophical and religious discourses, are confidently “*implied but not expounded*” by Lévi-Strauss (119, original emphasis), a premise just as disturbing in relation to “objective” scientific observation and empirical “proof” as deeming them naturally wicked. However, Derrida indicates that this premise does not indeed serve science but “sets up a premise - the goodness or innocence of the Nambikwara - indispensable to the subsequent demonstration of the conjoint intrusion of violence and writing” (117, 118).

Finally, Derrida directs his deconstructive attention to Lévi-Strauss’s conclusion that writing is the medium which heralds the “enslavement” by civilization of primitive communities such as the Nambikwara. Making his most provocative binary inversion for the sake of his deconstructive argument, Derrida suggests that if Lévi-Strauss’s logical argumentation is read closely, it can be concluded with equal validity that writing is not a means of enslavement but of “liberation.” To explain the logical path to this conclusion, Derrida refers to Lévi-Strauss’s own discussion of the problematic assignation to writing of a specific influential role in the development of “civilization” with respect to “knowledge” and “progress.” Pinpointing Lévi-Strauss’s admittance of writing’s inconclusively positive or negative role in the development of societies, Derrida reasons that Lévi-Strauss’s own assigned role for writing, that of “enslavement,” signals a break with the internal logic of Lévi-Strauss’s text and the subsequent application by Lévi-Strauss’s of an ideology.

What is going to be called *enslavement* can equally be called *liberation*. And it is at the moment that this oscillation is *stopped* on the signification of enslavement that the discourse is frozen into a determined ideology [...] In this text, Lévi-Strauss does not distinguish between hierarchization and domination, between political authority and exploitation. (131)

It is beyond the scope of this discussion to describe Derrida’s analysis of the implications of this dimension of Lévi-Strauss’s argument; suffice it to say that Derrida’s purpose is not to support a hypothesis of liberation through writing, but to point out the inherent illogic of Lévi-Strauss’s rationale and to reveal the text’s application of ideology - the ethnocentric, dualistic, primitivist paradigm - masquerading as objective logic.

Not only does writing become in *Tristes Tropiques* “a scapegoat for all the exploitative evils of ‘civilization’” (Spivak, “Translator’s” lxxxiii), but the “Native subject” - the Nambikwara - become the *victims* of both the societal violence of its colonizing intrusion and of the *inevitability* of its intrusion in the form of history and “progress.” Analyzing Lévi-Strauss’s statement “Doubtless the die is already cast” concerning the “dangers” of writing that Lévi-Strauss had introduced to the Nambikwara,” Derrida remarks that

...the question here is the fatal evolution into which peoples who were hitherto protected from writing are already seduced; a more fatalistic than determinable proposition. The historical concatenation is thought under the concept of play and chance. (134)

Derrida recognizes that in this remorse for the inevitable loss of the Nambikwara’s “natural state” exists an “ethnocentrism *thinking itself* as anti-ethnocentrism in the consciousness of a liberating progressivism” (120). The Rousseauian nostalgia for what precedes this loss of a “natural state” is shown to mask the foundational ideology of “a necessary or rather fatal degradation, as the very form of progress” (134). In other words, the primitivist “Native subject” of both Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss is not only a measure of how far civilization has “fallen,” but more importantly, how far it has advanced.

Whereas Rousseau engaged in philosophy and the “speculative science” of the age (and as such inherited a long tradition of Western epistemological paradigmatic thinking as the context for his primitivism), Lévi-Strauss professes to be practicing “objective,” empirical science detached from cultural bias. However, as Derrida states,

It is just that his anthropological discourse is produced through concepts, schemata, and values that are, systematically and genealogically, accomplices of this theology and this metaphysics. (135)

This remark must be seen in relation to the rising influence of Michel Foucault who would develop the wide-ranging implications of this interaction between cultural discourses, knowledge systems, and the conceptualization of the “other” within Western society (such as “the leper” in his first work, *Madness and Civilization* 1961, which predated *Of Grammatology* by 6 years).

While Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* would become best known for its deconstructive method of analysis with respect to writing and speech, much of Derrida’s analytic energy in that work is expended on deconstructing the legacy of the West’s nature/culture dialectic as formulated in the tradition of Rousseau’s Enlightenment primitivism. As one of the initiators, along with Foucault, of poststructuralism and its critique of the West’s “humanist subject,” Derrida chose to approach this project via the West’s “Other,” - the “Native subject” - deconstructing the *Indian* to destabilize the binary paradigmatic scaffolding of much of Western epistemological and ontological thought.

The reception of postmodernism by Native writers

While Derrida’s analytical method inspired widespread use of the term “(de)construct” in postmodernist cultural critique, the word “invention” became the favored term to describe cultural development and socio-cultural change, exemplified by the influential works *The Invention of Culture* (1975) by Richard Wagner and *The Invention of Ethnicity* (1989) by Werner Sollors. The postmodern sociology of Jean Baudrillard, which will be discussed further below, would add a more cynical dimension to “construction” and “invention” with its theories of “simulation.” Gerald Vizenor enlists all these terms, including the term “presence” (severely compromised by poststructural critique), to serve his own aesthetic project, here described in relation to his implied audience.

“I have no interest in passive readers...I write to readers who are imaginative, and who are open to change [...] what I am doing is trying to find readers who can imagine the presence of natives by imagination and understand the absence of *indians by critique*...I write for people who would rather imagine the world than subscribe to the lessons of anthropology.” (qtd. in Pulitano 160)

However, as Vizenor explored these new critical tools and concepts, many Native writers were wary of the perceived value and potential threat of these postmodern/poststructural approaches to their various cultural projects. In a 1982 interview, N. Scott Momaday expressed a general sense of the inapplicability of the previous decade’s “critical revolution” for a new generation of Native writers. When asked if “Derrida-ism, etcetera” could be “threatening to new writers,” he responded

I think if it were taken seriously it might be a threat, but I do not see it as something that will be taken very seriously by very many people very long. [...] I’m not sure what’s happening in the “realms” of criticism. Nor am I particularly interested. (qtd. in Schubnel (ed.) 123)

Indeed, throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, postmodern aesthetics and poststructuralist analysis seemed to offer little of value to Native writers at a time when Native literature was

just coming into its own. Poststructural theorists at this time targeted language as singularly self-referential, unable to represent anything “outside itself,” “meaning” being forever differed in an “endless interplay of signification.” While Roland Barthes decreed the death of the author in 1968, the “subject” was deemed defunct as well. In literature, postmodernism meant a move “*away* from narrative, from representation” and towards self-reflexiveness and metafiction (Bertens, *Idea* 4, 6-7). These critical perspectives on language, text, “the author” and “the subject” presented a theoretical path completely distinct from and at odds with the creative agenda of most Native writers who were advocating the importance of their spoken languages and their oral traditions, and who were committing their creative energies to self-authored representation of the “Native agential subject” beyond modernist paradigms.

Despite the West’s loss of faith in representation, which characterized the growing theoretical investment in “postmodernism,” Native writers realized that Native peoples were still struggling with social science theories and popular culture stereotypes which professed to describe and “define” them. In Vine Deloria Jr.’s (Sioux) groundbreaking book *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969), he remarks

Our foremost plight is our transparency. People can tell just by looking at us what we want, what should be done to help us, how we feel, and what a “real” Indian is really like [...] Because people can see right through us, it becomes impossible to tell truth from fiction [...] Experts paint us as they would like us to be. Often we paint ourselves as we wish we were or as we might have been.

The more we try to be ourselves the more we are forced to defend what we have never been. The American public feels most comfortable with the mythical Indians of stereotype-land [...] To be an Indian in modern American society is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical. (9-10).

Vine Deloria Jr. illustrates in this book that, in the absence of and lack of interest in tribal-based sources, Euro-American anthropologists, religious do-gooders, and politicians had filled in the “transparent” Indian with their own discourses. As Ward Churchill has pointed out, Deloria Jr.’s insights with respect to the socio-political ramifications of (mis)representation of Natives preceded the similar if not identical insights which, while underplayed or even ignored in the self-reflexive, linguistic and textual oriented postmodernism of the 1960s/1970s, would be a central concern in the 1980s of a more politically aware and engaged postmodernism (“Contours” 250,251). It was during the (mid)1980s that postmodernism could offer Natives more applicable critical tools and insights with which to explore the cultural processes which Vine Deloria Jr. had already made visible.

During the (mid)1980s, “postmodernism” underwent what could be called a bifurcated development. On the one hand, the increasing prominence and influence of Foucault’s theories of the workings of “power” and the non-neutral nature of “knowledge,” the translation of Jean-François Lyotard’s seminal attack on “master narratives,” Frederick Jameson’s focus on the socio-economic influences of commodification and late capitalism, and Jean Baudrillard’s theory of “simulation” broadened the influence of this now evolving postmodern thought into the sociological and international (global) arena, adding to it a dimension of potential political analysis and critique. On the other hand, the 1980s has also been seen as marking the “decline” of postmodernism proper, a period in which postmodernism was “absorbed and promulgated in new social-historical contexts, became intertwined with different traditions, such as feminism, cultural studies, and postcolonialism (Fokkema, 26). These different traditions, now focusing primarily on those “othered” by the discourses forming and supporting the Euro/American normative “subject,” offered a greater theoretical investment in a political dimension, attempting to re-theorize the possibility of the agential subject (Bertens *The Idea* 7-8). Whether postmodernism of the 1980s informed or was informed by what are now termed postcolonial and cultural studies is still debatable

(Bertens "The Debate" 3,6). What is certain is that the postmodernism of the 1980s did offer concepts and theories attractive to Native writers.

Nevertheless, Native writers have remained wary of those elements of the postmodern perspective which have been perceived as antithetical to Native values, values such as community, a sense of history, and the power of language (Allen, "'Border' Studies" 307). As Leslie M. Silko has remarked

Post-modern, self-referential writing reflects the isolation and alienation of the individual who shares nothing in common with other human beings but language and its hygienic grammatical mechanisms. Self-referential writing is light-years away from shared or communal experience that underlies oral narrative and modern fiction. ("Odd" 179)

In relation to a sense of history, Craig Womack has written that he does not bother much "with the skepticism of postmodernism in relation to history. It is way too premature for Native scholars to deconstruct history when we haven't yet constructed it" (*Red* 3). In relation to language, Womack calls for a sensitive evaluation of the implications of postmodern perspectives in relation to Native concepts of "the power of the word."

...is the language of postmodernism an effective means of analyzing tribal worldviews given postmodernism's skepticism about language and literature and its tendency to place them in the realm of nonrepresentation? [...] What changes occur in "the power of the word" concept when it is examined under a system that devalues any sense of word essence? [...] Is there a balance called for here, an acknowledgement that sometimes fixed meanings are necessary, other times free play, as well as an honest recognition that both can be abused? (*Red* 204-205)

Womack takes a utilitarian and "strategic" approach to contemporary critical theory in relation to contemporary Native cultural expression.

...this is not to say that postmodernism's resistance to centers, meaning, coherence, and teleology is entirely antithetical to Native viewpoints, not that contemporary theory should be abandoned, only that it should be examined critically as to its value in illuminating Native cultures. (*Red* 242)

Indeed, the strategic usefulness of various tenets and techniques of postmodernism have not gone unappreciated, especially when directed at dismantling the master narratives of their cultures of origin - i.e., Europe and Euro-America. Ward Churchill, describing this concisely, remarks

The object is therefore to engage in what Michel Foucault, in a celebrated turn of the phrase, once referred to as the "archeology of knowledge," apprehending the codes and symbologies of domination at their sources, and, to borrow a term from Jacques Derrida, "deconstruct" them from start to finish. Only then, freed from the conceptual blinders imposed by what Jean-François Lyotard called "the master narrative," can one- or an entire culture- hope to (re)envision a truly liberatory reordering of the polity. ("Contours" 250)

Gerald Vizenor will also specifically see postmodern thought in terms of its liberatory potential (*Narrative Chance* 6), emphasizing its strategic usefulness while not adopting its "ideology." While Vizenor has been called a postmodern writer countless times, he denies this attribution.

"Well, I don't fulfill definitions of postmodern [...] Postmodern in literary context is figurative, it's imaginative interpretation of practices and conditions and issues that arise in the use of language in a literary context. That doesn't fulfill a kind of definition of a person and his or her practice. So I take up postmodern ideas and make use of them in original and complicated ways. Then I also try to run traces with these ideas to Native expression [...] So while I'm not a postmodernist fulfilling any kind of ideology that gives meaning to literature, I do practice and take up the philosophical ideas, linguistics and political thought, social criticism, and cultural

interpretations that are postmodern in that they challenge the established use of modernist ideologies.” (Harmsen-Peraino 3)

Therefore, it must be concluded that the degree to which postmodern insights and techniques are accepted as useful or rejected as destructive varies with each Native writer in relation to his/her literary projects of contemporary cultural expression and the envisioning of a contemporary “Native agential subject.” While postmodernism has proven most useful to Native writers in the deconstruction of *western* paradigms and in the expression the *West*’s crisis of meaning and representation, Native communities do not consider themselves to be involved in the same intellectual trajectory in relation to their understanding of their own cultures and worldviews. As Kumkum Sangari has stated, “the postmodern preoccupation with the crisis of meaning is not everyone’s crisis (even in the West)” (qtd. Slemon “Modernism’s” 436). Hans Bertens has put postmodernism in a similar perspective

It’s not the world that is postmodern, here, it is the perspective from which that world is seen that is postmodern. We are dealing here with a set of intellectual propositions that to some people make a lot more sense than they do to others. (*The Idea* 9)

As will be illustrated in the discussion below of the short stories “Graduation with Ishi” from *The Trickster of Liberty* (1988) and “Squirrels” from *Dead Voices* (1992), to Gerald Vizenor, this “set of intellectual propositions” has provided him with fertile analytical ground to conduct a specific cultural critique of the Euro-American discourses which have made of the “Native subject” an “invented *indian*.” In addition, these “intellectual propositions” become a playground for Vizenor in which to exercise and develop the ironic and liberatory implications he sees in these discourses in relation to his own vision of the contemporary self-authored “Native agential subject.” Vizenor’s self-authored “Native subject” will be discussed in the light of a specific aspect of subject-ivity theorized by Foucault as “technologies of the self.”

Technologies of the Native Self

While, as mentioned above, the West’s crisis of meaning and representation need not be seen as “everyone’s crisis,” Vizenor has indicated that there is a related crisis in the Native community involving the (con)fusion between what he terms the Euro-American “invented *indian*” subject and Native people’s sense of “self.” One of Vizenor’s primary concerns is how the *indian* of Euro-American popular culture and social science discourses has influenced Native people’s self-conceptualization, how Euro-American Native subject paradigms (i.e. invented *indians*) threaten to become essentialized and adopted by Natives as discursive modes of self-referentiality, subsequently becoming sources of self-identification. Vizenor’s much quoted remark reveals his concern that Euro-American discourses have infiltrated and supplanted not only Native-authored modes of subject-constitution, but also modes of self-constitution: “We’re all invented as Indians... So what I’m pursuing now in much of my writing is the idea of the invented Indian. The inventions have become disguises” (qtd in Owens, “Afterword” 250-251). The following analysis will focus on Vizenor’s exploration of the Euro-America authored Native subject and Native-authored subject, specifically with respect to the constitution of the “subject” as “self.” The theoretical reference point of this analysis of Vizenor’s Native-subject-as-Native-self will be Foucault’s nascent concept of “the technologies of the self,” introduced in a seminar in 1982, and which can be understood for the purpose of this analysis as the strategies employed in the composing of a self-referential discursive construct, i.e. the “self,” from discourses of subject-ivity (Foucault, “Technologies” 18).

The use of the word “self” in this analysis must be prefaced by a qualification of Vizenor’s use of the term “identity,” which appears frequently in his writings up to the 1990s, after which time the term “self” appears more regularly. As indicated in the introduction, the term “identity” has been used in a variety of theoretical contexts without a corresponding theoretical rigor in its definition and has often been used in tandem with, as an aspect of, or as a synonym for the “subject” and the “self,” an example of which is Best and Kellner’s description of Foucault’s technologies of the self as the strategies whereby “individuals create their own identities through ethics and forms of self-constitution” (60-61). Considering Vizenor’s engagement with (post)structural theories and discourse analysis in relation to the “invention” of the Native subject, it will be presumed that Vizenor’s understanding of “identity” in his early works corresponds more closely to the discursively constructed “self” than to the sociological definition of “identity” which will be maintained in the second part of this paper. That these two concepts can be potentially inter-linked and inter-influential is acknowledged by Vizenor in his later writings; in his collection of essays *Fugitive Poses* (1998), he indicates the differentiated but interpolated nature of these two concepts stating “The self is a tease of identity”(20). Vizenor’s specific concern in relation to this interpolation has been that Natives have accepted Euro-American discourses about the Native subject and consequently adopted these discourses as the “technologies” by which they themselves conceptualize and construct a Native self.

Vizenor’s exploration of the Native “technologies of the self” begins in his early works with an investigation of the ramifications of inherent Euro-American biases in the discourses which were prevalent during the 1960s and 1970s and which threatened to infiltrate Native self-conceptualizations, namely social science discourses of Native dysfunctionality and cultural revitalization discourses of the value of tribal traditional culture.

Euro-technologies of the Native self: the (con)fusion of the invented Indian subject as Native “self”

In his short story “Marleen American Horse,” Vizenor explores the insidious ramifications of the Euro-American “invented Indian subject,” legitimated by authoritative social science discourses, for the Native sense of self. This short story, first appearing in *Wordarrows* (1978), reappears in *The People Named the Chippewa* (1984) as part of the essay “Firewater Labels and Methodologies.” In this essay, Vizenor scrutinizes the preconceptions behind the “myth of the drunken Indian,” given credibility by social science studies that are themselves tainted with racist essentialist presumptions, an example being the supposed “fact” that Indians genetically cannot tolerate alcohol. Vizenor believes that these theories linking a dysfunctional condition to “Indianness” have encouraged Natives to include these discourses of dysfunctionality in their “technologies of the self.”

In the short story, a “tribal advocate” at an urban tribal community center attempts to help a young alcoholic woman to resist seeing herself in terms of Euro-American discourses. He attempts to explain to her that Natives have been portrayed as the losers of colonial conflict and consequentially as “victims” of history, the legacy of which is contemporary Native dysfunctionality (i.e. alcoholism). The advocate asserts that most of the problems faced by Native people originate in these discourses, in “white words” and “white expectations.” Echoing Vine Deloria Jr.’s remark that Euro-Americans have discussed minorities in terms of “problems” and that “we are taught to speak of the *Negro problem*, and the *Indian problem*, and so forth” (*Custer* 189), the advocate provocatively asks Marleen,

“Are you a white person?”

“No, of course not, you can see that.”

“Then how come you have a white problem?”
 “What white problem?” She asked.
 “Drunken Indian.” (*Wordarrows* 42-43)

The character of Marleen American Horse can be seen to represent the *covert* infiltration of the Euro-American “invented *indian* subject”- constructed through “authoritative” discourses of dysfunctionality, dependence, and what Vizenor calls “victimry”- into the Native conceptualizations of “self.”

Vine Deloria Jr. has suggested, with devastating irony, further insidious effects of such invented *indian* discourses during the 1960s and 1970s resurgence of Native pride as such social science theories, specifically in relation to the “Indianness” of alcoholism, were often *overtly* adopted as “technologies of the self.”

One [university] workshop discussed the thesis that Indians were in a terrible crisis. They were, in the worlds of friendly anthro guides, BETWEEN TWO WORLDS. People between two worlds, the students were told, DRANK. For the anthropologists, it was a valid explanation of drinking on the reservation. For the young Indians, it was an authoritative definition of their roles as Indians. Real Indians, they began to think, drank and their task was to become real Indians for only in that way could they re-create the glories of the past.

So they DRANK.

I lost some good friends who DRANK too much. (*Custer* 90)

Both Deloria and Vizenor indicate that during the mid 20th century Red Power movement, the drive to re-cultivate Native pride, to re-construct and re-substantiate the “Native self,” looked to extant discourses of Native subject-ivity for its “technologies,” often without ascertaining to what extent these discourses were Euro-American inventions. In his first novel, *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* (1978), published in the same year as “Marleen American Horse,” Vizenor illustrates that by unwittingly drawing on Euro-American authored Native subject-ivities, what is supposed to be the “Native self” becomes simply a rehearsal of adopted romantic Euro-American primitivism.

It is in *Bearheart* that Vizenor explicitly introduces his concept of “invention” in relation to the Native “self” through the character Belladonna Darwin-Winter Catcher who, while expounding on what it means to be “Indian,” provokes her audience to deconstruct her rhetoric.

“We are tribal and that means that we are children of dreams and visions...Our bodies are connected to mother earth and our minds are part of the clouds...Our voices are the living breath of the wilderness...”

“...Are you telling me that what you are saying is exclusive to your mixedblood race?”

“Yes!” snapped Belladonna. “I am different than a whiteman because of my values and my blood is different...I would not be white.

“...tell us how you are so different from white people...What does Indian mean?”

“...An Indian is a member of a recognized tribe and a person who has Indian blood.”

“But what is Indian blood.”

“Indian blood is not white blood.”

“Indians are an invention,” said the [man] with the beard. “You tell me that the invention is different than the rest of the world when it was the rest of the world that invented the Indian...Are you speaking as an invention?”(194-195)

Constructing her “Indian self” from popular counter-culture stereotypes of Natives’ cosmically holistic consciousness prevalent during the 1960s and 1970s (exemplified by Carlos Castaneda’s popular *Teachings of Don Juan* (1968)), her listeners remind her that she has adopted essentialist discourses which the “rest of the world” created, via primitivism, to “other” the Native, the present form of these discourses being a romanticized and idealized “traditional Indian.”

For Vizenor, the prevalence of this romanticized and idealized Native traditionalism has threatened to obscure Native experience and to obstruct the development of contemporary Native “technologies of the self.” Vizenor specifically takes to task the American Indian Movement (AIM) activist Russell Means for his part in the adoption of elements of the Euro-American *indian* in creating an authentic Native “self.” In the collection of essays *Manifest Manners* (1994), Vizenor describes an Andy Warhol silk screen titled “The American Indian” (1976), which presents Russell Means costumed and with the same expression as in the Edward S. Curtis photographs which had been rediscovered and republished in 1976.² During the 1970s, these now famous photographs of dubious accuracy but potent romantic vision inspired veneration as portrayals of a specifically Native reality and humanity and served as reference points for the construction of a recuperated “authentic” Native self. Vizenor, however, emphasizes that this “authenticity” was grounded in Curtis’s artistic primitivism, discussed further below, but was nevertheless adopted by Natives as a viable “technology of the self,” exemplified by Russell Means in the Warhol silkscreen. Drawing on the exploration of image, discourse, and the “real,” both in René Magritte’s painting “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe*” and Foucault’s *This is not a Pipe*, Vizenor evokes the complex irony of the silk screen by applying to it his Magritte-like phrase “This is not an Indian.” Explicating his intentions regarding this phrase in relation to the portrait, Vizenor remarks “the portraiture is the absence; the assertion is an ambiguous discourse on simulations and the sources of tribal identities” (*Manifest* 18).

Simulations of dominance and postindian simulations of survivance

During the 1980s, Jean Baudrillard’s idea of “simulation” would become a key concept for Vizenor as he developed his theories of the ironic interactions of the “invented *indian* subject” and Native self-authored expressions of subject-ivity. According to Baudrillard, a simulation is “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal” (qtd in Vizenor, *Manifest*, 9). According to Vizenor, Native peoples have been simulated in the descriptions and definitions of the social sciences such as structural anthropology and the ethnographic aura of Edward Curtis’s photography- both of which are founded on primitivist prescriptive models of a “Native real.” While Baudrillard’s concept of “simulation” and its effect on society is dystopic, Vizenor’s adaptation of Baudrillard’s concepts is meant to provide an empowering environment for the creative imagining of the Native subject. Explaining his adaptation of Baudrillard, Vizenor has remarked “I choose the ironic rather than the political burden [of the simulation]. By irony, literary irony, I can turn it around, and I can hold those who stand by the simulation responsible for it” (Harmsen-Peraino 3). This ironic turn involves the insistence that not only Euro-American discourses simulated the “Indian” in the service of hegemony (what Vizenor terms “dominance”), but that Natives, as he says in an interview, “of course, use simulations too, but for reasons of liberation rather than dominance” (Vizenor and Lee 84). Vizenor has called the creators of these Native simulations of liberation “postindian warriors,” their task being to undermine the Euro-American invented/simulated

² From 1896 to 1930 Edward Sheriff Curtis (1868-1952) took over 40,000 negatives of 80 tribes west of the Mississippi for his photographic series titles *The North American Indian*, a 20 volume collection of photographs and ethnological information. The all but forgotten photos were republished in the 1970s as *The North American Indian, The Vanishing Race: Selections from Edward S. Curtis’s “The North American Indian,”* New York: Talpinger, 1977.

indian and, amidst these “ruins of representations,” to counter the “literature of dominance” with new stories, with “their own simulations of survivance”³ (*Manifest*, 5).

Postindian creative agency and the trickster

The process of revealing and redirect the influence of simulations demands once again the conceptualization of an agency effective in responding to Euro-American hegemonies. Vizenor claims that the “postindian” is the creative mode which is the source of such agency, stating that “The postindian stands for an active, ironic resistance to dominance, and the good energy of native survivance” (Vizenor and Lee 85). The narrative figure which Vizenor has taken as the expression *par excellence* of this ironic, resistant agency is the trickster, asserting that “trickster stories are the postindian simulations of tribal survivance” (*Manifest*, 15). The trickster becomes, in Vizenor’s work, a narrative expression of Native agency in that he “does not just talk; he acts; he is the ultimate agent, sometimes a secret agent working within cultural, psychological and/or political representations” (Jahner, “Trickster” 40).

Vizenor underpins the viability of the trickster as a figure who can meaningfully engage theoretical concepts such as “simulation” by linking the trickster’s often anarchical role in traditional stories to the aspects of contemporary theory which highlight the instability and flux in discursive systems of cultural representation. Proclaiming that the “trickster is postmodern,” in his essay “Trickster Discourse” Vizenor presents the trickster in poststructuralist and dialogical terms as a “comic sign in a language game” whose cultural “meaning” arises out of the dialogic process of the storytelling event, the trickster’s significance and signification changing with every new performance and new context. Karl Kroeber has also recognized the possibility of interpreting traditional trickster tales in terms of poststructuralist deconstruction and the instability of representation.

[The trickster Coyote] is exactly no “character” in the traditional sense but a figure self-deconstructive, alogical, unamenable to determinate interpretation [...] One cannot say simply, “[Coyote] means so and so,” because he always also means something else; in his meaning one thing the power to mean another is implicated [...] He transforms, or deconstructs, any definition of him even as he provokes one into making a definition ... [Trickster] tales and cycles of such tales function to evoke richness of meaning not reducible to any unified “icon.” An intrinsic, essential heterogeneity explains the endless proliferating of the stories: there can always be more because a Trickster-Transformer cannot come to any rationally conclusive end. (“Deconstructionist” 78)

Vizenor insists that his contemporary tricksters are the narrative agents of “tribal survivance,” actively and ironically undermining, in the manner of deconstructionist and poststructuralist critique, discourses of dominance in their most recent Euro-American discursive forms. Vizenor’s contemporary postmodern-esque trickster agency is directed towards a specific purpose, to liberate the tribal imagination from the influence of repressive *indian* subject paradigms: “we must tease manners and liberate our minds with trickster stories” (*Hotline* 24).

“Graduation with Ishi” (1988) by Gerald Vizenor

Deconstructing the simulations

Making ironic reference to one of America’s most well-known statuary icons, Vizenor’s *The Trickster of Liberty* (1988) is a collection of what he calls Native “liberty stories” (Vizenor and Lee 127). Each section is devoted to a member of the trickster dynasty introduced in his first novels *Bearheart* and *Griever* (1986). The chapter “Graduation with Ishi,” devoted to

³ One of Vizenor’s many neologisms, combining “survival” and “resistance.”

the trickster academic Tune Browne and the historical figure Ishi, illustrates how Native creative agency is both an act of trickster-deconstruction of Euro-American simulations of the *indian* adopted by Natives (represented by Tune) and an act of ironic postindian manipulation of these simulations (represented by Ishi).

Tune Browne, we are told, has established the New School of Socioacupuncture at the University of California at Berkeley. Explicating his notion of “socioacupuncture,” Vizenor has said that

just the right cultural pressure and mediation on the simulations of the native invites the ambiguities of association and meaning. So applying just the right socioacupuncture at the right time can, in stories, heal and liberate. (Vizenor and Lee 82)

Tune calls his method specifically “postmodern socioacupuncture” (57) in that the school releases the blockage of Native “self” by piercing through the authoritative discourses surrounding the invention of the *indian*. During his lectures, Tune targets and applies socioacupuncture to the photographs and methods of Edward Curtis, whose photos positioned the “Native subject” within the primitivist paradigm of the “vanishing world” of the *indian*. The role that this medium has played in the positioning of the Native subject is remarked upon by Vizenor, who highlights the interplay between early photography and the covert primitivism of the field structural anthropology to come, Vizenor has remarked,

At the same time that colonial nations dominated much of the world and many native communities were removed to federal exclaves, the new technologies of photography captured the fugitive other in the structural representations of savagism and civilization. (*Fugitive* 152)

Dressed in traditional costume like Curtis Native subjects, Tune begins his lecture by referring to Curtis’s photograph titled “In a Piegan Lodge” which shows two traditionally dressed men sitting on the ground in a lodge with several peace pipes and other Native items. Tune refers to an item which was removed from the photograph by Curtis to maintain a look of authenticity.

“See here,” said the trickster, as he pointed to the images, “Curtis has removed the clock, colonized our cultures, and denied us our time in the world [...] Curtis paid us for the poses [...] It was hot then, but he wanted us to wear leathers to create the appearance of a traditional scene, his idea of the tribal past.” (45)

As Tune points out, in the original photograph of “In a Piegan Lodge,” a clock was centrally placed on the ground in the lodge. By removing this and similar sign of western contact in other photos, Curtis removed images reflecting the contemporary realities of Natives at that time. Christopher M. Lyman has analyzes Curtis’s photographic mode of operation – the cropping of pictures, and the manipulation of negatives, the staging of scenes, and even the provision by Curtis of cultural props and traditional clothing for his models - revealing how Curtis artistically influenced if not actively created the aura of ethnological authenticity in his photographs. While Curtis is still admired for his creative photographic talent, Lyman indicates, and Tune underlines, that Curtis created a “mystique” of the Native “self” and culture in which the degree of “authenticity” was judged by the degree of separation from the contemporary world. Elsewhere, Vizenor has another character reflect, in the voice of Curtis’s subject, how these photographs of invented and simulated *indian* authenticity have insidiously become “technologies of the Native self.”

“We never saw the photographs then and never thought that it would make a difference in the world of dreams, that we would become *his* images [...] But it did make a difference, we were caught dead in camera time, extinct in photographs, and now in search of our past and common memories we walk right back into these photographs, we become the invented images.” (*Crossbloods* 90)

Tune Browne, himself dressed like a Curtis subject, applies “socioacupuncture” both to Curtis’s *indian* images as well as to the process of Native identification with these images. To cries from the audience of “Take it off! Take it off!”, Tune begins to strip, slowly removing his traditional clothes, calling his dance the “ritual striptease” of “socioacupuncture.”

“Socioacupuncture is our means of survival on the wire, our striptease in mythic satire,” the trickster said as he untied the ties of mock vestments captured in photographs, unhooked the hooks to museum commodities, and bead over bead performed a slow striptease, [...] Tune removed his beaded leather vest, untied wing bones, and turned a sash; he danced and continued his stories on the ethos of the ritual striptease.

“Socioacupuncture reverses the instrumental documents, [...] and the pale inventors and consumers of tribal cultures are exposed when the pressure in captured images is released.” (46)

This striptease performed by Tune Browne is a clearly deconstructive act, removing the ethnological simulations of a Native authentic “presence” from Curtis’s photographs, or in other words, stripping away the representations which portray Native “absence” from the contemporary world. The metaphor of striptease not only signals the divestment of these representations of Native absence but also signals the conceptual pivot of “presence” and “absence” referred to by Vizenor as the “tease.” For Vizenor, the deconstructive cultural striptease stimulates the creative potency of the “tease,” an ironically heightened evocation, described by Vizenor as a Derrida-like “trace” (*Manifest* 70-71), of some unseen Native “presence” which lies naked under the simulated tribal breech cloth.

In *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (1998) Vizenor describes the nature of the “tease” as a mode that indicates an “ironic consciousness, the cut of a native trickster” (*Fugitive* 20). As in Welch’s novel, Vizenor conceives of the “tease” as a distinctively Native critical mode suited for postmodern scrutiny and deconstruction of hegemonic paradigms as well as for exploring and highlighting the complex ironies of tribal history and Native genealogy which constitute contemporary tribal life and culture. In the novel *Hotline Healers* (1997), the trickster protagonist encourages everyone to “tease the chance of conception, tease your mother, tease the privy council of the great spirit, and always tease your own history” (1). For Vizenor, the “tease” represents the acknowledgement of the complex context of the tribal “real”: the self-referential awareness of the interplay of inventions-simulations- representations, socio-cultural discourses, and the palpable effects and contingencies of history. If Tune represents the trickster’s deconstructive striptease of *indian* simulations, the historical figure of Ishi represents for Vizenor the “tease” of a Native “presence” and “survivance” amidst the ironies of the tribal “real,” as Ishi seemed literally to step out of the tribal past and into the institutional arms of early twentieth century anthropology.

Ishi: from the striptease of Native absence to the tease of Native presence

After Tune is finished with his cultural striptease and is standing in his “undecorated breechcloth” (48), he relates the singular situation of Ishi, a Native who surprised the country in 1911 when he was discovered in northern California, hungry and scared, speaking an unknown language. Heralded as “the last wild Indian,” Ishi had been living a fugitive existence as the last survivor of the Yana Indians who, along with many other Californian tribes, had been hunted to near extinction during and after the Gold Rush (*Manifest* 128). The anthropologist Alfred Kroeber took Ishi into his care, giving him a room in the Museum of Anthropology and the University of California to live in and where he could teach researchers about his culture. In her discussion of the importance of Ishi in Vizenor’s work, Kimberly Blaeser remarks on Ishi’s deeply ironic situation.

Ishi became a living museum specimen, with his language, his hunting skills, and his appearance all studied. He was repeatedly dressed and posed, then photographed, as a “savage” simulation, and “captured” again by the camera. (Blaeser, *Gerald* 58-59)

Ishi, though respected and admired, was treated as a living museum “artifact,” a Curtis photograph come alive. Vizenor, however, portrays Ishi not as engulfed by, as Benedict Anderson phrased it, “the museumizing imagination” (178) which relegates Native cultures to the nation’s prehistory, but as playing a contemporary postmodern role.

While Curtis’s photographs represent “simulations of the tribal real,” Ishi for Vizenor represents “tribal simulations of survivance,” and he is by his very *presence* the tribal “real who endured in spite of or alongside of the simulation” (Blaeser, *Gerald* 58-59). Significant for Vizenor is the fact that the historical Ishi never revealed his sacred tribal name, this most intimate representation of his tribal “Native self” remaining elusive, seemingly absent but actually present in Ishi’s silence. As Amy J. Elias remarks, Ishi plays

the game of simulations while keeping his own name silent. In other words, Ishi simulates simulations. For Vizenor, he becomes a living sign. Ishi is not only absence; he is presence masquerading as absence, playing at absence in a simulation of his own. (88)

Ishi can be seen as representing Vizenor’s postindian who creates “simulations of survivance,” performing the tease of a “tribal presence” amidst Euro-American inventions and authoritative discourses.

As a postindian, Ishi’s very presence ironizes his situation in the same manner as Tune’s socioacupuncture and “ritual striptease.” This is illustrated as Tune relates how both he and Ishi received honorary Doctor of Philosophy degrees at the University of California, dressed only in their breechcloths and academic sashes. As Ishi awaits his degree, Vizenor has Alfred Kroeber and others who worked with Ishi reiterate their recorded remarks praising Ishi as a “natural philosopher” with “the soul of a child” (49). With jeering cries of “Take it off!”, the audience applies socioacupuncture to these covertly primitivist remarks. The “praise” of Kroeber and his associates represents for Vizenor the hypocrisy of Euro-American discourses which first identify “the Native” as the “non-civilized savage” who stands in the path of civilized westward expansion and progress, and then praises the Native “last of his kind” as an idealized “noble savage” savant. Vizenor underlines this by having Tune quote from Robert Bellah’s *The Broken Covenant* (1975) that it was not unusual for the colonized to undergo “the transvaluation of roles that turns the despised and oppressed into symbols of salvation and rebirth [...]” (49). Both Tune and Ishi, however, specifically point out Bellah’s subsequent insight that when this transvaluation occurs, it is an indication of “new cultural directions” and “a deep cultural revolution.” Having said this, Tune and Ishi receive their

doctorates, “circled the dais and then rendered a ritual striptease deep in a cultural revolution” (50).

This “cultural revolution” is, for Vizenor, the self-referential postmodern turn in which Natives become responsible for new self-authored “teasing” simulations of Native “presence.” For Vizenor, these new tribal simulations must be founded on an insight into the ironies and contradictions of the Native subject in relation to the invented *indian*, the “tease” being the vigilant awareness that “any sense of native presence must contend with the ambiguities of the absence of natives” (*Fugitive* 73). Whether strip-teasing in traditional vestments, in breechcloths, or in academic sashes, Tune and Ishi are Vizenor’s representatives of Native agential forces, the deconstructive energy of the trickster and the constructive creativity of the postindian, who now control the simulations which both cloak and evoke “tribal presence.”

Having revealed “simulation” to be the central technology of the Euro-American authored Native “self” and having presented his Native readers with trickster and postindian agential figures as a means to ironically deconstruct and transvalue such simulations which have infiltrated Native subjectivities, Vizenor offers a “technology of the Native self” as a means to substantiate the contemporary Native subject beyond the concept of simulations. The source of this “technology” is the legacy of the oral tradition in contemporary Native writings: “Native American Indians are the storiers of presence [...] There are no other secure stories that tease the creation of native presence” (*Fugitive* 1).

Beyond simulations: stories and Vizenor’s technologies of the Native self

In line with his intense poststructuralist critique of the West’s “metaphysic of presence” as it substantiates the humanist subject and constructs a Native Other, Vizenor denies the applicability of this metaphysic to the idea of “Native presence.” He states that postindian narratives “create a sense of presence, a native self, [...] That sense of self is a creation, an aesthetic presence; the self is not an essence, or immanence, but the mien of stories” (*Fugitive*, 20). Using the conceptual tools of poststructural theory, Vizenor describes the Native self as “an inscrutable persona” and “a referent in stories;” its trace of “Native presence,” as in Derrida’s process of *différance*, always “differed to other native stories” (*Fugitive* 33, 34). Therefore, Vizenor insists that while the Native self cannot be appropriately understood or interpreted through the lens of Western humanism, it can be viewed through the lens of poststructuralism to help explain the Native self as an “aesthetic presence” in tribal narrative.

It will be shown in the following discussion that tribal narrative, understood specifically as the intertwining of traditional oral stories and contemporary Native writings, is Vizenor’s primary “technology of the Native self: “Native selves are stories [...] the tease of presence” (*Fugitive* 20). Vizenor’s Native “storied self” closely parallels the conclusion drawn by Julie Cruikshank in her study of the lives of several Yukon women that Native people use traditional narratives to express their life experiences (Cruikshank (ed.), *Life* 29). Kathleen M. Sand’s description of the Yukon women interviewed in Cruikshank’s book is applicable to Vizenor’s technologies of the Native storied self.

...for these Native women [in Cruikshank’s book] subjectivity is not singular but inextricably connected to tribal myth, history, and contemporary experience [...] Contemporary narrative speaks to and is resonant with oral tradition and historical narrative [...] voices of the past, dialogue from both past and present, and self-reflexive interpretation all share narrative space. (Sands, “Cooperation” 144)

It will be shown that for Vizenor, the central element in “the narrative space” which substantiate the Native self involves what can be called totemic imagination, in which “the totem is a native metaphor” of Native presence (*Fugitive* 123).

Vizenor's literary totems and "authored animals"

While the anthropological term totem refers to a kinship clan, according to Vizenor the term also indicates an originary kinship relationship to an animal, often a spirit-animal from a mythic period. Referring to the Chippewa (Anishinaabe), Vizenor remarks that

The *anishinaabe* endure in these stories of survivance as the crane, loon, bear, martin, and catfish families, the first ancestors on the earth; the *odoodemi*, totem or "to have a totem," is that native presence and trace of originary. (*Fugitive* 119)

A corresponding power or talent of the animal ancestor of the totem is usually associated with the clan, and Vizenor indicates that this association traditionally worked as a metaphorical connection between the perceived characteristics of the group and the animal ancestor. Mentioning the crane totem of his grandmother, Vizenor quotes William Warren, the nineteenth-century mixedblood historian, as saying that the people of the crane were "noted as possessing naturally a loud, ringing voice, and are acknowledged orators of the tribe" (*Interior* 4). Describing these animal attributes as metaphorically expressing the "moods of family," he extends these metaphorical connections to contemporary Native situations:

The sandhill crane is gregarious, a tribal bird that soars, [...] The great blue heron is one more mood as a totem: a solitary figure in tribal narratives, but never lonesome [...] We are crossbloods, or mixedbloods, now, and we are heron and crane totems in the wild cities. (*Interior* 4)

While these totemic metaphorical connections establish a cultural discursive system of group characteristics and extra-biological kinship relationships, animals also play a fundamental role in the construction within this system of the Native "self" of the individual through visionary experiences. The most well-known practice in this regard is that of the vision quest, which is reflected in the Anishinaabe dream songs that Vizenor re-worked and re-published in *Summer in the Spring* (1965). During a vision quest, an individual acquired power and insights from what would from then on be seen as their animal mentor or spirit-helper, this power often accessed through the singing of a song given to the supplicant by the animal being. The supplicant's vision was often interpreted by tribal elders as to its significance in relation both to the individual's understanding of his/her "new" dimension of his/her "self" and his/her possibly revised role in the community. The vision and its distinctive totemic characteristics can therefore be seen as a "technologies" by which the Native "self" is substantiated within a specifically Native cultural and societal discursive system.

These totemic metaphors of group kinship with and individual visionary connections to animals and nature form for Vizenor a distinctive Native aesthetic sense, a trace of the "Native self" in the "authored-animals" of Native literature.

"Good Native literature in my view has the presence of other life forms metaphorically... they have a powerful metaphorical position and are not just objects to compare human behavior to. It would be similar to totemic stories, stories that include a special connection to a visionary animal [...] it isn't true belief, and it's not representational, and it's not linear. It's a visionary connection." (Harmsen-Peraino 5)

In his essay "Authored Animals," Vizenor discusses several contemporary Native writers' portrayal of animals in relation to Native totemic metaphor, concepts of anthropomorphism, and the implications of the literary technique of simile. His description of the significance of Momaday's bear can be seen to reflect Vizenor's own sense of animals as the metaphorical trace of native presence.

The authored bear is a metaphor, a dream, a mythic character in narrative. [...] The presence of the bear is a metaphor of transcendence [...] Foremost, the bear is the mythic healer of human separation in a narrative. That separation is never closed, but metaphor is a sense of presence... (672, 678)

References to authored animals in Vizenor's own work range from shamanistic bear transformations, mongrel dogs that heal the sick with their paws and tongue, the use of myths of animal-human marriages, and personal stories of animal encounters.

Vizenor realizes, however, that any venture connecting the Native subject to the natural world brings with it the danger of the romanticized *indian* attributed with an *essential* connectedness to an animistic, anthropomorphized environment.

Natives and *indians* are commonly perceived as being in close association with nature and the natural, totemic presence of animals. Such nostalgic attributions, the essence of creationism or evolution, are considered as sources of native omniscience and consciousness. [...] Native metaphors, then, may not be easily understood outside the "background knowledge" of the native, visionary world. Clearly, the metaphors of native creation [...] the mighty stories of animals, have been translated, more often than not, by social scientists, as evidence or romantic revisions, and with minimal comprehension of native intentions and meaning. (*Fugitive* 131-132, 134)

As a ironic and parodic response to the Euro-American tendency to mistranslate and misrepresent "native intentions and meaning," Vizenor has employed the bawdy and sacrilegious dimension of traditional trickster stories - stories in which the trickster itself is often an animal such as a coyote, raven, or rabbit - as well as traditional myths of animal and human marriages to counter the association of Native animal metaphorical imagery with Euro-authored romantic simulations of Native harmony with nature. This approach is exemplified in *Bearheart* and *Hotline Healers* (1997) in which Vizenor describes explicit scenes of "loving" nature in the form of exuberant sex and masturbation with animals, ultimately resulting in *Hotline Healers* in marriage.

In *Hotline Healers*, Vizenor additionally uses the intercourse with animals not only to undermine specific romantic Euro-American simulations of Natives and nature, but also as a form of broader cultural critique. In the final scene of *Hotline Healers*, the reader is told that certain missionaries were seduced by the erotic energies of the New World and had conjugal relationships with animals. Instead of converting the "savages" to "civilization," the monks underwent carnal conversions as they began to take on the characteristics of animals they had married. One monk, who was obsessed with his otter lover

ate fish and salamanders and strained to swim with the lithe movements of an otter. No other monk at the monastery came closer to a reversion to the other creation. Over the years the extreme course of his imagination in the river changed his body. The monks celebrated his creature conversion...his toes were webbed, his nose was broad, he was lighter on the underside, playful on the river bank, and he had grown a thick tail covered with brown fur. (170)

Vizenor not only creates a "new" myth of animal-human marriages and creaturely transformations but infuses it with a cultural critical force overturning and reversing the process of "othering" (conversion) brought to the "New" World by the "Old." These scenes are, as discussed above, the "tease" of Native absence and presence, as the romantic simulations of Natives are deconstructed by contemporary postindian totemic stories of human and animal familial relationships.

Throughout these totemic landscapes, Vizenor's "play on native stories of human and animal relations, the wild allegories, ironies, and myths of families" (Vizenor and Lee 100), a constant thread of purpose can be discerned, the desire to "heal" through these totemic narratives the "separation" from that which substantiates the "Native self." This is the central focus of *Dead Voices* (1992) in which the narrator, a Native "wordie" filled with "dead voices" and empty of personal stories, is encouraged to discover and narrate his own totemic

experiences. Specifically, the section entitled “Squirrels” will be discussed as an example of one of Vizenor’s recurring “literary totems” which indicate that such metaphorical connections to nature are available to the “Native self,” even in urban environments.

“Squirrels” (1992) by Gerald Vizenor

In *Dead Voices*, it is specifically the urban environment which provides not only the context but the source of the totemic experience for the contemporary Native subject as “self.” Remarking on the effect that the historical processes of land development and urbanization have had on Native peoples, Vizenor draws a parallel with animals stating that Natives and animals have been driven “from the treelines” (11) but have found “new sanctuaries in the wild cities” (59). Vizenor insists that the wild animals of the city are proof of nature’s “survivance” in the face of human encroachment, as urban Native subjectivities are proof of tribal survivance in the face of colonialism and hegemonic discourses. However, the primary challenge to the “Native self” in the cities, faced by the unnamed narrator of *Dead Voices*, is to maintain the “totemic observance of nature” and the expressions of the totemic imagination which substantiate the Native self.

Vizenor’s narrator, a California University lecturer in tribal philosophies, meets a tribal woman, Bagese, from the Leech Lake Reservation, Minnesota. Bagese lives the life of a bag lady but has the manners of a tribal shaman. She is concerned about the “wordie” narrator whose “mouth moves with dead voices. How can he be so young and so dead? How could he kill all the animals and birds in his heart? How can he go on? He has no stories to remember” (31). Bagese tells the narrator seven stories based on a tribal card game in which she envisions herself transformed into the animal depicted on the card she chooses each day: a bear, flea, squirrel, praying mantis, crow, beaver, and trickster. These stories, each a chapter in the book, range from fable-like satire of the clash of cultures (“Fleas,” and “Praying Mantis”), to critique of Euro-American intellectual and environmental pollution (“Beavers” and “Trickster”), to the depiction of those in need of urban totemic stories (“Crows” and “Squirrels”).

“Squirrels”: Vizenor’s storied self

The story “Squirrels,” which has been reworked in various writings, relates an influential incident in Vizenor’s life: his nonchalant shooting of a red squirrel in the forest and its slow death. Each of Vizenor’s retellings is a re-exploration of the event and the thoughts and emotions of Vizenor’s personae, his narrative “self:” from its initial brief account in the autobiographical essay “I Know What You Mean, Erdupps MacChurbbs: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors” (1976), to Vizenor’s postmodern scrutiny of the first version’s perceived sentimentality in “Crows Written on the Poplars: Autocritical Autobiographies”(1987), to its reworking and mythical undercurrent in *Interior Landscapes: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors* (1990). In the most recent version of the story in *Dead Voices* (1992), the narrator comes to understand the squirrel’s *totemic* significance in relation to his sense of “the Native self.” Vizenor’s retellings have been seen by Kim Blaeser as acts of “writing in the oral tradition” (Blaeser, *Gerald*), reflecting Momaday’s understanding of autobiography as the “forming and reforming of the self” through stories: “The ways in which our own experiences becomes stories, images and so are added to all the other stories and images the mind stores up for the use of the imagination in its continuing creation of the self” (qtd. in Brumble 5).

In each reworked version of the squirrel story, Vizenor increasingly underscores the need to read the incident as an aspect of the “storied self” and not as autobiographical “fact.”

Through reference to postmodern theories of autobiography, Vizenor attempts to undermine the reader's propensity to approach "Squirrels" as a mimetic representation of a past autobiographical event, and to redirect the reader's attention to the creative act of narration. In his reworking of "Squirrels" in "Crows," Vizenor quotes Paul John Eakins' *Fictions in Autobiography*.

...what we are ready to believe- and what most autobiographers encourage us to expect- is that the play we witness is a historical one, a largely faithful and unmediated reconstruction of events that took place long ago, whereas in reality the play is that of the autobiographical act itself, in which the materials of the past are shaped by memory and imagination to serve the needs of present consciousness. (qtd. in "Crows" 102)

According to Vizenor, this awareness of the instability of the traditional autobiographical "subject" and the postmodern indication of the process of conscious autobiographical "construction" is valuable to Native writers in that they should keep in mind the variety of Native subject positions they must navigate when attempting to express "the Native self."

The *indian* self is not the same as the native self of personal visions; and the previous or historical self is not the same self created in autobiographies. [...] My self is an interpretation of creation and history. (*Fugitive*, 20)

Thus Vizenor sets "Squirrels" firmly in the context of his view of the trace of "Native presence," the imaginative aesthetic creation in narrative of a "sense of self." Kimberly Blaeser sees Vizenor's autobiographical writings, which integrate these postmodern autobiographical theories of narration with the genre of visionary and totemic stories of tribal oral tradition, as "mythic self-authoring" in which "the mythic, the metaphorical, the personal, the historical, the fictional always inform one another" (*Gerald* 103, 105-106).

In "Squirrels," the shooting of the squirrel is narrated first from the perspective of the trees in the forest, who describe the actions of a hunter from the city strongly associated with the "wordie" tribal professor. The city hunter is contrasted with a traditional hunter through their respective engagement with animal "stories." The traditional hunter's actions can be seen to be performed within a context of totemic lore which fuses experiential knowledge of animal behavior, an understanding of the personal skills and insights gained from vision quests and family clans, and myths and stories of animal characteristics and "power." The narrator remarks that the traditional tribal hunter's "survival is determined by the stories he remembers at the treeline" (63). "Wordie" hunters, on the other hand, act on "pretense," i.e. simulation, pretending to be traditional hunters in their pretense of hunger and survival and in the absence of a cultural totemic context for their actions. These "wordie" hunters are described in the narration as having "a weapon not a vision" (64). The "wordie" professor, like the "wordie" hunter, is admonished by Bagese for his lack of vision. While the "wordie" professor can write and talk about Native culture as a "hunter" of tribal "presence" and the tribal "real" at the university, Bagese advises him "not to pretend, but to see and hear the real stories behind the words, the voices of the animals in me not the definitions of the words alone" (7). In effect she is admonishing him to hunt for his Native "self" in personal totemic stories.

When the wordie hunter finally shoots a red squirrel in the forest, the text reads "That one shot was a sound of the great deception of his survival. He would eat once more, and at the same time remain separated from the natural world he tried so hard to remember in his stories" (64). The death of this forest squirrel triggers in the hunter the realization that his Native "self" is hollow and that he is "dead in his own stories" (67) both in the city and in the forest. Not yet completely aware of how to understand his feelings and suffering primarily from personal guilt and self-pity, he sings a "death song" for the squirrel but feels no

emotional relief. It is only when the hunter returns to the city that he succeeds in discovering the totemic significance of the event in the forest.

Witnessing a car hit a squirrel in the city, the hunter takes the dying animal to the curb of the road and once again sings it a death song. However, unlike in the forest, he now feels a sense of emotional resolution in that his song is not a selfish act to absolve a sense of guilt, but is an act of honoring the “survivance” energy of animals in the city. This survivance energy is voiced through Bagese’s visionary identification with the squirrels in the city: “We are squirrels on the paw over the cracked concrete in the church parking lot. Seeds gather there [...] Our tails brush the engines under the cars and were blotched with grease” (61). The hunter realizes that the death of the squirrels is meaningful to him as a personal animal metaphor, a totemic story of the survivance of Native culture in all discursive or geographical environments, and which serves to counter the “dead stories” of romantic and nostalgic simulations of tribal survival struggles in a bygone natural world. The squirrel-as-story become his “technology of the self,” the hunter discovering that his true need of the squirrels is not as physical food but as sustenance as an urban totemic story for his urban “Native self.”

“Squirrels” is offered, as are all the stories in *Dead Voices*, as indications of the importance of the totemic imagination in the literary expression of the “Native self.” The story, in its multiple versions, can be seen to exemplify Vizenor’s weave of contemporary theory and Native oral literary practice in the service of regaining Native discursive author-ity over the Native subject. Not only can the story be seen to illustrate how the oral tradition has always and continues to provide Native people with the means of self substantiation *a la* the Foucauldian “technology of the self,” but the story also exemplifies Vizenor’s discussion of Derrida’s concept of *différance* in relation to the Native self, not only as a deconstructive tool to reveal Euro-American discursive meaning-making processes, but also as a description of the construction and substantiation in relation to the oral tradition of the “Native self” as an aesthetic presence in stories. Each re-telling and re-expression of the death of a red squirrel has become a new interpretation of Native experience “serving the needs of present consciousness” (Blaeser, *Gerald* 102) and forming a trace of a contemporary “tribal presence” amidst the “ruins of representation” in new narratives of the urban tribal oral tradition.

Further interactions of contemporary tradition and postmodern theory

Despite the a strong current of what Louis Owens calls the “traditional” in Vizenor’s work (*Other* 230), Vizenor’s virtuosic and innovative use and production of “theory” has made him the target of criticism focused primarily on his writing style, which has been called “opaque” and “pretentiously jargon-driven.” Discomfort with his engagement with contemporary theory is characterized by wariness as to the degree to which Vizenor has appropriated contemporary discourse or the degree to which he has allowed himself (and tribal culture) to be appropriated by it (Churchill, “Contours” 250; Pulitano, *Toward* 160).

Nevertheless, Vizenor’s work has enabled other Native writers, who also see in poststructuralism and postmodernism a set of meaningful and useful intellectual propositions, to place and approach these discourses within a growing vision of Native intellectualism. It can be argued that Vizenor’s persistent engagement with postmodern theory has made it part of the Native American intellectual and creative domain, and younger Native writers such as Louis Owens (Creek/Cherokee) and Stephen Graham Jones (Sioux) have continued to adapt and apply postmodern literary techniques in the ongoing struggle to maintain discursive author-ity over the Native subject as a literary expression and reflection of contemporary Native experience and complex cultural contexts.

Louis Owens's novel *Dark River* (1999) engages what George E. Tinker (Osage/Cherokee) has called the "newest threat" to Native American cultural author-ity which "builds on the impoverishment that has been established by five centuries of invasion and conquest, yet [...] involves a seeming affirmation of Indian cultures": New Age-ism (228). Applying a postmodern use of and parodic approach to "magical realism" in *Dark River*, Owens juxtaposes non-ironic "magically real" descriptions of spiritual forces with the hopes of New Age vision-seekers to acquire a "Native-style" animal-spirit helper. These two elements in the novel become ironically intertwined as a young Native entrepreneur, selling visions to New Age customers, dies in a wolf-suit during the vision quest of a European woman and becomes her animal-spirit helper. The complex irony with which Owens develops this situation both insists on the integrity of Native visionary experiences and, at the same time, parodies the commodification of Native spirituality, simultaneously borrowing from Alejo Carpentier's understanding of magical realism while holding this literary technique with its arguably European roots and its "exotic" appeal at arm's length (Durix 103-107; Bowers 2, 90, 102, 126). Owens mirrors the New Age commercial element in his plot with the ambitions of a Jewish anthropologist to help a Native community return to their "authentic" selves and way of life by turning the reservation town into a pre-colonial tribal village open to paying visitors. Using these two complementary ironic situations, Owens indicates that the Native subject as an expression of the complexity of contemporary life and changing traditions is in constant danger of being co-opted by economies of supply and demand in which the Native subject becomes (once again) a bankable primitivist product of "tradition" and "authenticity."

Stephen Graham Jones's first novel *The Fast Red Road* (2000), modeled on Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), is a (re)exploration of the problem of Native agency and self-authorship in a world discursively dominated by Euro-American teleotic narratives of history and modernity. Jones's main character, Pidgin, comes in contact with a secret Native postal network run by a group who declare that Pidgin is the fulfillment of their prophecy of Native American cultural renewal, similar to the promise of the late 19th century Ghost Dance movement of the Plains. Pidgin himself, however, is struggling with the sense that he is the product of the teleotic inevitability of the history of colonialism, represented by his mixedblood lineage, his white father and Native mother. Pidgin imagines that he represents the process of colonialism repeating itself endlessly in each mixedblood generation like a bad pornographic film in which John Smith will always have his way with Pocahontas. Whereas Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49* can eventually order her epistemological world through "paranoia," a self-fashioned meta-narrative in which she can centrally position herself as "subject," in *The Fast Red Road*, Pidgin is suspended in an ontological insecurity as he struggles with the "impossible subject" position of his generation as both the embodiment of the promise of Native cultural regeneration on the one hand and as the representative of the continuing history of colonization and ongoing erasure of Native culture on the other. Jones's novel makes clear, as does Owens's, that after forty years of post-modernity and postmodernism, the "Native" as postmodern "subject" is still prone to hover on the brink of an "impossible subject position," a no-man's land of discursive competition in which representations of the Native subject are predicated on "power," i.e. hegemonic "author-ity."

Indeed, postmodernist critique has been credited with effectuating the transparency of this interlinking of "representation" and "power." As Hans Bertens concludes,

postmodernism recognizes that in the absence of representation it matters more than ever who has authored, or who controls, any given representation. [...]The emphasis, in other words, is on power. Representations do not only reflect power and power relations; they are vehicles of power. ("The Debate"6)

However, it is at this conceptual point in relation to "power" that the momentum of postmodern critique reaches a "zero degree" of analysis. Due to its key theoretical premises of

radical provisionality, the constructedness of all textuality, and the critic's complicity in the hegemonic targets of critique, postmodern critique in relation to "power" becomes the child in Hans Christian Anderson's "The Emperor's New Clothes" who reveals but does not influence the Emperor's now naked display of power. In relation to the representation of Natives and other (former) subjects of Emperors, the need to theorize a response to the now transparent inter-relatedness of discursive and representational control and socio-political power, which could not adequately be addressed by postmodern discourse, would prove to be the central theoretical concern of postcolonial discourse.

Part Two

Postcolonial allegory: the Native subject-as-tribal-nation and resistance

Postcolonialism is often seen to have achieved recognition as an identifiable theoretical field in 1978 with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and its critical techniques are often discussed as proceeding from postmodernism's cultural insights and critical strategies. However, while agreeing that postcolonialism's "discursive and theoretical space is not named" until the late 1970s and 1980s (Rice and Waugh, "Postmodernism" 291), postcolonial theorists locate the period of the generation of their corpus and critical perspectives as predating the West's postmodern "crisis" by centuries, commencing in the era of colonization, and insist that their critical insights have been *facilitated* by poststructural theory "although in no sense simply *provided* by it" (Barker, Hulme and Iverson, "Introduction" 5).

Considering that postcolonial theorists base their inquiry on the historical fact of European colonialism and that they address the political ramifications of representation in texts fundamentally shaped by the "imperial process," postcolonialism's suitability as a discourse which could illuminate and express the concerns and conditions of Native Americans would seem obvious. However, Kathryn Shanley states that "it is difficult for a Native critic to lay hold of a word such as *postcolonialism*" (26). Graham Huggan explains that for Natives

Postcolonial critical theory- much of it inspired by the various French post-structuralisms- proves, at best, to be a double-edged sword; for while on the one hand it clearly allied itself to the material practice of an anticolonial struggle, on the other it presents itself as a carefully nuanced understanding of the constraints of human agency. And nowhere is this dilemma clearer than in approaches toward "the Native," who risks being seen as a differential signifier- rather than as a socially constructed subject with his/her own embattled history. (qtd. in Shanley 47)

The problematic conceptualization of subaltern agency within the theorized paradigm of (post)colonial power structures is, as Huggan notes, primarily due to the poststructural techniques shared by postmodern and postcolonial discourses.

The relationship between postmodernism and postcolonialism has been characterized as an initial "shock of recognition" of shared deconstructive techniques and "grand narrative" discursive targets, targets which had also been scrutinized in the critical field often allied with or subsumed within the postcolonial critique, colonial discourse analysis of the 1980s (Ashcroft *et al*, *Empire* 162). Colonial discourse analysis is a critical field which focuses primarily on the "demystification of the colonial archive" in order to scrutinize the legacy of imperial hegemonic nexuses of knowledge and power and metropolitan-authored hegemonic discourses and knowledge systems (Parry, "Directions" 66). From this perspective, Said's work has been seen not as initiating postcolonial analysis but as having inaugurated "a new area of academic inquiry: colonial discourse" from which postcolonial paradigms and interpretations could develop (Williams and Chrisman, "Colonial" 5). However, Said's use of

Foucauldian theory and the subsequent utilization of poststructural techniques by the postcolonial theorists has threatened not only to methodologically characterize and monopolize the field of postcolonial enquiry, but to cause the re-constitutive and reconstructive dimension of postcolonial literary discourse to be nullified by a poststructural catch-22 in which resistant agency is made void due to its complicity in the hegemonic structures it seeks to oppose (Ashcroft, “Excess” 34; Barker, Hulme and Iverson, “Introduction” 12; Bertens, “The Debate” 3; Slemon, “Modernism’s” 5; Needham, 10-11).

Postcolonial theorists have taken great pains to underscore that despite sharing critical analytical techniques, postcolonial and postmodern “political valenc[ies] are very different” (Tiffin, “Introduction” x). Stephen Slemon has insisted that “Post-colonialism is not simply a kind of “postmodernism with politics” but can be described as an “*interested* critical practice” [original emphasis] which examines texts created within conditions of postcoloniality and which theoretically and analytically allows for the production of positive subject-positions, anti-colonial subversive strategies, and anti-imperial “oppositional truth-claims” (“Unsettling” 117; “Modernism’s” 5). This commitment to theorizing oppositionality, frequently discussed in terms of resistance, can be seen to have provided the critical framework for attributing a political valency, if not agency, to those subaltern subject-ivities to which the imperial discourse had attributed invisibility and ineffectuality. In the novels to be discussed in the next section, the Native subject will be explored in relation to various conditions of postcoloniality and understood to be constituted both by a resistant agency and by what has been called “one of the strongest foci” in postcolonial literature and critical studies “for resistance to imperial control in colonial societies,” the concept of “the nation” (Ashcroft, et al (ed), *The Post-colonial* 151).

Postcolonialism and “the nation”

As Aijaz Ahmad reminds his readers, postcolonialism was initially an area of political science, “the first major debate on the idea of the postcolonial” taking place “not in cultural studies but in political theory where the object of inquiry was ‘the postcolonial state’ [and] identifiable structural shifts in state and society” (qtd. in Parry, “Directions” 73). This political concept of ex-colonial statehood had a socio-cultural correlate in the writings of Third World intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, and Ngugi wa Thiongó: the concept of the “nation.” This concept had become a potent rhetorical focus both for colonized societies envisioning liberation as well as for ex-colonial societies working to establish societal cohesion and solidarity. Furthermore, P. Mallikarjuna Rao has indicated that the concept of the “nation” is a foundational component in the formation of subaltern subject positions, stating that the theorization of the subject in relation to the concept of *national* anti-colonial resistance has “become fundamental to the whole enterprise of postcolonial studies” (v).

In relation to Native America, Arnold Krupat has remarked that contemporary Native American literature “performs ideological work that parallels that of postcolonial fiction elsewhere” in its “invocations of the nation in opposition to oppression” (*The Turn* 32; *Red* 7). In the novels to be discussed, the Native postcolonial subject will be seen to reflect what Stephen Slemon has termed the “overlapping” fields of inquiry in postcolonial discourse: the “subject,” the “nation,” and “resistance” (“Unsettling” 105). Drawing on Frederick Jameson’s proposal that national “allegory” is a primary mode of postcolonial literature, the Native subject will be shown to allegorically represent the postcolonial conditions of a socio-political “collective,” i.e., the tribal nation. In addition, the Native subject-cum-nation’s resistant agency will be shown not only to function oppositionally as anti-colonial pro-activity, but

through the concept of “praxis” will be seen to concurrently be the substantive enactment of “tribal nationhood,” a performance of cultural heritage and continuity.

The concept of the “nation”

While discussions concerning conceptualisations of the “nation” are usually interlinked with analyses of the rise of the nation-state and nationalism in late eighteenth-century Europe (Guibernau 51, 57), Monsterrat Guibernau insists that the roots of the nature and function of “nationhood” should be retrospectively located in pre-state communal structures.

The theories that defend the modernity of the nation and nationalism ignore the historical roots of ethnic communities which transformed themselves into nations and later may or may not have turned into modern nation-states. In order to understand nationalism and the nation, it is worth contrasting them with pre-existing forms of group identity and loyalties. (49)

Characterized by Ernest Renan in 1882 as “a large-scale solidarity”(19), the contemporary understanding of “nation” has been outlined by Guibernau as a “human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself” (47). Will Kymlicka adds a sociological dimension by remarking that the concept of “nation” is “closely related to the idea of a “people” or a “culture”- indeed, these concepts are often defined in terms of each other” (11). Benedict Anderson has emphasized the significance of the collective and consensual consciousness of a territorially disperse group of individuals who “imagine” that they are one “political community [...] imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”(5-6). In his discussion of subalternity in British India, Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and its Fragments* (1993) explores the concept of “nation” not as a political community but as a cultural community, a “cultural construct which enables the colonized to posit their difference and autonomy” within hegemonic colonial state structures (Loomba 190). That the colonized adopted the European concept and rhetoric of “nationhood” to consolidate and focus their anti-colonial resistance efforts and discourses of cultural recuperation and revival has been discussed not as culturally derivative but as culturally innovative, Anthony Appiah remarking that

As Ben Anderson has argued - in his elegant *Imagined Communities* - though the national idea was introduced to much of the world by way of contact with European imperialism, the appeal of the idea to the “natives” soon outran the control and the interests of the metropole. African and Asian intellectuals do not believe in national self-determination simply because it was forced upon them, because it was imposed as a tool of their continued neocolonial domination; rather, the idea of the nation provided [...] a way to articulate a resistance to both the material domination of the world empires and to the more nebulous threat to precolonial modes of thought represented by the Western project of cultural ascendancy.(946)

These remarks are equally applicable to Native American discourses concerning the socio-political significance and implications of the acknowledgement of tribes as “nations.” As the history of the colonization of Native Americans clearly situates Native contemporary socio-political concerns within the purview of postcolonial discourse and critical analysis, likewise the historical development of the distinctive political arrangement between the U.S. federal governments and tribal governments, with its ongoing *realpolitik* ramifications and debated legal implications (Strickland, “The Eagle’s” 248), situates the concept of the tribes as “nation” within the postcolonial discussion of political strategies and literary tropes of the “resistance” to colonialism and of the construction of socio-political and cultural solidarity.

The history of the application of the term “nation” to Native communities

Both the rhetoric of nationhood and the burgeoning constructs of nation-statehood were imported to North America with lasting and complex legal effects by the European governments settling on the North-American East Coast in the 1600s who engaged in the practice of treating with Native tribes. Eighteenth century treaties primarily functioned as a means for settlers to secure a foothold on the continent by creating trade and military alliances with “friendly” tribes against both “hostile” tribes and potentially competing European colonial nations. In the 19th century, treaties between Native nations and the new U.S. were meant to facilitate U.S. expansion west and the “legal” acquisition of Native territories. During what has been seen as the treaty-making period, which officially ended in 1871, the process of treating acquired a significance beyond its primary contractual function and became the basis for defining the relationship between tribes and the U.S. as “political” due to the government-to-government level of interaction and “legal” in the implied mutual obligation to adhere to the precepts of European legality (Fogelson 51-52; Strickland, “The Eagle’s” 257; Deloria Jr. and Lytle, *American*, 3-4).

While it is generally agreed that the treaties themselves primarily benefited the U.S. to the detriment of tribal communities, the validity of the treaty structure has been defended and insisted upon by tribal polities up to the present because, as a negotiated agreement, the treaty structure stipulates the rights and responsibilities of *both* treating parties (Niezen 55) and implies the mutual recognition (following European international accepted codes) of the status of both treating parties as “nations”- i.e. possessing a sufficient degree of political sovereignty and self-determination (Deloria Jr. and Lytle, *The Nations* 7). These implicit prerequisites for the treating process were underscored during the 1830s by Chief Justice John Marshall, the author of the holdings which continue to be the complex basis for contemporary issues of federal, state, and tribal jurisdiction.

During the 1830s Cherokee Nation Cases, in which the state of Georgia’s interests conflicted with the interests of the Cherokee community, John Marshall’s attempt to navigate state and federal jurisdiction with regards to the treaty rights of tribes as “nations” led to his seminal conceptualization and juridical formulation of these relationships. He prefaced his discussion by validating and legitimizing the application of European terms and legal procedures to tribal polities.

“The words ‘treaty’ and ‘nation’ are words of our own language, selected in our diplomatic and legislative proceedings, by ourselves, having each a definite and well understood meaning. We have applied them to Indians, as we have applied them to the other nations of the earth. They are applied to all in the same sense.” (qtd in Cheyfitz, 408)

However, in his ruling of *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. (5 Pet.) 1, 20 (1831), Marshall qualified the status of tribal nations as “domestic dependent nations” whose relationship to the federal government was that of a “ward to his guardian.” While maintaining the concept of the “sovereign” quality of tribal polities (e.g. self-government), this ruling limited the “independent” aspect of tribal nationhood. Despite the fact that this ruling denied national “equality” by placing tribal nations firmly under federal jurisdiction, this ruling also beneficially formalized the federal government’s perpetual “fiduciary duty” to support tribal communities. Marshall’s ruling in a second Cherokee Nation case made more allowance for the element of tribal political autonomy inherent in the concept of “nation,” asserting in *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. (6 Pet.) 515, 559 (1832) the primacy of federal over state authority in Indian matters.

The laws and treaties of the United States, Marshall declared, “contemplate the Indian territory as completely separated from that of the states.” All intercourse with the Indians was to be carried on exclusively by the government of the Union. (qtd. in Deloria, Jr. and Lytle, *American* 32)

In essence, John Marshall’s holdings acknowledged a degree of tribal national sovereignty and autonomy in relation to the jurisdiction of states while limiting these elements in relation to the jurisdiction of the federal government. Much of the subsequent legal struggle between tribes and the federal government involved the interpretation of these rulings which, in their dualistic and even contradictory “definitions” of tribal nationhood, both allow and restrict tribal national sovereignty (Deloria Jr. and Lytle, *The Nations*, 17; Deloria Jr. and Lytle *American* 29-31).

After Marshall: The changing shape of federal policy and tribal national “sovereignty”

While Marshall created a legal space for tribes as nations within the U.S.’s federal framework, the contradictory ideas which substantiate this legal space (that tribes are both sovereign and dependent nations) have led to a history of selective interpretation of the rhetoric of Marshall’s formulations by both federal policy makers and the tribes, as reflected in the various federal acts, policies, and Native collective political struggles which have given shape to tribal-federal affairs since then (Johnson 7; Deloria Jr. and Lytle *American* 33). The General Allotment Act of 1887 (Dawes Severalty Act) drew on the rhetoric of “wardship” and its accompanying premise of Indian incompetency, providing the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs with an authoritarian mandate to regulate tribal land and funds. In 1934, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler-Howard Act) rescinded the Allotment Act, replacing the rhetoric which supported political “guardian to ward” structures with the rhetoric of “self-government” as Native polities were encouraged to “reorganize” their tribes as viable polities in order to achieve a degree of political autonomy within the greater U.S. political system. During the 1950s, however, the federal government attempted to dissolve the legacy of Marshall’s holdings, the political and legal imperatives which bind together the federal government and tribal nations, by intensifying a rhetoric of Native “independence” from government “control” and encouraging as yet politically naïve tribes to voluntarily and legally “terminate” their official tribal status and thus unwittingly relinquishing treaty rights (hunting, land, water, government funds and other support), becoming undifferentiated U.S. citizens. During the 1960s and 1970s, this Termination Policy was challenged by the first generation of university educated tribal lawyers and political activists who were able to explain the complexity and ramifications of federal Indian policy to their communities. Shifting the focus of the 1960s “civil rights” issues to “treaty rights” issues for tribal people, these activists and lawyers explored the potential legal and political viability of extant treaties and their implied attributes of nationhood: “sovereignty” and “self-determination.” The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 effectively ended the policy of termination and signaled a new era of federal support, while amendments to this act during the 1980s and 1990s have increased tribal government autonomy in the self-management of federal funds allocated to their communities.

Despite the European “moorings” of “tribal sovereignty” and “self-determination,” Scott Lyons has suggested that these concepts have come to represent the diversity of struggles by Native peoples for the autonomy and integrity of their communities on all levels, from material to cultural to legal, from first contact to the present (449-450). Craig Womack points out that sovereignty as an “ideal” of nationhood must not only be explored in the political arena but also in the imaginative realm of self-definition, i.e., literature.

Native literature, and Native literary criticism, written by Native authors, is part of sovereignty: Indian people exercising the right to present images of themselves and to discuss those images. Tribes recognizing their own extant literatures, writing new ones, and asserting the right to explicate them constitute a move toward nationhood. While this literary aspect of sovereignty is not the same thing as the political status of Native nations, the two are, nonetheless, interdependent. (*Red* 14)

Cook-Lynn, echoing Womack, claims that “the discourse on the function of the modern novel in the modern tribal life and nationhood” is the “most important literary discussion of our time.” (“Literary”49).

Postcolonial discourse and Native literary nationalism

While postcolonial literary critical discourse seems best suited to support Cook-Lynn’s position, postcolonial theory and the literary techniques have been met with wariness within the Native literary community, Louis Owens charting for Native writers both the potential dangers and benefits of postcolonialism. Owens warns that postcolonialism, as the new “metropolitan” academic tradition, has a propensity to assimilate Native writings into its critical models, threatening to hinder consideration of Native works within the appropriate “local,” i.e. tribal nation, cultural context (*Other* 16). On the other hand, Owen recognizes that the literary strategies and paradigmatic critical theories associated with postcolonialism are “viable tools” with which to explore the colonial/anti-colonial dynamics which characterize the postcolonial condition of their communities as nations (*Pulitano, Toward* 129).

The viability of such tools for Native writers lies in their subversive potential which is, according to Helen Tiffin, a dominant “characteristic of post-colonial discourse in general.” Her identification of this subversive quality enables Tiffin to draw the conclusion that “Post-colonial literatures/cultures are thus constituted in counter-discursive rather than homologous practices, and they offer ‘fields’ of counter-discursive strategies to the dominant discourse” (“Post-colonial” 17-18). However, the nature and effect of counter-discursive strategies have been criticized with respect to the very parameters Helen Tiffin set for them, for while Tiffin accords primary significance to the subversive and dynamic nature of postcolonial cultural production, she stops short of paradigmatic and potentially political change.

The operation of post-colonial counter-discourse [...] does not seek to subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place, but to, in Wilson Harris’s formulation, evolve textual strategies which continually “consume” their “own biases” at the same time as they expose and erode those of the dominant discourse. (“Post-colonial” 17-18)

This self-deconstructive theoretical mode in relation to the very real political concerns of tribal polities affected by the legacy of colonialism has led Native writers such as Cook-Lynn to remark

For American Indians, then, and for the indigenes everywhere in the world, postcolonial studies has little to do [...] with the actual deconstruction of oppressive colonial systems. It is not like the end of slavery in 1865, for example, when owning other human beings for economic reasons became illegal and a new status for African Americans as free citizens could become the focus of the discourse. Postcolonial thought in indigenous history, as a result of the prevailing definition, has emerged as a subversion rather than a revolution. This fact has been a huge disappointment to those scholars whose interest has been in Native-nation status and independence. (“Who stole”13-14)

Despite Tiffin’s formulation and Cook-Lynn’s criticism of the effect of subversive counter-discourse, the narrative tactic of ironic inversion, identified as a “favored strategy in the arsenal of this form of resistance” (Needham 10) has been used by various Native writers to present a pointed and unambiguous critique of the dominant discourse of colonial

expansion and imperial epistemologies of conquest. Carter Revard's (Osage) "Report to the Nation: Claiming Europe" (1983) and Gerald Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus* (1991) are exemplary of the "reverse" application of the "Doctrine of Discovery" which served to legitimize the possession of lands discovered by European explorers. In Revard's short story, a member of the contemporary Osage nation travels to Europe and claims all the lands he sees for his tribe, describing his encounter with the Euro-Natives in terms similar to 17th century explorers.

The Europeans kill each other pretty casually, as if by natural instinct, not caring whether they blow up women, kids or horses [...] If our elders decide it's worth the bother and expense, possibly we could even teach the poor souls our Osage language, although if our faith and goodness can't be pounded into them we may just have to kill them all. I hope, though, they will learn - although I must confess, from what was learnable of their history and current attitudes, they do not seem capable of being civilized. (167, 169)

In Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus*, his band of mixed-blood characters insist that they are the descendents of Columbus and his Native lover. As the rightful "heirs" to the continent, these Natives replay the historic landing of Columbus at the "opposite" most northwesterly point of the U.S., at the border with Canada, Point Roberts (119). Placing a giant "Trickster of Liberty" statue in the harbor, the Native protagonist ironically appropriates Columbus's account of his "possession" of the continent.

Point Assinika was declared a sovereign nation on October 12, 1992, by the Heirs of Christopher Columbus. "At dawn we saw pale naked people, and we went ashore in the ship's boat [...] The Heirs of Columbus bear faith and witness that we have taken possession of this point in the name of our genes and the wild tricksters of liberties, and we made all the necessary declarations and had these testimonies recorded by a blond anthropologist. (119)

Such instances of the inverse use of the "master's discursive tools" are meant to disarticulate and disconcert the coherence of imperial master narratives and the ongoing socio-political consequences of their self-legitimizing (il)logic. Native authors who employ such postcolonial narrative strategies can be seen to reflect the conviction that the anti-colonial critical *effect* of counter-discursive narratives is not undermined or compromised by the overt acknowledgement of "mutual imbrications" (Needham 10).

Another mode of Native-authored subversive postcolonial critique has been explored by Craig Womack in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (1999). In this study, Womack finds models of tribal national "postcolonial critique" within the performative tradition of oral storytelling, stating that "the oral tradition has always been a deeply politicized forum for nationalistic literary expression" (51-51). In his discussion of Creek oral traditions, he investigates how these narratives contain an inherently political "nationalism."

...oral traditions- legends and myths if you will- performed in their cultural contexts have always been nationalistic and are told for the purpose of cultivating a political consciousness.(57)

As an example, Womack discusses a contemporary telling of the Creek origin story by Phillip Deere, a full-blood traditionalist, which was transcribed and published in the early 1980s. Womack remarks that this transcription shows that "Deere provides a political gloss to the story of Creek migration [...] relating it to contemporary political events in Indian country" (55). Womack proposes that this dimension of tribal oral narration, connecting traditional stories to current tribal national political concerns, has always existed within the tribal post-contact contexts but has been consciously omitted in ethnographic collections "because of a perception that such matters were outside the purview of oral tradition" (57).

When one considers the vast body of motifs dealing with tricks- encounters with opponents, disguises, transformations; little guys facing off with more powerful enemies and winning through ingenuity; [...] how can we overlook the fact that these stories may also function as post-colonial critique, in addition to explanation of the spiritual and material origins of culture? For example, when we consider the story of Turtle's shell and his concomitant recovery through singing a medicine song [...], might this story illustrate not only the power of chant but a critique of colonialism and a comment on Native resurgence and recovery?(61)

Womack suggests that to interpret such traditional narratives "to their fullest potential" the scope of analysis must include the contemporary "body of symbols" (61) available to the teller/performer and subsequently must accord the narratives the function of social commentary and national political allegory.

While Womack's analysis has revealed the potential of oral narrative and narrative traditions to function *as* postcolonial critique and tribal-national political allegory, Cook-Lynn has insisted that the primary function *of* contemporary Native literature must be to maintain and defend a tribal national "mythos," community solidarity, and distinct political structures ("Literary" 46). Having criticized Native American Studies departments for their academic institutionalization and for failing to "link scholarship to social action on behalf of Native communities" (qtd. in Cheyfitz, "The (Post)Colonial" 418), she insists that contemporary Native writers should incorporate "the body of nationalistic myths, legends, metaphors," into their writings as "the basis of the critical discourse that functions in the name of the people; the presence of the Indian nation as a cultural force [as] a matter of principle" (qtd. in Krupat, *Red* 9). In the development of her views on the literary expression of the Native nation, which can be seen as approaching tribal-nationalist allegory, Cook-Lynn has recognized an exemplary form of this approach in "Third-World" nationalism and literature.

The Third-World nationalistic literary model: the Native postcolonial subject as tribal national allegory

Despite her adamant insistence that Native American literature should be much more than just a reaction to colonization, Cook-Lynn calls upon Native writers and critics to look to the clearly nationalistic literary structures which have arisen out of the mid-20th century breakdown of colonial regimes. The anti- and de-colonizing energies and literary models of Third-World literatures represent for Cook-Lynn an important critical perspective from which Native literature must be considered and from which Native writers can draw inspiration.

... nationalistic or Third World models in fiction and criticism should be of legitimate concern to scholars and should become part of the discourse in literary theory as it is applied to the works of Native American writers.[...] In addition to authorial intent, themes of invasion and oppression so familiar to colonized peoples throughout the world that are taken up by American Indian writers serve as proof for the argument that major concerns of Third World theorists must be crucial analytical components of anything that might be said about the current literary trends in American Indian voice. (*Why* 82)

The "nationalistic or Third World model" which will be a central "analytical component" in the discussion below of Cook-Lynn's *From the River's Edge* (1991) and Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman* (1997) has been suggested and developed in Fredric Jameson's article "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." While controversial because of its potential for being read as a neo-colonial approach to Third World literatures, Jameson's article is cogent in its appraisal of a literary technique which he deems particularly effective in the narrative recuperation, exploration, and development of Third World "nationhood": allegory.

All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel. (69).

In his well-known response to Jameson's now (in)famous article, Aijaz Ahmad challenges Jameson's restrictive categorical generalization "*all... necessarily*" as well as the orientaling process and hegemonic ideologies underlying the "Three Worlds" categorization. Ahmad indicates that while the First and Second Worlds are defined by their "active" economies and social structures (capitalism and socialism, respectively), the "third world" is defined purely in terms of the imperialist's passive "Other," as the object and site of colonial and imperialist activity. Despite this criticism, as Neil Lazarus points out, "Third-Worldness" was conceptualized "at a specific moment in the history of anti-imperialist struggle in the twentieth century."

In a world of colonies and nation-states, such aspirations [for autonomy and self-determination] can only be predicated in and through nationalism [...]. In these terms, it seems plausible to propose that literature which rises to the challenge of "third-worldness" will of necessity allegorize the nation. And the same would then be true of literature which has "third-worldness" thrust upon it, as a condition of its existence. (57, 58)

While maintaining their wariness of the conceptual traps indicated by Ahmad, other critics such as Louis Parkinson Zamora have recognized that allegory, as Jameson indicates, has become a "frequent device of postcolonial writers" (509-510; see also Slemon, "Monuments"; Slemon, "Post-Colonial Allegory"). Cook-Lynn herself has indicated that for Native American novelists to write tribal "nation-centered" literature, they must consciously have a "first-person 'I,' speaking in a tribal/nation timbre" ("Literary" 50).

Native American literary national allegory: the tribal autobiographical voice

A literary genre which can be seen to offer a template for the Native "I" speaking in a tribal allegorical timbre is the Native collaborative autobiography. These "as-told-to" life stories have become influential as "both personal and cultural narrative," and can be seen to resonate with Fredric Jameson's proposal that Third World literature allegorizes the nation by equating the life of the individual with the life of "the collective" (Jameson 85). Carter Revard, in his discussion of Geronimo's autobiography notes that the Native "individual" is not portrayed according to Euro-American concepts of individuality but within the context of "the people."

Something strange appears when we look at some autobiographies of Indian peoples: the notion of identity, of how the individual is related to his world, his people, his self, is not quite what is found in an "Ameropean" autobiography. [...] Geronimo does not even get round to mentioning his own birth until his third chapter. [...] Only after [a] *Genesis*-like history of his world's creation, his people's creation and deliverance, of their land's creation, of why they are called Apaches, of what it means to be taken from the land created for the people, does Geronimo speak of himself, of this individual's birth into the world [...] Whatever the order of importance among such facts might be for an Ameropean autobiography, Geronimo ranged them from the cosmic through the geologic to tribal, subtribal, family, and then only, last and in full context, to the "individual" self that was Geronimo. And every name in his narrative, whenever he speaks it, has its symbolic meaning that resonates in this deeper context, only to be understood rightly in the light of that part of the people's history which he is telling at that time. ("History" 84-84)

H. David Brumble III has warned that because autobiographies such as Geronimo's and Black Elk's are *collaborative*, the "evidence of *two* personalities and two cultures," it remains problematic to draw conclusions about the "Indian habits of mind" in relation to their understanding of their individual lives and the "life" of the collective (Brumble 12, 54). Nevertheless, Revard's description of the general form of "Indian autobiography" as *literary*

genre has been seen to reflect a traditional function of oral narrative, which is, as Womack states, to “incorporate both ‘I’ and ‘we.’”

And the story, passed down from generation to generation, is communal property, the history of the people, so that the story explains the teller’s place in the scheme of things; it incorporates both “I” and “we.” Because of the performative dimension and the passed-down dimension of the stories in an oral community, all stories are autobiographical to varying degrees. Autobiography is not as foreign to tribal societies as has been assumed, though certainly written, published accounts of one person’s life story are different from the relationship to oral narration just described. Oral stories tell the history of individuals and their communities. As we saw earlier with the Creek’s [creation and] migration story, it explains both Creek history and [the storyteller’s] history, since he has a place in the community whose history he is recounting. The story continues to serve the nation well because it also explains the lives of contemporary Creeks who continue to live out the migration account. (*Red* 249).

A contemporary example of the “Indian autobiographical form” as Native literary national allegory is Irvin Morris’s (Navajo) *From the Glittering World* (1997). In this novel, subtitled “A Navajo Story” and classified as “fiction” on the colophon page, Morris distills the “life of the nation”- tribal myths, history, worldview, and contemporary tribal socio-political situations- into the “one life” of his unnamed narrator. Like Geronimo’s “autobiography,” the protagonist of Morris’s novel begins his life’s story with the creation myth of the Navajo. The narrator then relates key moments in Navajo history preceding the treaty of 1868 which determined the present Navajo nation’s reservation. Subsequently, the narrator situates himself in relation to the “sacred geography” of the Navajo nation bounded by mountain ranges and rivers, proclaiming that the land and the stories of his people “better than anything else [...] tell me who I am” (41). It is only after clearly establishing this tribal national context, expressing his individual self as both a product of and representative of the Navajo Nation, that he continues with what seems to be a more personal autobiographical account. However, the reader is not given a *Bildungsroman* portrayal of a Navajo individual, but a portrait of the Navajo nation. In the description of his youth, his brother’s boarding school experiences, the 1960s AIM movement, his struggle with drugs and unemployment, his jobs in various Navajo governmental functions, and his eventual university education and career as a writer, Navajo national culture is always fore-grounded as the source and inspiration for his life’s direction, as his momentary “failures” and “weaknesses” in relation to the pressure of Euro-American society reflect the challenges to the Navajo Nation.

As we have seen above, Native narratives since contact, from the oral tradition to contemporary fiction, are open to nationalist literary critical interpretation. As Womack argued, these narratives “serve the nation” by linking, through various narrative forms from myth to the autobiographical first person voice, the Native “I” to the tribal collective “we.” In the analysis of the novels to follow, the Native postcolonial “subject” will be seen to allegorically represent the tribal nation. Furthermore, as recognized by Simon Ortiz in his discussion of “the particularly nationalistic character” of the Native literary voice (“Towards a National” 9), integral to any discussion of the Native postcolonial subject is the consideration of its agential mode, a mode also recognized as a central concern of the broader postcolonial theorization of the “subject”: resistance.

The Native postcolonial subject’s agency: resistance as praxis

As suggested earlier, the theorization of “resistance” as the primary agential mode of the postcolonial subject has seemed to be twinned to the theory of “complicity” which proposes, as Anuradah Dingwaney Needham summarizes, that “no modes of resistance, whether they acknowledge it or not, are completely free of their implication in the domination they resist”(11). The inability of postcolonial theorists to theorize beyond this postulate has

provoked other theorists such as Benita Perry to criticize such arguments which assign an *a priori* paradigmatic authority to the colonial binary as the default configuration of all resistant activities (Parry, "Resistance Theory" 172). This configuration can be argued to be anchored in a dimension of "reactivity" implicit in the concept of "opposition" offered by Stephen Slemon and others as a "basic" characteristic of "agency under colonial power. Basically, the question of agency can be restated as a question of who or what acts oppositionally when ideology or discourse or psychic processes of some kind construct human subjects" ("The Scramble" 22). Ashcroft *et al*, attempting to broaden the conceptual scope of "resistance" in relation to "opposition," almost free themselves from the implicit binary, only to become entangled in the default reasoning of "complicity."

By the term "post-colonial" we do not imply an automatic, nor seamless and unchanging process of resistance but a series of linkages and articulations without which the process cannot be properly addressed. These linkages and articulations are not always directly oppositional; the material practices of post-colonial societies may involve a wide range of activities including conceptions and actions which are, or appear to be, complicit with the imperial enterprise [...pointing to] the problem of complicity in all oppositional discourse, since they point to the difficulties involved in escaping from dominant discursive practices which limit and define the possibility of opposition. ("General Introduction" 3)

While such seeming complicity has been most influentially theorized and explored by Homi Bhabha in his concept of the disruptive potency of mimicry, i.e., performed subaltern "complicity," as it intensifies the "ambivalence" inherent in the colonial discourse, Parry remains frustrated by the repeated degeneration of discussions concerning modes of resistance into the circular logic of opposition/complicity with its undercurrent of the de-legitimization of subaltern agency. Parry insists on a more rigorous commitment in postcolonial critique to a contemporary re-theorization of oppositionality beyond binary colonial paradigms and to the premise that "no system of coercion or hegemony is ever able wholly to determine the range of subject positions" and agential modes ("Resistance theory" 173).

Native writers will be seen to conceptualize "resistance" both in tandem with and beyond the binary implications of the concept of "oppositionality," a perspective signified by the deconstructive quip of one of Vizenor's trickster characters, "Opposites are never the opposite" (*Trickster of Liberty* xvi). The "oppositional mode" which will be seen as "not opposite" will be discussed as a specific form of cultural advocacy understood as "praxis." The concept of praxis which will be most pertinent to the discussion of the agency of the Native postcolonial "subject" as it represents the tribal nation in opposition to imperial hegemonies will be that of Paulo Freire's in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968). As summarized by Glenn T. Morris (Shawnee).

Praxis is the process by which theory and practice merge through a cycle of action and reflection that converts to further action in the development of critical consciousness, resulting in the implementation of liberatory strategy. (152)

Freire drew on Marx's ideas concerning praxis and applied them specifically to the psycho-social situation of the colonized, who needed to develop new thought patterns which would lead them to active and *meaningful* resistance to colonial oppression. In relation to the forms of resistance action which are integral to this concept of "praxis," Freire in *Pedagogy* stipulates that

...the action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection. In this sense, the praxis is the new *raison d'être* of the oppressed; [...] otherwise, action is pure activism. (52-53)

If “pure activism” is understood as the direct binary opposition of hegemony, Native “praxis” which has significance both as and beyond pure activism, reflecting a foundational *raison d’être* of Native American socio-cultural life, has been recognized as the very practice of Native cultural forms (rituals, etc.) in the face of violent censure (Tinker 225-226). As will be explored in the novels to be discussed, the performance of traditional rituals signifies both a resistance to colonial structures and imperialist epistemologies as well as the perpetuation of the tribal “nation.”

Native writers, commenting on the concept of “resistance,” imply in their formulations this interpellation of resistance and praxis. Patricia Monture Angus (Mohawk) has stated that “It comes as no surprise to me that Native American writing can be organized thematically around the idea of resistance because Native Americans live resistance”(26). Beth Brant (Mohawk), in her collection of essays *Writing as Witness* (1994), indicates how “resistance” in relation to the performance of Native cultural forms can be seen both as opposition to oppressive hegemonies and as the praxis which perpetuates the lifeways of their communities.

Our writing is, and always has been, and attempt to beat back colonization and the stereotyping of our Nations. But the writing is not a reaction to colonialism, it is an active and new way to tell the stories we have always been told.(39-40)

The novels

In the analysis of the following novels, the protagonists will be shown to allegorically represent the challenges facing their tribal nations, to explore the potential for effective response to postcolonial situations and conditions, and to enact a meaningful praxis of resistance. In Cook-Lynn’s *From the River’s Edge* (1991), the situation facing the Native subject-cum-nation will be identified as (*post*)colonial, to be understood as the ongoing condition of colonization for tribal nations in the late 20th century. The Native subject will be shown to struggle with the situation, described in Gayatri Spivak’s seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak” (1988), in which the individual Native subject as well as the tribal nation are prevented from representing themselves outside of the imperial discourse. In Winona LaDuke’s *Last Standing Woman* (1997), her Anishinaabeg community will be seen to move from (*post*)coloniality to what will be understood as a *postcolonial* condition in which colonial hegemonic structures have given way to *new* political configurations based on an empowered tribal national sovereignty and self-determination. The struggle towards this postcolonial situation will be seen to model its effective resistant agency on the Native activism of the 1970s. The conclusion of the analysis of the Native postcolonial subject will briefly address Leslie M. Silko’s vision in *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) of tribal national *post-coloniality* as ex-coloniality, i.e. liberation and independence.

***From the River’s Edge* (1991) by Elizabeth Cook-Lynn**

Law, [...] is indeed a language. In the end, it is clear that in the task of conquering the continent, despite its constitutional humanitarianism and commitment to tribal sovereignty and the “rule of law,” the Supreme Court spoke the language of the European and not the language of the Native American. (Strickland 260)

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn’s *From the River’s Edge* follows the court case involving John Tatekeya, a Dakotah Sioux⁴ living along the South Dakota and Nebraska border. While John

⁴ Also spelled Dakota. “Sioux” is the Euro-American collective name for this plains tribe. Contemporary Sioux use the terms Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota to indicate their specific communities and dialects.

is on a drinking spree, forty-two head of his cattle are stolen, and John suspects his Euro-American neighbors of the theft. Discovering the whereabouts of only four of his cows, John decides to take the case to court in Pierre, South Dakota, to receive compensation for his losses. As the trial proceeds, John will muse on its allegorical nature as a reiteration of the history of the disenfranchisement of the Dakotah nation. This history will be reflected in the discursive dynamics of court room litigation as a contestation of two national self-substantiating discourses: U.S. law and Dakotah law.

Pertinent to the discussion of Cook-Lynn's novel will be Gayatri Spivak's insight into ramifications of State "law" as a monolithic Imperial discourse which supplants the colonized's modes of self-representation. John, as Cook-Lynn's Native subject, will be seen to be situated in Spivak's conundrum of subaltern representation and articulation within this normative and hegemonic State discourse. In Spivak's often summarized and anthologized essay, she establishes "speech" as the pre-eminent metaphor of this now "classic" theoretical situation encapsulated in one rhetorical question.

We must now confront the following question: On the other side of the international division of labor from socialized capital, inside *and* outside the circuit of the epistemic violence of **imperialist law** and education supplementing an earlier economic text, *can the subaltern speak?* [boldface added]("Can" 283.)

While Cook-Lynn will place John in a situation which re-asks this seminal question, her Native subject will find the discursive means to answer in the affirmative. As "law" is a system which structures and defines both Native and U.S. politics as socio-cultural entities, "law" will prove to be not only the discursive site of Imperial State ideology and coercion, but also the source of tribal national substantiation and resistance.

The allegorical arena

As the United States' territorial expansion reached the limits of the Pacific coast, and military confrontations between Natives and federal troops dwindled, contestation between tribal communities and the federal government have continued in a new arena: While "American Indian wars are no longer fought on the plains," they continue to be "fought in what's called the courts" in which "the combatants are attorneys, and the weapons are the rules and precedents of law"(Nagel 53, 160). It is in this modern "theatre of war" that John muses on the allegorical dimensions of his court case, stating that "it takes only a small event in the life of an ordinary man to illuminate the ambiguities of an entire century" (39).

Throughout the novel, John associates his present condition with a fractal patterning of Dakotah dispossession by the U.S., stating "the white man has always stolen from the Sioux, [...] First it is our land, then our way of life, our children, and finally even the laws of our ancestors. And now this white man, the son of my white neighbors, has stolen my goddamn cows."(21) In addition, certain ironic developments in the court case, namely the defense lawyer's attempt to incriminate John as responsible through negligence for the loss of his cattle, causes John to view his situation as exemplifying historic dynamics of colonial relationships.

Just across the river from where he sat in the witness chair in the federal building, in this crowded courtroom testifying in a legal process which seemed to be directed toward the improbable notion that he had himself stolen his own cattle and was now falsely accusing a young white man of the crime, one of his grandfathers, Gray Plume, had once attended a great Council meeting where nine tribes of the Sioux Nation had met with the white man soldier William S. Harney. Even at the time that it occurred, in 1856, all of the people had recognized that they had been ordered there to defend themselves from the accusation that they were thieves

by the very people who were stealing the Sioux homelands. [...John] concluded that what had happened at the Harney Council was known to have happened over and over again and was happening at that moment. (38-39)

The ironic and contradictory nature of imperial “logic,” as John interprets it, is engendered in the metropolitan’s need to transvalue the colonial enterprise from “theft” into “rightful ownership.” The instrument used to achieve this transvaluation is the discursive and institutional superstructure of “legality.”

John’s view that his situation is representative and reiterative of the injustice inherent in the imperial project illustrates that the novel is written in an overtly national-allegorical mode. This is described by Frederic Jameson’s as a mode in literature in which the “telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself” (85), a collectivity primarily marked by the experience and legacy of colonialism. However, John’s court case not only represents a fractal iteration of the “experiences of the collectivity,” but also reveals the nature of what Jameson calls the “embattled situation” (69) of the colonized nation within the colonizing nation-state, namely its subsumption into the State’s legal superstructure.

The embattled tribal nation, state-building, and the “law”

As the court case commences, John finds himself acting within one of the primary systems by which a nation-state, having defined its territory through military control, self-appoints a “jurisdiction” over this territory and the populace within it (Guibernau 31). As Edward Spicer indicates, this process of State formation involves the installation of a territory-wide uniform system of “law and legal procedures.”

Nation-states, in general, became deeply hostile to variation in legal procedure and, therefore, were strongly inclined to eliminate court and legal usages of local origin, the product of local experience and local cultural orientations. The reason for the elimination of such local law was held to be that identical laws and penalties were necessary in order to provide equal justice for all. It was believed that part of the function of a state was to provide this for all its citizens equally, and, therefore, a centralized and uniform legal system had to be *imposed* from the capital city of the nation-state. (43)

This process, the institutionalization of U.S. sovereignty within its colonized territories, involved the elimination through supplantation of the “local” socio-legal structures of tribal polities (Guibernau 61).

As Spivak claims, however, this is not simply a structural maneuver but reveals the interpolated nature of law as both a jurisprudential and ethical “agent of national unity” (Wilkins 95). Selecting the Vedic Hindu practice of widow self-immolation as a case study, Spivak explores the clash of two ethical systems understood as “law”: classical Vedic custom and English abhorrence and consequent legal abolition of this practice. The complexity of Spivak’s case study and argument must not be simplified into the binary opposition colonized’s traditions vs. colonizer’s law. Her discussion illuminates the complexity of subaltern self-representation and self-substantiation within the (post)colonial situation in which articulation of (alter)native discourses are forestalled by monolithic and normative State discourse. Analogously, the self-substantiation of the Native subject within the dynamics of Native “traditions” and federal juridical procedure serves as the central problematic in Cook-Lynn’s novel, as her protagonist finds himself involved in a court-case which reveals to him the irreconcilability of the Dakotah and Euro-American ethical and ideological systems.

I should know better by now. Indians like myself should probably avoid participating in such white man's doings. And we should avoid trials and courtrooms. I should know by now that the white man's notions about these things are almost always in direct conflict with what my people know to be ethical. (32)

John's trial will reveal that the history of the imposition of nation-state law has not only adversely affected the integrity of tribal politico-societal structures but also the integrity of its socio-ethical foundations.

The nation-people and the "law" as relational ethic

Strickland has remarked that "scholars have only recently come to acknowledge, that peoples have different goals and values and senses of law and of law's function" (260). In *River*, John understands "the law" not in procedural, but in cultural and relational terms.

In all cultures and in all times, people have made laws in which they have found faith and in which they have found self-affirmation. People have always found processes of thought and modes of reconciling conflicting considerations. Certainly, the Dakotahs have done this for longer than is known. (32)

John's emphasis on the communal function of law ("faith," "self-affirmation," and "modes of reconciling conflicting considerations") characterizes "law" as a socio-cultural construct which coheres a community. Such characterizations are also reflected in theoretical discussions of the sociological dimension of the concept of "nation," in which

"nation" means a historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture. A "nation" in this sociological sense is closely related to the idea of a "people" or a "culture"- indeed, these concepts are often defined in terms of each other. (Kymlicka 11)

It is this understanding of "nation," as Scott Lyons argues, that was first formalized politically during the treaty-making period and which remains the foundation of contemporary tribal self-conceptualization of "nationhood":

Indians who entered into treaties as nations are better understood as representing themselves as a *people*. [...] It has always been from an understanding of themselves as a people that Indian groups have constructed themselves as a nation. (454)

Placing these concepts within the context of contemporary international structures, Arnold Krupat has remarked that the "sovereign political entities" that Native nations were and continue to be were not and are not *states* [...] Native people typically think in terms of *nation-people* rather than the *nation-state* (Red 3).

While the term "people" describes a widely spread network of individuals connected through a sense of descent, history, language and religion, the use of the term "peoplehood" has come to refer to a more localized societal structure of "a people" who acknowledge reciprocal rights and duties toward one another. The "major mechanism" which holds a peoplehood together is "kinship structure" (Fogelson 52, 53). For various types of peoples, various types of kinship structures cohere the group through social expectations of proper behavior with regard to kinship responsibilities and reciprocity. These expectations form the "ethical codes" and cultural logic of "law" of the peoplehood (Warrior, *Tribal* xx; Weaver, *That the People*, 115). In *River*, Cook-Lynn shows how this understanding or "law" as an ethical foundation of the Dakotah nation-*people* is embodied in the *tiospaye* kinship structure and concept.

The *tiospaye* structure is a kinship system which is “built upon the idea that individuals owed each other certain kinds of behaviors and that if each individual performed his or her tasks properly, society as a whole would function” (Warrior, *Tribal* 110). In her discussion of contemporary Native literature and Third World critical paradigms, Cook-Lynn strongly connects the *tiospaye* concept to the Dakotah sense of “nationhood,” and its presence in Native literature as a clear indication of a potential tribal nationalist reading.

The continuous overtracing of personal histories within the *tiospaye* concept (defined as a societal/cultural/tribal organizational construct) [...which is] so much a part of the storytelling process for the Sioux, is never put into the Third World theoretical lexicon simply because the professors are not much interested or are uninformed. The result is the diminishment or alteration of the *tiospaye* concept as a *nationalistic forum for the people*, in spite of the fact that the appropriate interpretation of traditional literatures suggests that nationalism is a major reason for their existence. (*Why*, 93)

Kinship responsibilities could extend, as will be seen in Greg Sarris’s novels, beyond the bounds of biology and marriage through the ceremonial creation of relatives (Steltenkamp, 12). John’s neighbor Harvey Big Pipe and his two sons Jason and Sheridan are related to John through a ceremonial bonding of Harvey’s father, Red Shield, and John’s father.

When John was just a boy [Red Shield] had brought to the Tatekeya home the striped quills and the tobacco and requested that John’s father take part in the important ceremony which would make them relatives, thus forever obliged to one another. [...]

John’s father [...] knew that the refusal to “make relatives” in the traditional way was to ultimately take part in the attempted destruction of the *nationhood* so relentlessly defended for hundreds of years by the people even before the invasion of their lands by Europeans. (63) (emphasis added)

In this passage it is clear that the societal mechanisms for consolidating the tribal community as an extended kinship system are seen as the foundation of Dakotah nationhood, the responsibilities inherent in this system of kinship relationships forming the law and subsequently the ethics of the Dakotah nation.

Ethnologist Ella Deloria (Yankton Sioux) relates how important kinship responsibilities - “being a good relative” - were to a sense of being a “real Dakotah.”

“I can safely say that the ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey the kinship rules; one must be a good relative.” [...] Without the aim of being a good relative and the constant struggle to attain it, writes Deloria, “the people would no longer be Dakotas in truth.” (qtd. in Weaver *That the People*, 115)

The *tiospaye* is indeed an ethical concept which John feels defines him as a Dakotah and his nation as distinct: “that what distinguished the Dakotah from all others in this world was the powerful and compelling individual sense of obligation toward one’s relatives” (63). These obligations also signify for John “the moral quality of the social world in which their kinship duties were strictly ordered”(85-86). Here we see that the kinship system both distinguishes the “collective” as a tribal “nation-people” and simultaneously creates a self-authored template of the Native (Dakotah) “subject” which the individual Dakotah responds to.

The nation-state and “law” as universal ethic

While the traditions-cum-law of personal reciprocity and kinship responsibility form the ethical foundation of the Dakotah as a nation-*people*, the U.S.’s legal mechanisms and therefore “legal ethic” can be seen to be those of a nation-*state*. The “state” has been defined as a primarily institutional phenomenon, most often arising from military conquest and/or political contract (such as a treaty). The state enforces its authority over its territory and

imposes its self-appointed sovereignty over its people through standardized and codified juridical structures (Guibernau 31, 44, 48).

As the *tiospaye* forms the foundation of Dakota nationhood and subject-ivity, the U.S. Constitution and the laws flowing from it have performed a similar communalizing and subjectivizing function: first in the development of a sense of political unity among the newly independent thirteen states, and consequently in the “imagining” of the consolidation of an increasingly diverse ethnic and linguistic populace into an umbrella subject-ivity of shared “American” ideals. After the Constitution was completed in 1789, it became a symbol of U.S. nationhood, “an object of patriotic veneration” (Carroll and Noble 133). Since then, the United States has become “one of the most legalistic nations in the world”(Wilkins 164) in which

the belief in “Law” or the “Rule of Law” is pervasive. While virtually all societies have law-making and law-enforcing institutions and legal systems, in the United States “law has become a reified entity [...] a thing unto itself. [...] the notion of Law in the United States has become deeply entrenched and revered, taking on a mystical, omniscient qualityresult[ing] in the emergence of a semireligious social phenomenon. (Wilkins 85)

The federal government’s interaction with Native tribes during the period of colonization and expansion was characterized by an emphasis on legality. While treaties and legal agreements were entered into by the federal government as an efficient method of land acquisition, the tendency to justify its nation-state building processes legally stemmed from a sense of accountability to Enlightenment principles.

The U.S.’s conception of “law” derives from an Enlightenment logic which emphasized reified universal truths perceived to be detached from social, religious, or monarchical origins. Law was seen to embody abstract principles of “rights” and “justice” grounded in “Reason, and thus ultimately in Nature itself.” The development of the young Republic’s national self-conceptualization entailed an Enlightenment pride in being a new nation “governed by laws and not men” (Osborne, “The Voice” 58), these laws being based on “universal” human “rights,” inalienable to the individual. Ironically, as indicated above, the discourse of Enlightenment rationality became a rationale for legalizing the expansionist activities of the Republic as a burgeoning nation-state.

...as the tide of expansion and conquest- to use the favorite metaphor of nineteenth-century historians- swept across the land, the claim [to Indian land] becomes *reasonable* and even lawful. “Rights” appear and disappear as products of history and juridical historiography. (Osborne, “The Voice” 67, emphasis added)

John sees this hypocritical, expansionist cultural logic at work in his own court case, as it was also at work in parallel historical efforts of the U.S. to disenfranchise the Dakotah.

...the council which Harney directed all those many years ago must have been very much like this one, that it is the white man’s thievery which is legalized and the Indian’s behavior which is made criminal in either case. It is always a part of the strategy that the white man’s whim must be satisfied and that he must be made to look fair and decent. Reasonable. Compassionate. (39)

Cook-Lynn has John come to the conclusion, generally drawn by Native American scholars, that Euro-American subject-ivity is predicated upon the maintenance of its legal rationale for the process and effects of its nation-state formation, namely imperialism and the supplantation of tribal national structures and systems of subjectification.

Can the Native subaltern speak?

As the discourse of law-as-national-ethic substantiates and legitimizes both the subaltern and the colonizer as “subject,” John’s court case can be seen to parallel Spivak’s paradigmatic

(post)colonial situation in which the imperial State attempts to impose and maintain discursive control over the modes of subaltern expression in order to maintain the hegemony of its subject position (Slemon “The Scramble” 28). John’s court case becomes the Spivakian site of colonial contestation between two national self-representational “voices,” that of the nation-people and of the nation-state, “law” being their language.

John’s trial takes place in the arena of nation-state discursive control, in which procedural law is the sanctioned mode of legal discourse. Glenn T. Morris (Shawnee) has described the operations of the nation-state (“settler-state”) in constructing systems of “normalized or “correct” language” and establishing standards of “acceptable discourse.”

The “correct” language becomes a kind of code within the settler society that is reinforced in law, policy, and the educational system. The legitimation of the normalized semantics of the dispossession of indigenous peoples takes on the veneer of objectivity in the courts and the schools, but in fact, what is created is a state ideology designed to establish a totalizing rationalization and excuse for state expansion over indigenous peoples. (119-120)

As will be illustrated in relation to John’s cross-examination, “dispossession” takes on the discursive form of limiting the mode, and therefore the effectiveness, of Native articulation within these systems. In relation to law, tribal nation-peoples cannot represent themselves outside the nation-state construction.

Spivak’s paradigm explores the dynamics of such situations as she pinpoints the dilemma of subaltern “representation/re-presentation” within the dominant discourse. Focusing on the different meanings and implications of the word “representation,” she points out that the subaltern are caught between

representation as “speaking for,” as in politics, and representation as “re-presentation,” as in art or philosophy. [...] These two senses of representation- within state formation and the law, on the one hand, and in subject-predication, on the other - are related but irreducibly discontinuous. (“Can the Subaltern Speak?” 275)

John’s situation concretely reflects this dilemma as he is given an attorney to “represent/speak-for” him within the state judicial system, while at the same time he is expected to testify, i.e. “re-present” himself. John thus finds himself in the position of a Spivakian “impossible subject,” positioned at the intersection of two conflicting modes of self-representation, expected to “re-present” himself *within* state institutional discourse while desiring to re-present himself *outside* the cultural logic of the nation-state, i.e. *within* Dakota understanding of law and nationhood.

During the initial stages of the trial, John’s own lawyer begins unwittingly to take over John’s mode of articulation by asking leading questions. When the defense lawyer objects, a discussion as to John’s ability to speak ensues. The judge remarks,

“Well, now, let’s remember, first of all, this witness is, as he says, an Indian. He is halting. I’m not entirely sure how readily he understands the English language [...] I think we do have to consider his education, his background; and I am going to rule out questions that suggest the answer, but I am going to permit the United States Attorney to ask questions that may be somewhat leading [...] I call your attention to a United States case of *Antelope vs. The United States*, [...] in which you have an Indian whose testimony is somewhat halting, who was a little hesitant and had difficulty in understanding all of these legal matters, and where it was necessary to ask leading questions to get the material facts involved. Now, I’m not going to let the U.S. Attorney testify or put words in this man’s mouth, but I think that he is somewhat confused on dates, and because of the fact that he is an Indian, I am going to permit leading questions.” (29, 30)

Referring to a previous court case, the conclusion as to the (in)ability of Natives to re-present themselves, i.e. to speak (“halting” language), has become “normalized,” cemented into the legal discursive procedure as “precedent” and legally defining the Native subject as

“incompetent.” The concept of Native incompetency became a legal category during the allotment period (1887-1934) and was applied to Natives deemed unable to manage their allotted land and federal allowance. As a consequence, the Native’s assets were put under the management of a third (non-Native) party (Biolsi, 35; Wunder 44). John recalls that his mentor Benno was declared “incompetent” and his land sold by the agent who was acting “on his behalf” (36). Similarly, as it is implied that John is cognitively incompetent, it becomes a procedural “necessity” for the lawyers to take control of John’s mode of articulation by asking leading questions. The language of the courtroom interaction- i.e. the cross-examination- reflects this process of hyper-discursive-control through which the Native is represented as “incompetent.”

[District Attorney] Did you sell any cattle [...]? In other words, from January 1 of 1966 to this April date when you made the [official] count?

[John]: Yes. I sold cattle before the count was taken.

District Attorney: When was that?

A: Well, that was sometime during the fall; later part of the summer or early fall.

Q: Well, what year would that have been?

A: That would be last year.

Q: The latter part of the summer or early fall of last year. Is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: Well, Mr. Tatekeya. Maybe you don’t understand quite what I’m getting at. Now, the last year was 1966. Is that right?

A: Well, last year is when I sold them cattle.

Q: OK. And you say that was in the summer or fall?

A: That was in the fall, I’d say.

Q: In the fall. Well, now, what I’m getting at, you said that you sold cattle in the fall of 1964. Is that right?

A: That’s right.

Q: And that’s the only bunch of cattle you sold in 1964. Is that correct?

A: That’s right.

Q: And you said, I believe, that you didn’t sell any cattle during 1965.

A: That’s right.

Q: Now then, did you sell any cattle from the time that you had these missing cattle - that’s in the fall of 1965 - up to the time that you made the count in April of last year?

(29-31)

While the judge justifies this manner of cross-examination as necessary in order to get “the material facts out here”(31), the leading questions put to John are not only disorienting in their repetitiveness and their obsession with minutiae, but they unwittingly redirect the focus of guilt to John himself and his seeming incompetence at counting his own cattle.

Such dialogues in actual courtroom transcripts have been studied by Patricia Monture Angus and discussed as a specific type of legal “narrative” technique in which the meticulous focus on what lawyers call the “facts” obfuscates the “story” of the situation in question.

Lawyers call these the facts. This is the form that a legal story is presented in, although it is not presented as a story. [...] Facts, separated from the larger context of the story, are the commodity of law. The story is not important just because it is a story. It is important because it embodies a dispute. This is the fundamental problem with the law as a storytelling vehicle: it is not the people or the message in the story that are important. (35)

Angus discovers in this method the purpose of “law as a storytelling vehicle”; the goal of lawyers and their legal discourse is not to understand the “story” but to gain control of “the narration” so as to prioritize only one of the lawyer’s (re)narration of the “facts” as the authoritative “proof” of guilt or innocence. John senses that he has lost his “story” to the discursive control of the lawyers, remarking “I, myself, am now the focus of suspicion. [...] By implication, accused” (31, 33). He realizes that, as a Native subject within their story, he will

be substantiated from then on by the legal classification “Native incompetence” and by the winning lawyer’s rhetorical skill in narrating either “guilt” or “innocence.”

John’s ability to re-present himself seems to be overwhelmingly determined by the lawyers’ hyper-control of the “narrative,” i.e. their representation during litigation of the factual minutiae of John’s case. Court litigation, the sanctioned procedural discursive mode, seems to have forced John, as Native subject, into a monosyllabic binary response to the colonizer, either confirming or rejecting the nation-state’s “story.” Terming this “rhetorical imperialism,” Scott Lyons describes the situation as one in which the “dominant powers” have the ability “to assert control of others by setting the terms of the debate” (453). This seems to corroborate Spivak’s conclusion which pre-empts the possibility of subaltern “speech” both “inside *and* outside the circuit [...] of imperialist law” (“Can the Subaltern Speak?” 283). Nevertheless, the discursive dynamics of the trial will challenge the absolutism of Spivak’s conclusion. While John, as representative of the tribal national voice, will seem to be structurally silenced inside imperial law, he will exercise a transgressive mode of articulation hidden *within* the procedures of this systemic law, which will place the power of Native subaltern agency “outside” the discursive hegemony of the nation-state.

The Native subaltern speaks

During John’s testimony, unknown to his attorney, John will consciously perform a “camouflaged” transgressive discursive act by which he effectively both manipulates the procedures and undermines the proceedings of the court for his own purposes. James C. Scott has developed the metaphor “hidden transcript” to identify and refer to strategies of dissent and/or critique performed by the oppressed but unseen or unrecognized as such by the oppressors. While there is much to criticize in Scott’s study and approach,⁵ writers such as Beverly Haddad have found Scott’s metaphor useful in countering Spivak’s debilitating conclusion as to the impossibility of subaltern articulation and agency. Haddad asserts that Scott “accords a much greater degree of subjectivity to the subaltern than Spivak allows” (14).

Contrary to Spivak, I would argue that what is presumed to be silence is not silence at all. [...] The subaltern can and does speak, but often in ways that [...] are often hidden to those in the public realm, where hegemonic forces are strongest. (12-13)

As John’s testimony is heard, his lawyer asks him whether he has seen any of his missing cattle since they were stolen. Because of a legal technicality, John has been cautioned to mention only three of the four animals sighted since the theft. However, when questioned, John’s response causes a major commotion and threatens to derail the proceedings.

Q: Now, Mr. Tatekeya, since the fall of 1965, have you seen any of those missing cattle since then?

[...]

A: Well, I seen one of them over there north of Highmore. I seen one of them up east of Yankton, by Irene.

Q: And did you see one down there, near Ainsworth, Nebraska?

A: I seen *a couple of them* down there.

At this answer, unexpected but hoped for by the young white man’s defense attorney, John looked squarely into [his attorney’s] disbelieving and astonished eyes, then at Mr. Joseph Nelson III, who saw his chance and leapt to his feet shouting triumphantly, “Just a moment! Your honor!” (73)

⁵ The work’s most glaring problems are that it gives priority to non-contemporary examples of extreme subordination - European feudalism, and American slavery - with the exception of examples from caste systems, and it entirely ignores colonial and postcolonial socio-political realities and theory.

This procedural irregularity enables the defense lawyer to call for a mistrial. Playing the “incompetent Indian,” John consciously undermines the rules of this discursive environment, and this will reveal a truth more significant to the Dakotah as a nation-people than the lawyer’s truth as to the perpetrator of the crime.

Immediately after making his “mistake,” John watches the audience, specifically noticing the reaction of Sheridan Big Pipe, who has been following the trial closely.

As the three lawyers conferred quietly but earnestly, John looked over at Sheridan’s heavy, round face. He was no longer lounging carelessly in his seat. The young man’s eyes were suddenly alert, attentive, and he leaned over to whisper something to his wife, who looked merely frightened. He grabbed his brother Jason’s knee and then hit it with his fist lightly, triumphantly. (73)

John realizes that Sheridan has been involved in the theft of the cattle along with John’s white neighbor. John will be confirmed in this as he hears the false testimony of Jason Big Pipe, who attempts to incriminate John as incompetent in order to protect his brother Sheridan from prosecution. When John hears this incriminating testimony from a member of the family ritually connected as relatives to his, John realizes that the court case has revealed the most significant impact of the discursive hegemony of nation-state law on the tribal nation.

It wasn’t just the cattle now. It was something else. It was a failure of values, a failure of community, a failure of esteem and respect among men, those ever-important considerations for Dakotahs[...] the public, familial, and tribal humiliation in the white man’s court of law that John would forever afterward recall with a deep sense of loss. (57)

To borrow Scott’s metaphor of the “stage”(4), the novel’s setting within which John speaks his lines coincides with Scott’s description of the public theater within which subversive but camouflaged “transcripts” are articulated, producing what one could call a resistant dramatic irony communicated only to those can hear the hidden, covert message.

...the hidden transcript is typically expressed openly-albeit in disguised form. [...] they insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct. (xii)

John’s strategic performance of the “transcript” of the “incompetent Indian” can be seen to exemplify the strategy which has been most thoroughly theorized by Homi Bhabha as subaltern mimicry. Bhabha has theorized a fault-line of ambivalence that the subaltern/colonized, as successful mimics of imported cultural modes, create in the assimilationist discourse of the colonizer. Critics such as Benita Parry have seen in Bhabha’s investigations the potential of this ambivalence, present in the subconsciousness of the colonizer, to be consciously manipulated by the subaltern (“Problems” 35, 40). In relation to Native resistant subject positions, Dee Horne has focused on this implied dimension of Bhabha’s mimicry and has proposed two modes of Native American mimicry: colonial mimicry and subversive mimicry.

In colonial mimicry, the mimic imitates to become like another while in subversive modes of mimicry the mimic imitates to critique another. In challenging the authority of the model or referent underlying the mimicry, the subversive mimic, unlike the colonial mimic, is self-aware. (13)

John’s discursive act, the mentioning of the fourth cow, is congruent with Horne’s concept of subversive mimicry. John is aware that his remark will both disrupt the court proceedings and elicit a consequential reaction from members in the audience. Through John, Cook-Lynn indicates that the Native subaltern subject can successfully “speak” and manipulate such an

ostensibly hegemonic nation-state discursive practice at the central site of their juridical authority- the courtroom. The success of this articulation can be seen as an affirmation of subaltern agency within, as Spivak states, “the epistemic violence of imperialist law” (“Can the Subaltern Speak?” 283).

The tribal nation in crisis

It is the nature of this “epistemic violence” which is revealed as the success of John’s subversive strategy leads to a demoralizing “truth”; ironically, while he wins the court case against his Euro-American neighbors, his nation’s integrity as a nation-people seems to have been, at least temporarily, lost. He

knew that for some the old, familial bonds of respect for one another, those significant communal codes of behavior as old as the tribes themselves, were no longer held as intrinsically valuable [and he] acknowledged in his heart the uncompromising pride and courage inherent in the Dakotah way of life, and the loss of it, momentarily at least, in the behavior of everyone connected with this miserable trial. (71-70)

The allegorical significance of this moment, John realizes, is that not only have the tribes been dispossessed materially as he has been, but that the self-serving nature of the United States’ legal structures and discourse have had a corrosive effect on the relational foundations of Native nationhood. The significance of the trial for John does not concern “justice” as a universal value and the rights of the individual as his Euro-American lawyer believes (3), but concerns the integrity of Dakotah relational and communal kinship structures. Robert Warrior, writing about John Joseph Mathews’ portrayal of his Osage protagonist in his novel *Sundown* (1934), makes a remark pertinent to understanding Cook-Lynn’s protagonist’s concerns in a national allegorical light.

Mathews did not want to tell the story of just one person, but of a community in religious, political, and economic crisis.[...]Instead of a tragic victim and a community caught in the battle between an either/or of assimilation or remaining traditional, we see the real problem- a community having severely limited ability to make choices regarding its own future and the effect of that on a typical individual within the community. (*Tribal* 55, 81-82)

Similar to Spivak’s discussion of the subaltern, as the Native subject’s agency (mode of self-articulation) has been preempted by the representational dynamics of the state, so has its epistemic “source” - the communal structures which create socio-cultural “meaning”- suffered the pressures of assimilation and dissolution into the nation-state formation. In making this epistemic violence transparent, John has de-normalized the colonial paradigm and re-positioned the Native subject-as-nation from that of powerless, “voiceless” victim to that of a polity in “crisis.”

While Cook-Lynn’s novel is primarily concerned with diagnosing the disease she sees threatening the Dakotah as a nation-people, two instances of Dakotah national “voice” are offered as remedies to this situation. The voice as “song” and as “prayer” will be shown to represent a Native national “praxis” in which the articulation of culture resists and counteracts the corrosive effects of nation-state discourses.

Tribal national praxis: resistance and self-substantiation

During a recess in the trial, John participates with his brothers in an annual Powwow of Northern Plains tribes in Bismarck, North Dakota. Here John will enjoy another “irony,” opposite to the one engendered by his trial, which suggests not the dissolution but the endurance of tribal nations across the country.

...Custer was supposed to have said, after a particularly successful prior engagement with them, “Yes, I hated to see those savage redskins killed, but it had to be done.” The tellers of that tale smiled secretly. [...] the ceremonial had the reputation of being the largest single gathering of the year for the nations of the Northern Plains. It was now like challenging an enemy, a matter of tradition... These plains Indians hosted tribes from all over the country and taught every visiting Indian singer their victory songs. (103)

John reflects on the fact that Native people can now enjoy the irony of the “public transcript” (J.C. Scott 2) of Native erasure and extinction voiced by the soon-to-be-defeated General Custer. That their victory goes beyond the historic battle is expressed by the assembly as the powwow dancers enter the arena and the crowd sings “the song of nationhood that reminded the people of who they were and who they had always been. [...] they all emerged from the entrance and formed the spectacular circles which everyone recognized as symbols of survival” (104). This song exemplifies the praxis of Native cultural forms in which the very articulation of cultural self-substantiation is simultaneously an act of resistance to the processes of state “silencing” through genocide and assimilation into nation-state structures, and an affirmation of the success of this resistance.

This triumphant “voice” of contemporary tribal solidarity and survival is seemingly in contradistinction to John’s tone of despair which permeates the novel. Nevertheless, these two “tones” can be seen from the context of Dakotah cultural expression to be twinned forms of the assertion of Dakotah subject-ivity. John’s grieving “tone” needs to be understood within the context of similar lamentational instances of Dakotah rhetorical speech patterns, as well as in relation to the final scene of the novel. A well-known Native work which seems to be infused with a “lyrical” and “fatalistic” tone is the collaborative autobiography *Black Elk Speaks* (1932). It is now well documented that the poet John G. Neihardt emphasized a sense of cultural tragedy that he thought he heard in Black Elk’s account of his life. However, as Raymond DeMallie has shown, expressions of despair in Sioux culture did not necessarily indicate a fatalistic or a pessimistic view of the tribal nation’s present or future.

... it seems likely that Neihardt did not fully appreciate the Lakota attitude of prayer. Sorrow and despair were outward expressions of traditional Lakota prayer, for the efficacy of prayer depended upon making oneself humble and pitiable before the power of the universe. But this was a ritual attitude, not an expression of hopelessness. (“Nicholas” 56)

We can see this clearly in the novel’s final image, a short section titled “Afterpart,” in which John is shown taking part in a purifying sweat in a traditional sweat-lodge.

Sweat poured from his body and his agony seemed interminable.

He moaned and silently wept.

As he began to sing, [...] his eyes, wide open in the total darkness, looked upon the antiquities of the universe and his mind adjusted itself, by degrees, to his own triviality. (147)

The tone of lamentation in the novel may therefore be seen within the Sioux idiom of prayer in which the rhetoric of dejection and self-deprecation is the means by which the Sioux approach the forces of the universe to ask for their power and support. From this perspective, the “sorrow and despair” of the novel’s tone can be read as a rhetorical “attitude” connected to Dakotah spirituality, meant to encourage and lead the Dakotah nation through hardship and crisis to purification and hope.

Significantly, John performs this concluding purification ritual in a sweat lodge with Harvey Big Pipe, whose family represents both the kinship structures that define their polity as a nation-people, as well as the effects of the ongoing assault on the viability of these structures within the nation-state. In these circumstances, “prayer” becomes a praxis meant to affirm through performance the structures which cohere the nation. These twinned articulations of culture, the triumphant “songs of nationhood” and healing prayers of lamentation, as well as the covert discursive operations meant to reveal the “crisis” of the Dakota nation, serve to articulate through John a praxis of resistance to tribal “silencing” as well as to effect a re-positioning and re-anchoring of the Native subject into the relational structures of the tribal nation-people.

As in Spivak’s discussion, in Cook-Lynn’s novel “law” is seen as a central discourse which structures and substantiates both nation-state and nation-people and their subject-ivity. In *River*, the Native subject is rendered within in a monolithic and unalterable (post)colonial situation. Spivak’s postulated dynamics seem to be operative as John’s court case and the appropriation of his modes of speech allegorically represents the tribal history of material dispossession and loss of self-substantiating national structures. However, Cook-Lynn indicates that the Native subject-cum-nation is not Spivak’s muted and pre-empted subaltern. John demonstrates that the Native subject has recourse to resistant discursive strategies as well as modes of self-substantiation through articulated socio-cultural praxis. While Cook-Lynn’s novel emphasizes that for the Native subject-as-nation (post)coloniality is essentially an extended coloniality, Winona LaDuke’s novel *Last Standing Woman* will be seen to chart the Native American subject’s agency in creating an envisioned *postcolonial* future in which colonial structures have been modified to support nation-state and nation-people coexistence.

Last Standing Woman (1997) by Winona LaDuke

In *Last Standing Woman*, it is not the life of a single individual which reflects the “embattled situation” of the nation, but the intergenerational experiences of a small nucleus of families which represent the historical challenges to and envisioned future of the colonized collective, both as cultural community and as polity. LaDuke traces the lives of seven generations of an Anishinaabeg (also called Chippewa or Ojibwa) community on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota from 1862 to the year 2000. As the plot moves from the mid-19th century to a vision of the future beyond the novel’s publication date, LaDuke’s Native subjects move generationally from the (post)colonial situation of Native “silencing” to a climate of “vocal” political activism on the cusp of the 21st century. The distinctive 1970s-style Red Power activism is the primary agential mode of LaDuke’s Native inter-generational subject. LaDuke’s portrayal of Native activism fuses the political and the cultural into a praxis of resistance, iterated generationally, until it effects new socio-political structures and subject positions based not on the (post)colonial dynamic of colonizer-to-colonized hegemony but on a postcolonial dynamic of nation-to-nation mutuality.

The “politicized subject” and national allegory

“Activism” is an umbrella term used to identify a variety of overtly confrontational activities expressing a desire for social and/or political change. In relation to LaDuke’s novel, activism can be seen to infuse her subjects with a national allegorical function, an association which is also implied in Jameson’s discussion of contemporary Third World literary allegory. Jameson characterizes the nationally allegorical subaltern subject as “seemingly private” but “necessarily project[ing] a political dimension” (69), and speaks of the subject’s “passion for change and social regeneration which has not yet found its agents” (81). This activist

dimension of the subject has also been recognized by Alain Touraine in his article “The Subject is Coming Back.”

On all sides, the same protest is heard: [...] let us not forget that the most important factors of development are today education, national consciousness and cultural identity. It is everywhere the same cry: let us be actors, let us be subjects of our collective and personal lives, let us fight the ideology and the policies which make us believe that we “cannot do anything about it.” (209)

While writing from the perspective of a sociologist’s focus on identity configurations, Touraine additionally addresses the concept of the self-actuating and self-authored subject which realizes itself in political action. Both Jameson and Touraine posit a contemporary subject which is integrally political and politicized and whose actions are inherently “activist.” As *River* illuminated that Native nationhood is coterminous with cultural practice, LaDuke will explore how the Native subject is political and politicized in its commitment to these socio-cultural structures and practices. This commitment, understood in terms of activism, forms the Native subject’s praxis in which socio-cultural practices become simultaneously politically resistant and nationally substantiating.

The “politicized subject” and 1960/70s activism

It could be argued that, anterior to Jameson’s postulate and Touraine’s formulation, the allegorical nature of the politicized subject had been deftly explored and developed in 20th century African-American, including the subject’s potential to inspire the envisioning of and support efforts towards a realizable and ultimately realized altered political configuration. This altered configuration was realized during the 1960s due to African-American activism and the Civil Rights movement. Native American political and social activism of the 1960s and 1970s modeled itself on that of the Civil Rights movement in which civil disobedience was the predominant tactic. Civil disobedience aims to change socio-political super-structures from *within* these structures. It is primarily a non-violent approach emphasizing political recognition, political dialogue/negotiation, and ultimately the adjustment of specific political structures (Brownlee). For African Americans this would mean the successful enforcement of *de jure* constitutional equality and rights. For Native Americans this has meant the ongoing attempts to create effective political forms of nation-to-nation coexistence, understood in terms of sovereignty and self-determination, within the State structures of legislated federal responsibilities. During the 1970s, Native activists organized many high profile protest events such as politically provocative site occupations and cross-country marches. These tactics, in Joanne Nagel’s words, were “designed to draw attention to [...] *historical and contemporary* grievances: unsettled land claims, poor living conditions on reservations, U.S. failure to recognize cultural and social rights or to allow tribal self-determination” [emphasis added] (165).

This interlinking of historical grievances and the desire for radical social change within the context of mid-century activism was most popularly expressed in literature for the 1970s African-American community by Alex Haley’s *Roots* (1976). *Last Standing Woman*, although written twenty years later, can be generically and functionally compared to Alex Haley’s *Roots* in that it presents an individual’s family genealogy and inherited struggles as the embodiment of a people’s political genealogy and aspirations, aspirations involving resistance to State structures of oppression. Essential to both novels is a distinctive political futurity, the promise of new socio-political formations based on the concepts of “freedom” for African-Americans and “sovereignty” for Native Americans. As the entire narrative of Haley’s *Roots* is informed by the audience’s knowledge of emancipation in the 1860s and its ultimate fulfillment in the 1960s, LaDuke will intimate in the historical narrative of her novel

the future achievement of tribal sovereignty and self-determination envisioned by her at the turn of the 21st century. LaDuke will evoke this by rhetorically and narratively investing 19th century situations and characters with a nascent mid-20th century political activism. In addition, LaDuke will infuse the late 20th century Native American militant protest activities of the novel with a 19th century socio-cultural foundation, thus creating a contextual continuity for her Native activist subject and its tribal national “praxis” spanning two centuries of radical and violent change.

Proto-activism in the past

LaDuke’s narrative strategy of treating Native historical actions as contemporary “activism” reflects recent discussions of Native American activism which have dissociated it from a specifically mid-20th century socio-political context and re-appraised it within a broader conceptual framework as a mode of postcolonial resistance. The term “activism” has been retroactively applied to the variety of historical Native strategies which were meant to hinder colonial territorial encroachment and to counter attempts to abrogate Native culture and distinct socio-political structures. Troy Johnson asserts that

It is difficult and perhaps incorrect to isolate Native American activism to the contemporary era and to term it strictly as a political issue. In fact, Native American activism can be traced to the earliest periods of this country’s history [...] Native people rose up in groups and Indian prophets rose up individually to promote active resistance against the new invaders. Tribal groups organized into confederacies, leagues, and nations to protect their lands and their traditional ways of life. (12)

Joanne Nagel claims that the fundamentally activist function (i.e., protest) of earlier Native American collective action was obscured by Euro-American oppositional terminology.

American Indian protest activity and collective action stretch back to the point of European contact. Despite its similarities to later movements, early Indian collective action was likely not to be seen as protest but tended to be defined as “war.” (159)

LaDuke cultivates this “similarity to later movements” as her novel evinces proto-activist tactics in her turn-of-the-20th-century subject.

Two incidences in the novel can be seen to exemplify LaDuke’s narrative prefiguring of forms of mid 20th century activist protest in historical tribal situations. *Last Standing Woman* begins where *Roots* ends, during the 1860s, the desperate last years of violence and negotiation before the Dakota and Anishinaabeg were restricted to bounded reservations. During the description of the series of violent confrontations, which would later be called in U.S. historiography Little Crow’s “War,” a lexical resonance with contemporary postcolonial theory is encouraged as the military conflict which brings Little Crow’s War to an end is described in the novel as the destruction of “Dakota *resistance*” [emphasis added] (33). In addition to this lexical resonance, it is the action of one young Anishinaabeg warrior in response to this Dakota defeat which anticipates a mid-20th century mode of resistance.

...he, like the Dakota, had grown weary of being treated as children by the great white men. One morning at dawn, he and a group of his [warriors] took over the land office of White Earth and later, St. Columba Mission, the new Episcopal church enclave. They were tired of being ignored by Washington and wanted to show that they too could send the white man away. (32)

In addition to exemplifying Nagel's remarks concerning the use of the term "war" for what could be seen as Native militant "activist" resistance to territorial encroachment, LaDuke also positions a proto-1970s Native activist tactic, a site take-over and occupation, within this historical context. Similarly, LaDuke creates a confrontational situation a generation later, in 1915, in which the White Earth tribal community prevents the unauthorized clear-cutting of their allotted lands.

From deep in the forest, moving stealthily by canoe, the Indians crossed the lake toward the outlet into the Ottetail River, and by dawn they had positioned themselves below the logs, at the conflux of the two bodies of water.

The next morning the [foreman] returned. [...] "Them Indians have taken over the lake. They've got the lake, they've got the lake," he repeated over and over, stuttering with disbelief. [...] "They've blocked the logs, all of them, with their canoes and rafts." (70-71)

While set in 1915, the community's resistance to the infraction of their allotment rights parallels the 1970s series of Native activist civil disobedient takeovers and blockades organized to protest federal and state governments' treaty violations (Nagel 164).

While seemingly minor events in the first half of LaDuke's novel, these two incidents foreshadow the climax of the second half of novel, both in their confrontational "activist" tactics (occupation and blockade) and in their proto-civil disobedient nature. Structurally, these two incidents illustrate a narrative method employed by LaDuke throughout the novel: the setting up of recognizably parallel situations and parallel responses to these situations. As will be discussed in more detail below, not only do these two turn-of-the-20th-century incidents foreshadow the turn-of-the 21st-century events of the novel to come, but they also directly parallel LaDuke's own political activities during the 1990s, both literary and actual events involving logging companies and a council building occupation. The purpose of this narrative method is not to explore the historical "causes" of contemporary situations, but to emphasize the on-going pertinence of such tribal national issues. It is a perspective supported by Strickland's appraisal of Native American contemporary societal concerns: "As Native American peoples prepare to move into the twenty-first century, the issues facing tribes are not substantially different from those faced over the last five centuries" (255).

LaDuke's novel underscore that the source of these issues is the the five century problematic political and legal relationship of the tribal nations and the nation-state, and that Native people's historical responses to State structures have always been civil disobedient and activist in nature. Not only does LaDuke portray this civil disobedience as reflected in specific acts but also as inherent in manifestations of Native praxis which self-substantiate tribal nationhood. LaDuke explores how this "inherent" civil disobedience developed as she indicates in the novel that 19th century cultural practices became, through the dynamics of tribal cultural renewal and (post)colonial legislative censure, resistant and civil disobedient by default.

Native praxis as civil disobedience by default

As the reservation system was implemented at the end of the 19th century, it positioned the Native community within its boundaries, around its economic centers, and within its bureaucratic administrative organization. Culturally, reservation Christian missionaries attempted to re-structure or replace Native religio-cultural practices, partitioning off reservations along denominational lines. Despite the fact that LaDuke attempts to acknowledge a more complex cultural interaction between Christianity and Native lifeways (286), she portrays Christianity primarily as the extension of the authoritarian regulatory

bureaucracy of the reservation system. LaDuke indicates that within this religio-institutional context the performance of Native religio-cultural practices became politicized as “dissident.”

In the novel, Father Gilfillian of the reservation’s Episcopal Church notices that the churchgoing Native families have begun to attend his services more sporadically. He is told by a Native convert that these absences are due to a new drum ceremony being practiced by the community, a ceremony originating in a dream-vision of a community member.

“Who brought these drums here?” he demanded. He had never heard of these rituals before and was furious that a new cult might have crept onto his reservation.

“It was a vision of the spirits,” she said as if that explained all. “[...] There are now several drums in this village. There are church going families involved as well as *Midewinwin* families. It makes no difference.” (50)

The reservation missionaries convene and decide that this new ceremony poses a serious threat to the achievement of monotheism on the reservation, a more serious threat than the continuation of traditional Anishinaabeg *Midewinwin* religious practices (40, 43). While the missionaries believe that “traditional” practices will die with the older generation, the “new” drum ceremony offers the community a site of living cultural development. As such, the drum ceremony indicates the continuance of Native praxis and not its “extinction” as expected by the Christian authorities. LaDuke outlines the process by which this new practice re-consolidates the novel’s Anishinaabeg community around an intensified cultural focus.

Those families that had drums, their numbers multiplied and their strength grew. They were determined to survive, to keep their ways, their songs, their medicine [...] the *Midewinwin*, the shaking tent, the big drums, all of them. They had their own power. (40, 43)

Despite the fact that this example of metamorphosing traditions reflects the processes integral to the evolution of culture in general, such visible and discernable socio-cultural movements have been discussed within a sociological framework as “revitalization” movements and linked to the concept of “activism” (Nagel; Josephy *et al* (eds); Johnson (ed)). Historically, instances of Native religious revitalization, often inspired by the vision of a spiritual leader or “prophet,” became within the (post)colonial context the source of concerted, militant resistance to cultural and territorial encroachment (Nagel 159). Germane to LaDuke’s purpose is the contemporary characterization of these movements as “activist.”

European contact was an agency of attack on the political, social, and cultural integrity of these people. Prophets such as Handsome Lake, Tecumseh, Tenskwatawa, Neolin, Deganawida, and Wovoka led activism movements intended to repel or lessen the impact of the European onslaught. (Johnson 12)

It is due to this association of an activist mode with post-contact Native revitalization movements that LaDuke does not focus on the resistant potential of pre-contact traditions but specifically explores the resistant potential of the “new” drum ceremony within the power dynamics of the reservation community. LaDuke weights her “new” drum ceremony with the precedence of other such revitalization movements and their feared militancy as it is implicitly compared in the novel to the Ghost Dance movement (55, 56). The imagined threat that the Ghost Dance movement posed to Euro-Americans was based on the fear that an intensified renewal of and engagement in tribal culture meant an equally intensified militant oppositional stance towards Euro-American society. Similarly, while the novel’s drum ceremony is not in direct conflict with missionary authority, the intensification and renewal of a non-Christian cultural focus is seen as distinctly oppositional, becoming officially so as the missionaries succeed in outlawing the drum ceremony on the reservation.

LaDuke's missionaries' response to the drum ceremony reflects the historical reality that Native cultural practices were subject to federal sanctions. Beginning with the Civilization Act of 1819 until the mid 1930s, the federal government actively encouraged the prohibition of Native religions.

On most reservations the federal Indian Office's Courts of Indian Offenses investigated, convicted, and punished natives who persisted in following their ancient tribal religions. [...] Indian people continued their formal ways of worship surreptitiously. (Vernon 541, 542)

In the novel, reflecting Irene Vernon's (Mescalero Apache) remark above, the outlawed ceremony continues surreptitiously: "The law did not stop the drum, it only forced people to retreat into the woods" (57).

The old people drew further into the woods and brought the drum with them, [...] They kept those drums, fed them and cared for them. That kept the priests away. The priests could not touch those people. So they stayed, deep in the woods [...] They stayed, never faltering from their path. (43)

This passage indicates a process that can be described, building upon James Scott's conditions for the performance of the "hidden transcript" (120), as the "sequestering" of the social sites of certain cultural practices, a process symptomatic of the resistant function these practices became invested with due to their implicit defiance of cultural abrogation. It is through such processes that Native socio-cultural praxes became resistant and civil disobedient by default, their public practice inevitably confrontational and retrospectively understood as "activist."

The process charted by LaDuke, that of Native praxis becoming by default a site of performed resistance, has often historically culminated in violent confrontation. Similarly, in the novel the performance of the outlawed drum ceremony becomes the site of a climactic confrontation between aggressive reservation police and the peaceful participants, during which two boys are arrested. At this moment of confrontation, tribal national praxis and civil disobedience become identical. The gaze of the leader of LaDuke's drum ceremony during the tribal police's raid is an acknowledgement of the default situation in which the performance of culture has become a defiant act: "only Chi Makwa continued to sing, looking up at the two [policemen] with fierce contempt in his eyes, then looking through them, as if they were not there" (58). Chi Makwa's actions can be seen as similar to the civil disobedient tactics of the 1960s anti-segregationists, whose protests initially underscored the ostensibly "normal" and "non-dissident" nature of their so-called "activist" acts, in which their "right" to exist as a legal entity was reflected in the simple act of living as such, e.g. in that act of sitting at a lunch-counter. The community's the drum ceremony as "praxis" represents the tribal nation's "right" to exist through the self-validating performance of this right despite legal sanctions. Within the context of the activist and civil disobedient Native subject as allegorical representative of the tribal nation, this moment of confrontation in the novel also becomes the substantiation embattled tribal nation within nation-state superstructures, in that despite the threat to their safety as individuals, the participants in the drum ceremony are committed to perpetuating this praxis.

The women sobbed for the abducted children, but knew the drum ceremony must be completed before they could act. [...] There were two more songs before the ceremony would be done, and their voices rose in unison. (59)

As the children are dragged off to jail, an elder berates the police, exclaiming "Your time is short here. Ours is forever. You can't stop us. You can't hold us back. You can't hold us long" (59). This is in essence the tribal nation's "we shall overcome."

The drum ceremony represents the (re)consolidation of the tribal nation, resistant in its commitment to its own self-substantiation and survival in the face of (post)colonial sanctions and abrogation. While this visionary drum ceremony is given a cultural context by its inclusion in already existing religious structures of the community, its primary function in the novel is to indicate the processes by which living Native culture becomes politicized, a “praxis of resistance” by default, and how its post-contact performance has always in essence been, according to LaDuke, a civil disobedient reminder of the continuing problematic relationship between tribal nations and the U.S. nation-state.

From turn-of-the-20th -century civil disobedience to turn-of-the-21st -century civil disobedience.

LaDuke sums up the position of her turn-of-the-20th century Native American subject in the perspective of the tribal elder Mesabe.

Born into a time of chaos and change, Mesabe witnessed the families scattered asunder by the white man’s laws [...] In a world that was fraying and unraveling before his eyes, he rankled against the white man’s god and government. He held onto and followed the strands of his ancestors’ lives and rebraided them into a rope that would lead him through the twisted steel and shorn fields of America. (84)

What characterizes the agency of LaDuke’s turn-of-the-20th-century subject is primarily the “disobedient” function of the proto-activist strategies, dissident in their non-compliance with sanctions and situations of cultural abrogation and aimed at *maintaining* tribal national structures and coherence within State structures. What will characterize the agency of her turn-of-the-21st-century subject will be the distinctly “civil” nature of its disobedience, in which “civil” references interrelations between the State and those it governs, the Native subject aiming to politically *restructure* these legal interrelations with respect to tribal nations and the U.S. nation-state. As LaDuke follows the preconditions and consequences of a renewed activism in her 1990 Anishinaabeg community, it will be seen that her Native subject is now informed by an experienced “civil” political acumen. This skill will in the novel bring to fruition the “promise” of the Red Power’s 1970s activist vision: the *modification* of tribal nation and nation-state political superstructures to allow Native nations their desired degree of self-determination and sovereignty.

Once again LaDuke utilizes the narrative technique of overlapping as the timber company which had threatened the novel’s White Earth community in 1915 returns to the community in the 1990s (247). Now identified as The Potlatch Timber Company, they again attempt to acquire timber cutting rights on the reservation, this time by bribing a corruptible tribal council. Certain politically aware members of the community set up an action group, the Protect Our Land Coalition, and attempt to influence the course of events:

Protect Our Land worked over the coming weeks to try to stop any further negotiations with Potlatch or the start of issuing mill permits and construction. The group organized demonstrations in front of the council offices and at the state legislature’s environmental quality board in St. Paul, demanding an environmental impact statement. In turn, all administrative remedies in the Bureau of Indian Affairs had been either exhausted or ignored by the federal government [...] When the [Protect our Land Coalition] met the next time, they agreed that they had only one way to make themselves heard: They decided to occupy the tribal government offices. (148-149,151)

These activities of the White Earth community reveal an intimate knowledge of the variety of government venues and political tactics which afford civil influence in municipal and state

affairs. Only after venues of civil influence have been exhausted does the group resort to civil disobedience. While seemingly a repetition of the novel's earlier site occupation and loggers confrontation, this act of civil disobedience will not be limited to the preservation of tribal structures but will aim to re-configure the relationship between the tribal nation and the federal government.

LaDuke creates the sense that this envisioned re-configured political relationship is the culmination of generations of "activist" agency in her Native subject by maintaining her narrative technique of "paralleling" as she rhetorically and metaphorically links the "historical" and the "contemporary": While the novel's turn-of-the-20th-century opposition to (post)colonial encroachment was presented as a nascent form of 1960s/70s civil disobedience, the novel's envisioned turn-of-the-21st-century activism will metaphorically reference 19th century tribal situations and praxes.

Metaphorically infusing the 19th century into 20th century activism

As the novel's occupation of the tribal government offices commences, a historical situational continuity for Native peoples is underscored.

Remarkable as it was, things remained relatively calm at the White Earth tribal offices and in the villages. It was as if the state of siege had waned and waxed for one hundred years, and this was just one more phase of war. (214)

LaDuke maintains a metaphorical link between the historical territorial "war" and the contemporary the occupation of the tribal government offices in her description of the barricade of old cars separating the activists and the federal police. Having applied the term "resistance" to her 19th century Dakota warriors, LaDuke now assigns in the passage below a traditional role to her contemporary activists by using the Anishinaabeg term *ogichidaaweg*: warriors.

Like a settler of old circling the wagons for defense, Willie Scheider drove the tribal bulldozer, nudging the old sedans, crashed vans, immobilized pickups, and a few charred remains of unidentifiable war ponies into a circle around the office building to create a perimeter [...]The *ogichidaaweg* had completed a barricade behind which the Indians could now make their stand. (159,160)

Ironically inverting the frontier stereotype, it is now the "Indians" who must create a circle with their wagons to defend themselves against the "savage settlers" who are represented by the police and by a growing crowd of Euro-American onlookers who gradually become more drunk, aggressive, and uncontrollably violent during the course of the occupation. LaDuke does not restrict such metaphorical associations to the Native characters only. The federal officers guarding the parameter of the occupation are also overcome with a vivid sense of similarity between colonial settler conditions and the present situation.

The darkest of skies was filled with stars shining brilliantly against the backdrop of the northern woods. The silence tested Agent Cope's nerves; he distrusted the quiet in this foreign land. He felt precisely the same fear as his generations past had felt in out posts to Indian Territory. (203)

LaDuke's metaphorical compression of 19th and 20th century resistant activities is informed by the rhetoric of 1970s Red Power activists and the symbolic as well as political nature of their protest activities. Troy Johnson *et al* argue that the Red Power movement drew on "many elements of Indian history, especially symbols of resistance."

Geronimo, the Apache leader who fought against U.S. control over reservation communities in the 1880s, was one such symbol for the Alcatraz Island occupiers. Custer's defeat in 1876 was used to symbolize Indian victory

and defiance, and the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 became a major symbol of Indian repression during the Wounded Knee seizure in 1973. (292)

Extrapolating from Elizabeth Rich's discussion of the Red Power movement's use of "metonymy in 21st century protest," the terms used to describe Red Power acts of civil disobedience can be seen to have had both a metaphorical significance and a performative significance as "re-enactments" of extreme moments in Native history. Terms such as "occupation" and "retaking" referenced Native territorial dispossession, while the two cross-country protest caravans and marches from the West coast to Washington D.C., "The Trail of Broken Treaties" (1972) and the "Longest Walk" (1978), referenced historic incidents of forced relocation under inhumanly harsh conditions of, respectively, the eastern tribes and the Navajos. These high-profile activist events were not merely "passion plays" meant to raise public awareness, but performances attempting to politically reverse extant (post)colonial socio-political structures which had led to those historical events in the first place. As the Red Power activists repeatedly attempted to pressure the federal government into negotiating new policies favorable to tribal communities, LaDuke's activists present the authorities with similar demands, rhetorically constructed to metaphorically reference an ongoing (post)colonial state of affairs.

"In response to the government's decision to *invade* our community, we're issuing a statement," Warren began. "Ninety percent of our reservation is held by interests other than Native People. Our people have been forced into desperate poverty, and yet we watch our natural resources and wealth flow off this reservation, without any benefit to us. Now, the headwaters of the Mississippi River are threatened by contamination. *This is our survival*. We are not willing to *surrender* until there is some meaningful intention to negotiate. The federal, state, and tribal governments have been given a clear and reasonable set of demands. We await a response. We are prepared to *defend our land and future generations* by any means necessary." [emphasis added] (180)

This passage can be seen to articulate the nature of LaDuke's Native subject-cum-nation in the final sections of the novel, substantiated in an activist's civil disobedient emphasis on political agency (e.g., negotiation of structural change) as integral to the tribal nation. By metaphorically linking (post)colonial situations and contemporary political situations, LaDuke underscores that it is not the Native nation as colonized "Other" but the Native nation as self-authored subject, i.e., as political author of its own contemporary situation and future, which has existed since colonial contact and which remains agential.

As indicated above in relation to the drum ceremony, LaDuke's subject-as-nation's self-substantiating activist praxis is not only political but is also integrally cultural. The mutually influential nature of the political and the cultural can be seen as the occupation inspires a re-investment in traditional cultural practices.

Sweat lodges were constructed near the tribal offices, and on a number of occasions different *Anishinaabeg* spiritual leaders came in to lead ceremonies. There had even been talk of the return of the Big Drum and *Midewiwin* ceremonies. Those, however, would come in their own time. (214)

This passage reflects widely drawn conclusions concerning the correlation between political (anti-colonial) activism and forms of cultural revival and ethnic communal solidarity. In relation to the Native American activist movement during the late 1960s and 1970s, an interplay has been observed between "movement-sited interpretive frames and rhetoric and larger political and cultural themes" (Nagel 140). In her sociological study of 1970s Red Power activism, Susan Nagel has examined "the power of activism to inspire ethnic pride," to "reaffirm native cultural tradition," and to "foster ethnic community building" (140, 141). Mirroring the politicizing of Native revitalized cultural practices discussed in relation to

LaDuke's late 19th century situations, the novel's late 20th century situation indicates that it is the politically agential tribal nation which revitalizes performance of tribal culture practices.

It is this "praxis," the fusion through civil disobedient activism of the political and cultural, which informs LaDuke's subject-as-nation throughout the novel's 200 years of (post)coloniality in America, and which LaDuke supports by her interlinking of these two centuries. Paralleling the substantiation of tribal nationhood in the first sections of the novel as the *act* of civil disobedience to (post)colonial political structures, in the final occupation the substantiation of tribal nationhood will be the *actualization* of Native civil disobedient goals: the re-structuring of (post)colonial political hegemonic superstructures into postcolonial structures supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

From (post)coloniality to postcoloniality

As has been discussed in the (post)modernism section, much of contemporary Native literature has taken as its agenda the envisioning of "other destinies" (Owens) for its Native subject than those accorded it in Western discourse. Similarly, LaDuke's narrative technique of situational overlapping and metaphorical linking serve her ultimate purpose: to "rewrite" the outcome of these acts of civil disobedience as fulfilling the activist visions of Native national destinies. In doing so, LaDuke's novel corresponds to Barbara Harlow's description of resistance literature.

The resistance novels seek different historical endings and these endings are already implicit, contained within the narrative analysis and construction of the conditions and problematic of the historical situation itself. (79)

LaDuke's narrative configuring of an alternate tribal national present, represented in the ultimate success of her novel's 1990 occupation of the tribal government offices, is a creative composite of the political activities LaDuke herself was engaged in during the 1980s and 1990s on the White Earth reservation. The novel's occupation and the corruptibility of the tribal government to the disadvantage of the community's land rights echo the political situation on the White Earth reservation during the 1980s which led to the negotiation of what would be called the White Earth Land Settlement Act of 1986. LaDuke remarks that at the time

... we had a tribal government that was very corrupt, called the Wadina Administration. The chairman of the Wadina Administration took the settlement over the protests of the community. We had occupations of tribal council headquarters, and over 500 people were arrested. ("Native Struggles")

The novel's Protect Our Land Coalition resembles LaDuke's own organization, the White Earth Land Recovery Project (WELRP), which was formed in 1989 to attempt to legally challenge the detrimental White Earth Land Settlement Act. As echoed in the novel's 1915 confrontation with the loggers, in 1994 WELRP blockaded a road being used by the Potlatch timber company to clear-cut non-reservation land owned by LaDuke's organization ("White Earth").

While LaDuke and the White Earth community were not successful either through legal procedures or civil disobedience in combating the negative effect of Indian policy at that time, in her novel the occupation succeeds in fulfilling its civil disobedient function and civil political goal: to force the initiation of tribal-federal negotiation. As the activists in the novel maintain contact with the media, civil support from the broader community snowballs.

The result was that fifty to a hundred calls daily were going in to the Minnesota Congressional delegation and the State Legislature's offices, putting pressure on the elected officials to negotiate with the Indians. (214)

After an activist is killed by an errant federal bullet, the government agrees to negotiate with the Protect Our Land coalition. This produces its own snowball effect as the corrupt tribal council agrees to cancel the logging permit and the federal government agrees to several tribal national developmental plans which would afford the Anishinaabeg community more sovereignty and self-determination.

LaDuke now fully portrays her visions of an ideal postcolonial tribal nation, first beginning with the reorganization of the tribal government.

In 1994, the White Earth *Anishinaabeg* government was rebuilt with a melange of traditional tribal structures and new administration to manage relations with federal and state bureaucracies. (246)

This restructuring does not reflect a nativist return to pre-contact structures but a contemporary tribal self-designed blueprint of a viable postcolonial political system managing both tribal internal affairs as well as "international" tribal nation-to-federal government interactions. In addition, LaDuke sketches a socio-economic stratagem, based on the re-acquisition of tribal lands and a return to traditional economies, when as a result of what comes to be termed in the novel "the Occupation of 1993" (246), a large-scale land acquisition project is undertaken in which

...almost a third of the land had been returned to the White Earth people. This included those lands held by various absentee government and private owners.

What remained a challenge was the financing of the re-acquisition or the buy-out of the non-Indians who were private landowners on the reservation and who wanted to leave. [...]With the changes in land ownership wrought by the land programs, there was a change in natural resource management as well. [...] Now, a natural resource management committee established a program of selective cutting and habitat restoration. The committee had planted medicinal plants and re-introduced animals. (247, 251)

The domino effect initiated by the re-acquisition of much of the community's land base also influences tribal enrolment provisions:

Under new tribal enrollment provisions, a commitment to language and culture were now a central part of tribal membership. "It's not that you have to be a fluent Ojibwe speaker," Selam reasoned, "only that you should be sincere about a commitment to remember your culture and language." (251)

The final domino of tribal sovereignty and self-determination to be affected is represented by language. The linking of tribal citizenship to a commitment to indigenous language is effectively an act of de-colonization as it indicates a reversal of the pervasive legacy of Indian boarding schools where native languages were prohibited and children were estranged from their families and tribal cultural ties.

LaDuke's postcolonial tribal nation is the realization of both the economic and cultural ideals invested during the 1970s in the words "sovereignty" and "self-determination," as well as the realization of the political ambitions of LaDuke's WELRP project. LaDuke has envisioned the successful tribal national outcome of the 1970s activist ideals, as she practiced them in the 1980s, in her 1990s narrative as the culmination of 200 years of the resistant agency of the Native subject. This process is distinctively postcolonial in nature in that it charts the restructuring of colonial superstructures from "within."

A new postcolonial subject

While the long-term achievements of 1970s Red Power activism in terms of enhanced tribal *political* sovereignty and self-determination have been debated (Nagel 220), this movement did actualize what one could call the self-determination of the *discursive* context of the Native subject.

The Red Power movement was not only a political mobilization; it was also a wellspring of transformation and renewal. Red Power activism put forth an image of American Indians as victorious rather than victimized, confronting an oppressive federal bureaucracy, demanding redress of long-standing grievances, challenging images of Indians as powerless casualties of history, redefining “red,” “native,” and “tribal” as valued statuses imbued with moral and spiritual significance. (Nagel 140)

The Native subject was no longer subject to Euro-American discourse, the historiography of nation-state building, but was “repatriated” into Native discursive “activist” contexts of viable tribal national praxes. LaDuke also repositions her Native subject in a revised future socio-political discourse in which the hierarchical binary of colonial hegemony is replaced by a balanced binary of postcolonial mutuality. To achieve this, however, she envisions a transformation not in the Native subject, but in the Euro-American subject.

As her novel progresses beyond its year of publication (1997) to conclude in the year 2000, the situation LaDuke depicts to indicate this transformation involves the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) enacted by Congress on November 16, 1990 and its implied paradigm shift in socio-political attitudes towards Natives. Prior to the NAGPRA, all Native remains and artifacts discovered outside Euro-American graveyards were considered the immediate and sole property of the federal government, which deposited them at various research facilities throughout the country. Neither living relatives of the deceased nor tribal communities could claim rights to the remains (Thornton 399-400; Milun 58). The NAGPRA act, which provides for the protection of unmarked Native burial sites and for the legal means for tribal repossession of ancestral remains and cultural artifacts, has been seen by Native communities as an important symbolic departure from treating “the Native American” as a discursive and literal “object” of the nation-state’s prehistory (Milun 63).

NAGPRA recognizes that Native peoples are not themselves museum objects of dead cultures or even isolated remnants of quaint lost tribes; they are members of *ongoing* governmental, social, economic, religious, and political units. Native peoples are free under the law to define themselves and their life-ways, including their own legal system’s definition of what is a sacred object, what is cultural patrimony [...].(Strickland 88)

The quotation implies that NAGPRA indicates a paradigm shift from the (post)colonial to the postcolonial in its acknowledgement that the Native is no longer the “subject” of U.S.-authored colonial history but the “subject” of the Native-authored tribal national present and future. As LaDuke creates the novel’s postcolonial “futura,” she suggests how this implied paradigm shift should be reflected in a new postcolonial *Euro-American* subject and in a new postcolonial dynamic of Native and Euro-American interaction.

At the end of the novel, after having retrieved for repatriation Anishinaabeg tribal remains from the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., Moose Hanford’s car breaks down on the way back to the White Earth reservation. This draws the attention of a hippie, a highway patrolman, and a vacationing family from Pennsylvania, representatives of three primary Euro-American attitudes towards Natives: counter-culture romantic appropriation, racist and authoritarian disapprobation, and mainstream acceptance of “Vanishing Race” discourses. Moose is initially suspicious of their possible reactions to his situation but is bemused as both the Deadhead rocker and the policeman offer to help fix his car. When the family from Pennsylvania drives up and asks what is going on, Moose is much surprised as the patrolman replies

“He’s carrying an important load,” the officer authoritatively told the family. “He’s bringing back remains of his ancestors to be reburied.”

The man and woman looked surprised, the woman asked Moose, “They’re probably from the Smithsonian, I’ll bet?” The man looked questioningly at his wife as she explained, “I heard all about it on public radio.” (278)

Moose’s bemused reaction indicates that this situation is uncharacteristic, given the level of knowledge and respect for Native concerns in mainstream American society. However, LaDuke creates a harmonious and celebratory moment as the tourists offer everyone a picnic lunch.

Before Moose knew what had happened, he was sitting at a picnic bench with a re-checked tablecloth eating sandwiches with Mike the Deadhead, the patrolman, and the Walker family from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, who were on their way to see the Grand Canyon. The officer and Mrs. Walker were discussing repatriation while Mike ate tunafish sandwiches with glee. (278)

Moose experiences, as the reader does after the narration of 200 years of tribal and state contestation, relief regarding the respectful attitude of these “mainstream” Euro-Americans. This respectful and supportive attitude of the Euro-Americans indicate that LaDuke’s Native subject, with its intergenerational activism, has achieved not only the transformation of tribal and state political structures but also an inherent change in Euro-American society and in the Euro-American subject. Just as post-civil rights Euro-America had to develop a “multicultural” awareness to socially accommodate 1960s political change, LaDuke suggests that ultimately it will be the transformation of Euro-American *socio-political* discourse regarding Natives, from hegemony to mutuality, that will guarantee a lasting postcoloniality as she has envisioned it.

In *Last Standing Woman*, LaDuke has portrayed the Native subject-as-nation as authoring a viable postcoloniality. The futurity of the novel, created by LaDuke’s narrative foreshadowing, situational overlapping, and metaphorical linking of the 19th century, 1960s/70s, and 1990s situations, can be taken to purposefully imply the inevitable success not only of her literary Native activist subject, but of contemporary ambitions for the tribal national future. In this respect her novel reflects Jameson’s remark that such “national allegories” which present a literary “call to the future” are “able to open up a concrete perspective on the real future” (77).

It is such a mutually influential interplay of discourse and resistant political action that one can discern in Frier’s defense of “the subject” in relation to the reality of socio-political action as praxis.

To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naive and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without men. This objectivistic position is as ingenuous as that of subjectivism, which postulates men without a world. World and men do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction. [...] Just as objective social reality exists not by chance, but as the product of human action, so it is not transformed by chance. If men produce social reality (which in the “inversion of the praxis” turns back upon them and conditions them), then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for men. (35-36)

It is this task, the transformation of reality, that LaDuke sets for her Native subject in its narrative diegetic and “as a historical task” for tribal men and women.

Almanac of the Dead (1991) by Leslie M. Silko

The post-colonial indigenous subject and resistance as “liberation”: The rhetoric of post-coloniality

Having explored the Native subject as allegory of the tribal nation’s resistance to the conditions of (post)coloniality, as well as allegory of the tribal nation’s actualization of a viable postcoloniality, it would seem a reasonable critical step to address Native literary expressions of tribal national post-colonial aspirations: i.e., novels and stories presenting the Native subject working towards a liberated, ex-colonial national situation. However, while the rhetoric of “sovereignty” in the critical writings of various Native academics projects a nationalist separatist stance, few Native novels have dedicated themselves to this vision of the future of Native polities. This dearth, however, is partly compensated for in Leslie M. Silko’s monumental novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), in which the drive to be liberated from the legacy of imperialism and colonial oppression reaches global proportions and an apocalyptic intensity.

Although set in the present along the Arizona/Mexican border, the grand sweep of *Almanac* encompasses the five hundred-year epoch of European and indigenous conflict in the Americas. Through a spiraling web of stories about a myriad of characters, Silko’s novel snowballs through cycles of time and the accumulation of history towards the fulfillment of a prophecy preserved in an ancient Mayan almanac: the apocalyptic promise of the eventual disappearance of “all things European” and the return of the land to tribal people (570). The Euro-Americans in the novel, involved in a self-consuming world of drugs, sadism, and capitalistic schemes, are emblematic of a fundamentally debauched American society rooted in the exploitative dehumanizing Western imperialism of the 16th to the 21st century. The Native characters consolidate their energies to expedite the fulfillment of the almanac’s prophecy by mobilizing various indigenous peoples’ armies throughout the Americas, which gradually converge on the epicenter Tucson, Arizona in preparation for the apocalyptic moment of armed confrontation and restitution.

Exploring a vision seemingly antithetical to the Momaday-like non-confrontational message of her first novel *Ceremony* (1977), Silko’s characters in *Almanac* emblematically manifest the novel’s Manichean confrontational and combative paradigm of bi-polar oppositionality between the imperial (First World) “destroyers” and the indigenous disenfranchised (Fourth World) victims in both South and North America. *Almanac*’s structure of essential bi-polar oppositionality and conflict reflects the core paradigmatic interpretation of the colonizer/colonized relationship developed by liberation theorists such as Aimé Césaire and Franz Fanon as the “struggle between implacably opposed forces” (Parry “Resistance theory” 180), the novel’s indigenous characters manifesting what Fanon described as “the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space” (“On National Culture” 155). The indigenous characters manifest this “will to liberty” as they are infused with a sense of the immanent completion of an almanac cycle of *time*, the end of 500 years of imperialism, represented as the repossession of the indigenous territorial *space*:

Europeans called it coincidence, but the almanacs had prophesied the appearance of Cortés to the day. All Native American tribes had similar prophecies about the appearance, conflict with, and eventual disappearance of things European. [...] Conjunctions and convergences of global proportions might require six or seven hundred years to develop.[...] It made no difference because what was coming was relentless and inevitable; [...] tribal people would retake the Americas; tribal people would retake ancestral land all over the world. (570, 618, 712)

It is this singular focus on the land in the discourse of liberty which provides the novel with its multilayered nationalistic dimension, from the tribal-specific to the pan-Indian to the global indigenous. Cook-Lynn argues that the concepts of sovereignty and nationalism are predicated for colonized people on the “land.”

Sovereignty, Nationalism. These are political principles, make no mistake. [...] Yet for a colonized people the most essential value in the defense of self is in the land, for it is in land that the native finds morality and it is only in land that rights and nationhood reside. (*Anti-Indianism* 178)

Ellen L. Arnold interprets the novel's monofocal theme of the recuperation of indigenous land-bases in "nativist" nationalist terms, stating that the convergence of the indigenous people's armies in Tucson at the end of the novel indicates the creation of an "indigenous nation," and that the relocation of "the center of the continent to the area of the current US-Mexico border" recreates "an older 'nation' defined not by artificial boundaries [...] but by shared histories, [and] mythic traditions" ("The Word" 222). However, while Arnold recognizes a commonality of indigenous purpose expressed in nationalistic terms, her nativistic interpretation fails to take into account that the "history" shared by all the tribes is *not* primarily cultural history ("mythic traditions") but the history of imperialism and colonization. In this respect, the repossession of the land can be more appropriately understood not in nativistic terms of "recreating an [a new] older nation" but as a focalizing metaphor of anti-imperialism.

The characteristic anti-imperialism of the novel can be illuminated using Said's distinction between (anti)imperialism and (anti)colonialism (*Culture* 289, 293). Said claims that *imperialism* can be understood as an *ideology* developing from the West's epistemologies of superiority, which justified the practice of *colonialism* and its *institutional* management of the imperialist project, the conquest of territories and the subjection of non-European peoples. It can be said that *Almanac*, more than the other novels discussed, goes beyond an anti-colonial resistance to oppressive governmental structures in its attack on imperialism as an ideology, this attack reflected in the novel's "systematic resistance to, the Empire *as West*" (*Culture* 236), its radical insistence on the erasure of "all things European" and its utilization of indigenous epistemological systems (represented by the Mayan almanac's prophetic of cyclic history vs. Euro-linearity). This anti-imperialism is given its material expression in the novel as a redefined territoriality. Cook-Lynn remarks that the novel aims to "redefine the boundaries of the Western hemisphere" (*Why* 90). Said underscores the centrality of recuperated geography as a key anti-imperialistic element in resistance literature:

If there is anything that radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical element. Imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control. For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by loss of the locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored. Because of the presence of the colonizing outsider, the land is recoverable at first only through the imagination. ("Yeats" 297)

While the indigenist national liberatory drive of the novel seems to reach its prophetic culmination at the end of the novel, the "Native anti-imperial subject" having been consolidated into an "army to retake tribal land [...] all over the earth..." (518), the narrative concludes at this cusp of its presaged confrontation. While much of the rhetoric of her massive novel anticipates a violent conflict between indigenous nations and the U.S., as the moment draws near Silko has some of her characters discuss the value of democratically achieved peaceful solutions.

The Hopi had talked about peaceful and gradual changes as if he believed voting would become the solution [...] Each time the Hopi said "nonviolent free elections," Angelita had grimaced. Lecha could see that Angelita suspected the truth: there would be no elections; great struggles were about to sweep all through the Americas as far north as Alaska and Canada. [...] The Hopi and the twin brothers might sincerely believe their recovery of the Americas could take place without bloodshed, but Lecha had her doubts [...] Wilson Weasel Tail

and the Hopi could talk all they wanted about peaceful revolutions [but for years] Zeta had been buying and stockpiling weapons in the old mine shafts. (739, 740)

Both the politically minded Hopi and the twin brothers leading an indigenous group of religious pilgrims are dedicated to non-violent “postcolonial” alternatives to the radical, liberationist, anti-imperial drive and rhetoric of the novel. As the indigenous armies accompanying the pilgrims consolidate and converge on Tucson, the apocalyptic momentum of the novel is suspended at a final “ballot or bullet” ultimatum for the West.

This novel’s discourse of immanent indigenous global “liberation” from centuries of dispossession and oppression could be seen as a logical *ne plus ultra* position of the subaltern subject-as-nation actualized by its anti-colonial/anti-Imperial resistant agency. However, considering this discussion of the national allegorical function of Native subject in relation the “emblematic” function of the novel’s characters as embodiments of a Manichean anti-imperial oppositionality and liberatory rhetoric, it must be asked whether the novel’s rhetorically developed and projected indigenous “utopian” vision and goal retains an allegorical value and viability, or whether it ultimately falls into the genre of “fantasy.”

In her study *Modern Allegory and Fantasy: Rhetorical Stances of Contemporary Writing* (1989), Lynette Hunter distinguished the function and effect of modern allegory in relation to the function and effect of fantasy. Arguing that modern allegory has gone beyond its earlier crystallized convention of didactic “one-to-one images,” Hunter proposes that contemporary allegory demands that the reader engage in a critical evaluation of the text’s proposed world *in relation to* the corresponding situations in the *real* (socio-political) world (132-133, 141). “Fantasy,” on the other hand, insists on an acceptance of the text’s diegetic world and premises as absolutely viable without evaluative, critical comparison with the reader’s material (socio-political) reality (3, 179). Hunter insists that writers utilizing the allegorical mode are primarily concerned with the critical examination of disparate epistemologies, how these epistemologies are structured and governed by “power,” and the role language plays in rhetorically molding and reflecting these processes:

...those writing about allegory rarely assume neutrality, indeed they are often overtly interested in power. They do not assume a (con)fusion of worlds, the hover of the actual over the alternative, and are usually explicitly interested in the comment of one group upon the other. [...] Allegory is not that interested in outlining specific epistemologies, it is more concerned with the relationships they indicate. [...] allegory recognizes the world external to human beings, the material world of which language is a part, and hence recognizes the need for a discussion of relations of power when considering the use of language and literature. (131, 140)

Hunter claims that theorists of allegory concur that the allegorical viability of the text does not simply depend on the writer’s commitment to this narrative technique, but that the reader must also actively read in an allegorical mode in order to realize the evaluative, critical significance of the text’s rhetoric. As Hunter writes, “It is as if once you make a decision to read actively you enter the allegorical, but if you make no decision, you enter fantasy by default”(140).

In relation to Silko’s novel, *Almanac*’s liberatory rhetoric could be read as a utopian fantasy of a projected overthrown imperial world order. However, the *allegorical* significance of *Almanac*’s radical liberatory rhetoric becomes apparent when understood within the context of the function of separatist rhetoric in the Native activist discourse of nationhood during and after the Red Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the current 21st century reception of the rhetoric of indigenous distinctivity and collective rights.

Almanac can be seen to re-articulate the militant separatist stance of American Indian Movement (AIM) activists of the late 1960s and 1970s as carried over into the nationalistic writings of such contemporary Native writers as Ward Churchill who advocates “complete sovereign independence” for tribal nations (*Native Son* 531). The nationalist rhetoric of the

Red Power movement has been criticized as having “failed” in that it projected impractical and politically naïve envisioned separatist objectives. However, this criticism has itself been taken to task for its “misanalysis” of both the primary audience and the political purpose of such separatist rhetoric (Redfield 158).

With respect to the “dialogics” of this nationalistic rhetorical discourse, Randall A. Lake has indicated that 1960s/1970s Red Power rhetoric’s primary audience was not Euro-Americans but the AIM movement members and other Natives “for the purpose of gathering the like-minded, and is addressed only secondarily to the white establishment” (qtd. in Redfield 158). This implies that because Native militant rhetoric has been accorded the wrong primary audience- U.S. politicians and Euro-Americans- it has also been accorded the wrong primary political function, that of effectuating completely independent tribal nations. It can therefore be argued that one of the primary goals of the separatist rhetoric during the Red Power movement was to strengthen community solidarity specifically through a new, rhetorically fostered sense of political unity, viability, and distinctiveness. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to presume that solidarity was the *only* goal of this rhetoric, because political unity is itself a *prerequisite* for the realization of a political agenda. The recognition of this agenda depends on the interpretation of the distinctive relationship between Native separatist rhetoric and tribal political aspirations.

Scott Richard Lyons has argued that while Native contemporary academics from various socio-cultural fields such as Vine Deloria Jr.(law), Robert Warrior (literary criticism), and Ward Churchill (Native American studies) have explored the concept of tribal “sovereignty” utilizing nationalistic-cum-separatist rhetoric, “none of them can adequately be described as purely separatist” (457). Elucidating this, Ward Churchill has explained that an absolutist rhetorical *demand* for Native self-determination and national sovereignty is “not the same as complete separation from the United States, or Canada, or whatever the colonizing power may be.”

The unqualified acknowledgement of the right of the colonized to total separation (“secession”) by the colonizer is the necessary point of departure for any exercise of self-determination. Decolonization means the colonized can then exercise the right in whole or in part, as they see fit, in accordance with their own customs and traditions and their own appreciation of their needs. They decide for themselves what degree of autonomy they wish to enjoy, and thus the nature of their political and economic relationships, not only with their former colonizers, but with all other nations as well. (*Native Son* 531-532)

Utilizing an absolutist rhetoric himself, Churchill indicates that the political function of such rhetoric is to “force the concession” from the State of the distinctive legal rights due to indigenous peoples based on the legacy of colonization, treating, and the legal constructs of their polities as “nations.” Krupat has likewise identified the political function of Native nationalist separatist rhetoric as attempting to achieve an “expanded sovereignty” and “a greater degree of ‘autonomy’” for tribal nations *within* the nation-state superstructure without “seek[ing] the creation of postcolonial states” (*Red* 5). Similarly, Robert Warrior describes the character of Native nationalism as a call for Natives to “withdraw without becoming separatists” (qtd. in Lyons 457).

Therefore, while Native separatist rhetoric arguably has a non-separatist agenda, the conviction exists that it is an effective strategy for influencing political and legal structures. Indeed, the influence of rhetoric on tribal nations is exemplified in the ongoing legacy of Marshall’s rhetoric of tribes as “dependent nations,” in which actual political forms of tribal nationhood continue to be limited or enabled, substantiated or undermined by the legal implications of the rhetoric of national sovereignty. Beyond the borders of the U.S., as indicated by Churchill and as allegorically envisioned by Silko in *Almanac*, the political arena

in which such indigenous separatist, nationalist rhetoric continues to accrue a complex legal potentiality is the global community of nations.

In Ronald Niezen's exploration of indigenism as a liberation movement, he traces how AIM activism and idealism precipitated the coordination of the transnational organizations World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP, founded in 1974) and the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC 1974). These organizations emphasized a global indigenous constituency and aspired to UN recognition of indigenous peoples as polities, as the word "peoples" can be understood to imply. In 1981 the Working Group on Indigenous Populations was established by the United Nations and assigned the task of drafting a declaration for the international protection of indigenous peoples' rights. It would take 25 years of dispute concerning the declaration's rhetoric of nationhood and its legal implications before being adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2006.

Indicative of the international unease with tropes of nationhood in documents regarding indigenous populations was the contention over the word "peoples" in an earlier UN Convention (No. 169) adopted in 1989 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. Niezen relates that

For three years, delegates to meetings on the revised convention engaged in an apparently arcane debate on whether to replace "populations" in Convention No. 107 with "peoples" [in the new ILO Convention No. 169 of 1989]. State governments strongly resisted use of the word "peoples" in Convention No. 169 to identify its indigenous beneficiaries because use of the term is associated with self-determination, which, in turn, is associated in international law with a right of independent statehood. [...]The eventual compromise, which has since satisfied few, is inclusion of the word "peoples" in the convention, but with a disqualifying clause in Article 1.3: "The use of the term "peoples" in this Convention shall not be construed as having any implications as regards the rights which may attach to the term under international law." (Niezen 36, 38, 38)

Similarly, the countries with the largest indigenous populations (United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) voted against the 2006 Declaration, their UN representatives expressing "concerns over provisions on self-determination, land and resources rights and, among others, *language* giving indigenous peoples a right of veto over national legislation and State management of resources" [emphasis added]. Australia stated that it "did not support *a concept that could be construed as* encouraging action that would impair, even in part, the territorial and political integrity of a State" [emphasis added] ("General Assembly"). The U.S. *et al* can be seen as responding to what they understood as anti-state rhetoric echoing the liberatory rhetoric which heralded Third World liberation campaigns resulting successfully in ex-colonial national autonomy. However, as in relation to AIM separatist rhetoric, it has been argued that the UN Declaration utilized the rhetoric of national sovereignty with a decidedly *postcolonial* purpose.

Comparing the liberatory rhetoric of indigenist activist groups with their political goals, Niezen remarks that "indigenous peoples are not engaged in a liberation struggle that aspires to liberation within a national framework" but rather a struggle that works towards "an honorable relationship with states in which their rights to land are affirmed" (17-18). This envisioned honorable relationship is most often understood as a greater degree of politically structured and formalized "mutuality," primarily as a greater degree of tribal national "self-determination" within the nation-state superstructure and an increased indigenous political participation in policy decisions which might impact their communities and land bases ("General Assembly"). Niezen indicates that the political rhetoric of "liberation" utilized by international indigenous peoples movements needs to be understood within the context of this political agenda, as "emancipation through the exercise of power" (18).

While this understanding of indigenous liberation is not predicated on political separatism (i.e. tribal national ex-coloniality), it does imply the qualification of State institutional and legal hegemony predicated on the history of colonialism and the legacy of

Imperialism. Churchill's following remarks can be seen both to summarize this purpose and aim of Native separatist rhetoric, as well as to explicate the function of Silko's *Almanac* as *allegorically* reflecting these *realpolitik* situations and indigenous ambitions.

The intent here is not to visit some sort of retribution, real or symbolic, on the colonizing of former colonizing powers- no matter how much it may be deserved in an abstract sense. It is to arrive at new sets of relationships between peoples that effectively put an end to the era of international domination. The need is to gradually replace the existing world order with one that is predicated on collaboration and cooperation between nations. The only way to ever really accomplish that is to physically disassemble the gigantic state structures- structures that are literally predicated on systematic intergroup domination [...] - which evolved from the imperialist era. A concomitant of this disassembly is the inculcation of voluntary, consensual interdependence between formerly dominated and dominating nations, and a redefinition of the world "nation" itself to conform to its original meaning: bodies of peoples bound together by their bioregional and other natural cultural affinities. ("I am" 531-532)

Churchill underscores the anti-imperial implications of indigenous efforts to suggest, envision, and ultimately create new politically structured postcolonial inter- national relationships. It is this implied anti-imperial postcoloniality which the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand responded to in their resistance to the UN Declaration's rhetoric of indigenous nationhood, and it is this challenge that fuels the liberatory rhetoric of *Almanac* as an allegoric expression of this situation, its "ballot or bullet" final ultimatum demanding the recognition of the distinctive situations and rights of indigenous peoples.

Recognition: from the inter-national to the multi-cultural

Political "recognition" has been seen as the fundamental prerequisite for all nation-states in order to be able to actuate themselves as a sovereign entities.

A state cannot become sovereign except within a system of other sovereign states, its sovereignty being acknowledged by them; in this there is a strong pressure towards mutual recognition as equals, whatever the factual situation in respect of differential power. (Guibernau 57)

The demand to be "recognized" has been repeatedly discerned in discussions of tribal nationhood as the precondition for their envisioned expanded sovereignty, the treaty making process being seen to have implied a premised "mutual recognition of sovereignty" (Niezen 91). Scott Richard Lyons, discussing the evolution of the concept of sovereignty from its European roots as a discourse which legitimized State authority to the contemporary tribal "ideal principle" and "general strategy" by which Native polities aim to empower themselves, insists that the power implicit in the concept of sovereignty is dependent "upon the crucial act of recognition" and that the tribal pursuit of "sovereignty has always been on some level a public pursuit of recognition" (450, 465). This tribal pursuit of "recognition" as well as the contemporary (inter)national political discussion, briefly addressed above, of the ramifications of State recognition and accommodation of the distinctive political status and collective rights of peoples subsumed into State structures as a result of colonization is also rooted in the mid-20th century ethnic nationalist movements and the subsequent development of the concept of multiculturalism. Lyons, emphasizing the pivotal role of "recognition" in both the tribal concept of sovereignty and the discourses of multiculturalism remarks that the idea of sovereignty

has something to offer the discourses of multiculturalism and critical race theory, [...] because of its applicability to the many contested sites (and actual places) of power in multiple senses: legal, cultural, intellectual, material, and so on. [...] A reclamation of sovereignty by any group remains, as Deloria argues above, a recognition of that group's power- a *recognition* made by both self and other. (458)

In the next section, multiculturalism and its dynamics, termed “politics of recognition” by Charles Taylor will, be seen to form the primary socio-discursive environment for Native contemporary fiction in which Native writers explore not the construction of Native subjectivity but the determination and evaluation of Native identity. Attendant on the shift from “subject-ivity” to “identity” will be the shift in paradigmatic critical structures, a shift which can be seen to produce a “parallel” paradigm. While the (post)modern discussion of the “subject” involved the discursive components Self/Other, the exploration of “identity” will apply the referential concepts Same/ Different to the discussion of its construction. Likewise, the shift away from the postcolonial subject’s socio-discursive arena of the imperial state and tribal nation will follow Aijaz Ahmad’s proposed shift away from Jameson’s postcolonial nationalistic allegorical model to the patterns of the “relation between private and public, personal and communal” (82) in the following section’s discussion of Native identity.

Section Two: Native Identity

Arnold Krupat has remarked that since 1968 literary critics have “widely noted [that] the Native American novel has very intensively been concerned with the subject of *identity*” (*Red* 109). The intensification of this preoccupation coincided with the broader socio-political concerns of mid-20th century America: the Civil Rights movement, the subsequent ethnic revival movements, and the development of the concept of multiculturalism in the 1970s. Since then, “identity” in literary criticism has drawn on a conglomerated conceptualization of identity formation and negotiation gleaned from cultural/ethnic studies, postcolonial studies, sociology, and psychology (Handler, “Is Identity” 27-39).

A general definition of “identity” reveals a distinctive bipolarity. On the one hand, identity is the individual’s understanding of his/her distinctivity from others (i.e. “difference”), while on the other hand the term concurrently indicates the individual’s sense of membership in a homogenous group (i.e. “sameness”). In addition, the “homogeneity” of such a group has itself been studied with respect to the dynamics of “collective identity” formation and maintenance (Fogelson 41; Handler, “Is Identity” 28). Two primary identity paradigms used by social science theorists which would seem to be most applicable in the exploration of Native identity formation and negotiation in literature are “category-based identities (e.g. black or white, Christian or Jew)” and “role-based identities (e.g., parent or child, teacher or student)” (Stryker, Burke 289, 293). The examples offered parenthetically by Sheldon Stryker, one of the theorists just quoted, can be modified to apply to Native “category-based/social identities” (red or white, Christian or Native) and Native “role-based identities” (tribal kinship relationships and responsibilities). While these two identity paradigms are described and applied as distinct, they are also understood to be fundamentally interlinked as “social” constructions. As Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burk remark,

We point out that one always and simultaneously occupies a role and belongs to a group, so that role identities and [category] identities are always and simultaneously relevant to, and influential on, perceptions, affect, and behavior. (“Identity Theory” 228).

Due to the inevitable dialogic interplay of these analytic paradigms, the umbrella term “identity” or “social identity” will be used in this study to refer to both the category-based and role-based *self-concept* of the novels’ protagonists, and the term “identity contexts” will reference bounded social and categorical contexts within which the individual’s social identity is legitimated and recognized, specifically received understandings of religion, race, kinship, and gender within the tribal community and Euro-American mainstream society (Alcoff, *Visible* vii, 34; Morris 608).

Native identity

Native “identity” is most often discussed in terms of several primary contexts: kinship, community, culture, and land (i.e. place) (Lyons, “Rhetorical” 458; Grim 361; Fogelson 44). These constituent categories, however, not only provide reference points for the substantiation of Native identity, they also evince the socio-cultural contexts in which the “atom” of Native identity seems to be split infinitely. David Murray remarks that “the question of whether Indian identity is measured by blood, expressed through kinship and genealogy, or through culture and place, remains a complex problem in Indian writing,” (*Forked* 80) the Cherokee writer Thomas King asking his readers to consider the many permutations of these identity components:

... full-bloods raised in cities, half-bloods raised on farms, quarter-bloods raised on reservations, Indians adopted and raised by white families, Indians who speak their tribal language, Indians who speak only English, traditionally educated Indians, university-trained Indians, Indians with little education. (*All* x-xi)

In the novels to be discussed in this section, the permuted nature of Native socio-cultural contexts will be explored in relation to the “identity contexts” mentioned above: religion in the works of Anna Lee Walters (Pawnee) and Louise Erdrich (Chippewa), ethnicity/race and kinship in the novels of Michael Dorris (Modoc) and Greg Sarris (Pomo/Miwok), and gender in the texts of Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo) and Craig Womack (Creek/Cherokee). The Native individual’s self-concept will be seen as a negotiation of the dynamics of these variegated contexts in which identity “recognition” is complicated by the disparate and often conflicting Euro-American and tribal criteria for identity “legitimization.”

It is generally acknowledged that the dynamics of identity recognition and legitimization, especially for marginalized populations, have always been fundamentally political. The ramifications of this political dimension, brought to the fore during the Civil Rights movement, became increasingly pertinent with the development of the cluster of socio-political theories now known as “multiculturalism.” Therefore, prefacing the analysis of the novels, a sketch of the various issues within the multicultural debate relating to Native identity recognition and legitimization will be offered in order to contextualize the central problematic, formulated by Louis Owens as “What is an Indian?” (*Other* 3)

Multiculturalism: the continuing debate

One day in a Los Angeles neighborhood which had signs in every other shop in Russian (with Cyrillic alphabet), I stopped at a taco stand where a number of Asian-American students were also eating. The African-American waiter wore dreadlocks. No one seemed to notice. (Stiehm, “Diversity’s” 154)

In her essay about the concept of “diversity” in higher education and society at large, Judith Stiehm paints the rather well known picture often presented as an indication of the “multicultural condition” of post Civil Rights era America (Goldberg, “Introduction” 1). A closer look at the elements she recognizes as multicultural and the apparent social blindness to them will lead to several questions and opinions central to the multicultural polemic: Is this a multicultural utopian scene of peaceful synthesis and harmony? Or is it proof of pure assimilation into the hegemony of late capitalism in which the “ethnic” becomes yet another commodity for Americans to buy, wear, or eat? The cluster of discourses called “multiculturalism” has been seen to have a dual nature at best, and at worst has proven to be a double edged sword for minority cultures (Gordon and Newfield, “Introduction” 4). Put forth as a social philosophy, it can be seen as an attack on America’s common culture, but also as that same common culture “in ethnic drag.” As the philosophy behind political policy, has it enabled more members of minority communities to become better educated and achieve

employment, or has “an ambiance of cultural diversity (a subaltern *mise-en-scène*, if you will)” served to “obscure the fact that nothing at all has changed for the diverse populations in question” (Wallace 259).

As a discourse, multiculturalism seems to have become as unwieldy as it is indispensable. David Theo Goldberg states that “broadly conceived, multiculturalism is critical of and resistant to the necessarily reductive imperatives of monocultural assimilation” but admits that “no sooner had multicultural demands and aspirations begun to be articulated than they were imparted multiple and conflicting interpretations, meanings and implications” (“Introduction”7). Paul Kelly describes the multiculturalist debates as

cutting across familiar ideological boundaries between left and right.[...]Is being in favour of multicultural policies the natural response to rejecting group discrimination, racism and bigotry, or is it to fall prey to a subversive conservatism that endorses hierarchy, tradition and the denial of opportunity? (“Introduction” 3, 4)

In relation to the concept of identity, multicultural argumentation has been used, on the one hand, to reveal the socio-political legacy of “WASP” monocultural hegemony, to stimulate both the cultivation of ethnic distinctivity (“difference”) in relation to that monoculture and the consolidation and delineation of ethnic communal identity (“sameness”), and to develop the concept of political “recognition” and compensatory governmental policies in relation to previously devalued ethnic identities. On the other hand, the politicization of ethnic identities has provoked multicultural counter arguments in which institutional “politically correct” identity policies have been argued to be not a compensatory “politics of recognition” but a minority power-play of the “politics of difference:” preferentiality masquerading as “equality,” and the promotion of reverse-discriminatory identity straightjackets.

In his essay “Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition” (1992), Charles Taylor remarks that these heated issues reveal “what is at stake in the demand made by many people for recognition of their particular identities by public institutions” (6). Taylor accepts that “recognition” is the site of varying and often conflicting political and social visions concerning distinct group rights within a liberal egalitarian democracy, also calling this “the politics of multiculturalism” (25). In relation to Native populations within this “politics of multiculturalism” and as an illustration of “what is at stake” for both historically disadvantaged groups and the dominant society, Taylor offers a telling example of what he sees as the fallacy inherent in various compensatory government policies aimed at the political “recognition” of minority groups. He concludes that such policies would involve not simply a temporary *deferential* treatment of such groups to compensate for a history of discrimination, but the redefinition of

non-discrimination as requiring that we make these distinctions the basis of *differential* treatment. So members of aboriginal bands will get certain rights and power not enjoyed by other Canadians, if the demands for native self-government are finally agreed on. (39-40, emphasis added)

Whether or not one agrees with Taylor’s fundamentally Euro-centric perspective and reasoning, his image of the success of tribal claims as “the politics of difference” taken to “dangerous” extremes also interestingly indicates that these claims of tribal nations are “the politics of recognition” taken to its logical conclusion.

Such issues involving the concepts of “equality,” which have become the focus of the multivalent multicultural debate, have their roots in the historical development of the contradictory strains in American society: the concept of American “pluralism” and “egalitarianism” in relation to the country’s foundational ethnic diversity and its deep-seated and institutionalized WASP racism. This development will be briefly sketched to indicate how the social science categories “race” and “ethnicity” became socio-political identity

categories, and to suggest the ramifications of those categories for contemporary Native identity contexts.

Different multi-culturalisms and the history of American “pluralism”

In his article “White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism,” Peter McLaren sketches several very different “camps” multiculturalism has developed into. Conservative or corporate multiculturalism prioritizes the extant hegemonic “common culture” while incorporating the cultural contributions of ethnic communities as “add-ons.” Liberal multiculturalism, while accenting the equality of all ethnicities and supporting political empowerment, tends to become “difference blind,” ultimately viewing diverse cultures through universal humanistic glasses. This “blindness” is countered in left-liberal multiculturalism’s prioritizing, over “equality,” the importance of cultural “differences” which produce epistemologies and ontologies different from that of Euro-America’s hegemonic worldview. The pitfall of this brand of multiculturalism is that “difference” tends to become essentialized and then camouflaged by definitions and defenses of “authenticity.” Critical multiculturalism makes use of Foucauldian and poststructural terms and stresses the need to transform the “politics of signification” which has always served to maintain the hegemonic monocultural power system in relation to race, class, and gender. Despite McLaren’s cry for “truly counterhegemonic public spheres,” critical multiculturalism’s efforts and cultural insights usually remain in the sphere of the academy (“White” 63).

That the distinctions between these multicultural perspectives are also often discussed in terms of the concepts of cosmopolitanism, particularism, separatism, and pluralism points to the fact that the rise of the multicultural polemic in the United States is interlocked with earlier attempts to define American cultural pluralism (Newfield and Gordon 94). At the beginning of the 20th century, popular attitudes about the formation of American society were expressed in Israel Zangwill’s play *The Melting Pot* (1908) (Hollinger 9). The title became synonymous with an optimistic “Americanization” of European immigrants. However, as early as 1915, Horace Kallen began to set forth ideas critical of the assimilationism at the heart of the melting pot ideal. In 1924, although focusing only on Caucasian European immigrants, he would coin the phrase “cultural pluralism” and would advocate strong cultural group solidarity “orchestrated” into an interactive unity (qtd. in Newfield and Gordon, 98).

The complex and problematic concept of “cultural pluralism” has left its legacy to the multicultural debate, the central problem being the attempt to rhyme “multiplicity” and “unity” as foundational aspects of American society, one often being stressed to the detriment of the other. Attempts in the 1980s to defuse the pluralism/assimilation tension polarized, according to Newfield and Gordon, opinions into two general camps. The “New Supremacists,” while rejecting racial segregation and exclusion, demanded that Euro-American culture be recognized as the sole source of U.S. culture. “Cultural Unionists,” on the other hand, insisted on irreducible cultural diversity but required *political* unity. Whatever their understanding of diversity’s role and significance in society, these two types of pluralists “use unity to control whatever serious autonomy and shifts in power multiplicity might generate” (93).

Indeed, in relation to these tensions at the core of pluralism, contemporary critical multiculturalism has been successful in reevaluating and reformulating the central problem: instead of emphasizing “diversity” and the difficulties involved in accommodating it, the development of the concept of “unity” and of a “common core culture” has come under intense scrutiny as the source of these conceptual tensions. Homi K. Bhabha’s remark about common culture is a succinct example of this reformulation.

Like all myths of the nation's "unity," the common culture is a profoundly conflicted ideological strategy. It is a declaration of democratic faith in a plural, diverse society and, at the same time, a defense against the real, subversive demands that the articulation of cultural difference- the empowering of minorities- makes upon democratic pluralism. (qtd. in McLaren, "White" 54)

The insight gained from this perspective is that the key dilemma in the conceptualization of multiculturalism and its actualization in society is rooted in the conceptualization of "mainstream" society. Hazel V. Carby has stressed that what needs to be changed is "our whole mind-set, our perspective on the nature of American society. We need to confront what we mean by American society and culture. [...] We need to be critically aware of how we have determined - and who has determined - what we regard as the "common culture" (qtd. in M. Garcia, 51).

America's perceived "common culture" has arguably two central focal points: firstly "constitutional democracy" as national ideology and political superstructure, and secondly a variety of customs and beliefs generally seen as constituting "mainstream" culture and regularly labeled "WASP" (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant). During the Civil Rights movement, both of these focal points came under fire because of what came to be seen as both the fundamental framework and central fault-line of American society and politics discernable throughout American history: racism. Since the 1960s, the history of racism in America has been increasingly discussed in terms of the construction and maintenance of the "WASP mainstream," both through the creation of racial binary "others" as discussed earlier, and by politicizing a physical trait considered a primary indicator of "racial identity": color.

The politics of color, culture, and identity

Since the 1990s scholars have increasingly become interested not only in the West's need to create the "black them," but also in the very development of the idea of the "white us." David Roediger in his *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991) investigates historically "the question of why and how whites reach the conclusion that their whiteness is meaningful" (4). Roediger states that the self-designating term "white" was used by European explorers, traders, and settlers to distinguish themselves from the indigenous people of the Americas with whom they came in contact and the African slaves imported soon afterwards. As the U.S. established itself politically as a nation-state and culturally as Anglo-Saxon Protestant, Roediger indicates that many European immigrants needed to gain access to the category "white" in order to be considered a "member" of the American "mainstream" or "common" culture. Hollinger writes that

Even European immigrant groups whose whiteness was not legally contested- those from Ireland, Italy, and Poland, for example- were long considered so different that the significance of their whiteness diminished except in contexts when black-skinned people were present. The category of "white people" was articulated in the modern United States primarily in relation to black people and secondarily in relation to people of other colors. It took on greater significance as more and more European immigrant groups consolidated their political and economic connections with the Anglo-Protestant population so obviously in control of American institutions. (30)

The color binary "black/white" was both a legal and social identity "marker" which designated one's "difference" from or "sameness" to the American national culture of common "whiteness." This color "marker" proved to be on a sliding scale, a relative "measurement" not only for certain European groups, but also for Native Americans, who at various times found themselves subjected to one of three "color discourses" - "whiteness," "blackness," and "redness"- and their various socio-political ramifications.

Roediger has remarked that the attitudes of “whites” concerning manliness, land use, sexuality, individualism, and violence were influenced by real contacts with, and fanciful ideas about, Native Americans” (21, 22). However, early settlers, attempting to place Native Americans in a referential position with respect to their own “common whiteness” as an indicator of “common culture” could not decide what “color” Native Americans were. Terry Wilson explains that

Perceived as darker than Europeans, Indians were considered essentially White people whose exposure to the sun and custom of painting the body with ocher and other natural dyes explained their various hues. [...] Indians were characterized as culturally degraded, as were Africans, but without the negative comments on color and other physical features made about the latter. While Africans were indisputably and immutably “Black,” with the disparaging attributions made to that color, Indians’ brutishness was judged the result of custom and environment and partially ameliorated by the virtues of physical hardiness, stoicism, and hospitality. Not until the 1750s did Euro-Americans view Indians as a significantly darker race than themselves, and they did not adopt red as the accepted color label for Native Americans until after 1800. (Wilson 117)

The designation “red,” as Alden T. Vaughn remarks, “was sufficiently flexible and ambiguous to meet the metaphysical imperatives of a society that did not wholly agree about the Indian’s basic character or social and political fate” (949). While “blacks” were always perceived as the opposite of “whites,” the “red” Indian could signify both the opposite of whiteness (i.e. “black”: lazy, uncivilized, violent, animalistic) *and* its romantic ideals (i.e. “white”: independent, self-sufficient, brave, survivor in the wilderness).

These contradictory social views were reflected in the contradictory legal categorization of Natives. Anti-miscegenation laws, on the one hand, included Indians in the category “black.” However, whereas hypodescent socially and legally defined the racial category of children of mixed African-American and (usually) white ancestry as “black,” children of mixed Native and white ancestry were viewed by Euro-American society as “almost white” (B. Berry). Several tribal communities such as the Lumbees of North Carolina, the Nanicokes of Delaware, the Poospatuck of Long Island, and the Houma in western Louisiana, have a long history of white, black, and Native inter-marriages and were not recognized by the federal government as Native Americans but as “mulattos.” After the 1970s resurgence of Native cultural pride and the revitalization of Native communities, these “mulatto” communities attempted to legally reassert their unifying Native identity. G. Reginald Daniel remarks that, by 1980, these communities “after a prolonged struggle, had succeeded in officially changing their earlier classification as mulattoes to non-treaty Native Americans. This status excludes them from government benefits, but it places them squarely on the aboriginal side of the racial divide” (101). While heavily criticized by both Native and black communities as “donning feathers in order to escape the stigma of being Black” (101), these triracial communities can be compared to the Métis, a mixed blood Native community (Irish, French, Cree, Chippewa), legally recognized as a tribe in its own right in Canada, but not in the U.S.

More detrimental to Native identity, however, than being included in the category “black” or “mulatto” have been the U.S. government’s ongoing policies designed to assimilate Native peoples into the “whiteness” of the mainstream. Vine Deloria, Jr. has pointed out that

The white man adopted two basic approaches in handling blacks and Indians. He systematically excluded blacks from all programs, policies, social events, and economic schemes. [...] With the Indian the process was simply reversed. [...] Indians were] subjected to the most intense pressure to become white. Laws passed by Congress had but one goal- the Anglo-Saxonization of the Indian.(Custer 173)

As has been discussed above, the two policies most devastating to Native communities were the enforced education of tribal children at government boarding schools and the General Allotment Act of 1887. These two policies attempted to destroy all Native identity contexts by severing an entire generation from tribal kinship, linguistic, and cultural networks, and by dismantling the home community's unifying communal sense of "place/land" by enforcing individualism through land plot ownership.

These historical examples illustrate that Natives have been complexly situated in U.S. society's construction and maintenance of its black/white "color discourse." Natives have found themselves resisting both the segregation and racism associated with "being black" and the forced assimilation and integration policies designed to encourage them to "become white." It is, however, the color discourse of "redness" which best illustrates the distinctive relationship between tribal communities and the U.S. government and which distinguishes Natives from other ethnic groups in relation to the "politics of recognition."

The politics of redness: of blood and color

As we have seen, the unique political relationship between Native tribes and the U.S. government involves federal entitlements and monies not afforded non-Natives, such as land rights, tax exemption, healthcare, housing, and various other allocations of financial support for the tribal community and its members. Because of these federal commitments, not only tribal communities but also the U.S. government have had a vested interest in controlling tribal membership and deciding who is *legally* recognized as a Native American. Historically, the U.S. government often manipulated the qualifying degree of "redness" to suit its own agendas.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, when the acculturation-minded government was pressing for individual parceling of tribally held land, the signatures of mixed bloods were sought to satisfy the three-fourths approval of tribal adult males prerequisite to such distribution. On these occasions the government pushed for mixed bloods to be considered full members of the tribe (Hagan, 1985). Contrarily, when strong antiacculturationist or antigovernment stances by tribes have been partially instigated by mixed bloods or when the government has wanted to cut expenditures for Native Americans, U. S. policymakers have tried to categorize as non-Indian those with lesser blood quantum. At such times the Indian Office generally has urged the disassociation from the tribe of those possessing less than a one-half blood quantum. (Wilson 120-121)

In 1953, the most insidious attempt to manipulate Native Americans' legal identity was put forward in the House Concurrent Resolution #108, also known as the policy of tribal "Termination." Tribes were encouraged to become more "independent" from government intervention in their affairs by volunteering to terminate their legal status as "tribe." Their members would no longer legally be "Native Americans" but effectively assimilated into the periphery of the "white" mainstream as "Americans of color." Tribes that made this misguided decision lost their federally protected trust status, resulting in the withdrawal of federal support from their communities. This loss of funding inevitably weakened the healthcare and economic conditions of these communities (Deloria Jr. and Lytle *American* 21).

To date, determining which individuals legally "qualify" to be Native American remains a complicated and disputed task (Thornton (Cherokee), "Demography" 27; Jaimes, "Some Kind" 133-154). The need of both tribal communities and the federal government to regulate the allocation of limited resources, such as tribal lands and monies, has led over the centuries to an increasing accumulation of federal and tribal legislation with disparate criteria by which an individual qualifies or fails to qualify as "Native." Individual tribes have maintained various criteria for recognizing and awarding tribal membership, ranging from requirements of more than fifty percent Native ancestry to ceremonial adoption into the tribe,

from an insistence on matrilineal or patrilineal descent to membership through marriage. The federal government also does not apply one unified set of criteria for the determination of an individual's legal identity as "Native" and that individual's right to federal support programs. A 1978 congressional survey counted, as Eva Marie Garrouette has noted, "*thirty-three* separate definitions of Indians in use in different pieces of federal legislation" (16) Sketching the intricacies of these definitions, Garrouette highlights the fact that federal Native identity criteria do not necessarily correspond to those used by tribes to determine tribal citizenship.

Most federal legal definitions of Indian identity specify a minimum blood quantum- frequently one-quarter but sometimes one-half- but others do not. Some require or accept tribal citizenship as a criterion of federal identification, and others do not. Some require reservation residency, or ownership of land held in trust by the government, and others do not. Other laws affecting Indians specify *no* definition of identity, such that the courts must determine to whom the laws apply. Because of these wide variations in legal identity definitions and their frequent departure from the various tribal ones, many individuals who are recognized by their tribes as citizens are nevertheless considered non-Indian for some or all federal purposes. The converse can be true as well. (16)

Native identity, in the contexts discussed above, can be seen as a highly political power struggle between tribes and the federal government to define the nature and degree of "redness" which would determine a corresponding nature and degree of distinctive political rights. This coupling of distinct rights and Native identity would gain a broader societal context in the 1960s and 1970s during the period of the Civil Rights movement, the ensuing ethnic nationalist movements, and the development of multicultural theories in which the nature of a pluralistic society with liberal egalitarian ideals would be re-evaluated and its tensions and problems revealed.

The Civil Rights Movement and the Indian Civil Rights Bill: equality or assimilation?

The Civil Rights movement is seen to have "begun" on December 1, 1955 when Rosa Parks, a forty-two-year old black seamstress, boarded a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and refused give up her seat to a white passenger. Her arrest led to the Montgomery bus boycott, headed by Martin Luther King Jr., who would inspirationally fuse Christian doctrine and Mahatma Gandhi's tactic of nonviolence in his political campaigns. Emphasizing the "universality" of the Christian morality of brotherhood behind the American ideal of a constitutional democracy, he insisted that white society live up to its Christian and political ideals. Re-emphasizing the idea of "one nation under God," King was in a sense supporting an American "nationalistic" sense of itself, appealing to a sense of

a common destiny- to a sense that we, as Americans, are all in it together-[...] The successes of the Civil Rights movement owed something to this intangible nationalism. "It was the United States, the American people- not just some of them," as historian David Farber has summarized the matter, that African Americans were able to hold responsible "for guaranteeing one standard of basic social provision, justice, and equality before the law." (Hollinger 148)

However, for Native Americans, with their own specific concerns and developing sense of nationalism and sovereignty, King's appeal to a "common destiny" rang hollow. According to Vine Deloria, Jr. (Sioux), while various tribal groups had generally suffered discrimination and prejudice, these issues were not the pressing concerns of Native American communities (*Custer* 183, *God is Red* 48). Consequently, Native Americans generally could not identify with the Civil Rights agenda of integration and constitutional equality. For them, these were just re-worded forms of "assimilation."

During the Civil Rights movement, the call to strengthen and enforce constitutional rights was met with ambivalence in tribal communities because of the potential threat to hard

won tribal governmental sovereignty. Several landmark court cases had determined a precedence of tribal jurisdiction on reservation land and highlighted the autonomy of certain tribal legal systems. The 1895 case of *Talton v. Mayes* involved a murder trial within the boundaries of the Cherokee Nation in which the tribal member Bob Talton was convicted by a jury of less than 12 people. Despite Talton's argument during his appeal that his constitutional rights had been violated, the Supreme Court held that there had been no violation of Talton's rights under Cherokee structures of self-government which had been in existence before the adoption of the United States Constitution. Pointing out that at that time Natives were not automatically U.S. citizens at birth but were considered by the federal U.S. government to be "citizens" of their tribes, Deloria Jr. and Lytle emphasize that the Supreme Court's logic in the Talton trial had underscored the fact that

tribal laws were neither created by nor flowed from the Constitution. Hence, Indians living on a reservation, with respect to the relationship they enjoyed with their own tribal governments, were not accorded constitutional protections but were assumed to rely upon tribal customs and traditions. This decision meant that such constitutional guarantees as free speech, the free exercise of religion, the right to an attorney in a criminal case, and similar benefits were not available to American Indians unless specifically provided for in a tribal code or constitution.

During the [1960s], questions were raised in a number of sectors as to why American Indians, who were citizens of the United States as well as being citizens of their own tribes, should be guaranteed basic civil rights in a national setting but denied these basic human rights when dealing with their own local community institutions. (*American* 127)

This civil rights "dilemma," which would surface sixty years after the Talton trial, was partially due to the granting of American citizenship to Natives as a birthright in 1924 (Deloria Jr. and Lytle, *American* 217-222). As a result, by the 1960s the federal view of the primacy of U.S. constitutional rights and protection for tribal peoples had become more pertinent and logical than it had been in 1895. For tribal communities, however, this was not the case as they continued to view their communities as possessing a certain degree of legal and political autonomy. Despite tribal fears that their legal structures would be compromised, the Senate Judiciary Committee began to consider the idea of creating an Indian Bill of Rights in the spirit of the Civil Rights act in order to clarify the nature and limits of Native Americans' "dual citizenship" with respect to constitutionally protected civil rights.

A major source of Indian apprehension over the legislative proposals was the fear that the imposition of an Indian Bill of Rights on tribal court proceedings would go a long way toward transforming them into dark-skinned replicas of the non-Indian courts and would require massive expenditures of funds to ensure constitutional protections to defendants, which would bankrupt many small tribes. The Pueblos in particular were worried about the intrusions of the civil rights idea, that of pitting an individual against his or her society, in the traditional judicial system they favored, which was highly religious and required a fine sense of Indian customs. (Deloria Jr., and Lytle, *American* 128)

Circumventing the lack of clear support from Native communities, an Indian Civil Rights Bill was enacted in 1968, strategically attached by Senator Sam J. Ervin to a housing bill which was certain to pass (Deloria Jr. and Lytle, *American* 128).

The tribes feared that the Indian Bill of Rights would allow "reliance on traditional Indian solutions only to the extent that they [did] not conflict with state and federal laws" (Deloria Jr., *Custer* 234). This fear was put to the test ten years later in the case *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez* (1978), a case which revealed the complexities and ramifications of this judicial instance of the "discourse of redness" in relation to constitutional issues of sexual equality and the tribe's power to determine membership. Julia Martinez, a full-blood Pueblo Indian who had married a full-blood Navajo, took the Santa Clara Pueblo to court to contest the tribe's patrilineal ordinance that children of women who married outside the tribe were

not tribal members and were therefore not eligible for the Pueblo's various federally funded tribal health and housing services. Martinez appealed her case to the Supreme Court, alleging that her rights and those of her children, as stipulated in the Indian Civil Rights Act, had been violated on the grounds of sexual discrimination. In addition to appealing to contemporary legislation, both sides appealed to Pueblo "tradition," the Pueblo insisting on the validity of their patrilineal enrollment ordinance passed in the 1930s, Martinez providing evidence indicating that the Pueblo had had a matrilineal system for determining tribal membership before the ordinance. Questions concerning the precedent of past or more recent traditions in tribal decision-making, the degree of Federal interference in tribal judiciary systems, and the clash between tribal and constitutional issues of sexual equality all orbited the one central issue: who had the authority to determine the legal tribal identity of Julia Martinez's children.

The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Pueblo, citing the historical legal relationship with the tribes in which the greatest degree of autonomy needed to be respected and maintained. Concluding that this was a significantly positive ruling in support of tribal sovereignty, Deloria Jr. nevertheless attempts to alleviate potential civil rights unease brought about by the ruling by asking and also answering the question: "does this restriction [of the power of the Federal court in tribal legal decisions] significantly limit the future grievances of tribal members? The answer must be 'no' if one has any confidence in the integrity of the tribal court system" (Deloria Jr. and Lytle, *American* 133-136). However, for the Martinez family living in the Pueblo community, the ramifications of the court case were severe as the children were denied access to federally funded health care on the reservation. This court case exemplifies the "discourse of redness" - its legal, social, and historical complexity, and its intensely significant ramifications for tribal communities and tribal individuals.

This case also exemplifies the "multicultural" quandary most expressed and grappled with by liberals and conservatives alike from each cultural group: the attempt to rhyme a variety of justifiably distinct group rights with the overarching philosophy of "equality" structured politically as the "equal rights" of all individuals without distinction. The expressions of the anxieties brought about by this dilemma generally swing between varying degrees of fear of and insistence on "ethnic particularism" potentially intensified as ethnic nationalist separatism and, at the other extreme, "mainstream integration" potentially intensified as enforced assimilation. Despite the seeming incompatibility of these opposing ends of the socio-political spectrum, Newfield and Gordon see a continuity between ethnic nationalist movements and the burgeoning multiculturalism of the 1970s. They insist that a strong pluralist tradition "that sees cultural differences finding their 'resolution' in equity rather than assimilationist unity" is a "*multicultural* pluralism" which "owes most of its public life and development to the history of nationalist thought among people of color in the United States."

...Black power and related movements had developed a historically pivotal conjunction of *pluralism and nationalism* [...] These movements combined group autonomy and interaction with other groups, but further insisted that the combination rested on a continual striving for intergroup political equality. Rather than moderate pluralism's balance between unity and multiplicity, they envisioned a federation based on equitable negotiation among multiple groups. (101)

Vine Deloria Jr. came to a similar conclusion in his 1969 "Indian Manifesto" *Custer Died for Your Sins*. Discussing the drawbacks of the Civil Rights drive for integration and equality, Deloria Jr. states that "what the different racial and minority groups had needed was not a new legal device for obliterating differences but mutual respect with economic and political independence" (184). The internal logic of Deloria Jr.'s remark proceeds from the theoretic achievability of this situation for tribal nations. African-American separatist movements in the 1960s and 1970s could only dream of such an economic and political independence, but, as

Robert Allen Warrior has remarked, what has “often labeled ‘separatist’ for other non-European groups in the Americas is, in fact, government policy for native groups” (“Literature” 121).

While ethnic nationalist separatist movements in the U.S., their goals being politically unrealizable, were relatively short-lived, their communities have succeeded in maintaining a distinctive political identity and political influence due significantly to the shift during the 1970s in the rhetoric of social change from tropes of “skin color” to those of “culture.” While skin color can be seen to have represented the contemporary political struggle for constitutional revision and equality, skin color plus culture - i.e. ethnicity - referenced a history of group marginalization and oppression, social injustices that could not be adjusted by the stroke of a constitutional pen. While the U.S. monolithic WASP society might become color-blind in the adjustment of its foundational social contract, ethnic communities insisted that it not become “history-blind” but re-adjust its social and institutional formations to include the ethnic groups historically excluded from the WASP mono-culture. Throughout his 1969 “Indian Manifesto,” Deloria Jr. insists on the significance of cultural differences and the need to focus on the socio-political implications of these distinctions at a time when most people were thinking in political terms about “race relations.”

The basic problem which has existed between the various racial groups has not been one of race but of culture and legal status. The white man systematically destroyed Indian culture where it existed, but separated blacks from his midst so that they were forced to attempt the creation of their own culture. (Custer 173)

This conviction that culture remains the primary factor not only in the political solidarity and the effectiveness of a group but is also a central element in the construction of personal identity is strongly held by Native peoples. Terry Wilson remarks that today most Native Americans feel that the focus on “race” as defined in blood quantum “stems from attitudes and ideas fostered by the majority White culture and government. [...] most Indians today still posit their identification tribally and only secondarily as Indian” (166).

During the 1970s, the growing focus on culture began to feed a burgeoning “multicultural” critical perspective which defined diversity in ethnic rather than racial terms and which increasingly became the center of debates concerning “the relevance of cultural identity, experience, and history to the governance of institutional affairs” (Gordon and Newfield, “Introduction” 9). One of the institutions in which these debates have been most heated is the academy.

Natives scholars and multiculturalism

Structured theorizing about multiculturalism began in the 1970s in primary and secondary education as a post-civil rights reconstruction impulse focusing on the realities of the bi-cultural lives of “non-WASP” children. Theorists and practitioners of this multicultural education aimed at creating within a dominant culture classroom an awareness and positive valuation of minority cultures (Newfield and Gordon 77, 95). In higher education, however, multiculturalism became strongly associated with the drive to de- and re-construct the dominant culture itself as represented by the academia. As Wahneema Lubiano has pointed out, multiculturalism is the “deliberate attempt on the part of the historically marginalized to reconstitute not simply a particular curricula, but the academy itself as part of what George Lipsitz has called ‘the enormous industry of meaning making’” (68). Indications of this have been the successful problematizing of the American literary “canon,” as well as clear Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity objectives in student admission and faculty hiring. However, ethnic studies departments, which had been struggling to structure and define themselves since the late 1960s and which had produced the foundational research from

which multiculturalism's theories were developing, kept multiculturalism as a "project" at arm's length (Gutierrez 162; Newfield and Gordon 102). These departments have remained critical of what they see as the dominant trend towards "corporate multiculturalism" in the universities in which faculty "tokenism" and departmental "ghettoization" (i.e. grouping all non-mainstream cultures into one "ethnic studies" department) simply serve to maintain and supplement the traditional Anglo-American core curriculum and institutional structure. The danger inherent in the multicultural project in the academy's ethnic literature departments is wittily described by Craig Womack.

Departments often look for someone to do multicultural literature rather than Native studies; teach an Amy Tan novel now and then, throw in a little Ralph Ellison, a native author once in a while, and string it all together with the same damn Bakhtin quotes we've all heard a million times, reducing literary studies to little more than an English department version of the melting pot. (*Red* 8)

These suspicions are also reflected by Native American scholars and writers in Native American studies programs. Arnold Krupat has noted that many "champions of the vitality and integrity of Native American traditions are not necessarily in favor of multiculturalism" (*Turn* 24). Krupat points out that the recurring political concerns of many Native Americans—sovereignty, self-determination, and self-sufficiency—are not, in their "strong sense," compatible with multiculturalism, stating that "multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism have been opposed by some Native American critics whose pedagogical strategies make claims to cultural 'sovereignty' and 'autonomy,' the political implications of which strategies are nationalistic" (*Turn* 25). A proponent of this view is Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, a Sioux academic and writer, who feels that Native American studies programs should be dedicated to "doing the intellectual work of the tribes," i.e. researching and teaching tribal histories, cultures and political visions. She believes that the integrity of Native American studies "can be maintained only by its disciplinary separation from multicultural or American studies" (qtd. in Krupat, *Turn* 27) because "in practice, multicultural education has not and will not cast much light on the centuries-long struggle for sovereignty faced by the people of the First Nations of America" (Cook-Lynn, *Why* 91).

Louis Owens, a Choctaw Cherokee academic and writer, has struggled with multiculturalism's blindness in relation to Native Americans, asking how multiculturalism can avoid becoming another aspect of "the familiar discourse of dominance, what has been called 'critical imperialism'" (*Mixedblood* 49). Frustrated by Werner Sollors's ignorance in his *Beyond Ethnicity* (1986) concerning Native American literary critical production, and Edward Said's dismissal of Native Americans' creative literary output in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Owens remarks that we are left to assume that Indian writers "must be out 'there' in the territory somewhere, incapable of being taken seriously or even heard at the metropolitan center of multicultural posturing" (*Mixedblood* 36-37). Nevertheless, Owens does not accept the separatism advocated by Cook-Lynn.

Such separatist intellectual sentiments are easy to understand but difficult in the end to ratify entirely. The real problem is that we do not have the luxury of simply opting out because, whether or not we are heard by Said, Sollors, or others, we already function within the dominant discourse. [...] Half a millennium of Euramerican attempts to both eliminate and reimagine the Indian has resulted in a hybridized, multicultural reality clearly recognized in fiction as long ago as the 1920s and '30s [...] The very act of appropriating the colonizer's discourse and making it one's own is obviously collaborative and conjunctural. We have long since entered inescapably what Pratt terms a "contact zone" and what I prefer to call a "frontier," in James Clifton's definition, "a culturally defined place where peoples with different culturally expressed identities meet and deal with each other." (*Mixedblood* 52)

Responses to this problematically colonial “contact zone” as a “multicultural space” in the literary critical world of the academy range from the call to “decolonize” Native American Studies programs and literary critical approaches (Jaimes, “Academic Apartheid”), to an emphasis on concomitant Western/Native histories and an approach to Native American literary texts as successfully “mediational” expressions of bi-, multi- or “trans”-culturality (Ruppert, *Mediation*). The criticisms of the “multicultural project” in relation to the academy and ethnic studies departments are most likely not so much rejections of a failed project as they are expressions of discouragement in the battle for truly complex and challenging “cross-cultural” approaches in education. Louis Owens has expressed his frustration with what he has called “literary tourism” in which students, the general reading public, and publishers “want not literature that challenges them to think and feel in new ways but literary works that provide a comfortable, easy tour of colorful Indian Country. Crossing conceptual horizons can be, and in fact must be, hard work” (*Mixedblood* 42). Paula Gunn Allen focuses on the academy’s “epistemological” structure as the source of a deep sense of demoralization among many ethnic scholars. She states that ethnic scholars have succeeded only marginally in universities, not because of their unwillingness to work within the ethnic department structure and the publishing and tenure track demands, but because of “the peculiarity of the American academy, which makes it particularly suited to certain kinds of understandings, methods, and concepts” (*Off* 132-133). Gerald Vizenor, on the other hand, has experienced more positive Native responses to the potentially “destructive energies” surrounding and within Native Studies departments. Commenting on the idea of multiculturalism, Vizenor remarks that

Beyond the basic obvious meaning of multi-many cultures, I’m never sure what it means. [...] A range of metaphors [are used] that represent on the one hand trouble and disassociation and separatism as a critique, and then on the other hand ways to include, embrace, compare [...] in the sense of institutional responsibility.[...]The energies are generally good, but there is no ideal political situation in academic life. [...]I have to say that in spite of the destructive energies that have been so much a part of Native American academic programs and departments, at least the ones that I have been associated with, [...] in the context of ethnic and multicultural kinds of programs, that Natives have had the most generous sense of humor, sense of play, appreciation of irony, generally speaking, and certainly more so compared to other programs. (Personal correspondence July 26, 2001)

Vizenor’s focus on Native American humor is central in his writings which often deal with the “ironies and academic contradictions” of Natives, usually trickster scholars, in the academy (*Earthdivers* 4). Vizenor, Owens, Cook-Lynn, and Allen illustrate the range of attitudes of Native American scholars towards multiculturalism and the academy. Because multiculturalism has been seen to be both resistant to and supportive of a Euro-American core monoculture, Native American scholars and writers have wrestled with its power to assimilate while tentatively recognizing its deconstructive force and potentially empowering visions.

“Multiculturalism” is a rather recent social and political discourse even though many of its concerns are “familiar long-standing problems of political theory and practice” (Kelly 1). In *Culture and Equality* (2001), Brian Barry examines what he sees as the inherent flaw in multicultural theories, the attempt to rhyme cultural group-specific rights with (liberal) egalitarianism, his hypothesis and conclusion being that these are incompatible. As far as Native Americans are concerned, the fact that Barry chooses to argue this perspective can be seen as a foregone conclusion: His predictable prioritization of “egalitarian liberalism” can be seen to continue the discourse of “whiteness” which lays claims to being a de-ethnicized (universal) norm which, despite its flaws, is the best humanity has so far come up with. Thus is maintained the status of the “pluribus” which has remained subordinate to the American monocultural “unum” throughout its history. Native Americans have remained suspicious of the concept of “liberal egalitarianism” in its Euro-American political context, suspecting the political reality to be closer to assimilation and loss of tribal autonomous domains and cultural identity than it is to empowerment and civil protection of “universal” rights. For Native

Americans and members of other ethnic communities, the practical struggle in relation to the U.S.'s "multicultural condition" still involves the one-sided imperative that they strive as individuals for equality in the "mainstream" group, a group which they often do not culturally identify with and which is often hostile to their investment. One could conclude that the *burden* of multiculturalism has not been taken up by the mainstream but still rests with the minority communities and individuals who must juggle the demands and prices of maintaining the "multi-" component in their cultural worlds.

In this section, several texts will be analyzed with respect to the construing of Native identity amidst the dynamics of multi-raciality and multi-culturality, beginning with what could be seen as the first "multicultural" challenge faced by indigenous communities in the Americas: the arrival of Christianity.

Part One

Christianity and Native religious identity

Rabbit: "...I'll let you in on a little secret. When an Indian converts to Christianity, not all of him gets converted..." (Womack, *Red* 183)

Priests and missionaries either followed closely on the heels of European explorers, traders, and settlers, or themselves made first contact with tribal people in areas not yet explored. Each Native community responded to the presence of Christianity as an unavoidable aspect of expanding U.S. territorial dominance by deploying various strategies of adoption, adaptation, and rejection. While the detrimental effects of historically imposed Christianity on Native peoples have been and continue to be analyzed, a growing number of contemporary studies have attempted to bring to the fore the active management of Christianity by Native individuals and communities who, through the molding of certain Christian elements into their traditional practices, succeeded in maintaining the priority of an overarching Native perspective (Morrison 236).

In relation to Native identity formation and Christianity, studies discussing Native religious practices from first European contact to the early twentieth century propose a mixture of sincere, circumstantial, and strategic Native conversion to Christianity, all of which were ultimately necessitated by the imposed colonial condition and realities. Relatively fewer studies, however, explore the religious choices of contemporary Natives who wrestle with the concern that their voluntary participation in Christianity will be seen to compromise or even betray their Native identity. Native Christians such as Marie Archambault (Hunkpapa Lakota), insisting that the conditions for and therefore the implications of religious choices for Native Americans have significantly changed, call for a re-evaluation of Christianity in relation to Native society and identity. Taking her own Catholicism as case in point, Archambault insists that

The Catholic tradition deserves scrutiny by us. Unlike many of our ancestors, we are allowed to freely choose the Catholic faith. Whether our particular tribe chose freely or not, we are called to make that choice anew today. [...]It will call us to remember and name ourselves in a new way and to reclaim our traditional ways together with the Catholic faith as the real way to spiritual healing and power. (136)

Archambault's plea can be seen as a call for a "syncretic" conceptualization of contemporary Native Christianity which will not imply the betrayal of Native identity in the choosing of both "traditional ways together with the Catholic faith."

Whether termed syncretism, hybridization, or creolization, at its most basic level the discussion of Natives and Christianity is a discussion of cultural *change*, its nature within

specific socio-political contexts and its ramifications and implications for contemporary Native identity issues. Before exploring the engagement of contemporary Native writers with the legacy of Christianity in their communities and its influence on contemporary Native identity formation, a brief discussion of inter-cultural contact and theories regarding its effect on cultural development, specifically syncretism and hybridization, is in order.

Syncretism and hybridity: problematic metaphors of inter-cultural contact and cultural (ex)change

As has been discussed above, during the 1960s and 1970s the perception of U.S. society as a “melting pot” which produced, like the mixing of the various colors constituting white light, a “white” monoculture, refracted into the perception of a multi-cultural mosaic or “rainbow.” The awareness of ethnic distinctivity and difference was reflected in the academy by the development of a variety of ethnic study programs and departments such as Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Asian studies, and Native American studies. The initial primary focus of these programs during the 1970s was to chart the historic processes of oppression and marginalization and the effect of these processes on the identity formation of various ethnic groups within the context of U.S. monocultural hegemony. During the 1980s, with the rise of, among other disciplines, cultural studies and postcolonialism, ethnic studies theorists began to explore trans-ethnic situations and experiences and the “fusion” or “mixing” of cultures, terming this hybridity or creolisation (Ashcroft *et al*, *Empire* 30). While this is a relatively recent critical perspective in postcolonial and literary theory, Robin Cohen and P. Kennedy point out that sociologists and anthropologists “have long observed the evolution of commingled cultures from two or more parent cultures,” a process they termed syncretism (337). In literary theory influenced by postcolonialism, hybridity and syncretism are regularly mentioned together, suggesting a conceptual similarity. Despite the fact that both hybridity and syncretism have been hailed as counter-discursive challenges to previous monocultural interpretations of historical cultural processes, their potential for creating essentialist discourses through an implicit presumption of pre-syncretic cultural “authenticity” has been duly noted by wary scholars (Pratt, “Transculturation” 25-26; Ashcroft *et al*, *Post-colonial* 184; Parry, “Directions” 72).

Scholars involved in Native American studies have also felt called upon to flag the slippery theoretical foundation the concept of hybridity provides to those exploring ethnic identity formation. Arif Dirlik points out that “notions of cultural purity and hybridity alike, ironically, presuppose a cultural essentialism,” (“Past” 85-86), and Elvira Pulitano, in her *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* (2003), summarizes the polarized cultural critical camps which have developed in relation to the dual concepts of hybridity and its implied opposite.

[A]n emphasis on hybridity and plural identity has generated significant criticism by scholars such as Robert Young and Benita Parry, who see in such a tendency a perpetuation of the old notion of humanism. Within the specific context of cultures, they argue, the term *hybridity* is, much like its opposite reality, *authenticity*, unintelligible without a notion of cultural purity. Such a hybridized perspective, they posit, tends to homogenize the center more or less implicitly and make it monolithic in ways that simply does not do justice to the variegated (peripheral) realities. On the other hand, in the so-called border zones of cultures, such as Africa, the Caribbean, and the Indian Ocean, the term *hybridity* is conceived as a site of powerful creative resistance to the dominant conceptual paradigms. (7-8)

In relation to contemporary Native identity, the terms hybridity and syncretism are not only haunted by the essentialist specter of indigenous “authenticity,” but their definitions presuppose the conceptual problematic faced by Natives in their expressions of an identity that acknowledges the influence of Christianity: the presumed incompatibility of each belief

system. Corroborated by dictionary definitions, hybridity as Sabine Mabardi describes it, connotes “an artificial or forced union,” (2) a connotation particularly appropriate, she notes, for discussions concerning the legacy of colonization and the violent contact of cultures. A similar presupposition indicated by the word “syncretism” has been noted by Armin Geertz in his study of contemporary Hopi religion. Summarizing Robert D. Baird’s discussion of the problematic nature of the concept of “syncretism” in relation to religions, Geertz writes

...Baird argued against the implications of the category “syncretism” on the basis of its roots in the search for origins [...] His argument was that “such borrowing, blending, and influencing on the plane of history is part of the whole historical process and is both inevitable and universal,” and, therefore, no real purpose is served by using the term syncretism as it has been used [...] To insist on using the term to characterize certain religions implies that they have brought together elements that are conflicting and illegitimate. It is indeed a pejorative term. (179)

However, while syncretism can be seen as a culturally biased definition of cultural change, highly determined by European oppositional precepts and assumptions that “different” cultures will necessarily conflict and resist mutual influence, when applied to situations of actual cultural conflict- such as colonization and Imperialism- it can be used to indicate processes in which cultural power relations are revealed, contested, and negotiated. The site of such syncretic processes has been called the “contact zone” by Mary Louise Pratt: “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (“Arts” 34). The terms syncretism and hybridity, therefore, will not be used in this analysis to indicate the nature of Native religious expressions or identity formations, but to indicate the inter-group dynamics of the “contact zone” as Native people negotiate “their identity in contexts of domination and exchange” (Clifford, *Predicament* 338).

Cultural (ex)change as tribal tradition

While “syncretism” has been used in literary criticism as a synonym for the “fusion,” “mixing,” or drawing “parallels between” different traditions in relation to Native cultures (Friedman 108, 126; Dwyer, 43-69; Rainwater, *Dreams* 151-154), Native syncretism has often been illustrated concretely in terms similar to the scene presented by Judith Stiehm at the beginning of this chapter in which different ethnicities offer each other useful cultural “commodities.” Joseph Bruchac has remarked that

People who aren’t familiar with Indians go out to visit and they can’t believe that there’s somebody sitting in a lawn chair who’s an Indian. It’s kind of incomprehensible that there’s this ability to take in non-Indian culture and be comfortable in both worlds... That’s one of the strengths of Indian culture, that you pick and choose and keep and discard. (qtd. in Friedman 118)

While Bruchac uses a lawn chair to make his point, one can question whether a lawn chair is really “non-Indian” or is at odds with or has “fused” in a syncretic sense with Native American culture. While Bruchac maintains the “both worlds” dichotomy, Louis Owens has one of his Native characters in his novel *Dark River* (1999) discuss the more culturally complex ramifications of such an exchange of commodities. In response to an anthropologist’s suggestion that the tribe return to a traditional life-style, Owens’s character remarks

“I like my chain saw, Avrum. Mrs. Edwards likes her satellite dish. All the kids like those new basketball shoes. Tali just got that microwave oven after all these years. [...] You’re forgetting that change is traditional too. We

were running around on foot until those Spanish brought up horses, and then everything we did was on horseback. Everybody forgot we didn't use to have horses. [...] Every one of [those warriors] is wearing cotton clothes and holding rifles. That's tradition, too." (211, 213)

While Bruchac and Owens are attempting to illustrate a similar point, Bruchac's example highlights the practice of cultural *exchange* in which the use of various cultural "products" by various ethnic "producers" and "consumers" reflects a utilitarian strategy by which members of marginalized cultures negotiate multiculturalism's "both worlds" condition. Owens's scene, on the other hand, indicates that ultimately the use of such acquired "products" can be seen as an indication of cultural *change*.

Many contemporary authors insist that "change" is not only intrinsic to culture at all moments, but to life itself. As the healer Betonie in Silko's novel *Ceremony* (1977) says,

[...] long ago when the people were given these ceremonies, the changing began, if only in the aging of the yellow gourd rattle or the shrinking of the skin around the eagle's claw, if only in the different voices from generation to generation, singing the chants. [...] the ceremonies have always been changing. [...] things which don't shift and grow are dead things. (126)

While Silko's novel champions the acceptance of "change" as a necessary attribute of "continuity" in relation to Native traditions, the nature of cultural change has been profoundly problematized by historic violence and by the syncretic tensions of the colonial contact zone. Native communities have been repeatedly scrutinized and have self-searchingly investigated the consequences of such historical processes for their cultural development and contemporary practices while they also have become sensitive to their own agency with regard to changes in their cultures. Concerning the influence of Christianity on Native culture at both the personal level of conversion and the communal level of social structures, its appraisal has been conducted most often in relation to its historical imposition through coercion: the pressure of the missionary drive intimately linked to processes of violent colonization and tribal cultural erasure (Baldrige 85; Drinnon). This perspective has, however, threatened to overshadow the historical and contemporary dynamics of tribal religious openness in relation to the integration of Christian elements into Native religious contexts, making Christianity a problematic contemporary Native identity option.

Choosing to be a contemporary Native Christian: what about history?

As James Treat has remarked, missionary coercion and colonial history have problematized contemporary Native religious choices.

Why would any Indian want to belong to a religion that was so much a part of the tragic history of our people? [...] Yet this is precisely the choice that many native people have made and continue to make.(9)

At the heart of Treat's question is one dimension of the current multicultural dilemma: the tension between individual and group identity. When an individual belonging to one group (e.g. Native) chooses the religion of another (e.g. "white" and Christian), their construction and maintenance of "their own enigmatic religious identities" (9) faces the demands of potentially adversarial communities and the tendency in society to favor "essentialist definitions of religious, ethnic, and racial identities" (5).

These essentialist tendencies, however, have since the 1960s been counter-balanced by the concept of "invention," described by Werner Sollors as the recognition of the general "constructedness" of all aspects of human cultural development (Sollors, "Introduction" x). The concepts of "invention" and "construction" have since then destabilized the categories race and culture, thereby seeming to afford the individual greater liberty and agency in the

shaping of a social identity. However, constructing contemporary identities which cross historically antagonistic group borders, while more acceptable because of the deconstruction of essentialist strictures, today still proves to be dogged by the legacy of the essentialist logic which had served during the period of European imperialism and colonization to justify the erasure of tribal identities. In relation to Christianity and Native communities, this essentialist logic was encapsulated by the “either-or logic of conversion” (Clifford, *Predicament* 303) which stipulated that a Native could not “be” both traditional and Christian. Due to the legacy of this reasoning, contemporary Native “non-essentialist” conversion still implies this “essentialist choice” of culture group allegiance which in reality limits the individual in their “construction” of their religious identity. Treat, however, calls for the reappraisal of the significance of such choices and the implication of such strategies employed by Native converts whose identities were and are formed, in Clifford’s words, amidst the “complex realities of cultural change, resistance, and translation” (*Predicament* 303).

To dismiss all native Christians as acculturated, anachronistic traces of religious colonialism, is to miss innumerable demonstrations of their insightful historical and social analysis, their complex and sophisticated religious creativity, and their powerful devotion to personal and communal survival. To disregard Indian Christians, either as Indians or as Christians, is to deny their human agency, their religious independence, and – ultimately- their very lives. (Treat 10)

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to trace the complex history of the interaction between Christian missionaries and Native communities in the Americas, in order to historically contextualize contemporary Native religious identity choices, an indication will be given of the generally accepted understanding of Native religious agency during the years of early missionary contact, an agency characterized by a willingness to engage in cultural exchange as well as a strategic syncretism and also, as Treat suggests, by a mixture of social analysis and religious creativity.

Early contact: Native inclusivist identity and strategic syncretism

It is generally agreed that during the initial stages of contact, tribal people were usually free to decide on their responses to Christianity and its representatives.

Native American reactions to Christian missionaries were as varied as the number of Indian tribes and usually differed even within the same tribe. Some tribes rose up and murdered the missionaries among them; some Indians embraced them and their religion. Most tribes were initially tolerant, curious, and bemused by the strange ideas the missionaries preached. (McLoughlin 10)

An openness to cultural exchange and other religious belief systems has come to be seen as a characteristic of many tribal cultures during the period of initial contact. Described as “inclusivist” as opposed to the Christian “exclusivist” demands of conversion, Native peoples were generally willing to add to their ritual life the religious visions, sacred stories, and prophecies of other tribes as well as those from Christian missionaries if these religious experiences were seen as compatible with the tribe’s perspectives or were deemed spiritually insightful or powerful: a process Joseph Epes Brown terms “nonexclusive cumulative adhesion” (qtd. in Weaver, *That the People* 63). Despite this general initial openness, Native peoples regularly indicated to early missionaries where they drew the line of cultural tolerance and why. Responding to the growing missionary pressures to deny their own stories and cease their traditional rituals, Natives often stressed the inappropriateness of this demand by explaining to missionaries, as the Seneca leader Chief Red Jacket did, that

...since [the Great Spirit] has made us different in other respects, why may we not conclude that he had given us a different religion according to our understanding. The Great Spirit does right. He knows what is best for [each of] his [different] children. (qtd. in McLoughlin 13)

Nevertheless, the growing intrusion and entrenchment of Christian missionaries in the tribal community and their contention that tribal ways should be rejected put pressure on tribal culture-structures to create a response to this devaluing of their mythic conception of the world. One manner of response can be described as strategic religious syncretism and has been recognized in post-contact mythic narratives which employ an interfusion of Christian and tribal elements.

Jarold Ramsey, in his discussion of the Bible in western Indian mythology, states that “it is clear that the Indians did accept stories from the Christian Bible into their oral repertoires, with or without accepting the doctrines that the stories embody for Christians” (*Reading* 166-167). Ramsey further explains how some Biblical stories were incorporated into tribal oral tradition with little alteration because they resembled traditional stories, while other stories from both traditions were radically adapted in an attempt to maintain the distinctiveness of the two traditions while simultaneously reflecting the contemporary reality of their unavoidable interaction- for example, Jesus might appear in a Coyote story, or coyote make an appearance in Genesis (*Reading* 172). This latter method of narrative “adaptation” seems to have afforded the possibility for ironic social commentary, as one of Ramsey’s examples illustrates.

Almost everything was Coyote’s way. The Indian planted the apple. When he planted it, he said for all the Indians to come and eat. When he told them that, all the people came. The white man was a rattlesnake then, and he was on the tree. The white people have eyes just like the rattlesnake. When the Indians tried to eat the apples that snake tried to bite them. That’s why the white people took everything away from the Indian; because they were snakes. If that snake hadn’t been on that tree, everything would have belonged to the Indians. (*Reading* 175-176)

In his study of the Cherokee, William McLoughlin also sees such adaptations in the oral tradition as explicit social commentary incorporating a newly acquired awareness of European imperialism and an affirmation of tribal worldview and Native identity. This is exemplified by the tribal reworkings of the Christian creation myth which insist, much to the consternation of Christian missionaries, that God created more original human beings than Adam and Eve. McLoughlin tells us that “many tribes developed what they said were ancient myths” that explained that the Great Spirit had created Red people, Black people, and White people. The Red people, being his favorite, he placed on the American continent, and the others on their respective continents. White people, however, disrupted the world when they left the land appointed to them (13-14, 152). In these tribal strategically syncretic constructions of mythic contexts which accounted for the new colonial and missionary situation, room was created for a message of resistance to that situation and for the prioritization and declaration of an overarching Native identity.

Conversion: Native Christian identity and group allegiance.

While Native/Christian engagement has been thus far discussed primarily in terms of cultural exchange and strategic syncretism, critical explorations of personal conviction in relation to Native religious conversion and identity have involved the attempt to rhyme the dimension of syncretism which addresses the possibility of religious “fusion” and cultural change with the inter-group incompatibility implied by syncretism’s definition. Contemporary studies of the writings of early Native converts such as Samson Occum (1723-1792), William Apess (b. 1798), Peter Jones (1802-1856), and George Copway (1818-1869) reveal that critics are

divided as to their evaluation of Native personal conviction within this syncretic “conflict of interest” predicament. Despite their awareness of Native historic propensity for cultural inclusivity and incorporation, critics such as Arnold Krupat, H. David Brumble III, and Hertha Wong have tended to characterize the writings of these Native converts as exemplifying the success of the colonial missionizing campaign and colonial assimilation policies. Other critics such as A. LaVonne Ruoff, Jace Weaver, David Murray, and Barry O’Connell have re-evaluated these early writings as purposeful negotiations of the religious “contact zone” in which such syncretic cultural choices, while seen by U.S. society as successful assimilation and a denial of Native culture, were understood by these converts as a continuum of complimentary religious experiences and perspectives.

This critical disagreement is in part due to and indicative of the representative role ethnic literature has been expected to fulfill since the 1970s. Carl Silvio argues that texts of minority writers became caught up in what he calls “multicultural identity politics” (140) as these texts were expected to “authentically” represent under- or mis-represented populations.

Because identity based texts are meant to serve as the canonical representatives of the cultures to which their authors belong, [...] those texts are usually valued on the basis of whether or not they adequately represent the experiences, concerns, and beliefs of their respective identity categories. (143)

However, such texts face the scrutiny of the critical “gate keepers” of their home culture for surreptitious signs either of assimilation (potentially evident in the writings of Christian converts) or exoticism (potentially evident in the Euro-American popularity of certain Native texts). The text which has been the focus of many “gate-keeping” evaluations and which has proven to be exemplary of both a representative literary expression of Native identity and the fundamentally contested nature of Native Christian identity is *Black Elk Speaks* (1932/61) , the complete title reading *Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* as told through John G. Neihardt.

Black Elk Speaks, but with whose voice?

First published in 1932 to positive critical reviews but insignificant public reception (DeMallie, “Nicholas” 57-58), *Black Elk Speaks* was reprinted in 1961 and achieved worldwide acclaim as *the* iconic formulation of Native American identity and worldview. The text has been studied as history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and as an ecological handbook, only recently being considered as “preeminently a work of literature” (Witalec 47). As a work of literature, it has been repeatedly analyzed with respect to its problematic “authorial voice,” both lauded as the finest expression of the Native experience and rejected as the clearest form of Native ventriloquism and Euro-American cultural imperialism (Silvio 138; McClusky 49; DeMallie, “Nicholas” 57-58).

The text is a representative of the “as told to” genre most often referred to as “collaborative” Native autobiography. As the Lakota tribal elder Black Elk (1863-1950) related his life in Lakota to John G. Neihardt, Black Elk’s son Ben simultaneously translated his father’s story into English which he had learned at boarding school. Ben’s narrative was taken down in short-hand by Neihardt’s daughter and poetically reworked later by Neihardt. In addition to this linguistically complex collaborative process, the text was also a “composite” life story, Raymond DeMallie remarking that “Black Elk would tell of his visions and of his life experiences, and some of his friends would tell about episodes in Lakota history of which Black Elk himself could not speak from firsthand experience” (“Nicholas” 29).

The critical discussions surrounding *Black Elks Speaks* can be seen to involve a dual critical consideration of the syncretic identity both of Black Elk the text and Black Elk the

man. With respect to Black Elk the text, discussions have focused on the importance of Neihardt's authorial role and Euro-American perspectives in the production of the Native "identity" of the text. With respect to Black Elk the man, his representative function as communicator and interpreter of a specifically Native visionary tradition and spiritual worldview has been measured against his conversion to Catholicism in 1904 and his career as a catechist spanning more than 30 years. Critical discussions of the text have involved an archeology of its production and a "deconstruction" of the collaboration between Black Elk and Neihardt with the aim to achieve a better understanding of the text by separating not only the two authorial voices, but also the "Euro-Christian" from the "Native traditional" elements. As Philip P. Arnold has noted,

In general these efforts have tried to distinguish- or *disentangle*- the *real* from the *textual* Black Elk [and from] John Neihardt [...] An assumption of this debate seems to be, therefore, that determining the *real* motivations of Neihardt and Black Elk would help readers of *Black Elks Speaks* determine whether the book was accurate or not. (92)

However, these archeological approaches have only led to a more complex picture of the syncretic contact zone in which Native Christian identities were formed and of contemporary multi-cultural contexts in which the validity of Native identity representations is debated.

John Neihardt speaks

In 1930, John G. Neihardt, poet laureate of Nebraska, visited the Sioux elders Black Elk and Afraid of Hawk to collect material about the Ghost Dance religion for the conclusion of Neihardt's epic poem dealing with the history of the United States, *A Cycle of the West. Black Elk Speaks*, covering Black Elk's youth until the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, was published as a separate text inspired by Neihardt's reverence for Black Elk's visions and teachings. Despite Neihardt's devotion to Black Elk and despite the anthropological accuracy of Neihardt's description of traditional Lakota life and Black Elk's intricately symbolic visions (J. Rice 6), Neihardt's poetic tenor in *Black Elk* has been primarily analyzed as a "literary restatement of the theme of the vanishing American" (DeMallie, "Nicholas" 55-56). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the oft quoted final passage in which Black Elk seems to mourn both the ineffectuality of his vision and the ending of traditional tribal life. Reflecting on the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, Black Elk supposedly looks back in reflection:

I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch [...] And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream.

And I, to whom so great a vision was given in my youth,- you see me now a pitiful old man who has done nothing, for the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead. (276)

DeMallie's scrutiny of the original interview transcripts and correspondence between Black Elk and Neihardt reveals that this passage did not reflect Black Elk's thoughts but was written by Neihardt as a fitting tragic coda at the "end" of Black Elk's autobiography which also served as a symbolic pronouncement of the "end" of Native Plains culture ("Nicholas" 55). While DeMallie stresses that Black Elk did indeed deeply mourn the fact that he could not live up to his visions and save his people, DeMallie concludes that

... Black Elk's attitude toward his people's future held more hope than thoughts of doom. The sense of irreversible tragedy that pervades *Black Elk Speaks* reflects Neihardt's interpretation. Lakota culture does not emphasize the irreversible, but rather the opposite: what once was is likely to be again. This was the hope that Black Elk voiced again and again in talking to Neihardt, that together they could "make the tree bloom." ("Nicholas" 55-56)

DeMallie insists that while Neihardt's purpose was to express and mourn in literature the ending of an historic era in American and Native history, Black Elk's purpose was to regenerate his people's spiritual heritage and make it viable again by sending his vision through Neihardt out into the world.

In addition to steering the import of Black Elk's religious message towards the tragic, Neihardt's text obfuscates Black Elk's spiritual position within his community and his community's religious realities. Cropping Black Elk's life story at 1890 and the Massacre at Wounded Knee, Neihardt chose not to address Black Elk's life between 1890 and 1930, a life which reflected not pathetic defeat but both a successful adaptation to the exigencies of life on the Pine Ridge Reservation and a respected spiritual career as Roman Catholic catechist (DeMallie, "Nicholas" 57). While Neihardt's authorial voice indeed would seem to distinguish the text as a potential vehicle for the Euro-American doomed Native "subject," the text's more pertinent and controversial role in discussions concerning the syncretic dynamics and tension of Native "identity" is revealed in the literary critical contention surrounding Black Elk's Christian convictions and practices, their potential influence on the text (and Neihardt's subconscious or conscious role in this), and the contemporary cultural positioning of the text as "authentic."

Black Elk's "religious identity": between a Christian rock and a syncretic hard place.

Shortly after the turn of the century, in 1904, Black Elk ceased the practice of shamanic healing and joined the Roman Catholic Church. DeMallie indicates that this decision was the result of a contemplative process that had begun as early as 1888 when Black Elk became curious about Christianity, a curiosity indicative of his general interest in religious thought and spiritual experience. By the time Neihardt met Black Elk in 1930, Black Elk had been a Catholic for 26 years and was known among Catholic missionaries as one of the most committed and successful Native catechists (DeMallie, "Nicholas" 27, 28). In the critical appraisal of Black Elk's life, it is generally agreed upon that his conversion to Christianity reflected the complex motives of most of his tribal contemporaries who were weathering the extremes of violence and deprivation which characterized the transition from traditional lifeways to the oppressive conditions of the reservations. These motives have been understood as a combination of strategic necessity and sincere emotional commitment supported by the general propensity of Native cultures to incorporate other religious elements into their thought systems (Powers 46-47). In relation to Black Elk's convictions and practices, two of the major detailed studies of Black Elk's life, DeMallie's *The Sixth Grandfather* (1984) and Michael Steltenkamp's *Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala* (1993), have argued that while his emotional commitment to Catholicism was sincere, he did not reject Native traditional perspectives but regarded his two visions- his traditional vision and his conversion to Christianity - as parts of a continuum, as two complementary spiritual stages in his life (Steltenkamp 98-99; DeMallie, "Nicholas" 66). This "inclusive religious identity," however, was arguably incomprehensible to both Neihardt and the Jesuits with whom Black Elk worked, and with the publication of the text in 1932 Black Elk found himself suddenly positioned uncomfortably between Native and Euro-American identity contexts.

As has already been mentioned, within Native cultural precepts the syncretic interplay of Christian and Native spiritual systems was not uncommon or unacceptable. Both Black Elk

the text and Black Elk the man could be seen as engaging in non-agonistic syncretism, arguably aligned with Native cultural practices and thus translatable into a context of culturally acceptable Native “social identity” (Clifford, *Predicament* 303). However, within the Euro-American religious identity contexts of Black Elk’s day, syncretic religious situations were understood in mutually exclusive and often confrontational terms, any perceived ambiguities in personal religious conviction requiring a clarification of group allegiance. For Neihardt this meant that Black Elk’s narrative and investment in his vision and its significance indicated that he was “primarily” a traditional medicine man. The Jesuits, however, understood Black Elk’s Catholicism and subsequent work as a catechist to be the substantiation of the absolute spiritual metamorphosis indicative of “conversion” (Clifford, *Predicament* 303). DeMallie tells us that the Jesuits for whom Black Elk worked were “shocked and horrified at the suggestion that one of their most valued catechists still harbored beliefs in the old Indian religion. For them to accept *Black Elk Speaks* at face value necessarily called into question the genuineness of their success in converting the Lakotas to Catholicism” (“Nicholas” 58). DeMallie writes that Black Elk felt called upon to write a document to re-stabilize his relationship with the Jesuits, reaffirming his commitment to Catholicism and stating that “For the last thirty years I have lived very differently from what the white man told about me. I am a believer” (“Nicholas” 59). DeMallie insists that Black Elk’s declaration was not a denunciation of *Black Elk Speaks*, but was read as such by the Jesuits who were reassured of his “true” identity as a Christian-*sans*-pagan (“Nicholas” 61). It can be proposed that Black Elk the man’s negotiation of the identity contexts of his times parallels the positioning of *Black Elk* the text within the contemporary multicultural literary debate surrounding what Silvio termed “identity based texts.” Current literary criticism of *Black Elk Speaks* reveals a similar demand that the text provide indications of a prioritized “loyalty” to one of the two spiritual and cultural systems to which Black Elk devoted his life. It can be concluded that the critical debate cannot yet seem to find a balanced appraisal of the presence of both religious systems in the text.

William Powers, one of the severest critics of *Black Elk Speaks*, accuses Neihardt of primitivizing and exoticizing Black Elk’s life, pandering to his Euro-American audience and producing the “myth” of Native “traditionalism” in a text which denies Black Elk’s spiritual development after Wounded Knee. This criticism could be seen as an implicit call for a reading of the text which takes Black Elk’s simultaneous allegiance to two belief systems into consideration. However, Powers attributes the Christian elements he sees in the text solely to Neihardt’s re-dressing of a Christian model in Native primitive costume, and thus rejects the text in its entirety.

Black Elk Speaks and Black Elk the myth, as opposed to the Black Elk truth, are so successful because Neihardt and others have consciously molded a character that conforms to the Judaeo-Christian model of worldliness, suffering, and salvation. (43)

This extreme rejection of *Black Elk Speaks* due to perceived Christian elements in the text is matched by the opposite perspective exemplified by Julian Rice in which Christian elements are acknowledged but are deemed insignificant, in no manner influencing the verity and specificity of the Lakota religious elements of Black Elk’s vision.

...Neihardt’s changes were made from aesthetic considerations in an Anglo-Christian literary context. The comparison also reveals that in sustained sections of the narrative, including the *hanbloglaka* (vision talk), Neihardt made only superficial changes. *Black Elk Speaks* is still a reliable introductory text [to traditional Lakota culture]. (6)

These two extremes can be seen to illustrate the primary critical responses to the syncretism of the text and the problematic multicultural representational role the text has in relation to Native identity: While Black Elk as Christian *catechist* is generally understood and accepted within the paradigms of Native inclusivity and strategic syncretism, interpretations of Black Elk as Native traditionalist which also attempt to address evidence in the text of the personal spiritual conviction of a Christian *convert* can be seen to grapple with issues of agonistic syncretism and threatened Native “authenticity.”

DeMallie has attempted an alternative interpretation of the text which addresses the authorial voices of both Neihardt and Black Elk, as well as the syncretic situation in which both traditional and Christian elements co-exist in the “religious identity” of the text. DeMallie insists that “It is unquestionably reasonable to assert that Black Elk’s teachings represent to a great extent traditional Lakota belief and ritual. But it would not be unreasonable to assume that Black Elk’s long active involvement with Roman Catholicism did not influence the way he spoke about traditional religion”(“Nicholas” 89). DeMallie has noted in both Neihardt and Black Elk a complementary mutual commitment to a universal message: for Neihardt a humanist vision and for Black Elk an “ecumenical attitude” in which the sacred hoop of his vision symbolized “all the continents of the world and embrac[ed] peoples of all colors.” DeMallie argues, however, that this ecumenical attitude was “foreign to traditional Lakota religion” (“Nicholas” 89). He also takes as an example of this mutual commitment to a universal message Neihardt’s minimization in the text of the theme of warfare in Black Elk’s vision and Black Elk’s personal rejection of the weapon offered to him in his vision to destroy his people’s enemies: the soldier weed. In order to emphasize a humanist message in Black Elk’s vision, Neihardt did not include Black Elk’s acquisition of the soldier weed, which was most likely to be interpreted in a context of resistance to encroaching Euro-American power, and chose to emphasize his acquisition of the power to heal his people.

By so doing, Neihardt set off Black Elk’s vision from other published Lakota vision accounts, most of them centered on the bestowal of power for success in warfare. [...]Black Elk himself had rejected the power to destroy when he turned his back on the vision and embraced Catholicism, and this alone gave Neihardt justification for accentuating those aspects of the vision that were most important for understanding Black Elk as a healer. (“Nicholas” 53)

DeMallie concludes that “Neihardt’s interpretation of Black Elk’s vision is valid and consistent. It hews closely to the way Black Elk himself interpreted his vision later in life” (“Nicholas” 54).

It has been this universalization of Black Elk’s vision predicated on a distinctly Native religious paradigm which has, since the 1960s, enabled the text to become the iconic inspiration for a universalized pan-tribal Native “identity,” especially, as Vine Deloria Jr. argued in *God is Red* (1994), for Native urban youth of various tribes whose ties to the reservations and surviving traditions are tenuous (36). However, *Black Elk Speaks* remains a contested and debated text in relation to contemporary issues of Native identity construction such as the determination of “authenticity,” authorial voice and group representation, and the negotiation of group allegiance, all of which are indicative of the play of seeming cultural oppositions and seeming unions in the “contact zone.”

Contemporary tribal literary responses to Christianity

This uneasily syncretic territory of the Native-Christian contact-zone can be seen as a major reason for the dearth of Native Christian literary texts and the tentativeness of their critical approval. This unease is reflected in the comments made by Paula Gunn Allen about the

Athabaskan poet Mary TallMountain. Describing her work as revealing “a deeply spiritualized sensibility,” Allen also remarks that TallMountain’s “tribal consciousness is tempered with a mystical Roman Catholic perspective, and this makes for a difficult and uneasy alliance between the pagan awareness that characterizes tribal thought and the less earthy, more judgmental view of medieval Christianity” (*Sacred* 172). One might argue that Allen’s terms “difficult and uneasy alliance” reveal more about Allen’s unease than about Tallmountains’ mystically oriented poetry.

An insecurity similar to Allen’s can be found in Winona LaDuke’s *Last Standing Woman* in a seemingly insignificant remark made by one of her characters at the conclusion of the novel in which she refers to “her continued commitment to what she call[s] ‘the two paths of the Anishinaabeg’ - Christianity and traditional spirituality” (286). Taken out of context, this seems to be an expression of non-agonistic syncretism and an affirmation of Native identity. However, the remark comes almost as an afterthought of Native-Christian inclusivity at the end of the novel and is unconvincing under the weight of LaDuke’s detailed description earlier in the novel of missionary cultural oppression on the reservation and the sexual abuse of young Indian children by priests in Christian boarding schools.

A novel which offers a prolonged engagement with the influence of Christianity is Diane Glancy’s *Pushing the Bear* (1996), a portrayal of the Trail of Tears, the removal of 13,000 southeastern Cherokee over a distance of 900 miles to Oklahoma in the winter of 1838-39. Her depiction of the thoughts of the Cherokee Reverend Bushyhead during the march trace his gradual spiritual disillusionment in the face of the march’s incomprehensible misery. While Christianity itself is not criticized in the novel, its teachings, metaphors, and parables begin to ring hollow as it ceases to provide comfort and solace for the families of the decimated tribe. Native stories and myths, on the other hand, are increasingly seen to carry the seeds of communal continuity- the symbolically laden memories of a culturally crucial homeland- to be planted and nurtured anew in Oklahoma by the survivors.

Despite the predominance of a negative valuation of Christianity in Native literature, the following analysis of the literary expressions of Native identity in relation to Christianity will target texts which portray a more integrative engagement of the tribal individual with Christianity and which avoid a conclusive rejection of Christianity within the scope of Native identity. Anna Lee Walter’s short story “The Devil and Sister Lena” (1985) will be shown to address the “inclusivist” pedagogical context of Native identity formation as she explores the role of a grandmother in the instruction of the tribal community’s children in a Native worldview. In Louis Erdrich’s novels *Tracks* (1988) and *Love Medicine* (1984), the “vision” as a primary indicator of religious identity in both Native and Christian traditions will be investigated. While the nature of contemporary Native Christianity will not be explored as such, the reflections of contemporary Native Christians will serve as a context for this analysis, the dynamics of syncretism being a constant factor in their lives. As Treat remarks, Native Christians are aware that “the idea of a native Christian identity is problematic, both culturally and historically [...] they face a fundamental existential dilemma in attempting to resolve their hybrid identities into an organic unity” (2,9).

“The Devil and Sister Lena” (1985) by Anna Lee Walters

In Anna Lee Walters’ short story “The Devil and Sister Lena,” the attempts of several preachers to convert Lena to denominational Christianity is paralleled by Lena’s instruction of her 5 year old grandchild in what can be generally termed a tribal “worldview,” more specifically to be understood in this analysis as a tribal religious “identity context” (Rosenberg 608). Lena’s grandchild is witness to dialogues between Lena as tribal elder and various Christian preachers, the pedagogical nature of this situation being the child’s exposure

to and consideration of both religious identity contexts. As the child proves open to both modes of thought, both religious paradigms for understanding and interpreting events in the world, Lena's responses to the preachers and her subsequent discussions with the child will be seen not as "identity teaching" but cognitive identity "priming"; Lena will teach the child not *what to think* but *how to reason* as she helps the child explore both the Christian "doctrinal/dogmatic" approach and the "experiential/inclusivist" nature of tribal religious perspectives. Ultimately, Walters will show that the tribal religious identity contexts are more pertinent to tribal contemporary experience, thereby also reaffirming the contemporary pertinence of traditional pedagogical contexts of tribal identity formation: instruction by the tribal elder.

The grandparent/grandchild relationship in Native literature often reflects a negotiation of the dramatic changes in tribal life which occurred during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Medicine, "American Indian Family"; Bradford 55-56). The grandparent's role as the teacher of tribal traditions to the younger generations is regularly seen as challenged by the identity predicament of the contemporary grandchild who responds to the Euro-American pressure to reject the grandparent's knowledge as anachronistic, but who also experiences a sense of longing for "missed instruction, for someone to "teach us the ways"" (P. Smith 119). Walters's story relieves these tensions adherent in the relations between the tribal grandparent and the grandchild by presenting Lena's young granddaughter as completely open to her grandmother's teachings, thereby enabling Lena to successfully fulfill her traditional role as tribal elder in the contemporary world. More subtle however, is the situating of the short story itself in a constructed time frame in which situations associated with both past and present conditions apply, thereby undermining the temporal contexts within which tribal worldviews have been made to seem anachronistic.

Many aspects of the story give the reader a sensation that it is taking place at the turn of the 20th century when the various Christian denominations which had settled in Native communities maintained a 19th century missionary attitude towards indigenous peoples. In the short story, missionaries are described as seeing Lena's tribal community as "children" with "simple minds," "simple lives," one preacher so bold as to declare to Lena "I hear you people don't have religion. Don't believe in God or Jesus"(63, 67). It is unlikely that many readers of Walter's story would interpret this missionary attitude as a contemporary one.

Lena's involvement in the religious life of the community is also described by Walters in terms which resonate with the inclusive religious attitude discussed, which seems to imply an early non-coercive missionary presence in the tribal community.

Lena was a religious woman. She attended church at every opportunity even though an ancient tribal belief had been deeply instilled in her. She did not forsake "the old way" as she called it, and she taught both ways to the grandchild in her care. [...] she was not the only one like that; there were other Indian people who were the same." (63)

Lena seems to be unhindered in her additive approach to the religious systems in her community, incorporating both Christianity and "the old way" into her traditional role as tribal elder as she instructs her grandchild in what Paul Schultz (Ojibway) and George Tinker (Osage/Cherokee) call "both sets of stories" (60). This involvement in both religious discourses exasperates one young preacher who asks Lena why she goes to church if she is not exclusively committed to Christianity. Lena replies "Because all these peoples, they ask me to come. Sides, I like it. Jesus I like. The songs, too" (66). Lena's remark reflects what has been seen as a characteristic initial response of tribal peoples to Christian stories. As Rosemary McCombs Maxey (Muscogee) argues,

With the introduction of Christianity to the tribes, some of our people, regardless of tribal affiliation, found the teachings of Jesus similar and compatible to the ancient moral and ethical teachings of our people. Jesus' teaching were accepted by many who did not give up their understanding of their place in the universe as taught in traditional instruction prior to missionary influence. (43)

In addition to the amenable figure of Jesus, many aspects of the institutional church were attractive to tribal members because, like Native socially structured religious conventions and ceremonies, Christian institutions could "provide avenues for the development and recognition of religious leadership," social status, and could "facilitate community reconciliation and allow for the fulfillment of ceremonial obligations" (Treat 10). Therefore, if "all these people" ask Lena to join their social religious organization, her traditional tribal outlook and society structures would support her inclination to do so.

These elements in Walters' story seem to place Lena in an "early" and arguably idealized non-agonistic syncretic environment in which traditional inclusivist approaches to tribal religious identity could operate, Lena incorporating elements of Christianity compatible with Native worldviews into her function as instructor of Native identity contexts to future generations. However, well into the story we come across a detail that places it within a much more contemporary frame: we read that Lena "watched airplane lights flicker in the sky" (68). This is the first of only a few indications that the story takes place after the mid-twentieth century. What had seemed expressions of early contact strategies for dealing with missionaries and Christianity now become possible critiques of contemporary society. An example of this is Lena's refusal to see the importance of the dogmatic differences between Christian denominations.

...[Lena] divided up the Sundays equally between churches. One by one, the pastors approached Lena to ask the same question. "Sister Lena, do you know what you are doing? All these churches you been agoing to ... they ain't the same.[...]these churches don't all believe the same way. [...] we have different rules we go by. We believe that god wants us to live in a certain way, and it's very different from the way those people in other churches live. Otherwise, we'd all be alike. Wouldn't make much difference what church we went to." (64)

Lena's answer, "It's alla same. Yes, it is. Alla same. *You* don't understand" (64), can be understood both as an early tribal response to Christian denominationalism and as the anti-institutional attitude of the 1960s and 1970s in which "the organized church" was seen as an impediment to the true experience of Christianity. As Susan De Ramirez remarks, for the preachers who insist on dogmatic denominational loyalty, "Christianity appears to be the impediment to their spirituality and recognition of the common ground between all manifestations of the sacred," while "it is Lena who truly values Christianity as well as her tribal beliefs" (99). In this particular exchange, Lena's approach appears to be the more appropriate one for a contemporary multi-cultural society, the priest's attitude seeming antiquated.

With the scarcity of twentieth century detail, Walters gives the impression of "fusing" two time frames: one suggesting the "past" of religious inclusiveness and minor missionary influence, the other a "present" that makes itself felt only in the incidental mention of an airplane and of 1950s model cars. This subtle temporal fusion works against the above mentioned perceived discrepancy between the tribal life of the "past" and that of the "present" often embodied in the uncertain pedagogical role of the grandparent as transmitter of tribal identity contexts. This temporal fusion relieves the grandmother figure of the weight of colonial history and the aura of anachronistic knowledge and experience, allowing Lena to speak to her grandchild solely as a source of contemporary and relevant wisdom.

Lena's wisdom: "lissen"

As suggested above, Lena's grandchild is witness to the dialogue between representatives of two religious modes through which human experience and worldly events can be interpreted and understood. The grandchild is the implicit target of their discussions, one of the preachers urging Lena to commit herself exclusively to Christianity

"For the sake of your grandchild there, if nothing else." He pointed at the little girl who watched his every move. Lena answered him. "Thank you, preacher, but we came this far. Us peoples. Been looking out for ourselves. Came this far since the beginning. This girl's gonna know jest how things are."(67)

As the grandchild listens, Lena and the preacher offer each other an encapsulation of their respective religious "cognitive" paradigms which shape their responses to the material world. Attempting to impress upon Lena the urgency of her situation, the preacher implores Lena to "Save your soul, Sister Lena, [...] Me, I'm saved. You...you going to burn in hell unless you're saved [...] You'll burn for eternity" (64-65). The preacher rhetorically expresses an approach to life which is governed by the formalities of "doctrine," in this case the absolutism of sin and salvation. Lena offers the preacher an alternative to the exclusivity of the Christian doctrinal worldview.

"I'll tell you what I can. We don't got Jesus. We got something else. It's ever thing. Hard to sit and talk bout it. Can't say it in so many words. [...] What we have is a mystery. Don't got answers for it and don't understand it. But it's all right. Jest live right in it. Side by side.[...] lotsa time us peoples feel it, if we want to or not. It jest touches us, and us peoples think, we's part of it" (67, 70)

Lena attempts to explain to the preacher the inclusive, mysterious "ever thing" that is accessible to everyone and ultimately accessible intuitively through all religions, placing prime significance on an immediate mystical experience—"us peoples feel it...jest touches us"—rather than the conscious pursuit of a future, abstract "salvation." Lena's remarks can be seen to reflect a perspective emphasized by Natives exploring the nature of Christianity within Native spiritual sensitivities and paradigms: while "conventional Christian theology is typically doctrinal and rational, Native Christian reflection is experiential" (Treat 13).

Lena's primary pedagogical purpose in relation to her listening grandchild, however, is not the privileging of the tribal mystical experience over the Christian, having committed herself to the teaching of both perspectives. Lena's cognitive identity "priming" consists of teaching the child a non-dogmatic approach to this mystical experience. Indicating to both preacher and child that tribal people "Don't got answers for it and don't understand it," Lena confides in the child later that the preacher's intolerance of tribal perspectives is the result of dogmatic thinking: "he thinks he knows ever thing [...] He don't lissen. Don't hear the wind and the rain, the trees, and the grass. Don't hear it, the voice inside the mystery" (69). According to Lena, the dogmatic approach which demands definitive doctrinal interpretations of life will make one impervious to the wisdom that is to be gained from being open to ("listening to") life experiences. In order to be able to navigate those experiences successfully, Lena attempts to "prime" the child to think contextually, both in relation to practical situations and to the various religious interpretive paradigms which can aid the child in the interpretation of these situations. Lena's pedagogical method is exemplified in her approach to the central religious issue of the short story as indicated in its title, "the Devil," i.e. how to recognize "evil" and how to react to it.

Recognizing "evil"

Comparing Christian ideas about sin and evil to tribal attitudes, Paul Schultz and George Tinker state,

In all our traditional stories there was no doctrine of sin, per se. Yes, there was always an understanding of evil in human existence. [...] In all of our traditional tribal stories, sin or evil is treated as a fact of life. It is not explained theologically or philosophically. (65)

It is this “fact of life” which Lena attempts to teach her grandchild to recognize. When the child asks her grandmother what the Devil looks like. Lena replies “Well, some says he’s red and has horns and a long tail. But they’s others who says he’s handsome and can make hisself look like anything he wants to look like. [...] Some Indian peoples though says the Debil is a whiteman [...] They even say he is a preacher” (70, 66). Lena’s grandchild asks in effect how to recognize the evil in the world, and Lena’s response offers the child various examples of how evil has been understood and experienced in different cultural contexts: the Christian concept (horns) with its implied doctrinal tradition, a tribal version (shape-changer) in which evil has no definitive form, and a socio-historical experience of tribal peoples in which evil is identified as Euro-American society and Christianity. Lena’s main pedagogical purpose is prime her grandchild for cognitive openness and religious inclusivity in order to recognize and navigate the evils and dangers, apparent and less apparent, which have been and remain the “facts of life” for tribal peoples in the culturally agonistic contact zone.

To underscore the need to learn to contextually and not dogmatically judge societal situations for their potential “evil” or detrimental nature, Lena uses the natural world as both a practical and metaphorical example.

“They’s lotsa snakes hereabouts, baby.[...] Got to watch. Some of these snakes, they’s harmless. And some’s poison. Got to know which is which. Those green and black snakes, they nothing. They mind their own business. Let them pass. Leave all of them alone. My father, he tole me, daughter- you can’t always see them snakes, but you gonna know when you git bit.[...] Got to watch your step. Look round and lissen!” (68)

From a practical perspective, Lena is teaching her grandchild the pertinent zoological knowledge necessary to keep her safe in their environment. Lena also uses the “snake” as a syncretic metaphor, a shared Christian/tribal symbol, representing a hidden evil or threat to tribal worldviews. Similar to the concept of the Devil above, this hidden threat can be seen as multivalent and thereby requiring contextual analytical skills for its recognition. The snake arguably could refer simultaneously to the recognition of Christianity and the “whiteman” as potential negative forces in the tribal community, and conversely to the insidious effects of attributing evil to any religious system or racial/ethnic group. When her granddaughter questions her about the Devil and how to react to this shape-changing, contextual evil, Lena responds “Got to watch for him, baby. Look and lissen, like you do round snakes. Jest pick your steps round him” (71). Lena indicates that once the child learns to recognize the various forms of evil contextually, she will be better able to navigate and avoid its detrimental effects.

The short story concludes with a situation meant to complement Lena’s instruction, in which “evil” is recognized by the tribal community. At a tribal gathering to which Lena takes her now eight-year-old grandchild, a whiteman attempts to enter into the communal dances, choosing various Native partners. The other participants become restless, eventually cancelling the gathering by announcing “My relatives, the Devil is among us tonight. Take your families to your tents! Stay there!” (78). The next morning, Lena learns that the girls the man had danced with all died during the night. The temptation to make an interpretive connection in this episode between white society and the death of Native culture is countered by the presence of other whitemen at the dance who are not recognized as evil by the tribal community. One of these men can be seen to represent tribal inclusivity as the narrator remarks that he “was married into the tribe, so he was considered one of them” (76). This implies that the tribal community has avoided (or should avoid) the demonization of Euro-

American society and by extension Christianity, in marked contrast to the historical demonization of tribal peoples (Drinnon; Pearce; Berkhofer Jr.). Lena's instruction is meant to cultivate in her grandchild a sensitivity to moments such as these in which "evil" is recognized, but not blindly or "dogmatically" attributed to an ethnic group or religious system.

Lena's inclusive instruction was meant to "prime" her grandchild with an inclusive cognitive skill with the help of which the child could "lissen" to and eventually benefit from aspects of other cultural perspectives which have been assimilated into the tribal purview and become "one of them." That this inclusive perspective is grounded in the Native *experiential* approach to the practical and mystical world discussed above can be seen in Walter's metaphorical identification of the "Devil" at the gathering with the historic European contagions which had decimated tribal communities. When, in the final lines of the story, Lena's grandchild asks how the tribal community knew that the Devil was present,

Lena answered, "It's happened before. Seen some things before. Us peoples knows lotsa things. Jest keeps it to ourselves. Now, come on, eat. Be too hot to move soon."

"Like Hell?" the girl asked Lena.

Lena swallowed her cereal and said, "Looks to me like you learning, baby."(81)

The short story ends with both the insistence that there has been wisdom gained from the tribal historical experience of "evil," as well as Lena's approval of the grandchild's ability to think metaphorically in various religious systems. This ability will enable the child to recognize contemporary "evils"- i.e., threats to tribal life and identity contexts- as the result of a complex of historical and socio-cultural developments, and not to categorically link these threats to Euro-American culture in general or Christianity in particular. In this respect, Lena's "traditional" inclusive message to her grandchild is also a very pertinent one for Native Christians specifically and, more in particular, for Native youth who need to position the traditionally rooted identity contexts of their elders in their own contemporary multi-religious settings and experiences.

Even though set in the present, the story harkens back to earlier contact situations in which Christianity was understood in a tribal manner, its stories taken in and its wisdom gleaned without impinging on the integrity of the tribal community and its worldview. This strategy allows Walters to circumvent those aspects of the legacy of colonial history which have put Native culture under erasure. By doing so, Walters has removed the symbolic association of a "vanished culture" with the character of the "grandmother," thereby enabling the potential of the voice of the tribal elder as cultural teacher of Native identity contexts for present and future generations.

In as far as the story avoids the complexities of the colonial "contact zone," it can be criticized as idealistic. However, the story itself can also be seen to be pedagogical in its illustration of how traditional tribal worldviews and identities contexts *can* be maintained in tandem with Christian perspectives. Its "idealistic" context can be seen as purposefully constructed to allow Lena's teachings to have priority over potentially contradictory social realities. By insisting on creating a "protected space" in the "contact zone" in which the tribal worldview can be taught and lived without the threat of cultural erasure, Walters moves colonial history and coercive and exclusive Christianity to the periphery of the tribal religious experience. Reconstructing the "contact zone" to serve her pedagogical purpose, Walters teaches the reader "traditional" tribal inclusive cognitive contexts as the foundation for contemporary Native and Native Christian identities.

While Walters's story focuses on the *pedagogical* contexts of Native religious identity formation, in the following two novels by Louis Erdrich, *Tracks* (1988) and *Love Medicine* (1984), we find a *revelatory* locus of religious identity in both Native and Christian systems:

the “vision” and how mystical experience is invested with identity significance within the community. Reminiscent of, respectively, Black Elk’s predicament and Walter’s context of tribal religious inclusivity, Erdrich’s characters will be seen to negotiate the pressure of religious group allegiance in *Tracks* and transcend these syncretic antagonisms in *Love Medicine*.

***Tracks* (1988) by Louise Erdrich**

In *Tracks* and *Love Medicine*, Louise Erdrich explores the influence of two mystical systems, Native and Catholic, on the identity development of her protagonists, an exploration which reveals her own personal affinity for Catholic mysticism. As she remarked in an interview,

Catholicism has always been important to me even though I am not a practicing Catholic now. The rituals full of symbols, mysteries, and the unsaid. That affects a person always, once you know it as a child. (qtd. in Friedman 119)

Erdrich was brought up a Catholic and her maternal grandfather, Pat Gourneau of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa reservation in North Dakota, was comfortable in both Native and Catholic religions. Remarking on the mixture of “old time religion and church religion” on the reservation, Erdrich relates how her grandfather’s activities reflected a religious hybridity: “He would do pipe ceremonies for ordinations and things like that. He just had a grasp of both realities, in both religions” (Bruchac, “Whatever” 99,100). While in *Love Medicine*, set between 1934 and 1984, Erdrich’s characters will be seen to achieve this grasp of the realities in both religions, in *Tracks*, set between 1912 and 1924, the spiritual development of the central protagonist Pauline will highlight the tensions between Native and Christian religious identity contexts.

Tracks relates the events which form the preconditions for the situations in *Love Medicine*, taking place during the period of the allotment policy (General Allotment Act of 1887), when reservation land was divided among individual Native and families, and “left over” land was sold to non-Natives. Starvation, extreme poverty, high mortality from disease, a strong missionary presence, and an intense pressure to assimilate characterized this period for the tribal people of North Dakota. The novel has two alternating narrative voices: the tribal elder Nanapush who has maintained traditional practices, and the young woman Pauline Puyat who eventually denies her Indian blood and becomes a Catholic nun. Both narrators focus most of their attention on the life of Fleur Pillager, who possesses shamanistic powers given to her by the water monster Misshepesu. While Nanapush has adopted Fleur as his daughter, Pauline comes to see Fleur as a rival against whom she must measure her own spiritual power.

Pauline is the character who most embodies the cultural contestations of the novel’s historical period. Early in the novel, Pauline prioritizes white society by identifying with her half-white mother, eventually convincing herself that she is not Indian at all but completely white. In this respect, Pauline can be seen as a prime example of “internal colonization” and the assimilationist drive to erase Native identity, Susan Friedman remarking that “Pauline represents the internalized self-hatred of the colonial subject, the Indian who wants to be white” (110). However, as the reader follows the development of Pauline’s Catholic identity, her conversion does not reveal an assimilative drive, but a struggle for, and construction of, an outlet and social context for her developing mystical powers.

Pauline’s mystical identity: visions and search for community

It is significant that while Pauline is absolutely associated with Catholicism by the end of the novel, the first revelations of her spiritual potential take place clearly within the context of tribal visionary experience. Present at the deathbed of a young woman, Pauline undergoes a “transformation,” spiritually and physically as Erdrich describes it.

A cool blackness lifted me, out the room and through the door. I leapt, spun, landed along the edge of the clearing. My body rippled. [...] And that is when, twirling dizzily, my wings raked the air, and I rose in three powerful beats and saw what lay below. [...] I alone, watching, filled with breath, knew death as a form of grace [...] when they found me in the tree later that morning, everyone was shot with fear at the way I hung, precarious, above the ground. [...] But I remembered everything, and wasn't in the least surprised. I knew that after I circled, studied, was all, I touched down on my favorite branch and tucked my head beneath the shelter of my wing. (68)

This visionary transformation is, in a tribal context, very much associated with the powers bestowed on a supplicant during a vision quest and with shamanistic abilities (Deloria Jr. *God is Red*, 90). The owl Pauline hears before Mary dies, an animal associated with death in many tribal cultures, becomes Pauline's spirit helper as she is “called” to guide the dying to the afterlife. Pauline is not at this point involved in any considerations of different mystical systems as such, only in her vision and her calling.

After that, although I kept the knowledge close, I knew I was different. I had the merciful scavenger's heart. I became devious and holy, dangerously meek and mild. [...] We set them praying into the ground if they were Christians, or if unconverted, along the death road of the Old Ones, with an extra pair of shoes. It was no matter to me what happened after life. I didn't care. I accompanied Bernadette, waited for the moment that brought me peace. (69)

Pauline feels herself changed, empowered. She has a mystical knowledge which has come to her within a clearly tribal framework. At this point in the novel, a parallel with Fleur is implied as Pauline receives the same fearful respect from the tribal community given to Fleur due to their both being involved with the powers of life and death.

Pauline's vision has given her a central spiritual source around which she can construct her identity. However, despite the fact that she performs a general societal *function* on the reservation, she does not have a social *identity* linked to this function because she does not seem to be integrated into the Native community. Nanapush remarks that “She was, to my mind, an unknown mixture of ingredients [...] We never knew what to call her, or where she fit [...] so we tried to ignore her” (39), Pauline describing herself as “invisible” (15-16, 75). Driven by the need to be recognized and accepted, she attempts to integrate herself into two families which can be seen to represent the two main Native culture groups on the reservation: the family she is living with (Bernadette Morrissey and her brother Napoleon) whose western-oriented customs and education- such as fiddle playing and a knowledge of French- reflect the Canadian Métis culture of Pauline's background, and Fleur's “family” which she calls Nanapush's “new clan,” consisting of Fleur, Fleur's lover and their daughter Lulu, and Nanapush's lover Margaret Kashpaw. This “new clan” is “traditional” in their selected incorporation of Christian rituals into an overarching Native mystical system. Pauline experiences extreme emotional aloofness from Fleur's family, and impersonal, loveless sex with Napoleon Morrissey (resulting in the unwanted birth of her daughter Marie). In a calculated remark meant to gain Fleur's sympathy, Pauline plays on her non-position on the reservation to justify her choice to become a nun: “I have not family [...] I am alone and have no land. Where else would I go but to the nuns?” (142). Despite the remark's manipulative intent, it does describe Pauline's actual situation. Her frustrated need to be accepted as a meaningful member of a group and to be recognized as an emotional, sexual, and spiritual being drives her to sabotage Fleur's relationship by using magic to bewitch Fleur's lover into

sleeping with the young Sophie. The climactic developments of this situation will ultimately lead to Pauline's second visionary experience which will point her towards the community which will support and legitimate her burgeoning but frustrated identity, towards Catholicism and the reservation convent.

After falling under Pauline's spell, Sophie realizes that she has slept with a shaman's lover and runs distraught to Fleur's house, where she is frozen statue-like by Fleur's powers. The townspeople, desperate to disenchant the girl, bring the statue of the Virgin Mary to Fleur's house. Pauline stares into the beautifully sensual statue's face and is sole witness to a miracle as tears fall from the Virgin's eyes. At that moment, Sophie is released from her frozen state, and while she is the center of attention, Pauline scoops up the tears which have frozen on the wintry ground and puts them in her pocket.

For many months afterward I brooded on what I'd seen. Perhaps, I thought at first, the Virgin shed tears as She looked at Sophie Morrissey, because She herself had never known the curse of men. She had never been touched, never known the shackling heat of flesh.[...] Then later [...] I knew that the opposite was true.

The sympathy of Her knowledge had caused Her response. In God's spiritual embrace She experienced a loss more ruthless than we can imagine. She wept, pinned full-weight to the earth, known in the brain and known in the flesh and planted like dirt. She did not want Him, or was thoughtless like Sophie, and young, frightened at the touch of His great hand upon Her mind. (95)

It is clear that Pauline's vision of the Virgin's tears involves the revelation of a connection between earthly longings and religious aspirations, between erotic desire and mystical (comm)union. On the one hand, Pauline's interpretation of her vision reflects her own sexual, emotional, and spiritual complexities. On the other hand, however, there is a more fundamental connection between the erotic and the mystical, which Erdrich herself recognizes.

I believe that faith is erotic in the sense that our yearning is toward union, toward the absolute. Toward a transcendence- not of the body- but of all of the concerns that grab us from every side from day to day. Transcendence of the ordinary or an acceptance- a love of the ordinary part of faith. So I interpret erotic to be a much more inclusive and embracing word than say purely sexual. ("A Conversation")

Pauline, in her failure to find a sense of community and emotional and sexual intimacy, understands the revelation of the Virgin in terms of the frightening desire and erotic longing of mystical union. It is at this point that Erdrich has Pauline choose the nuns as her community, Catholicism as the focus of her religious identity, and a particular strain of "devotion" as the expression of this identity through the legitimization of her complex longings.

Pauline's Christian identity: Catholic and tribal contexts

The form of devotion upon which Pauline models her actions was practiced by early Christian women mystics who expressed their visions in mildly cloaked erotic terms of passion and union (Friedman 120). By engaging in this tradition of disturbing extremes, of self-mortification and tones of erotic mystical passion, Pauline has chosen a spiritual path which was in conflict with the Church authorities. As Friedman notes, medieval mystics' visions of God and Christ

signified direct access to the divine, thus requiring none of the ordinary mediation by priests or the institutional church. This challenge to both Church doctrine and authority met with considerable resistance. This was particularly true for women mystics because even as they operated within the framework of Catholicism they implicitly challenged its patriarchal foundation by insisting on the priority of their visions over the words of a male authority. Many of the saints' lives of women mystics narrate a complex path to sainthood in which the

woman must authorize her visions and religious life by overcoming the doubts and opposition of fathers, brothers, priests, and other members of the church hierarchy. One form that such self-authorization took was extreme deprivation, an excessive mortification of the flesh that functioned as penitence for sin, replicated the sufferings of Christ, and served as the precondition of visionary experience. (120-121)

Erdrich has Pauline choose a tradition bordering on the heretical within the Catholic Church, a tradition in which women visionaries, despite the cruel extremes they felt driven to, found a source of authorization and respect for their visionary insights. In her identification with this community of early women mystics, Pauline creates avenues in the church for the authorization of her own identity as a “visionary.” While she exploits avenues of power in the Catholic Church, she neither denies the reality of the tribal gods (in her respect for Fleur and Misshepesu), nor accepts blindly the tenants of the Catholic Church. Similar to early and contemporary Native recognition of the potential of the Christian Church to provide venues for religious and social identity roles in the community, Pauline decides that the Church can give her “a system of vitally effective power” (Morrison 254) and the context for developing her own distinctive spiritual calling.

While providing her with an identity as “woman mystic” recognized within the traditions of her new community, Pauline’s extremes of self-mortification within the tribal community, as represented by the voice of Nanapush, become the focus of continual satire. Still, Pauline is more than simply a site for ridicule. Through Nanapush and Pauline’s own monologues, Erdrich can be seen to apply humor as a distinct mode of Native commentary on the dynamics of Pauline’s identity within the tribal community. As has been discussed in James Welch’s *Winter in the Blood*, joking are strategies used to manage and cultivate tribal community coherence ranging from social control with its threat of social ostracism to the affirmation of bonds of family and friendship. Kenneth Lincoln in his study *Indi’n Humor* (1993) remarks that such bonding “pivots on playful baiting” (63). While Nanapush and Margaret Kashpaw’s playful sexual baiting can be seen to solidify the intimacy of their relationship (53, 126), Nanapush’s teasing of Pauline, in addition to the clearly tricksterish fun, can be seen within the context of the tribal elder who, as in Walters’s short story, attempts to instruct the younger generation, integrating them into the life of the community and guiding them through contemporary challenges.

Nanapush focuses on what he finds inappropriate in Pauline’s actions and puts extra pressure on them in carefully planned situations. An example of this is his reaction to the discovery that Pauline, who now wears a potato sack instead of proper clothing, only allows herself to urinate once in the morning and once in the evening. Nanapush proceeds to exacerbate Pauline’s self-inflicted “trial” by offering her sugary tea and telling a story about how rain drops turn into a flood of running water (149-151). As Pauline flees the house having wet her pants, Nanapush calls after her, “You have to dry a soaked potato sack in sunlight! Come back! Listen to an old man. I’m only telling this for your benefit!”(151). His teasing Pauline “for her benefit” suggests a pedagogical motive described by Keith H. Basso in his analysis of Apache teasing: “these performances are little morality plays in which [they] affirm their conceptions of what is ‘right’ and proper by dramatizing their conceptions of what is ‘wrong’ and inappropriate”(76). It would be tempting, though unconvincing, to argue that Nanapush is criticizing the discipline of self-denial, for Native religious practices such as the vision quest and Sun Dance employ similar extremes. We may assume, however, that Nanapush’s teasing primarily addresses Pauline’s position in the Native community, in which the social and religious aspects of her “identity” have distanced her from tribal life.

This “distance” is due not only to her strict Catholicism, but also to Pauline’s self-constructed “white” identity. When she had originally presented herself at the convent to become a nun, Pauline was told that the order would not admit “Indian girls.” Pauline subsequently convinces both herself and the nuns of her “purity,” aided by a vision in which

God tells her that “despite [her] deceptive features, [she is] not one speck of Indian but wholly white” (137). This subsidiary identity is also confirmed and maintained, either consciously or subconsciously, by Nanapush’s family who, Pauline uncomfortably notes, “treated me as they would a white. I was ignored most of the time. When they did address me they usually spoke English”(145-146). It is Nanapush, however, who attempts to bridge this barrier by constantly interacting with Pauline, waylaying her and “asking questions without limit or end” (145). While Pauline experiences these questions as provocative and adversarial, Nanapush can be seen to be keeping open modes of communication across strained “identity” barriers. That Pauline and the rest of Nanapush’s family do not recognize this dimension of Nanapush’s teasing is due, as Basso has pointed out, to the double nature of teasing.

... what of the kinds of messages that joking imitations communicate about the persons who perform them and their relationship with individuals they cast in the role of butt? What, in short, of social meanings? [...] Apaches assert that joking is one means for testing and affirming solidarity by ostensibly denying it. However, they are quick to observe that for this very reason- [...] joking can also accomplish the opposite effect; it can ‘tear’ relationships as well. (67, 69)

Nanapush’s teasing is a dangerous “game” in which his attempts to repair torn relationships also serve to reveal the extent of the damage. Therefore, while Erdrich encourages the reader to approach Pauline’s actions and thoughts ironically, both through the “the dramatic irony of Pauline’s monologues and the satiric humor of Nanapush’s renditions of Pauline” (Friedman 121), Pauline’s character is not simply the site of colonial “caricature,” but the site where, through humor, the seemingly insurmountable cultural pressures and rifts of that era are acknowledged. As Paula Gunn Allen remarks,

Humor is a primary means of reconciling the tradition of continuance, bonding, and celebration with the stark facts of racial destruction. (*Sacred* 159)

Cultural rifts and religious rivalry: the red herring

While Nanapush’s teasing of Pauline is an attempt to counter “the stark facts” of tribal community destruction, to Pauline his teasing serves to highlight what she comes to see as the power struggle of two cultures, experienced by her as the rivalry of the two mystical systems represented by Fleur and herself. Ostensibly, Pauline’s attitude towards Fleur seems to reflect the struggles of Native peoples “caught” between the “old” gods and the “new,” metaphorically portrayed during a climactic episode in which Pauline is trapped on a sinking rowboat in the middle of a wind-tossed lake and envisions the hungry water monster Misshepesu below her and God’s protective hand above her (196-201). However, as Naomi Zack points out, in certain multicultural situations inter-group rivalries can distract or mask the actual source of group insecurity and fragmentation. In her discussion of the antagonism between Jewish and Black communities, she notes

Blacks know that the worst form of violent oppression and degradation that the black population has suffered in America was not dealt by Jews, but by white Christians. And Jews know that black anti-Semitism is only a widespread danger if it ignites the latent anti-Semitism among non-Jewish Americans.

So in fighting with each other in public, blacks and Jews are in effect addressing and audience that each side may hope is the real enemy of the other side alone but that is almost certainly the enemy of both sides. (146)

In a similar fashion, the rivalry between Pauline’s Catholicism and the Native mystical powers and tradition represented by Fleur and Nanapush is a false rivalry. The “real enemy” of tribal culture and community solidarity in *Tracks* proves to be, as Louis Owens states, the hungry “machinery of colonial Euramerica” which consumes tribal lands (*Other* 217).

Throughout the novel, as the hardships, the passionate loves, and the mystical rivalries of the characters are foregrounded, the threat of late land fees and the eagerness of the Turcot lumber company to buy forfeited Native land remains a constant background concern. The growing urgency of this situation necessitates a concerted effort by Nanapush and Margaret to earn enough “holding money on both Pillager and Kashpaw land. No less, no more” (191). When Nanapush later discovers that his land has not been secured, it is revealed that Margaret secretly used all their money to secure Kashpaw land. Consequently, Nanapush’s Pillager land goes to the lumber company, and the trees around the tribe’s source of mystical power, the lake of Misshepesu the water monster, are destroyed. This is tribal history which will influence the characters in *Love Medicine*, “...the feud that would divide our people down the middle, through time. [...] the question of money settlement” (109). Therefore, ultimately the real threat to Native community and religious identity contexts in the novel is not actually signaled by Pauline’s construction of a non-Native, Catholic identity but by Margaret’s desperate decision to pay only for her allotment of land. It is this misguided choice which creates the real instability within the community, the religious rivalry between Christianity and Native traditions in the colonial “contact zone” having been set up by Erdrich as a “red herring,” the religious oppositions being a side effect of the struggle to construct community and develop spiritual identities in difficult times. Through Erdrich’s ironic treatment of Pauline’s extremes, the adversarial stance constructed by Pauline turns out to be just that- a stance constructed by Pauline to facilitate the formation of her religious identity. It is Margaret who has given in to the “machinery” of an expanding Euro-America in which the single-minded desire for tribal lands causes the fracturing of Native families and communities.

As in Walters’s short story, Erdrich’s novel underplays the historical pressure put on Natives to convert, and implies that an identification with Christian mystical tradition is not in itself a threat to Native identity and its cultural contexts. Erdrich locates the more insidious damaging force, exemplified by Pauline and ultimately by Margaret, in the missionary and imperialistic pressure to choose between group loyalties. As James West (Southern Cheyenne) remarks, what the Christian mission “has usually meant for the Indian person who has converted to Christianity is a choice, [...] a choice between Christianity or our own people and our spiritual way-of-life” (34). While Margaret chooses to prioritize her own family over the “new clan” represented by Nanapush, Pauline is also forced to prioritize one “identity context” over the other, being told that “Christian” and “Native” are two mutually exclusive identities. As Jace Weaver remarks, “Natives are still taught that “Christian Indian” is an oxymoron. For all too many, to become Christian still means to cease being Indian” (*Other* 286).

Catherine Rainwater has described Pauline as “a site of code conflict”; as “‘cross-coded’ according to different models of identity” (*Dreams* 92). Conversion, the choice of a new “model of identity,” in the period in which *Tracks* is situated was a problematic but often chosen strategy for tribal people searching to construct a community and simultaneously find paths to develop their spiritual sensitivities. By contextualizing Pauline’s construction of her spiritual identity within the traditions of Native worldviews, Catholic women mystics, and the concomitant history of colonialism and the missionary system, Erdrich presents an idiosyncratic exploration of the limitations and possibilities of identity in the early twentieth-century religious contact zone.

Erdrich’s multicultural “holding back”: choosing not to choose

Pauline’s situation reveals the complexities of individual “choice” and the demands of “group allegiance” in the construction of identity that are very much at the heart of the contemporary

multicultural experience. Ideally, the contemporary concepts of the ever changing “borderland” and *mestizaje* identity would allow “the possibility that an individual can have simultaneous membership and multiple, fluid, identities with different groups” (Root, “Within” 6). However, studies of bi- and multi-racial individuals have explored the realities of negotiating the demands of exclusivity of these groups (Root (ed.) *Racially*; Root (ed.) *Multiracial*). For Natives to assert various degrees of involvement in Christianity brings with it the need to answer for themselves and their communities’ questions concerning their “ethnic authenticity” and group alliance. While the definition of the boundaries of tribal ethnicity might be necessary for the consolidation and empowerment of Native identities within Euro-American society, the right to claim multi-cultural or multi-religious identities has been seen by some as key in the process of decolonizing Native identity contexts. As Marie Therese Archambault insists

The Catholic tradition deserves scrutiny by us. Unlike many of our ancestors, we are allowed to freely choose the Catholic faith.[...]When we read the Gospel, we must read it as Native people, for this is who we are. We can no longer try to be what we think the dominant society wants us to be. [...] We must, as one author says, “de-colonize” this Gospel, which said we must become European in order to be Christian. (136, 135)

Erdrich’s use of Catholicism in both *Tracks* and in *Love Medicine* points to a similar creative stance. While condemning colonization, she does not simultaneously condemn Christianity as anti-Native, but chooses to explore both Catholic and Native mysticism as intimately interactive because of their intertwined history. This stance, which is a refusal to pledge a singular group allegiance, has been called “holding back” by Naomi Zack who sees it as a strategy for negotiating multiple loyalties to “rival” groups. Discussing the predicament of the Black Jewish individual, Zack states

On ethical grounds, people who think, feel, and have the ability to choose to be both black and Jewish hold back. They accept their dual racial and ethnic identity as a matter of social fact but cannot fully *be* it. [...] Holding back creates a space in which the good faith behind even the positive aspect of being something racially and ethnically can be interrogated. (148)

This “holding back,” according to Zack, puts the individual in a tentative relationship with the past and with one’s “ancestors.” She concludes that the conflicting responsibilities to different sets of “ancestors” can have a detrimental effect on the agency of the contemporary individual who wishes to be loyal to both groups. She suggests that “good faith requires that people who have to act in the present draw a line between the sphere of constraint that is a consequence of the past and the sphere of freedom that is where their own agency begin in the present”(149). This is directly relevant to the Native individuals’ sense of moral responsibility to the sacrifices of their ancestors in the fight against missionary and colonizing forces, and their contemporary involvement in Christianity.

That Erdrich’s novels seem to “hold back” has led Leslie M. Silko to criticize Erdrich for lacking “political commitment” and for being “ambivalent about her Native American origins,” Erdrich responding that “any human story is a political story” and that all mixed-bloods are ambivalent about their origins (Chavkin 237-238). Silko most likely senses that Erdrich is reticent about making a direct link between imperialism and Christianity, a reticence which leaves room in her novels for the meaningfulness of Christian mystical experience in Native identity contexts. According to Zack, criticism such as Silko’s can be seen as a result of the strategy of “holding back”:

People who hold back from the antagonism between blacks and Jews will probably not be highly welcomed recruits or secure members of either group because it will be impossible to draw them into the bitter agendas. They may be accused of being antisocial, reserved, standoffish, hard to get, and so on. (150)

Erdrich's novel *The Beet Queen* (1986) elicited just such a response from Silko in her well-known essay "Here's an Odd Artifact for the Fairy-Tale Shelf." In this novel, set in North Dakota during a period spanning from 1932 to 1972, Erdrich somewhat surprisingly chooses not to focus on Native and white relations.

In Erdrich's hands, the rural North Dakota of Indian-hating, queer-baiting white farmers of the Depression, becomes magically transformed. [...] hers is an oddly rarified place in which the individual's own psyche, not racism or poverty, accounts for all conflict and tension. [...] In Erdrich's North Dakota, the deepest levels of the human consciousness appear untouched by racism or bigotry. ("Odd Artifact" 180,181)

While Erdrich's choice to "hold back from the antagonism" between white and Indian (and straight and gay) in this novel can rightly be criticized as creating a "naive" or "fairy-tale" environment, Silko argues that Erdrich's literary style also reflects a disengagement from tribal culture. Silko comments that Erdrich's prose is "an outgrowth of academic, post-modern" influence which, according to her, is "light-years away from the shared or communal experience that underlies oral narrative and modern fiction" ("Odd Artifact" 179). Erdrich's perceived "holding back," both in her avoidance of North Dakota group antagonisms and in her supposedly a-political, a-historical postmodern style, is seen by Silko as ultimately reflecting the politics of the "enemy": "In this pristine world [of *The Beet Queen*] all misery, suffering, and loss are self-generated, just as conservative Republicans have been telling us for years" ("Odd Artifact" 181). In defense of Erdrich's writing, Louis Owens has responded to Silko's criticism by pointing out that

in attacking [*The Beet Queen*] for its refusal to foreground the undeniably bitter racism toward Indians in America's heartland, Silko seems to be demanding that writers who identify as Indian, or mixedblood, must write rhetorically and polemically, a posture that leaves little room for the kind of heterogeneous literature that would reflect the rich diversity of Indian experiences, lives and cultures. (*Other* 206)

In relation to Christianity, Erdrich's novels do indeed seem to "hold back" and not engage in a polemical presentation of a rivalry between Christian and tribal spirituality. While acknowledging the Christian church's part in the politics and economies of imperialism and the suppression of Native cultures, Erdrich leaves space in her novels for Catholic mysticism and a tribal involvement in and appropriation of it. Doing so, she reflects a contemporary strategy in the construction of religious identity in which Natives involved in Christianity "have problematized and deconstructed the Christian theological tradition in the very process of critically appropriating and reconfiguring it for their own purposes" (Treat 11). In *Love Medicine*, Erdrich will achieve a masterful expression of this "reconfiguring" in a more intimate interweaving of Catholic and Native mystical wisdom, the purpose of which is to re-establish the social cohesion and cultural solidarity of the tribal community.

***Love Medicine* (1984) by Louise Erdrich**

In *Love Medicine*, the allotment era ends (1934) and the era of the Indian Reorganization Act begins, in which the structuring of tribal governments and cultural self-determination were encouraged by the federal government. The fragmented tribal community at the conclusion of *Tracks* is now seen in the process of reconstruction, each chapter of the novel narrated in the first person by a child or grandchild of Fleur, Pauline (now Sister Leopolda), or Margaret - the matriarchs of the three feuding families. In their complicated familial and love relationships, they play out the contingencies of the contestations which concluded *Tracks*, moving towards a new sense of community solidarity and familial harmony. The source of this process proves

to be the intertwining of Catholic and Native American mystical visionary worldviews, accompanied by their subsequently intertwined “miracles” and “magic.”

The Native and Christian forms of spirituality in *Love Medicine* have been described by Catherine Rainwater in terms of conflicting religious codes - “two different religious frames of reference” that “are yoked but not reconciled” (“Reading” 168,169). However, as has been discussed above, Erdrich’s strategy of “holding back” can be seen to deny this perceived religious rivalry. The process of reconciliation which is at the heart of the novel does not focus, as Rainwater does, on the “syncretic” tensions between the two religions, for it is not Christianity and tribal worldviews but the families within the tribal *community* which must be reconciled. Nevertheless, this reconciliation does involve the religious rivalry which pervades *Tracks* as the children of the characters most associated with the distinct religious identities “Catholic” and “Native” continue to compete with each other, this time in matters of love. Pauline’s daughter Marie, inheriting her mother’s sensitivity to and obsession with Catholic mystical power, will confront Lulu Nanapush, Fleur’s daughter who embodies the traditional Chippewa trickster Nanabozho’s potency, as they vie for Margaret’s son Nector’s affections.

As indicated by the title, “love” is a central motif in the novel, referring not only to the central narrative concern but also to the pivotal component that will create an unexpected intermeshing of the two religious systems, ultimately bringing together the feuding families. More specifically, the novel’s title can be seen to refer, in a tribal context, to the ritual “magic” of a love spell, its parallel in Erdrich’s Catholic context being the “miracle” of divine compassion. Love itself as the desired “result” of the magic/miracle can be understood as an emotional transformation which will result in a bonding of people. As Erdrich’s characters attempt to influence the workings of love as “passion,” they are confronted with the unexpected and uncontrollable nature of miracle and magic in both mystical systems, which despite the resulting blackly ironic series of events, effectuates the central moments of love as “compassion” which re-bond the community.

The “miracle” and the missionaries

In the chapter entitled “Saint Marie,” Marie Lazarre arrives at the Sacred Heart Convent on the reservation, to live under the tutelage of Pauline, now Sister Leopolda. Marie’s desire to join the nuns echoes Pauline’s drive in *Tracks*, as Marie is looking for an outlet for her sense of overwhelming personal spiritual power. Marie’s passionate description of her ambition as a young novice foreshadows an ironic twist of events.

No reservation girl had ever prayed so hard. [...] I was going up there on the hill with the black robe women. [...] I was going up there to pray as good as they could. [...] And they never thought they’d have a girl from this reservation as a saint they’d have to kneel to. But they’d have me. And I’d be carved in pure gold. With ruby lips. And my toenails would be little pink ocean shells, which they would have to stoop down off their high horse to kiss. (45)

Marie vividly envisions herself not only as the perfect practitioner of Catholic devotion, but as embodiment and focus of passionate devotion theoretically achievable for members of the Catholic Church: sainthood. Marie finds in Sister Leopolda both a teacher and an adversary as they contend for dominance within the Catholic mystical weave of love, desire, and (Christ’s) passion.

At first, their relationship reflects missionary subjugation as Leopolda attempts masochistically to drive out the “Dark One” who she feels talks to Marie in “the old language of the bush”(46). However, the mother/daughter relationship, which both characters remain unaware of, gives their struggles a Freudian dimension in which “love” is the motif at the

vortex of multi-contiguous desires ranging from Leopolda's cruel "mothering" of Marie, to Leopolda's obsession with the sexual "lust" of the Devil for Marie and for herself, to "God's love" which Leopolda says she offers Marie, to the longing adoration of the Saints by the nuns. At the climax of their confrontations, after Leopolda attempts to exorcize the Dark One from Marie by pouring boiling water on her, Marie tries to push Leopolda Hansel-and-Gretel-like into the large bread oven. Leopolda defends herself by stabbing Marie in the hand with a hot poker. When Marie awakens from her faint, Leopolda and the nuns are kneeling at her bedside, and Marie discovers that her most dreamed for hope had come true.

"I have told my Sisters of your passion," [Leopolda] managed to choke out. "How the stigmata...the marks of the nails...appeared in your palm and you swooned at the holy vision.."

"Yes," I said curiously.

And then, after a moment, I understood.

Leopolda had saved herself with her quick brain. She had witnessed a miracle. She had hid the fork and told this to the others. And of course they believed her... (59)

Here Erdrich has set up an ironic echo of the passion of Christ, Marie's "stigmata" being the absurd culmination of a cruel, farcical series of events. However, as mentioned above, while the "miracle" is presented ironically by Erdrich, she also reveals that it is exactly at these seemingly absurd moments that true healing transformation – love - takes place. Ready to glory in her situation and her victory over Leopolda, Marie, much to her chagrin, has a change of heart.

I smiled the saint's smirk into [Leopolda's] face. And then I looked at her. That was my mistake.

For I was her kneeling there. [...] With the desperate eyes drowning in the deep wells of her wrongness. There would be no one else after me. And I would leave. I saw Leopolda kneeling within the shambles of her love.

My heart had been about to surge from my chest with the blackness of my joyous heat. Now it dropped. I pitied her. I pitied her. Pity twisted in my stomach like that hook-pole was driven through me. [...] Still, still, I could not help what I did. I had already smiled in a saint's mealy forgiveness. I heard myself speaking gently.

"Receive the dispensation of my sacred blood," I whispered. (60)

While this moment of "dispensation" should have been the apex of Marie's triumph over Leopolda, her sudden sense of pity indicates the true revelation of the moment. Marie feels compassion for her enemy, a central theme in Christ's message of love, and she forgives Leopolda.

If Marie's struggle with Leopolda is seen as representing the battle against the cruel, oppressive missionary system which had demonized Native peoples' religions, her forgiveness of Leopolda can be understood in contemporary terms as the diffusing of the detrimental legacy of the missionary system through a revised attitude towards that struggle. As the Native Christian William Baldrige (Cherokee) remarks,

Fighting missionaries has taught me that the end of the missionary system begins with a change of heart, my heart, not the heart of the missionary nor the heart of the institutions that commission missionaries. Fighting the oppression of the missionary system is a struggle for justice that unavoidably becomes a struggle for power. Power lies at the core of Christian colonialism. Refusing the terms of the struggle is an essential first step in regaining the spiritual perspective of Native America. (87)

Baldrige's personal experience can be understood as an "exorcizing" of the missionary system from his personal Native Christianity, a "decolonization" of his spirituality which enabled him to regain the inclusivity of Native religious identity. Marie's situation can be seen to mirror Baldrige's as Marie, unable to surrender to the sense of power she was most hungry for, refuses the terms of Leopolda's struggle. In this last moment of compassion,

Marie undergoes a “miraculous” “change of heart,” defeating the missionary system in herself. The dimension of Christian “love” which is strengthened in Marie by this defeat is a spiritual ability central to the passion of Christ, symbolized by the stigmata, the ability to “forgive,” i.e. the power to give absolution. This is experienced by one of the other characters later in the novel, regardless of the fact that by that time Marie has become more overtly “traditional.”

[Marie’s] eyes went through me like the eyes of a saint carved into the wood of a broad wall. An unquiet light from the dance floor cast a blue shadow on her forehead. Her hair stood out on each side, white and winged...She was going to say that...my father would have been proud [...] She was going to tell me that I had a place. But, before she could speak, I noticed she was holding out her hands and in reflex I held out my own hands to her [...] In one palm there was a raised white scar, an old wound that twisted like a small tough twig.

“I’m sorry,” I mumbled.

It was the first apology that ever made me feel forgiven too... (322-324)

This ability to convey a sense of forgiveness which reaffirms the bonds of community and “place” will play an important role in the reconciliation of the three feuding families dividing the community. While Erdrich treats Marie’s “sainthood” with dark humor and irony, this does not undermine the fact that Marie has received a transformational Christian spiritual ability which will be integrated into her identity as tribal matriarch. However, in the chapter “Love Medicine,” it will be tribal magic which Marie calls upon, and while events seem to go tragically wrong, a process is initiated by which the schism in the community is healed.

The “magic” and the tribal community

Fleeing the convent, hand still bloody from Leopolda’s poker, Marie is stopped on the road by Nector Kashpaw, Margaret’s son. Having planned to marry Fleur’s daughter Lulu Nanapush, Nector suddenly feels inexplicably attracted to Marie. They marry, but Nector remains Lulu’s lover into their old age. Eventually, Marie calls upon the healing talents of the young Lipsha Morrissey to create a love spell which will turn Nector from Lulu and back to her. Marie chooses Lipsha for this task because of his hands which have “the touch,” the power to heal. This power, however, is complicated by the “trickster” in his blood – he is the grandson of Lulu Nanapush, a fact which is unknown to him. While Lulu is a lusty trickster, Lipsha proves to be a different type of trickster: the friendly but bungling “overreacher” (Allen, *Studies* 50). Lipsha knows that if his “love medicine” is to work, the adherence to traditional ritual practices is crucial (234-236). Correct ritual preparation, or more to the point the lack thereof, is Lipsha’s central concern as he decides to take “the powers in [his] own hands” (241).

As he fearfully avoids seeking advice of a shaman, the reader follows his train of thought as he invents his own ritual preparation of the love medicine in question. He reasons that since Canadian geese are animals which mate for life, if Marie and Nector eat geese hearts, their relationship will be repaired. However, as Lipsha is unsuccessful in his attempt to shoot a wild geese pair, he decides to buy frozen turkey hearts instead. He even goes as far as to “bless” them himself with holy water, remarking

I finally convinced myself that the real actual power to the love medicine was not the goose heart itself but the faith in the cure. I didn’t believe it, I knew it was wrong, but by then I had waded so far into my lie I was stuck there... (246)

Here Lipsha decides to ignore the performative, “ritual-based” foundation of the tribal spiritual worldview in which a cause-and-effect relationship between events is attributed to a “supernaturally ordered” and aware universe, and in which ritual is the attempt to communicate with and influence its forces (Kidwell and Nabokov 358). The idea of “faith,”

however, turns ritual into symbolic gesture, no longer the active, performative influence implicit in Native ceremonies.

After Lipsha completes his dubious ritual preparation of the turkey heart, Marie attempts to complete the “ceremony” as she eats one heart and cajoles Nector into eating the other. Suspicious of Marie’s motives, Nector teasingly holds the raw heart in his mouth. Marie slaps him on the back causing him to choke to death on the very morsel which was supposed to heal their relationship. If ritual is, as Paula Gunn Allen describes it, “a procedure whose purpose is to transform someone or something from one condition or state to another” (Sacred 79-80), then Nector has certainly been transformed by Lipshaw’s make-shift ritual magic. The disastrous effects of Lipsha’s actions can be seen to reflect the painful wisdom of many trickster narratives, which often highlight all manner of human folly. Nevertheless, as in many trickster tales, such trickster disasters often ultimately prove to be beneficial for mankind. In the chapter called “The Good Tears” the absence of Nector as a focus for the adversarial relationship between Marie and Lulu becomes an opportunity for the reconciliation of these two major forces in the tribal community, the one associated with Catholic symbolism and the other related to the Chippewa trickster.

At the time of Nector’s death, Lulu is recovering from an eye operation and ponders the fact that she cannot cry: “There were so many things I never cried for. I knew if I started now [about Nector’s death] I would have to waste all the rest of my last years. Besides that there weren’t tears in me. I was incapable. The operation had my eyes so dried out” (295). It is Marie who volunteers as a nurse to put eyes-drops (tears) in Lulu’s eyes. Tears not only express emotional release, but as illustrated by the miracle of the weeping statue in *Tracks*, they also announce a spiritually transformational moment. As Marie leans over Lulu to apply the eye drops, Lulu uses the opportunity to get “something [...] off her chest”:

“I appreciate you coming here to help me get my vision,” I said. “But the truth is I have no regrets.” (296)
 “That’s all right.” [Marie] was almost impersonal in her kindness [...] “Somebody had to put the tears into your eyes.” [...] She did not mention Nector’s funeral. [...] It was enough just to sit there without words. We mourned him the same way together [...] For the first time I saw exactly how another woman felt, and it gave me deep comfort, surprising. It gave me the knowledge that whatever had happened the night before and in the past, would finally be over once the bandages came off. (297)

Lulu’s trickster personality, confrontational and undermining, refuses to regret (cry for) her past actions, and Marie makes clear she does not need this type of “repentance.” Gradually acknowledging that their love of Nector was “shared,” the administration of the tears becomes the performance of a healing ceremony in which the cruel Catholic “miracle” of the stigmata and the disastrous trickster ritual of Lipsha’s love “medicine” converge and become the mutual catalyst of forgiveness and reconciliation. Becoming friends, Marie and Lulu form an imposing matriarchal alliance and re-establish the solidarity of the tribal community.

In her intertwining of both Catholic “miracle” and Native “magic,” Erdrich creates a mystical environment in which the blackly farcical folly of human love which drives people apart is overcome and healed by unpredictable moments of another type of “love,” spiritual transformation and (comm)union. While these two religious identity contexts clearly share a problematic space in the tribal community, Erdrich does not try to “rhyme” the two mystical systems, nor does she deny their histories of conflict in the “contact zone.” By not “[overdetermining] one avenue of interpretation and thus endors[ing] one theological view over the other” (Rainwater, “Reading” 166-167), she holds back from privileging Native religious identity. In *Tracks*, by ultimately denying Pauline and Fleur’s religious rivalry, Erdrich undermines syncretism’s inherent oppositional elements. In *Love Medicine*, Kim Blaeser claims, Erdrich

places [her readers] on uneasy ground, requires they re-investigate their own understandings of religion and spirituality. [...] Erdrich creates a complicated vision of spirituality that lies outside the limits of orthodox religion. Her novel abounds with unorthodox views and scenes which offer a challenge to any static construction of order the reader might envision or attempt to inhabit. (“Pagans” 29)

One might even argue that Erdrich challenges “any static construction of *Native religious identity*” just as she challenges the idea of religious syncretism as “opposition” or “fusion.” This is an approach championed by contemporary Native Christians who, as James West remarks, wish to see

traditional [tribal] spiritualism and Christianity [as] two realities, two truths, existing side by side within the same spiritual experience, [and feel that] it would seem a hopeless and useless task to measure these truths or weigh them to the purpose of determining which is “truer.” (36)

In the writings explored above, Walters and Erdrich respond to the syncretic tensions of the religious “contact zone” not by rejecting or challenging Christianity, but by underscoring an overarching Native religious identity context of inclusivity. In *Love Medicine*, the harmonizing of the protagonists’ religious identities within this context of inclusivity realizes the stabilization of an additional identity context, the tribal community. In the following novels by Michael Dorris and Greg Sarris, the identity “harmony” or “consonance” of the tribal individual and the stability of the tribal community continue to prove interdependent, as “religion” is replaced by “race” as a problematic marker of Native identity.

Part Two

The individual and the tribal community

Thomas King has noted that “for native writers, community - a continuous community - is one of the primary ideas from which our literature proceeds” (“Introduction” xv). Novelist and academic Greg Sarris, in his discussion of Erdrich’s *Love Medicine* describes his own experience of tribal community which he sees reflected in Erdrich’s novel:

Families bickering. Families arguing amongst themselves, drawing lines, maintaining old boundaries. Who is in. Who is not. Gossip. Jealousy. Drinking. Love. The ties that bind. The very human need to belong, to be worthy and valued. Families. Who is Indian. Who is not. Families bound by history and blood. This is the stuff, the fabric of my Indian community. It is what I found in Louise Erdrich’s Chippewa community as I read *Love Medicine*. (*Keeping* 117)

The “fabric” of Sarris’s Indian community, which he recognizes in Erdrich’s work, is the network of relationships in which “community” and “family” are inextricable. However, Sarris’s remark also indicates that, despite the emphasis on kinship, a continual evaluation of group boundaries and group membership- “...drawing lines...Who is in. Who is not” - is paired with the appraisal of the legitimacy of ethno-racial identity - “Who is Indian. Who is not.”⁶ The dynamics of this legitimization and recognition of the individual’s ethno-racial

⁶ Concerning the use in this section of the terms “race” and “ethnicity,” Hollinger has remarked that it has come to be generally agreed upon that anthropologists, humanists, and social scientists “have found so much evidence for the socially constructed character of race as well as ethnicity” (34). It remains however a practical reality that these concepts profoundly affect individuals socially and politically. I will be using the term “race” to refer to a classification based primarily physiognomical elements- i.e. skin color, eye shape, etc.- which calls upon biology and genetics to substantiate itself. I will use the term “ethnic” to

identity within the Native community, a community which must also simultaneously define its own boundaries, will be explored in three novels by Michael Dorris and Greg Sarris.

Charles Taylor identifies what he terms the two spheres in which identity legitimization and recognition take place.

[...] the intimate sphere, where we understand the formation of identity and the self as taking place in a continuing dialogue and struggle with significant others. And [...] the public sphere, where a politics of equal recognition has come to play a bigger and bigger role. (37)

In his socio-psychological study, Morris Rosenberg further suggests that a “stable self-concept” is actualized to a significant extent by “interpersonal confirmation,” claiming that “others must ‘legitimate’ [...] the individual’s role identity”(611). In *Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (1987) by Michael Dorris, *Grand Avenue* (1994) and *Watermelon Nights* (1998) by Greg Sarris, the intimate sphere is the Native family, the “identity context” within which mixed-race individuals attempt to create a “stable self-concept.” The tribal external “public sphere” is constituted by Euro-American socio-political contexts which attribute identity criteria often in conflict with Native modes, specifically with regard to “race” and “kinship” as these play a role in creating a “legitimate” Native/tribal identity.

The mixed-race individual and ethnic community membership

“If Alex Haley had traced his father’s bloodline, he would have traveled twelve generations back to, not Gambia, but *Ireland*,” Ishmael Reed has observed of Haley’s *Roots*. [...] The nature of this choice is further illuminated by an experience reported by Reed, whose ancestry is also African and Irish [...] Reed mentioned his Irish-American heritage to a Professor of Celtic Studies at Dartmouth, who laughed. (Hollinger, 19, 20, 21)

As this passage illustrates, an individual’s relation to an ethnic group may involve a complex of markers which, on the one hand, supports the “authenticity” of that individual’s ethnicity, but on the other makes this “authenticity” unachievable if the most recognizable markers are missing or ambiguous. The professor’s laughter probably indicates this complexity - he is unable to believe Reed could be “authentically” Irish because the racial markers of African-Americanness are the most recognizable. Indeed, Taylor has remarked that both the intimate and public spheres of the “politics of recognition” have been “shaped by the growing ideal of authenticity, and recognition plays an essential role in the culture that has arisen around this ideal”(36). Because the concept of “authenticity” brings with it essentialist pitfalls, it will be replaced in this analysis with the concept of “legitimization,” which can be seen as a social and/or political process of appraisal based on constantly reevaluated and (re)constructed criteria. As such, it typifies the dialogic and modulating dynamics of individual-group identity validation.

Generally speaking, ethnic communities in the United States maintain their boundaries of membership through the consensual recognition of ethno-racial markers: a mixture of hereditary ties, racial appearance, and cultural/community involvement. Mixed-race individuals, as Cynthia L. Nakashima points out, find negotiating the various “criteria” for group membership complex, if not profoundly problematic.

The ways that mixed-race people struggle for inclusion and legitimacy vary, both by what kind of inclusion and legitimacy each individual wants from a community and by what each racial/ethnic community requires of the

refer to the mixture of racial identification with an involvement in cultural activities (religion, language, etc.). I accept that these words indicate complex constructed discourses, and upon subsequent use the reader must imagine them surrounded by quotation marks.

individual. In many Asian American communities, physical appearance plays a very important role in the level of acceptance a mixed-race person experiences. Also, having an Asian surname, which suggests patrilineal Asian heredity, seems to be an advantage. In many Latino communities, where racial phenotype varies greatly, language is considered an important indicator of legitimacy. In the African American community, which also claims a wide range of physical types, a person's lifestyle and cultural behavior are given considerable weight. Each of these communities' criteria for belonging have arisen out of specific historical, cultural, and political contexts and continue to change as conditions change. (84-85)

In relation to Native American identity legitimization and tribal group recognition, Taylor's two-tier model of recognition becomes discernable in the discrepancy between the manner in which different "legitimizing bodies" define and apply ethnic or racial criteria as validating markers of identity. In the "intimate sphere" of the tribal community, while blood ties to Native ancestry are valued, group-internal modes of recognition tend to prioritize ethnic criteria over racial ones. As Jana Magdaleno writes,

the key to being American Indian in terms of a given community is in the degree of incorporation into the social network of that community. Thus, a "fullblood" may be thoroughly acculturated to the dominant society, while a "mixedblood" may identify and function entirely as a member of a tribal group that has assimilated biological non-Indians over generations. (289-290)

External to the tribal community, in Taylor's "public sphere," the federal legitimization of a mixed-race individual's Native identity prioritizes, as has been discussed above, the discourse of "race" supported by calculations of "blood quantum."

The *politics* of recognition in relation to Native identity becomes apparent in the often contestatory interaction of the two spheres of legitimization, most discernable when tribal communities, in order to claim their distinct political rights from the federal government, are required to codify tribal membership criteria, effectively codifying tribal "identity" criteria. The ensuing application by the tribe itself of federal "blood quantum" for this purpose precipitates the investment of these "public institutional" criteria with group-internal "private" legitimizing power. This situation influences both the community and the individual, Helena Hershel remarking that while groups such as Mexican-Americans, Native American Indians and Native Hawaiians may value a mixedblood individual's fulfillment of ethnic identity criteria (i.e. community involvement) above that of racial criteria, antagonism between Native individuals and their tribes may appear "when governmental and other agencies begin to assess the amount of race purity to determine institutional funding and ethnic entitlement programs" (175). Therefore, despite the importance of ethnic participatory criteria, the distinction of Native individuals as racially "full" or "mixed" continues to be discussed as a factor in Native identity.

The Native mixed-race individual

Since the 1970s, the number of individuals who self-identify as "mixed race" has grown to the point where it is now discussed as a "movement" with a developing concept of identity (Nakashima 80). A. Robert Lee has remarked that

Black-Native mix, like white-Native mix, has been a long-time fact. White-Asian and Black-Asian interracialism, marriage and offspring, has more than doubled in the last decade. *Mestizaje* lies at the very heart of Latino/a lineage. Even "mixed race" hardly covers matters. Is not, in, of, and for itself, almost another kind of "ethnic" meta-identity in play? (*Multicultural* 5)

Many Native writers create characters who, due to their mixed white/Native background, carry with them an awareness that they are the "product" of five hundred years of colonial history and syncretic cultural tensions, literally embodying "the 'us' and 'them' of [...]"

societal racial wars” (Root, “The Multiracial” xxv- xxvi). Louis Owens in his novel *Nightland* (1996) wryly illustrates this in a discussion between the middle aged character Billy and his grandfather about being half white.

“Which half you think it is?” The old man looked serious. “If you was lucky, the bottom half would be Indian, because us Indians is the best lovers. That’s why all those white women was always sneaking into our towns, and then when they got caught they’d pretend that they was kidnapped. If you was unlucky, it’d be the top half, because then you’d always be thinking about how Indians got everything stolen. If you was white on top and Indian on the bottom, your top half could steal everybody’s money and your bottom half could steal their women.” [...]

“Well, Grampa, I kind of think it’s right down the middle, top to bottom.”

“That’s a shame, Grandson, because that way a man’s just fighting with himself all the time.” (43)

During this exchange, while “white” and “Indian” are being teased and caricatured, the colonial struggle between these two groups seems to be perpetuated in mixedblood individuals. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, however, has criticized this “meta- identity” of the mixedblood as an continuation of Euro-American “blood” mathematics and discourses of the racially “(im)pure.” She takes to task “writers who call themselves mixed-blood”- writers such as Louis Owens, Gerald Vizenor, and Michael Dorris, among others - for directing reading audiences’ attention away from tribal identity, history and contemporary issues, to the point that the “so-called ‘mixed-blood’ story [...] has taken center stage.” Cook-Lynn goes on to remark that with the rise of cultural studies, multiculturalism, and postcolonial studies, “the bicultural nature of Indian lives, [always] a puzzle to the monoculturalists of America” now fits the intellectual climate of the times - “thus, mixed-bloodedness becomes the paradigm of preference” (“American Indian Intellectualism” 125). While one could argue with Cook-Lynn’s tendency to demand that all Native authors write from the perspective of tribal nationalism, her rejection of the division of Native peoples into “mixed-blood” categories which weakens their connection to tribal identity can be seen to be rooted in traditional concepts of tribal community membership.

In early Native communities, the potential multi-raciality of individuals did not necessarily produce a need to identify these individuals as anything other than Native.

Ethnohistorical studies show that in New England the mixing of different communities was common well before the Pilgrims’ arrival. Adoption was frequent, and it was customary to capture and incorporate opponents in war. Indians were in this respect color blind. In colonial times a large number of captives stayed with their captors, adopting Indian ways, some even becoming chiefs. [...] openness to outsiders - as long as the newcomers intermarried and conformed to Indian ways - was a continuation of an aboriginal tradition, not a loss of distinct identity. (Clifford, *Predicament* 307)

As we have seen in the analysis of Cook-Lynn’s novel, Eva Marie Garroutte discusses how traditionally, in many tribes, rituals such as adoption and marriage were seen to transform or re-create the essential nature or “blood” of the outsider, connecting them to their adopted tribe in fundamentally the same manner as those born within that tribe. This allowed “at least in principle, for people of any race to be brought into kinship relations through the transformative mechanism of ceremony” (126, 127).

While historic examples and nationalist visions might be seen to promote and support a singularly Native identity over a mixedblood identification, the experiences of contemporary mixedblood individuals as expressed in autobiographical essays and fiction reveal that an unqualified Native identity will rarely be a “given” for them. Their writings indicate the ever present demands of “legitimization,” the pressures and strains of intercultural and inter-familial dynamics, and the significance of the Native identity contexts “kinship” and “community” (Penn; Miheuah, “American Indian Identities”; Churchill, “The Crucible”).

The Native American community as kinship system: traditional concepts and contemporary forms

Indian tribes are communities in fundamental ways that other American communities or organizations are not. Tribal communities are wholly defined by family relationships. (Deloria Jr. qtd. in Weaver, *Other* 42)

Thomas King, referring to the various expressions of community in his anthology of Native writing, remarks that “all of these communities exist as intricate webs of kinship that radiate from a Native sense of family” (“Introduction” xiv). Supporting this remark sociologically, DeMallie in his article “Kinship: The Foundation for Native American Society” remarks that while the recognition of kinship relationships is common in all cultures, defining these relationships is specific to each society. He emphasizes that “the kinship system of modern America is different from the patterns characteristic of native American systems in very basic ways”(323). John Redhorse, a Cherokee social worker, offers as an example the tribal understanding of the “extended family.”

Native American extended families differ from their European counterparts which define an extended unit as three generations within the same household. Rather, Native American extended families assume a distinct village-type network construct. (qtd. in Medicine, “American Indian Family” 17)

Graphically, one could compare the Euro-American genealogical “tree” with its emphasis on bilateral descent to Bea Medicine’s descriptions of tribal kinship relationships as “circles of kinship matrices” and a “community-wide web of kinship,” which functions as an extended family support system and “adaptive mechanism” allowing

for movement from one social grouping (extended family) to another when the situation “gets tough” as some Lakota say. When interpersonal relationships become strained, [...] when reciprocity patterns are shattered, and when expectations are not met, a couple’s relationship may dissolve [...] The structure of the system may re-align, but it continues in a new form within the concentric circles of kinship matrices. This expansiveness and retractability can also extend to urban areas which are part of the total experiential network of most contemporary Indians. (“American Indian Family” 19)

While acknowledging that the Native family has also suffered “maladaptive effects of familial adjustment” such as domestic violence and unstable marriages, Medicine maintains that distinctly Native versions of domestic units “have not been completely recast in a White mold” (“American Indian Family” 20,21).

The integration of distinctly traditional kinship structures into contemporary familial situations can be seen in the complexity of the clan organization of various Southwestern tribes such as the Navajo, and the *tiospaye* “extended family” of the Lakota Sioux. DeMallie reports that the *tiospaye* was the focus of a revitalization movement on the Pine Ridge Reservation during the 1990s. The project sought to encourage the more than sixty *tiospaye* groups on the reservation to work together and become more involved in tribal government and social support networks. It was, as DeMallie writes, “an active strategy for rejuvenating communities and dealing with the social problems of today on the basis of the traditional strengths of the kinship system” (“Kinship” 350). In the following discussion of *Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (1987) by Michael Dorris, the strengths of traditional tribal kinship systems will be seen to provide the protagonists with the means to resolve the primary social identity problem resulting from their multi-racial and multicultural situation, namely a sense of identity “dissonance” within their various identity contexts (Rosenberg 661).

***Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (1987) by Michael Dorris**

Native identity “dissonance”

In three first-person narrated sections, the novel presents the life stories of three generations of Native women. The reader is first privy to the thoughts of the 15 year old Rayona as she tries to understand her relationship with her seemingly callous and now terminally ill Native mother, Christine, and her absent African-American father. In the second section, Christine describes her youth, her relationship with her apparently emotionally cold mother “Aunt Ida,” and with her husband. In the third section, Aunt Ida reveals the secrets surrounding Christine’s birth and her own role as mother. All three characters will struggle to recognize how they and their family cohere amidst the conflicting Native and Euro-American racial and ethnic “markers” which “legitimize” kinship identities and family relationships. For Christine, her attempt to understand how she can be the daughter of a woman who refuses to be called mother involves the different cultural contexts of these kinship terms. Rayona focuses on “racial markers” as she emotionally invests in the search for physical “resemblance” as legitimizing evidence, for herself and others, that she is the daughter of both her African-American father and Native mother. Their search for identity consonance within a unified familial context will find resolution in Native modes of kinship legitimation and recognition.

Rayona, initially understanding herself as a “color-blend” of her mother and father, learns that group acceptance often gives high priority to “matching” physical traits. She is first introduced to this idea when she hears her mother tell her father “We’re the wrong color for each other, [...] That’s what your friends think.” (9) Rayona becomes sensitive to the evaluating gaze of others as she imagines what her family must look like to the outside world. When her father suddenly appears to visit Rayona’s mother at the hospital, Rayona imagines that the thoughts of those watching the scene would be “That little Indian woman, I don’t know what tribe, with a big black man. And a child, a too-tall girl. She looks like him” (7). Rayona senses that her family is seen by others as a mis-matched and dissonant mixture of the two racial and ethnic groups. Rayona’s mother is also influenced by such external appraisals of their family, wondering about her relationship with Rayona: “We had the same tastes, more like sisters [...] though it bothered me that we didn’t look more alike. Riding on a bus side by side we could be two strangers, who might get off at separate stops” (221). Despite the fact that Rayona and Christine *are* alike, they do not *look* alike, and this external judgment of “racial” dissonance is internalized by Christine as a pre-condition for potential estrangement from her daughter. Rayona also internalizes this external appraisal of her family’s non-coherence, and as her mother and father indeed become estranged and decide to separate, Rayona becomes herself increasingly dependent on physical markers of racial “sameness” to recognize a coherence in her destabilized identity context “family” and to legitimize and stabilize her kinship identity within this context.

Because of her size and skin-tone, Rayona resembles her father more than her mother, and it is this physical appearance which she feels should cement the familial connection to him. As she imagines surprising her father on his postal route where they live in Seattle, Washington, Rayona idealizes the scene.

I had it all pictured in my mind. He would be walking along, his head down sorting the letters, and wouldn’t notice me until he looked up to cross the street. Then he’d do a double take, grin, and say he didn’t believe it. He’d invite me to share his bologna and cheese under a shade tree, and people passing in cars would smile at us, a father and a daughter who looked so much alike, having their lunch too early in the morning just because they enjoyed being together. (9)

An element in this imagined scene includes an external perspective which reveals Rayona’s internalization of the “politics” of recognition” in which identity in Taylor’s intimate sphere must also be acknowledged in the public sphere. In Rayona’s mind’s eye, it is not enough that she feels connected to her father, but “people passing by” must validate this relationship in

their legitimizing gaze by registering her identity as visibly “consonant” with her father. Rayona’s dependence, however, on consonant “visible identities” (Alcoff) to legitimate her family’s cohesion will lead her, as it does many multi-racial individuals, further towards a sense of identity dissonance as she continues her search for markers of resemblance among her Native relatives. It will be Rayona’s task to find the means of understanding her identity beyond public “visible identity” criteria of sameness and difference, i.e. racial physiognomy.

Following her mother back to the reservation in Montana, Rayona finds herself abandoned at her grandmother Aunt Ida’s house, where she discovers photos of her mother at age fifteen.

I try to see a resemblance, something in me that looks like her at my age. I even hold the picture to the mirror next to my face and go over it again- hair, eyes, now, mouth, chin. But she is still Mom and I still am me. (35-36)

On the reservation, Rayona’s lack of visible Native racial markers places her in a position of intensified identity dissonance resulting from the range of imposed racialized “public identities” (Alcoff 93-94) Native mixedblood individuals face due to group-internal racism at one extreme and a mainstream “well-meant” multicultural discrimination at the other.

While Euro-American society has had a long history of prioritizing Caucasian features in order to consolidate the American “mainstream,” it has been primarily since the 1970s Red Power movement that a Native “visible identity,” i.e. looking “Indian,” has tended to create more social acceptance of the mixedblood individual within the tribal community. Consequently, looking less “Indian” potentially undermines the mixedblood individual’s sense of legitimate membership in the tribe (Garrouette 48-52). Rayona’s full-blood cousin Foxy places Rayona solidly in the category “wrong color, outsider” (43), calling her ““Buffalo Soldier’,” after the African-American men who were cavalry scouts and fought Indians a long time ago, and leaving a note in the Africa section of her geography book. “When are you going home?” it says.” (47). As the novel progresses, it is clear that Dorris condemns Foxy’s racist attitudes, associating those attitudes with other conditions detrimental to the Native community, such as (Foxy’s) drinking. Foxy’s expression of racism reflects not only white racist attitudes towards African-Americans but also certain historical inter-group antagonisms now directed at mixed-blood members of the tribal community. It will be seen in the discussion of Greg Sarris’s novels that this type of internal racism within the tribal community is considered a legacy of colonization.

The racism which Rayona blatantly encounters in Foxy is more subtly directed at her through the “multicultural” remarks of Father Tom. After attempting to seduce Rayona, the priest offers her hush money and encourages her to return to Seattle by appealing to her multi-racial identity.

“And you won’t feel so alone, so out of place,” he says, smiling that stupid grin of his. “There’ll be others in a community of that size who share your dual heritage. [...]He pulls something over his head.[...] I reach to take it, but it’s only the beaded medallion he wears on the reservation, big and gaudy. Tourist bait. “Wear this. Then people will know you’re Indian.” (63, 64)

The priest’s envisioning of dual heritage identity groups reflects, on the one hand, the multicultural discourse concerning the importance of “community,” its construction and its recognition. However, in the priest’s mouth, multicultural rhetoric becomes vacuous and banal, revealing an undercurrent of racism which multiculturalism ironically has to thank for its existence. As Joan W. Scott remarks in her article “Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity,” “most discussions of multiculturalism avoid this kind of insight [assuming]that identity groups preexisted rather than followed from discrimination”(15). It is this racism, the ever-present underbelly of multicultural rhetoric, which Elizabeth Cook-Lynn attacks in her

essays, insisting that the “mixedblood” or “dual heritage” label is yet another racial construction created by Euro-Americans to categorize and define the identity of “non-whites.” The priest unwittingly underscores the racist constructedness of such identity groups as he attempts to reinforce Rayona’s “invisible” Native identity by providing her with an identity “badge” or “name-tag,” a stereotypical “Indian” marker recognizable to the legitimizing Euro-American gaze. As Louis Owens remarks, in such a situation “identity is all surface. [...] With a medallion, Rayona may become Native American rather than African American” (*Other* 221).

Rayona’s predicament seems to haunt mixed-race individuals as they experience an “identity dissonance” in relation to the mainstream mono-culture, distinct ethnic communities, and their own families. In response to a collection of essays by mixed-race individuals, Mindy Fullilove remarked

“At last, the voices of my kind. Those of us who match each other but not our relatives, who live in a one-person demilitarized zone, who create a patchwork of self out of mismatched bits of group hate and individual love.” (qtd. in Nakashima 88)

For Rayona, her experience of the complexity of “the politics of recognition” and “visible identities” has created this sense of living in a “one-person demilitarized zone,” surrounded by inter- and intra- group racism and multicultural “dual heritage” rhetoric, but not a unified familial group which she “matches.”

In Christine’s narrative which follows, Christine’s relationship with her mother also reflects her sense of identity dissonance with her own family. Her struggle does not involve racial markers or visible identities, but culturally defined linguistic markers which legitimize family ties: the words “mother” and “father.” Because Ida will not reveal the identity of Christine’s father, the word “father” represents for Christine an inaccessible and non-functioning familial relationship. The rejection of the word “mother” by Ida, who insists on being called “aunt,” signifies for Christine a willful rejection of the biological fact of kinship. Apparently without identifiable parents, Christine proclaims her filial identity “illegitimate,” describing herself as “the bastard daughter of a woman who wouldn’t even admit she was my mother” (114). Christine seems to regain a sense of familial legitimacy only after she herself becomes, physically and linguistically, a mother: “Rayona gave me something to be [...] I was nobody’s regular daughter, nobody’s sister, usually nobody’s wife, but I was her mother full time” (222). However, as Aunt Ida tells her story, the reader realizes that there are two kinship systems being indicated by the terms “mother” and “aunt.” While Christine focuses on the English terminology which defines the Euro-American family structure and the corresponding de-legitimizing category “bastard,” Ida’s kinship term will be seen to refer to traditional tribal patterns of kinship recognition and relationships.

Using English terms to describe Native kinship relations has been seen to present a misleading linguistic aggregate of two systems of kinship classifications (DeMallie, “Kinship” 322). As exemplified in the novel, the English kinship term “aunt” can, when applied to Native family relationships, reveal itself to be situated in the linguistic contact zone of two distinctively structured kinship systems in which familial relationships, responsibilities, and emotional dynamics are understood and recognized differently. It will prove to be the existing, though often subterranean, influence of traditional Native approaches to kinship that provide the renewed foundation of “family” which will bind Rayona, Christine, and Ida together again.

Ida’s reasons for using the designation “aunt” are revealed to be complex as she relates her role in the pregnancy of her mother’s sister (Clara) by Ida’s father. In order to avoid social shame for her father, the young Ida agrees to pretend that the baby, Christine, is hers out-of-wedlock. The English word “aunt” is mistakenly applied to Ida by the nuns

assisting Clara in childbirth because they think Ida is Clara's sister. While Ida is seen as Christine's mother on the reservation, Ida insists on being called "aunt" by Christine instead of "mother" to prevent herself from becoming too maternally attached to Christine in the eventuality of Clara reclaiming the child. However, the reader discovers that "aunt" also carries with it a traditional tribal meaning indicative of closer familial ties. Much later, when taking the adult Christine to visit the aging Clara, Ida's position becomes clearer:

"She's my mother's sister," Aunt Ida said. It took me a minute to figure out the Indian word she used. It means something like "little mother," but in English it would be "aunt." (226)

Such linguistic traces of older tribal kinship terms and systems in contemporary situations, as indicated in this passage, were researched in relation to the Northern and Southern Cheyenne during the 1980s. Among these Cheyenne, who live in the same area where the Montana reservation of *Yellow Raft* is situated, a kinship term similar to Dorris's "aunt" was recorded: "Some speakers also used an alternative word for mother's sister, meaning 'second mother'" (DeMallie, "Kinship" 348; Owens, *Other* 218). Christine is not aware of her biological relationship to Clara, but the reference to a traditional meaning of "aunt" indicates a kinship system in which biological descent is not given the singular legitimizing power to define the mother/child relationship, as is the case in the Euro-American system. DeMallie has remarked that "learning to think about biological categories and kin categories independently of one another is the first step in understanding American Indian kinship" ("Kinship" 323).

It is necessary to understand that although the biological relationship between parents and children is universally recognized in Native American systems, terms equivalent to "father," "mother," "son," and "daughter" are not used in most of the systems to designate only those specific biological relatives. As Morgan discovered, for example, the terms "mother" and "father" frequently included mother's and father's same-sex siblings and parallel cousins. Thus in most American Indian societies an individual has many mothers and fathers. This does not mean, for example, that mother's sisters are like mothers; they are mothers. In other words, the status of mother is defined in terms of patterns of relationship surrounding, but not limited to, the act of giving birth. The biological mother is no more or less a mother to her children than are all those women she calls sister. [...] In 1970 I recorded kin terms on the Cheyenne River Sioux reservation in South Dakota [...] Children talked about being laughed at in school when they referred to their "mothers" or "fathers," and soon learned to use the acceptable expression, "Indian mother," or "father, Indian way." ("Kinship" 323, 347)

DeMallie's remarks are not meant here to insist on the anthropological plausibility of Dorris's text, but to indicate, as Dorris does, that traditional kinship responsibilities and relationships still have a recognizable influence in tribal communities. While Ida is, according to biological descent, Christine's half-sister and half-cousin, her most important place in Christine's life is that of mother, "Indian way."

To Christine, tribal traditions are indeed unknown while the English kinship system plays the greatest role and presents the greatest barrier in her recognition of family and her own family membership. Nevertheless, as alluded to by the word "aunt," it will be the tribal understanding of family as a complex of relationships going beyond simple biological descent that will define "family" for the three women, both mother/daughter pairs. This familial cohesion takes place at the conclusion of Christine's story. In the last stages of her illness, Christine is taken in by Dayton who had been a good friend of her brother Lee, a Vietnam War casualty. Christine reveals that she is counting on a remark Dayton made in their youth: "Once Dayton had said he wanted to be like a brother to me, and now was his chance (263)." Echoing the complexity of kinship responsibilities behind the linguistic designations "mother"/ "aunt," the responsibility of surrogate "brother" changes to that of surrogate "husband" as Dayton and Christine settle "into the routine of an old married couple" (273). When Rayona discovers where her mother is and also moves in with Dayton, they all, including Aunt Ida, "set up housekeeping" together (283).

During this process of “housekeeping,” the emotional coherence associated with “kinship” and “family” is created as they *interact* as a family - shopping, cooking, watching television, and taking outings together. This interaction strengthens and develops an existing but subterranean Native understanding and experience of kinship as behavior “patterns of cooperation and respect” (DeMallie “Kinship” 323). The significance of the participatory element in Native definitions of kinship has been explored by Eva Garroutte as a concept “recoverable in a number of American Indian philosophical traditions” (127).

[It is] what I am calling responsibility to reciprocity. It is likewise suggested by Christopher Jocks when he writes of the “ability to *participate* in kinship” (original emphasis). He regards kinship as an ongoing practice or skill, an active relationship that must be maintained and that is not invariably tied to one’s genealogical connections. (129)

Rayona’s family ultimately coheres not because Dorris has them consciously (re)discover the meaning of traditional Native kinship terms, but because Dorris attests to the viability of Native intimate familial identity contexts, asserting that they have remained operable despite external modes of (de)legitimization. During the process of living together and housekeeping, Christine, Rayona, and Ida overcome their emotional estrangement as their previously publicly perceived dissonant familial identities become consonant kinship identities, “Indian way.”

The identity “dissonance” experienced by Dorris’s characters was created by the privileging of Euro-American markers of kinship legitimacy. In his novel *Grand Avenue* (1994), Greg Sarris also explores the influence of the public Euro-American sphere on the intimate Native sphere, his focus going beyond Native identity “dissonance” to identity “distortion,” as he portrays more acutely than Dorris how Euro-American concepts of “race” and kinship “(il)legitimacy” detrimentally effect the tribal sense of family and community and the Native individual’s sense of identity within those group contexts.

***Grand Avenue* (1994) by Greg Sarris**

Native identity “distortion”

The title *Grand Avenue: A Novel in Stories*, makes explicit the text’s structure. Each chapter is a short story narrated by a different member of the community living on Grand Avenue, the poorest street in South Park, one of the poorest neighborhoods of Santa Rosa, California. The neighborhood consists of Pomo Indians, Mexicans, African-Americans, Filipinos, and Portuguese who are related in various ways - as lovers, spouses, siblings, and children, parents, grandparent -to the Pomo Indian family whose family tree appears before the title page. As these characters struggle within these relationships, Sarris explores the forces within this Native multi-racial extended family which strain its coherence and distort the identities of its members.

The Sioux anthropologist Bea Medicine has stated that “to chart the possible direction of compositions of Indian families in the future, one must examine the forces and circumstances of racism and oppression” (“American Indian Family” 21). These “forces and circumstances” are not only external but, as Charles Taylor indicates, are generally understood to be compounded by the related process of the internalization of the produced identity distortion:

a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. [...] to the extent that the image is internalized. (Taylor 25,36)

Sarris has located, as have other theorizers of subaltern situations, these interlinked distortive processes in the “pressures that the history of European imperialism [...] exert on American Indian families and communities in the present” (Burnham 22). As one character in *Grand Avenue* states, “Look at what the Spanish did, then the Mexicans, then the Americans. All of them, they took our land, locked us up. Then look at what we go and do to one another”(222). What Sarris’s characters “do to each other” is a result of the process of internalization mentioned above.

Today so much of our pain [...] seems associated with that history [of colonization], not just in our general material poverty but also in the ways we have internalized the domination. Low self-esteem. A sense of powerlessness. [...] We often judge ourselves in terms of the dominator’s values (“laughing at ‘Indians’”) or create countervalues with which to judge ourselves (“they act white”; “they’re mixed, light-skinned”). We internalize the oppression we have felt and, all too often, become oppressor-like to ourselves. (Sarris, *Keeping* 119-120)

As this passage indicates, “the dominator’s values” which have infiltrated Native identity contexts employ a racist “reasoning” which results in Native identity distortion and delegitimization. The following analysis of *Grand Avenue* will explore the dynamics of Native identity distortion from three perspectives: racism internalized as self-hate in the chapter “How I got to be Queen”; racism, Native identity recognition, and the non-Native spouse in “Joy Ride”; and Western definitions of (il)legitimacy in “Secret Letters.” In each chapter Sarris does not resolve the complexity or (self)destructive force of racism and the discourse of (il)legitimacy in these families, but depicts the tenacity of Native multi-racial families and their coherence as grounded in a tribal understanding of Native identity as kinship.

“How I got to be Queen” can be seen as Sarris’s exemplary portrayal of a Native multi-racial family in the grip of “racism, internalized as self-hate” (Magdaleno 293-294). Alice, the narrator of this chapter, tries to accommodate her mother’s racist anxieties by hiding the fact that Alice’s sister Justine is dating an African-American, Ducker. Alice adopts this plan of action after she catches a glimpse of her mother’s opinion about the neighborhood they live in.

“A lot of blacks,” Mom said. [...]
 “Not everyone can be a Pomo Indian,” I said. [...] I thought of reminding her that Justine is part Filipino and I’m part Mexican. [...]
 “Your sister, I don’t know what she’ll do here. Run with them kids out there. Niggers, anything.”
 That made it click. My worries took the form in a picture. Justine and Ducker. (127)

Alice intuits that her mother’s anxieties which are expressed as racial hatred come from another source: “I don’t even think it was black people that bothered Mom so much. [...] It was what nobody talked about” (131). “What nobody talked about” is an emotion encapsulated in young Alice’s description of her family, descended from the Native woman Sipie Toms.

“My mother is Mollie. Mollie Goode. Her mother was Sipie Toms. My older sister is Justine. Her father is Filipino and mine is Mexican. My brother Sheldon’s is white. And my other brother, Jeffery, his father is a Indian from Stewart Point. Justine gets in lots of trouble. Her and Mom fight. Justine likes black boys. Mom hates black people. She hates Mexicans. She hates whites. She hates Indians.” (219-220)

This is an interlocking inter-group and intra-group “hatred” which, in its internalization, expands to include everyone. That this inter-group racism has become racist self-contempt and has penetrated the center of Native family relationships can be seen in the manner in which Mollie and Justine fight.

“Dirty fat Indian, you don’t even know which Filipino in that apple orchard is my father,” Justine says. [...] Mom was hollering. “You’re the lowest dirty, black-neck squaw. Chink!” And Justine: “Which one is my father? Tell me, you drunk-slob low-life Indian. Prove you’re not the whore everyone says you are.” (120. 133)

Hurling “the dominator’s” racist epithets at each other reveals “the ways in which they ha[ve] incorporated derogatory and stereotypical ideas of themselves fostered by an oppressive outside community”(Sarris, *Keeping* 165). Justine’s mother applies to her daughter the Euro-American derogatory terms for “their” racio-ethnic groups: “squaw” for Native women and “chink” for Chinese/Asian, a racial group closely associated with Natives. Justine, on the other hand, attributes to her mother the stereotypical degraded qualities of “Indian” identity - dirty, fat, drunk, whore -, the last epithet targeting the bastardization of the Native identity context “family.” The use of these terms by the Native characters against each other reveals an internalized identity distortion which has been seen as a typical psychological effect of colonization. Through their exchange of insults, Justine and Molly attribute to each other, and therefore to themselves, the demeaned identity of the colonized (Sarris, *Keeping*, 143).

“How I got to be Queen” ends in a cathartic but temporary release of racial tensions when the otherwise meek Alice prevents a showdown between Justine and Ducker’s sisters by firing a shotgun over the crowd of angry onlookers. Nevertheless, that internalized racist identity distortions continue to destabilize Native identity contexts is explored further in “Joy Ride,” this time from the perspective of the non-Native partner. In this chapter, Albert Silva (of primarily Portuguese descent) brings his own complex experiences of internalized racism to his marriage with Anna, whose mother is Native. On the way home from drinking with a friend, Albert gives a teenage Native girl a ride. Her flirtatious manner triggers in Albert associative memories of his first, youthful sexual experience with another young Native girl, Mollie. The brief relationship with Mollie had ended with bitter words, and in a moment of anger, she referred to his family as “niggers.”

“Nigger Marie,” she said.

I thought she was referring to my sister, her dark skin and wavy hair. But just then I thought of something, even before she said it. My mother, who I never knew, was named Marie too. [...]

“We’re Portuguese,” I said.

“Part,” she said, “like I got Irish in me. But your father too! You’re all part nigger.” (110-111)

The young Albert counters her racist epithet with an ethnic group, yet the one epithet seems to level all ethnic distinctions. Mollie’s remarks awaken in Albert a sense of the complexity of the “discourses of color” in which racism derails the “recognition,” by society, of ethnic distinctions.

I thought of other things, like the way lots of Portuguese, even Italians, are dark. [...] Like how a Portuguese could be a black person: you know, mixing with the Moors and all. Or how a black person could be a Portuguese, mixing with a Portuguese. It could happen either way or both. I’d never know in our case, since there was no one to ask. Maybe my father didn’t know. But I’d think of him [...] about his meanness when we were kids [...] And my sister, how she stayed locked up, hidden [...] The whole picture of the past looked different to me. (111)

Recalling how his father was haunted by an aggressive but mysterious sense of shame, Albert now understands his family’s past as having been deeply influenced by internalized racism despite the vagaries of his “racial” descent. Albert’s family has been caught in an abstract construction of the discourse of “blackness” in which “black” no longer is associated with an ethnic group such as African-Americans or Moors, but with an internalized racist shame. It is this internalized racism which will eventually place the stability of Albert’s own sense of identity in jeopardy, as he is forced to consider the impact on him of his wife’s family.

Through Albert's memories, the reader learns of his engagement to his wife, Anna, and how he was shocked to discover that her mother was Indian.

A clean tidy-looking woman, but no doubt Indian. The dark woman had us in and served us tea in fancy cups. I couldn't believe it, that this fair-skinned girl I loved came from this woman. [...] I had always thought we were alike, me and Anna, more or less like orphans with no ties. (114)

These remarks reveal the extent and complexity of the shame of Albert's internalized racism. He had told Anna nothing about his parents, only that they had died, which in essence erased any genealogical traces which would have connected him to a specific race or ethnicity. In picturing her as similarly "orphaned" in theory, imagining her to be of indistinct parentage, he had attempted to create a racially neutral space for both of them, a place where racism's destructive discourse of "darkness" and "difference" would not exert its influence. When he meets her mother, he unwittingly re-racializes the identity of his girlfriend from "fair-skinned" to "dark."

Albert is able to suppress these disturbing indications of internalized racism until the present moment when chatting with this young Indian teenager in his car. While being "recognized" as "black" was a revelation of Albert's youth in which the Indian girl Mollie was instrumental, now with another young Indian girl in his car, Albert realizes that he has entered into another racial-ethnic category of "recognition" as this teenager identifies him not as "black" or "Portuguese" but as "Indian." The fact that Albert has somehow "become" Indian becomes clear when the girl in his car starts calling him "Unky," a name Native girls affectionately "call their uncles and other older men relatives" (116). Albert realizes this when "she start[s] on this Unky business. I wasn't the only one who had done some figuring. So had she. She knew who I was" (116). Albert suddenly sees more clearly "who he is" through her eyes as they drive past his house and his family.

"Nothing but a bunch of Indians in there," this girl said to me as I drove past my house. [...] A bunch of Indians in there. In my house, yes. Not just my wife and children and my wife's mother. It doesn't stop there. It goes on. Now my mother-in-law's brother, the Indian preacher man, and half of his congregation pack in our house every night with their Bibles and prayers for our sins. And when Jeanne, our oldest, got cancer, it wasn't just the old preacher and his troupe of hand tremblers but all the Indians in the neighborhood. They came out of the woodwork. Long-lost relatives like the Toms sisters. Yes, turned out Frankie's big girls are Anna's cousins. Everybody's connected to everybody. Seemed I'd leave the house to take a breath of air and then come back, only to find the space I left filled by another Indian. (115)

Complicating Albert's struggle with his internalized racism and shame is the discovery that the identification "Indian," determined by Native modes of kinship recognition, has included him without his knowledge. As in Dorris's novel, Sarris indicates that Native kinship systems potentially provide the overarching ethnic identity context within which all dissonant multi-racial identities are subsumed and become consonant. This is supported by Grand Avenue's Native elder Sam Toms who describes his offspring as "Mexicans, Filipinos, whites" (144), all the "races" in this community born out of the "Indian," all related to each other through the "Indian." For Albert, however, the realization of his Indian-by-marriage identity is difficult to accept. Sarris has Albert metaphorically picture the Native young girl in his car, now associated with racial shame and the internalized racial claustrophobia of his own family, as a stone he wishes he could throw far out of his sight.

The sense of shame which plays a central role in "Joy Ride" returns in "Secret Letters," this time however not in relation to racism and the multi-racial Native family, but in relation to the de-legitimization of Native family relationships. While in "How I Got to be Queen" and in *Yellow Raft*, internalized concepts of illegitimacy (the "bastard" child) became a wedge between mother/daughter pairs, in "Secret Letters" it is the father who must bridge

the gap not only of illegitimacy but of the taboo of “incest” to reestablish contact with his son. Sarris suggests that the father’s predicament is due to a large extent to the adoption of the West’s value judgments, i.e. taboo distinctions, with regard to contemporary Native kinship and familial situations. These taboos potentially destabilize Native familial unity by encouraging secrecy, the hiding and avoidance of kinship ties and responsibilities.

In “Secret Letters,” the reader is introduced to Steven Pen, a Pomo Indian, who is happily married to Reyna, an Apache. They have two children, but unknown to Reyna, Steven also has a son, Tony, through a relationship when he was seventeen. At that time, when the child was born, he had asked his father’s advice, wanting to do the “right thing” by his girlfriend Pauline. His father’s revelation of his own youthful affair with Zelda Toms confronts Steven with a tabooed situation fundamental in the defining of the boundaries of kinship.

“Pauline’s a nice girl,” I protested. “You always said a man must take responsibility for what he does. Isn’t marrying her the right thing to do?”

“You can’t marry her, Steven [...] Zelda is Pauline’s mother, right? Pauline’s your sister, Steven.” [...] I understood what my father was saying, the predicament I was in. Still, I didn’t agree with what he was telling me to do. “I’ve got to do something, Dad. I just can’t leave her—”

“Look,” he said, glaring at me, “She’s your sister. Can’t you see. This is the final embarrassment.[...]” He rambled on about our family name, Pen, our dignity [...].(191)

The revelation that Pauline is his half-sister and that he has unwittingly had an incestuous relationship produces a curiously disengaged response from Steven who merely calls his situation a “predicament.” This “predicament” does not seem to diminish his sense of responsibility towards Pauline, and his father must emphatically impress upon him that this potential tie is glaringly prohibited (“She’s your sister. Can’t you see”). However, Steven’s father is also less alarmed by the concept incest than by his own “predicament,” the social embarrassment which would result from the relationship becoming public knowledge. For the adult Steven, as it was for Steven’s father, the child resulting from this relationship proves more significant in terms of “social shame” than as “taboo.” While the general concept of “incest” will be shown to hang abstractly between Western and Native understandings of family and kinship, Steven’s internalized sense of shame will be seen as the result of the historical and ongoing de-valuation of tribal kinship relationships not recognized as “legitimate” by Euro-American definitions of family.

Paula Gunn Allen indicates how radically Native concepts of “family” can differ from Euro-American understandings. She takes as her example the traditional kinship system based on the clan.

“Family” did not mean what is usually meant by that term in the modern western world. [...] Membership in a certain clan related one to many people in very close ways though the biological connection might be so distant as to be practically nonexistent. [...] If clan membership is determined by your mother, and if your father has a number of wives, you are not related to the children of his other wives unless they themselves happen to be related to your mother. So half-siblings in the white way might be unrelated in an Indian way. Or in some tribes, the children of your mother’s sister might be considered siblings, while those of your father’s brother would be the equivalent of cousins. These distinctions should demonstrate that the concept of family can mean something very different to an Indian than it does to a non-Indian. (*Sacred* 251)

Historically, since community members were understood to be related or unrelated in ways dissimilar to Western definitions, the taboo of incest was also understood and structured differently.⁷ Many traditional forms of family organization shocked early settlers and

⁷ Robert Connelly’s historical novel *Mountain Windsong* (1992) presents an understanding of incest based on the Cherokee clan structure. When the young man Waguli falls in love with a beautiful woman from a neighboring village he is disheartened to find out that she, like him,

churchmen who did not recognize “proper marriages” in Native family structures and therefore imagined uncontrolled and incestuous sexual practices. Gunlog Fur relates how one European observer of the Lenapes in the 1650s wrote that they “have their mixing together with father and mother, brother and sister like soulless beasts, no one quite knowing, who is the father of the child” (93-94). During the process of colonization, many forms of traditional Native familial and sexual relationships were denounced as immoral, shameful and perverted, while the European nuclear family structure and definitions of “legitimate” kinship and sibling relationships were imposed on tribal communities. Nevertheless, Native understandings of kinship structures and relationships still pervade contemporary communities to varying degrees.

An often remarked upon similarity between Native historical and contemporary communities is that “everyone within a [tribal] community knew (and was related to) everyone else” (DeMallie, “Kinship” 324). As indicated above, the contemporary dynamics of changing conjugal relationships - marriage, divorce, and remarriage, “Indian marriage” (consensual)- creates, as Bea Medicine describes it, a community-wide complex of family relationships. While these relationships have been seen from a Native perspective as forming an extensive support system based on kinship responsibilities, Euro-American sociologists have described these relationships as unstable and dysfunctional, applying the “deficit model” of “family” to these relationships and taking as the “functional” model the theoretically stable middle class Euro-American family (“American Indian Family” 19, 14, 18).

Steven and Pauline’s relationship takes place within the Native “community-wide web of kinship” in which the complexity of traditional definitions of family relatedness and contemporary fluid patterns of parent and partner alliances are fused. This is alluded to in contemporary fiction as creating somewhat ironic problems for young lovers. In *Yellow Raft*, Christine remarks about the difficulties of growing up on the reservation: “You try to have fun when there’s nowhere to go and you might be related to every boy in town.”(141). Young lovers in *Grand Avenue* also regularly hear “That boy’s your third cousin [...] We’re tangled up with everybody” (38), or they realize that “me and [her] was related somehow too. Hell, all of us is related” (61). This state of affairs, in which Steven and Pauline’s “predicament” is not at all unthinkable, provides the context for jokes by various Native authors about just such potential accidental incest. In Sherman Alexie’s film, “The Business of Fancy Dancing,” the college activist Seymour Polatkin discovers that another student, Agnes, is also a Spokane Indian.

Agnes: My dad is Spokane.
 Seymour: No way! You’re Spokane? I’m Spokane! We could be cousins! What’s your dad’s name?
 Agnes: Adams.
 Seymour: I don’t know that name. So that means we’re not cousins. We could go back to my dorm right now and start our own little tribe and we wouldn’t have little Spokanes with two heads and three penises!

It is clear from this exchange that simply being from the same tribe brings with it potential kinship ties. Despite the humor of Alexie’s dialogue, this image of monstrosity also plagued the young Steven’s thoughts during Pauline’s pregnancy as he worried that the baby would be “a freak, some kind of vegetable ... I was seventeen, and the world ‘incest’ colored so many pictures in my brain”(192). However, the baby proves to be completely healthy, the first

is of the Wolf clan, remarking “to touch this beautiful woman would be incest” (26). When he later discovers it is to her mother’s (a non-Cherokee) Wolf clan that she belongs, and that she is actually living among the Cherokee without a clan, the incest taboo no longer applies and Waguli may woe her (66-67).

indication that both the scientific and moral “incest” discourses haunting this relationship are to be undermined.

Steven’s emotional turmoil surrounding the baby and his kinship with Pauline can be seen to result from a confusion of Euro-American and Native modes of recognition and legitimization of kinship and familial identities within Native familial identity contexts. The adoption of the West’s prohibitive kinship definitions of “incest” or “bastard” results in an internal de-legitimization experienced as “shame,” a shame which works to unravel the web of kinship identities central to Native communities. It is this sense of shame, encouraged by Steven’s father, which causes Steven to adopt a strategy of secrecy concerning Pauline and Tony. This secrecy distorts his identity as “father,” preventing the public recognition of kinship relations and denying the responsibilities which cement such ties.

Steven, however, begins to regret his strategy of secrecy when he meets Pauline and Tony eleven years later at an Indian festival and sees that his parental identity has remained hidden.

“Mom,” he said to Pauline, “are any of those dancers our cousins?”

“Yes, I wanted to blurt out, all of them. At the time a group of feather dancers from the Kashaya Reservation was performing. [...] I couldn’t hear what she said, how she answered the boy. But I knew she didn’t tell him the truth. (196)

Steven realizes that not only is he cut off emotionally from Tony, but that a complex of inter-tribal kinship relations which form Tony’s Native identity and which he could take pride in remain inaccessible to the child. Steven’s relationship with his son must be revealed and legitimized in order to avert the insidious disappearance of tribal identities through unacknowledged kinship, the repercussions of identity shame.

Fearing the effects such a revelation might have on his own family and on Tony, Steven tries to create an *ersatz* parental relationship with the boy without revealing the real kinship tie. Becoming anxious when he notices that Tony has begun to smoke marihuana, Steven decides to send him anonymous notes in the language of a young “secret fan” who hopes Tony will take good care of himself (204). Steven’s attempts to influence Tony fail as the tone of the letters seem to indicate pedophilia and are seen by the community as written by a “pervert” (207). Steven’s attempt to be “related” to his son, without any social “recognition” and acknowledgement of kinship, intensifies his “tabooed” position and distorts his identity further to that of pedophile. The desperate manner of Steven’s communications, now labeled “perverse,” indeed reveals Steven’s relationship with Tony to be “perverse,” but “perverse” because of secrecy and the evasion of responsibility.

When Tony’s parentage is finally revealed, Steven must discover how this will affect his nuclear family. Referring to a tradition in their family of drawing lessons from tribal stories, Steven presents his “predicament” to his children.

“What’s the lesson in this story?” I ask, unable to think of anything else.

But my children are way ahead of me.

“When’s Tony coming to dinner?” Shawn asks.

“Tomorrow,” my wife says.

“Tomorrow,” I say. (208)

Clearly this message concerning “family” is a positive one of inclusive kinship relationships that overrides the de-stabilizing effects of conflicting cultural modes of kinship legitimization. Through Tony’s health as a baby, the natural love of the father, and the inclusive attitudes of Steven’s family, one may conclude, as Michael Hardin does, in his comparison of *Grand Avenue* and Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, that “Sarris consciously alters the outcome of the incest myth [...] that damned the Buendias: Tony

represents a continuation and thus a hope for a future” (“Greg” 6). Nevertheless, Sarris will not resolve the serious challenge posed by internalized identity distortion to tribal communities so neatly. Steven does not reveal his kinship with Pauline, thereby indicating that the West’s discourses of incest and (il)legitimacy retain their destructive potential for tribal communities.

In *Grand Avenue*, Sarris’s vision of Native identity formation within the novel’s Native community of multi-racial families is not allowed to escape what Scott Lyons has called the “wreckage of colonialism” (Lyons, “Rhetorical” 461) at the heart of “multiculturalism” and the “politics of recognition.” In Sarris’s novel *Watermelon Nights* (1998), not only is the Native individual’s identity formation susceptible to “distortion” due to this wreckage, but tribal communities themselves have had to contend with the communal wreckage of *collective identity traumatization* caused by colonization. Specifically, Sarris’s Pomo community will be seen to struggle with its inability to recognize itself as a unified tribal community and with its attempts to regain this identity. The analysis of the novel will draw on studies concerned with trauma theory, specifically in relation to community cohesion and the corresponding collective identity.

“Trauma theory” and individual and collective identity

Hartwig Isernhagen has remarked that since the 1990s “trauma has been at the center of the most salient story of identity” (“They have stories” 11-12). Roger Luckhurst has pointed out that the field now known as “trauma theory” was deemed as such only after the mid-1990s when various lines of inquiry into the destruction and reconstruction of “identity” - psychology, feminism, new historicism, postcolonialism, and the multiple offshoots of cultural studies, identity studies, and race studies- “converged to make trauma a privileged critical category” (Luckhurst 497). Trauma has been theorized both as a sudden catastrophic event outside of and profoundly disturbing the “normal” fabric of human psychological experience, as well as a prolonged situation of extreme stress, such as poverty or oppression, which creates a chronic conditioned dysfunctionality in the psychology of those exposed to it. Trauma has been explored both in relation to the individual’s isolated experience (such as rape) and with respect to the group which has shared a traumatic experience such as a natural disaster, an historic event such as the Holocaust, and what one could call the violent conditions of human history itself such as the diasporas and genocide caused by colonization and slavery. The symptomatic effects of trauma have been analyzed from various perspectives: in psychiatric terms as pathologies - the neurosis of the individual struggling with the intrusive, obsessive repetition of the traumatic event subconsciously, as in dreams; in psychological terms as the disintegration of the individual’s psychical holistic “sense of self”; and in sociological terms as the ramification of collective experiences passed on generationally through various psycho-social mechanisms such as memorialization (Alexander et al; Caruth (ed), *Trauma*; Caruth, *Unclaimed*; Felman, *Testimony*).

In relation to “identity,” the effects of collective trauma have been seen to produce collective identification, both destructively as an internalized devaluation of one’s self as member of a devalued group and constructively as re-valued collective or “pan” ethnic identities linked to the traumatic situation or event (slavery and African-Americans, colonization and Native Americans, the Holocaust and Jewish people) (Erikson, “Notes” 185). As such, “trauma” has come to represent in many fields, as Isernhagen remarks, a “fundamental threat” as well as a fundamental recuperative challenge to individual and communal identities (“They have stories” 11-12). Native Americans have been critical of the use of the collective trauma of colonization as a marker of collective pan-Indian identity as this had generated discourses of Native dysfunctionality and encouraged, as Vizenor termed

it, the “invented Indian identity,” i.e. the popular tragic figure of the Indian as noble victim of an inevitable history (Isernhagen, “They have stories” 13). Nevertheless, the myriad effects of historic trauma on contemporary Native individuals and communities are an issue that remains pertinent to any discussion of Native identity.

Historic trauma, Native communities, and Native collective identity

While it is undebatable that Native individuals and communities have been traumatized by both the historic ‘sudden’ and violent disturbance of colonization and the subsequent chronic and intergenerational stress of poverty and oppression, the nature and symptoms of this multidimensional trauma are continually being scrutinized and reassessed in the search for a strategy to manage and, if possible, reverse the complex legacy of this trauma. Certain distinguishing characteristic features of the effect of historic trauma on Native peoples have been proposed by the Chippewa scholar Lawrence W. Gross.

First, the stress is society-wide in nature. The stress does not simply involve a small segment of the population, as might be the case with combat veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder. [...] Second, the stress strikes at both the personal and institutional levels. As such, [while] features are expressed in the lives of individual people [trauma] causes the collapse of societal institutions, which normally function to circumvent and/or minimize [individuals’] stress in the wake of a shock to the culture and assist in the recovery process.(qtd. in Madsen, “On Subjectivity” 63)

Gross’s two characteristics of historic trauma in relation to Native peoples place significant emphasis on the *community* as the primary traumatized entity, specifically the local community understood as “tribe.” Similarly, in Sarris’s *Watermelon Nights* the tribe will be taken as the primary traumatized entity and discussed not in terms of the broader concepts of collective trauma and pan-ethnic identity, but in terms of Kai Erikson’s narrower association of the “collective” with the immediate community and the effect of trauma on this collective’s sense of identity *as* community, i.e. the experience of being members of a close-knit, bounded society (Erikson, *Everything* 79). The “tribe” as a self-identifying, bounded community has been seen as the site of “identity and distinctiveness not only vis-à-vis whites but also with respect to other Native American tribes” (Fogelson 52), without which Sarris believes “Indian people in this country could risk becoming “unknown non-whites”” within mainstream America (qtd. in “Watermelon Nights” 10). In the analysis of *Watermelon Nights*, two dimensions of the “identity” of the immediate tribal community will be discerned: 1) the political identity of the Native community as bounded polity (i.e. tribe), externally determined by the federal government, 2) the Native community’s self-identification as “tribe,” maintained by community-internal societal mechanisms of cultural self-definition. While struggling to achieve the first, Sarris’s community will be confronted with the effects of the traumatization of the second.

Watermelon Nights (1998) by Greg Sarris

Traumatized community identity

Watermelon Nights returns one generation later to the Pomo Indian families of *Grand Avenue*. Like Dorris’s *Yellow Raft*, *Watermelon*’s narrative structure consists of three inter-generational first person narrative sections: the young man Johnny Severe’s present experiences in his South Park Pomo community, his grandmother Elba’s memories of the adversities of her childhood and young womanhood, and Johnny’s mother Iris’s memories of her troubled adolescence. The novel opens with Johnny’s involvement in the Pomo Indian’s petition to become a legally “recognized” and federally “acknowledged” tribe. During

Johnny's attempts to collect the genealogical charts required by the federal government to legitimize their claim to tribal status, community internal strife threatens to stymie the process, revealing a community deeply fractured by volatile inter-personal resentments and deep-seated personal grief. When the internal hostilities of his community target Johnny in a homophobic attack by his friends, Johnny decides to leave town and abandon his efforts to help his community. The novel utilizes the narratives of Elba and Iris to explore the roots of the situation Johnny finds himself in. Johnny's grandmother Elba relates what could be termed the traumatization of a community: the Pomo's loss of their land base, the disintegration and dispersal of the community and the hardships and cruelties suffered by its members. Elba's daughter Iris's narrative which follows explores the experiences of a generation Sarris calls "the lost generation" (422) who inherited and internalized the tribe's distress as Indian-identity-shame and attempted to free themselves from their traumatized Native communities by assimilating into Euro-American culture. The novel concludes as Iris witnesses Johnny's recommitment to the restoration of the tribe.

The dynamics of the situation Johnny is confronted with can be seen as directly related to the concept of the tribe's identity as material community, the disruption of this identity through historic trauma, and the recuperation of this identity through "recognition." This process of recuperation for Johnny's Pomo community involves two dimensions of the dynamics of recognition: community-internal self-recognition and community-external political recognition. Community-internal self-recognition involves the regeneration of socio-cultural mechanisms of social bonding and mutual identification which had become dysfunctional due to the cumulative effects of historic trauma. Community-external recognition refers to the federal government's requirement that a Native community must be legally recognized and registered as a "tribe" - a status not accorded to all self-identifying tribes - in order to qualify for land rights and the federal funding necessary to maintain itself as such (Nagel, *American*, 192-193; "Watermelon Nights" 9-10) Sarris's Pomo Indians, having lost their land base two generations earlier and with it their internal cohesive identity as material community, attempt to redress this situation by formalizing their unclear legal status and petitioning for federal recognition as "tribe."

The term "tribe" and federal "recognition"

The term "tribe" has been used 1) as an ethno-racial identification determined by blood quantum – for instance, one quarter "Cherokee," 2) in the ethnological sense of a small scale bounded and self-sustaining community in which the members are of common descent, and 3) in a political context in which it was used interchangeably with the word "nation" in treaty agreements regarding land transactions, border disputes, and later reservation allocation and federal funding (Utter 59). As James Clifford has remarked, "although tribal status and Indian identity have long been vague and politically constituted, [...] not just any Native American group can decide to be a tribe" (*Predicament* 289) and subsequently claim a legal relationship with the federal government. The federal government has assigned to itself the legal power not only to accord the category "tribe" a specific political status in relation to the federal government and state governments, but also to be the sole determiner of this status, the sole authority to define this status and subsequently "recognize" the rights legally due to these "legitimate" tribal communities. Indeed, the concept of "recognition" has a specific meaning in the legal history of Native Americans and the United States government. It is understood as the formal means by which "the United States officially acknowledges the existence of a Native American group or tribe" as a distinct political entity (Wunder 166; McCulloch *et al*). The importance of this legal acknowledgement to Native communities and their individual

members cannot be underestimated (*The State* 59-60), Anne Merline McCulloch *et al* remarking that tribes

have experienced great difficulty sustaining themselves as viable political and cultural entities without federal recognition.[...] by recognizing an Indian tribe the federal government is affirming the legal position of its members as Indians. Without such recognition, an ethnically identified “Indian” may not be able to benefit from federal programs tailored for “legally-recognized” Indians.

Due to various historical developments and interactions between the federal government and the myriad Native groups throughout the continent, not all ethnologically recognized tribes were accorded the status of politically recognized tribes. The absence of a treaty relationship with the US government, presumed extinction, or presumed assimilation were just a few of the reasons why tribal communities disappeared from the federal legal gaze. During the 1950s, in an attempt to dissolve the legal relationship with the remaining recognized tribes, the federal government adopted the policy of Termination which encouraged tribes to voluntarily forfeit their tribal status. The tribes which made this misguided decision and those which were illegally terminated by the government became ethnological tribes, ethnic communities with no rights to federal funds and services

During the 1970s, the political climate in America became supportive of the desire of Native communities to reverse the disastrous, impoverishing effects of Termination. A legal procedure for the reinstatement of tribal status to previously terminated tribes was initiated, and Native communities who had never had the benefits of federal acknowledgement now had the opportunity to petition the federal government for this recognition. There was, however, at that time no federal codification of the requirements for tribal legal status, and during the 1970s “the Department of the Interior recognized tribes on a haphazard case-by-case basis” (Wunder 176). The Bureau of Indian Affairs codified in 1978 and revised in 1994 a list of requirements Native communities seeking recognition must satisfy (*Code*). However, these criteria have proven problematic for many Native communities and have been criticized as not representing the variety of tribal societal structures but primarily reflecting Euro-American preconceptions of what a “tribe” is or should be (Clifford, *Predicament* 289).

Among the requirements for federal recognition are the demands that the petitioning community prove that it has been identified by various external sources (federal government, state or local governments, scholars, or other Indian tribes) as an “American Indian entity on a substantially continuous basis since 1900,” that it inhabits or has geographical ties to “land identified as Indian” (McCulloch *et al*), and that community members descend from a “historical Indian tribe [...] which functioned as a single autonomous political entity” with an active and discernable form of self government (“Summary”) In order to establish descent within this community, “a petitioner is required to establish the generational links to connect its membership to that tribe” (“Summary”). Annette M. Jaimes (Juaneno/Yaqui) has pointed out that these requirements involve identity catch-22s: “An Indian is a member of any federally recognized Indian Tribe To gain federal recognition, an Indian Tribe must have a land base. To secure a land base, an Indian Tribe must be federally recognized”(qtd. in McCulloch *et al*). Furthermore, these criteria have been criticized as generalities extrapolated from Euro-American understandings of the form and nature of legally recognized western tribes, making it difficult for eastern tribes with a longer and more complex history of cultural syncretism, institutional adaptation, and inter-raciality to fulfill the federal requirements for recognition. Indeed, the proposition has been offered that ultimately the decision to award federal tribal recognition is fundamentally based on a Euro-American concept of “Indian” and on Euro-American definitions of “descent” and “government.”

...the social construction of "Indianness" created by Euroamericans is among the most critical elements in determining which tribes will be recognized. [...] The ability of an Indian tribe to become and remain a federally recognized tribe is dependent on how well that tribe "fits" the social construction of "Indian tribe" as perceived by federal officials. (McCulloch *et al*)

In his examination of the 1977 trial to determine the tribal status of the Mashpee Indian community at Cape Cod, Massachusetts, James Clifford similarly concludes that there was a discrepancy between Native modes of self-identification and the federal recognition as "legitimate" of certain markers of tribal identity. During the Mashpee trial, Clifford remarks that

certain underlying structures governing the recognition of identity and difference became visible. Looked at one way, [the Mashpee] were Indian; seen another way, they were not. Powerful *ways of looking* thus became inescapably problematic. (*Predicament* 289)

As Sarris's Pomo community attempts to fulfill federal requirements for legally recognized tribal status, they must negotiate the discrepancies between external and internal "ways of seeing" their communal identity as "tribe."

No longer "Indian"? Losing the connection with the federal government

Elba recounts that though her tribe, the Waterplace Pomo, did not have a federal reservation, the private land upon which they lived, the Benedict Rancheria, was their ancestral land. They work as fruit pickers and farm hands and are not concerned about their relationship as "tribe" to the federal government until they are suddenly forced to leave the Rancheria. Without a place to live, they begin to realize how tenuous their position is in comparison to other tribes.

...we seen, too, for the first time, what them Indians with a reservation had that was more that we did [...] a piece of land to live on. It might've been ten, twenty, maybe even a hundred acres in some godforsaken place in the middle of nowhere, [...]but no one white man could get upset over something and throw you off with a snap of his fingers. That was part of the agreement with the government. (175)

They are allowed to live on another tribe's reservation at Sebastopol, only to discover that their community's relationship with the federal government has evaporated. As they are refused food and supplies by a federal agent,

Elmer pleaded with the government agent, pointed out that the government gave us commodities while we lived on Benedict's ranch, that we was the same Indians then as we was now. To which the agent, closing his trunk, said, "Yeah, I know. Problem was, there's too many Indians in the valley. Our drivers didn't know which was government Indians and which wasn't but we're sorting that out now, checking our lists to see what's a reservation and what isn't. (183)

With the loss of their land-base, they have literally become unrecognizable to federal agents. Even though they recognize *themselves* to be the same tribal community as before, their distinct *political identity* has been lost in the eyes of the federal government. It is not until Elba's grandson Johnny Severe's generation that an attempt to regain this federal status can be made. During the process to regain federal recognition, the tenuous nature of this political identity is commented upon by Johnny who cynically remarks,

It's a crazy thing, having to prove to the United States that we're Indians when they seen us as Indians once before, and then, when we left that last reservation west of Sebastopol, decided that we wasn't. White people! Grandma says. I say, what's to keep them from changing their minds again, even if we do prove ourselves Indians to their satisfaction? (58)

Johnny's insight is that a Natives' collective political identity is primarily dependent on Euro-American "ways of seeing." To explore further the discrepancies between federal and Native ways of seeing this collective identity as "tribe," Sarris in the novel focuses on his community's attempts to fulfill the federal required proof of tribal historic *continuity*.

As mentioned above, the federal acknowledgement of tribal community continuity requires the petitioning Native group to produce genealogical records of common descent as well as researched substantiation that the community has been a historically distinctive entity up to the present. Sarris's community is also involved in this process, and at a tribal meeting, the chairman informs the community that

... with so many completed charts we'd more than finished the first part of our job to get the U.S. government to acknowledge us as a tribe [...] It was the second step, what Steven was explaining – writing a report showing how we always continued as a tribe - where things come unglued. (58)

As indicated by the chairman, their Pomo community history is one of *both* continuity and discontinuity. As a point open to historiographic and cultural interpretation, this inconclusive continuity could disqualify their petition in the eyes of the federal government. Reflecting on the similar predicament of the Mashpee, Clifford, noted that the West's "metaphors of continuity and survival," invested with legal consequence in relation to tribal communities, do not take into account either the history of violent Native community disruption or the subsequent "complex historical processes of appropriation, compromise, subversion, masking, invention, and revival" engaged in by the remaining community members (*Predicament* 338). The complex history of Sarris's Pomo community is, as we will see, reflected in the genealogical charts filled in by its members. Sarris uses the genealogical charts to explore both external (federal) and community-internal "ways of seeing" tribal identity in relation to the legitimizing concept of historic "continuity."

External and internal modes of recognition of "tribe": blood quantum vs. "story"

That a genealogical chart is felt by the characters to be an artificial and inappropriate determinant of Native identity is revealed in Johnny's sarcastic remark that the chart "was one of a list of things we had to do to prove to the government that we was real *Indians*. [...] if you ask me, look no different from dog pedigree" (5). Nevertheless, as Johnny collects the charts from the community members, it becomes clear that this federal manner of legitimizing Native tribal identity produces the insecurity of "illegitimacy" among the community members. Deflecting his friends' defensive remarks about blanks in their charts - unknown fathers and mothers - Johnny realizes that

a blank space there, or anywheres on the chart, meant one of two things: Either you didn't know who the person was or, if you did know, you was ashamed. Both of which causes embarrassment. Particularly if you're Indian, since lots of us have blank spaces; and now with everybody wanting to be full blood and all, nobody wants to claim relations that ain't Indian.(11)

The gaps in the chart touch not only on the personal pain of parental abandonment but also, as has been seen in the discussion of *Grand Avenue*, on a "communal shame" of dysfunctional kinship structures and subsequently the individual's "social identity" marked by tribal-external concepts of bastardization and (il)legitimacy. In addition, as we have seen, federal definitions of Native identity tend to equate blood quantum and documentable continuous blood lines with "legitimate" individual *and* community tribal identity. "Missing" Native parents in the chart from a federal perspective could indicate a discontinuity in genealogy and subsequently an ethnic group dissolution and discontinuity. As a consequence of adopting federal "ways of seeing" the charts, Native identity and tribal continuity become disputable.

The charts, however, do not only reflect federal modes of recognition and legitimization. As Johnny points out, the community's combined genealogies reveal the community-internal means of self-identification as "tribe": The communal family tree-lines indicate that all their "histories come together" (141), connecting every Pomo Indian to one common ancestor named Rosa.

During the court testimonies concerning the definition the Mashpee as "Indian tribe," the judge asked an expert witness anthropologist whether, theoretically, a community which traced their lineage back to a single Indian ancestor could be defined as an Indian tribe. Yes, the expert replied, "it would be an extremely interesting one" (Clifford, *Predicament* 326). Sarris has his Pomo community trace their ancestry back to one woman, Rosa, who was both the last survivor and first generator of this Waterplace Pomo tribe. It is in each community member's kinship connection to her and her daughter (also named Rosa) that they understand themselves to have cohered continuously as a "tribe."

...I filled in the empty spaces on my chart, tracing from me and Mom and Grandma back to the first Rosa, which is what everybody was suppose to do to prove we was a tribe. A tribe, hell, it's a family. One big family. [...] everybody's lines start crossing together, after the grandmothers and great-grandmothers. (7)

Here Sarris juxtaposes but also fuses Western and Native kinship concepts: 1) Western-style genealogy in which bilateral descent is indicated on each chart, and 2) a tribal-style kinship system in which "everybody's lines start crossing together" when the individual charts are compared. Johnny indicates that it is the Native understanding of continual kinship ties and interrelated families which is the community's primary "definition" of tribe.

The importance of the originators of the Waterplace Pomo community, the life of the two Rosas, is repeatedly stressed as their stories are recounted by older members of the community. The story of the two Rosa's has the status of "origin myth," legitimizing this community's own sense of continuity, its literal rebirth from the verge of extinction.

"The Mexicans, Johnny, they come in and killed and kidnapped everybody. Raped the women. Sold the men and boys - girls too - as far away as Mexico. Sold them as slaves. There was one young woman left- named her Rosa. [...] The Mexican general, he didn't treat Rosa so good, not good at all. But they had a daughter, the second Rosa, and when she was old enough, she run away; and when she come back years later, she had her kids with her, and, that way, with her and them kids, this tribe started up again. The kids was Indian, from a man over by Sebastopol Lagoon. So we're all mixed up with the other tribes too. But, no matter, what we got in common is that one ancestor, the first Rosa. She never did see a way past the adobe's four walls where the general kept her; never seen the whole tribe back to life, when it had been killed off to just one person. (30)

The story undermines the presumption of the federal genealogical chart that Pomo identity is legitimized in blood quantum, with full-bloodedness being the most "authentic" identity. The story of the two Rosas substantiates the Native way of seeing the "racial" homogeneity of the community in the affirmation of communal descent legitimized by the mutual recognition of each member's genealogical connection to each other through one primary Native ancestor. In addition, this "genealogy-cum-foundation myth" underscores Native modes of recognizing tribal continuity in the face of complete community disintegration, countering the federal government's inability to accept gaps in community history or, as Clifford phrased it, the concept of "a group existing discontinuously" (*Predicament* 341).

However, while the narrative of the two Rosas can be seen to counter external perspectives which threaten to delegitimize tribal identity, it also pinpoints the *internal* forces which threaten the ability of Native communities to cohere and self-identify as "tribes." The story of the two Rosas reflects historic communal experiences playing themselves out destructively in the lives of individuals. More specifically, it can be understood as a narrative of the traumatization of a Native community, the reverberations of this trauma across generations, and the loss of collective "identity."

The “two Rosas” as narrative of community trauma

In the novel, the story of the two Rosas is passed down not only in the telling from one generation to the next, but also in the reality of the story as lived and relived in each generation, by each extended family. As various characters remark, “It’s always the same story, just different places - and times”(378). The Rosas’ story reveals the persecution of the Native population by various colonizing groups vying for authority during the 19th century conflict between Mexico and the U.S. for the California territory. This history is echoed in the displacement of Elba’s community and the subsequent experiences of her and her daughter. As the reader is privy to the private stories of Johnny’s grandmother Elba and mother Iris, the hardships of the Rosas serve as a leitmotif of the “colonial wreckage” - i.e. trauma - of historic violence, disenfranchisement, and sexual abuse, which seems also to be symptomatic of their lives. Through first-person narrative flashbacks, the reader learns that after leaving the Rancheria, Elba, like the first Rosa, was sold into marriage at a young age and sexually abused, eventually escaping her marriage only to be forced to support herself as a prostitute along with other members of her disbanded community. Her daughter, Iris, will attempt to flee (like the second Rosa) the restrictions and the “sadness, anger, hatred”(379) of her mother’s situation. Despite Iris’s disassociation from Native identity and the Pomo community, her son, like the children of the second Rosa, will be instrumental in the restitution of tribal status.

Elba’s and Iris’s stories, as well as the interconnecting lives of other characters, are seen by the reader to “fill” the hidden narratives of personal pain represented by the gaps in the genealogical charts. As Johnny gradually learns about these unspoken stories that haunt the blanks on the charts, he is able to make the connection between the Rosa narrative of historic community trauma and the abusive and abused lives of his contemporaries. As he ponders the murder of his cousin’s mother, Rose, by her husband, Johnny concludes “Rose on back to Rosa [...] it told me nothing I didn’t know before” (54), expressing his awareness of the self-destructive effects of intergenerational trauma which threaten his community.

The potential of such collective narratives to “resolve” the disrupted interpersonal dynamics of a traumatized community has been discussed by Deborah Madsen as the narrative’s capacity to situate personal trauma in “the patterns of tribal symbols and tribal mythology, the stories” (Madsen, “Of Time” 125) transforming trauma from an isolating experience to a collective, integrative experience, and creating a meaningful mutual identification - as Erikson phrases it, enabling the “I” to identify as “we” (Erikson, *Everything* 154) In this respect, the Rosas story could help Johnny’s fellow Pomo Indians to identify themselves, in Erikson’s words, as a traumatized *community* instead of “an assembly of traumatized persons” (Erikson, “Notes” 185). The story should activate the process described by Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman and summarized by Isernhagen as the working through of trauma in narrative (“They have stories” 11-12). The Rosas’s story should integrate individually irresolvable, repetitive individual and family traumas into a narrative of communal recognition and ultimately of community regeneration. In this capacity, the story can also be seen as a narrative of what Erikson terms *communality* - “the basic tissue of social life [...] the bonds attaching people together” (*Everything* 154) - in that it underscores the idea that when communities “constantly tell and retell their constitutive narratives,” they generate the sense that “there is no individual memory without social experience nor is there any collective memory without individuals participating in communal life” (Olick 344, 346). However, it is just this communality, this mutual recognition and self-identification as a participatory “collective” that Johnny realizes has been seriously damaged, if not destroyed, in his community. Ironically, during the process of attempting to achieve external federal

recognition as a tribe, Johnny realizes that his traumatized community has lost its ability to self-identify as such.

The nature of the traumatized community: damaged communality

Erikson's concept of communality plays an important role in his analysis of what he has called "traumatized communities" (Erikson, "Notes" 185), a concept which itself is based on his earlier concept of collective trauma in relation to the psychological damage done to communities by catastrophe.

By *collective trauma* [...] I mean a blow to the basic tissue of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. [...] a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. [...] "I" continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. "You" continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. But "we" no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body. (*Everything* 154)

Erikson suggests that the identity "we" which can be traumatized- the community's sense of communality - involves the concept of group culture as a self-identifying "ethos," understood in its many forms as the community's "culture," which he describes as "those modes of thinking and knowing and doing that a people learn to regard as natural, those beliefs and attitudes that help shape a people's *way of looking at themselves* and the rest of the universe, those ideas and symbols that a people employ to *make sense of their own everyday experience as members of a society*" [emphasis added] (*Everything* 79). The potentially disruptive influence of change on the communal ethos can be mitigated by "tradition" -the performed forms of the community's ethos/culture-, which as Geertz theorizes serve as adaptive mechanisms which maintain the community's sense of cultural communality and continuity in the face of such change (4-5). Erikson proposes that when societal change is traumatically extreme, a traumatized collective "mood" or "state of mind" can gradually become the primary "group ethos" (Erikson, "Notes" 185; Erikson, *Everything* 189). Considering Geertz, one can conclude that such extreme change damages the effectiveness of traditions to buffer and sustain communality, whereby a "damaged" or traumatized group ethos develops.

It is this process which can be seen at work in Sarris's community. While Sarris's community attempts to prove to the federal government that they have survived as a continuous tribe because distinctive and viable socio-cultural elements have survived the community's turbulent and traumatic history - elements such as tribal decision-making structures, kinship structures, collective origin narratives, surviving traditions such as Pomo language, healers, and basket weaving - Johnny realizes that these elements have ceased to function internally as meaningful modes of communality, of tribal self-definition and self-identification. While members of his community can individually identify both ethnically and culturally as Pomo, these members have lost the ability to mutually identify as tribe.

As Johnny attempts to inspire community enthusiasm for the federal petition, he attempts to use these traditional modes of tribal self-identification and solidarity to overcome the resentments caused by the accumulation of private tragedies. Attempting to encourage his cousin Lena to fill in her genealogical chart, Johnny offers weakly, "We're all related," whereby Lena responds "Ain't that a pisser, [...] I don't claim none of these people as relatives.[...] Federal acknowledgement for what? [...] A bunch of thieves, cheaters?" (32). The concept of kinship, as Johnny discovers, does not engender in Lena the expected sense of tribal communality but the opposite, the denial of its value. The degree of community-destructive cynicism which has infected the concept of kinship is similarly revealed as the three generations of the group which left the Benedict Rancheria gather to discuss the procedure for federal recognition of tribal status at a general tribal meeting. Sensing old

resentments, the tribal chairman similarly attempts to create tribal communality by referring to traditional kinship values.

“We got to be positive. We got to look at the ways we’ve hung together, not split apart.[...] We’re a tribe. One people. One blood. Each of us related-“

“Well, you done plenty to help that!” Lena blurted out. (59)

Lena’s response refers to the chairman’s many illegitimate children which he has never recognized. As Lena begins to reveal the names of these children present at the meeting, he attempts to save himself by challenging Lena.

“Lena,” he said. “I don’t believe you or your sister have turned in your genealogy charts, have you?”

“Why should I?” she asked.

“Well, at this point you’re not on our tribal rolls. Which means at this point you’re not a member of this tribe.” [...]

“Members, ha!” she shouted all at once. “Me and my sister here is the only ones got Waterplace Pomo full on both sides. You,” she said, pointing her finger again. “Your father’s from Kashaya Reservation and your mother might as well been pure Mexican.”(60)

These exchanges indicate that the primary mode of tribal community cohesion and identification, kinship, no longer serves to create bonds of responsibility which in their turn can serve as the foundation for tribal societal structures and a sense of communality, but are potentially the source of a sense of betrayal and resentment. In addition, the determiners of tribal “membership” likewise threaten to create community discord due to the introduction of external modes of legitimization (blood quantum) and documentation (tribal enrollment). The function of kinship in the tribal community no longer works because of the trauma passed down from Lena’s grandmother to Lena herself after the loss of their Rancheria land base and the subsequent conflicts between community members. Lena’s cynical remark above is indicative of the traumatized collective identity of the Pomo community which cannot see itself as a coherent, material tribe: “Federal acknowledgement for what?”

The fact that Native modes of collective self-identification and tribal communality no longer function has also been noticed by Johnny’s visiting cousin Felix as he explains to Johnny that everyone in the tribe is “cut off, disconnected” from each other (69). Felix tells Johnny that their Aunt Molly had not recognized Lena and her sister at the meeting until she heard their names. Molly had then told Felix a story that

“Twenty years ago her and my Mom and Auntie Daisy beat the shit out of those bitches in a bar up in Healdsburg. Daisy stabbed one with a knife and then her and Mom and Auntie Mollie took off back to Lake County. Don’t you see? They’re fucking cousins and they was killing each other and not even knowing it! [...] Would she recognize them later when they was all growed up? No. She might know the names, but that’s all. [...] Everybody knows the stories, they just don’t know each other”(70-71).

Implicit in this anecdote is not only that kinship recognition has, in the most extreme cases, become all but meaningless, but that “stories” as part of the oral tradition have lost their function to create bonds of connectedness and mutuality, having become narratives of resentment, integral elements of the community trauma. Johnny reveals that he has also experienced this breakdown of the oral tradition as he finds himself the subject of “thing stories,” stories which do not reaffirm mutual tribal identification and communality but perpetuate resentments, disconnectedness, and estrangement.

The same crap over and over again. I seen in detail how what he had said works, how it happens. How it works with them thing stories folks pin on one another and then talk about endlessly. Thing stories like drunk parents dying in the cold on lower Fourth, fathers that don’t up front claim you, white blood, being queer. Things stories that make folks bow their heads in shame only to look up a day a week, a year later with suspicion and hate at all the world and everybody they know. And then, so they won’t be alone, singled out in their shame, they take to

the business of collecting and spreading thing stories about everybody else. A poisonous basket weaved together with their fear and hatred. My Indian community. (123)

In effect, Johnny darkly satirizes what has most often been singled out as the cornerstone of Native identity: the community. The cynical irony pervading Johnny's characterization of *his* Indian community can be seen as the expression of communality as "anti-communality," the tribe held together not by mutuality but by "poison." This metaphor can be seen to parallel the characterization provided by Erikson of the effect of trauma on the communities he studied.

... these disasters (or near disasters) often seem to force open whatever fault lines once ran silently through the structure of the larger community, dividing it into divisive fragments. In a number of places where such emergencies have taken place, the people of the community have split into factions to such an extent that one wise student of such matters calls them "corrosive communities" (Erikson, "Notes" 189)

The metaphor "corrosive" resonates with Johnny's metaphor of poison to describe the pervading, toxic character of his community. This corrosive tenor of Johnny's traumatized community can be understood in terms of a traumatized ethos which has affected the community's identity. Trauma, as Erikson discusses it, works its way "thoroughly into the grain of the affected community so that it comes to supply its prevailing mood and temper, dominate its imagery and its sense of self, govern the way its members relate to one another" (*Everything* 190).

As has been discussed above, the symptoms of traumatized Native communities are intergenerational and cumulative (Duran et al; Styvendale) leading to a personal and group dysfunctionality that perpetuate the traumatized collective mood. In Sarris's novel, Johnny muses about his community along similar lines:

Indians is a mean, unhappy bunch. [...] [Grandma] says Indians can't help it on account of Rosa and that Mexican general. Meanness. It's a song, she says, that keeps getting told over and over, passed from generation to the next. The words might change, the melody don't. (6)

Johnny finds himself the next victim in the cumulative repercussions of his community's historic trauma as he becomes the target of an anti-homosexual assault by his friends. Returning from the hospital, he informs his grandmother

"Grandma," I said. "I got beat up last night.[...] My own people. Members of this tribe, the tribe you always want me to help. The ones I make flyers for, sweep up shit after meetings for. Them. You say they're mean, hateful. Well, you're right. Only I can't see the good side no more, no reason for helping them, if I ever did.[...] Grandma," I said, attempting to reason with her, "this neighborhood, everybody's trapped. The same old crap over and over - sadness." (119)

Johnny decides to move away from South Park to escape the trap of his traumatized community, his decision including his withdrawal from the process of petitioning for federal recognition. This signals the quandary of Johnny's community in which the damage inflicted by historic trauma on its modes of self-recognition and self-identification jeopardize the achievement of its much needed political identity as federally acknowledged tribe.

Healing the traumatized community: "kindness"

If Sarris presents the reader with a Native community containing all the socio-cultural "ingredients" of a contemporary tribe ripe both for federal recognition of its political identity and a revitalization of its tribal identity but also suffering from the cumulative effects of trauma, he also offers a strategy to counteract the effects of trauma to regain a viable communality: kindness. This deceptively simple concept is the insight gained by Johnny

during the episode which gives the novel its title and which ultimately convinces Johnny to remain and support the tribe despite the violence he has experienced.

Sarris's concept of kindness can be contextualized by Erikson's description of one of the most fundamental effects of trauma on the individual in relation to the community: "The experience of trauma, at its worst, can mean not only a loss of confidence in the self, but a loss of confidence in the surrounding tissue of family and community" ("Notes" 198). Specifically, Erikson indicates that close-knit communities lose confidence in the very characteristic which made them "close-knit": "the power [that the community] generated in people to care for one another in times of need, to console one another in times of distress, to protect one another in times of danger" (*Everything* 226). Sarris indicates that the tribe as a close-knit community of extended kinship relationships must recuperate this fundamental social dimension of communality which he calls "kindness" and which Erikson describes as "so elementary a feature of social life that its absence becomes inhuman [...]." As Erikson insists, "The mortar bonding human communities together is made up, at least in part, of *trust* and *respect* and *decency* - and, in moments of crisis, of *charity* and *concern*" [emphasis added] ("Notes 193). Because of the accumulation of symptoms of trauma within the Sarris's Pomo community, an act of kindness or charity must surface through layers of personal pain and interpersonal resentment and must involve both an insight into the nature of trauma and forgiveness of the perverse (self)destructive behavior it causes. Both Elba and Johnny face the challenges of this process as they find themselves the targets of the violence of their family and friends.

Elba's narrative of her life story reveals to the reader a tragedy brought about by her half sister Zelda. Fearing the curse of their religious leader, who condemning the sisters' prostitution foresees their punishment in the death of one of their babies, Zelda sets fire to the blankets of Elba's baby while it is sleeping, thereby hoping to save her own baby's life from the curse. Elba later secretly witnesses Zelda's confession of the deed and suddenly sees in Zelda what she calls "much of our common misery"(286).

I could say that I seen in Zelda at that moment the sum total of her sorry life [...] Or I could say I seen in her, as I had before, a pitiful representative of all of us, Zelda just being more obvious about the fear and related wretchedness in each of our lives. Wasn't we all a girl at the front door offering a dress she stole from the house in exchange for a home in that house? Wasn't we all burning some baby or other so that we'd be safe in that home? (286)

This insight that her community is trapped in the legacy of their common trauma of community displacement and familial disintegration, has a transformative effect on Elba who is surprised that the news does not cause in her an emotional collapse. Instead, she experiences "an emerging, as if from an old skin, and I felt wet, alive. [Zelda] looked old, pitiful. 'I forgive you,' I said out loud and begun to walk" (285-286). Elba's monumental act of charity and forgiveness effectively causes her rebirth out of and beyond the trauma of her community. While her act of forgiveness might seem to the reader emotionally unrealistic, as a narrative which parallels the story of the two Rosas, it has a "mythic" quality through which Sarris indicates that the traumatization of Native communities, expressed in the lives of its individual members, is so monumental that it takes more than human acts of "kindness," an almost superhuman ability to "forgive," to resolve its effects.

Two generations later, Johnny recognizes, as his grandmother did, the desperate and trapped condition of his friends who are constantly trying to negotiate a "safe home" in a traumatized community of distrusting, fearful, and volatile relationships. Having had a surreptitious homosexual relationship with his visiting cousin Felix, Johnny is tricked by an overtly gay friend Edward into a trap set by Felix who, in order to dispel "rumors" about his own homosexuality, decides to "prove" his heterosexuality by beating up Johnny in front of

their friends. When Johnny discusses the beating with his friend Tony who witnessed the event, Johnny discovers the extent of the trap that was set, in effect, for everyone.

“So let me get this straight,” I said. “Felix went around calling a meeting - supposedly about what us young people can do to help the tribe. That was one agenda item. The other just happened to be this thing I was saying about Felix. Right? And everybody knowed what was up [...] - everybody but Edward, because if Edward knowed he would never have gone and got himself in that situation. Edward, who said all that to Felix in the first place. Felix set up a trap for the both of us to fall into right in front of everybody.”

“I know it’s not true.”

“What?”

“What...you know. What Edward said. Shit, I know you’re not gay because if you was and tried something on Felix, Felix would’ve kicked your ass a long time ago.”

That stopped me. Not just how simpleminded he seen things, but how he seen Felix - just how Felix wanted Tony to see him. [...]

“Edward’s the gay guy, not you. He’s the liar. And he got off without a scrape. You should’ve busted him up more.”

Then I was more than stopped. I was sorry for Tony. He was trapped. A mouse on a treadmill. He would forever ask forgiveness for breaking his promise only to break his promise again. Promise, not pain. He couldn’t promise. Pain, and then more pain. Me, then Edward. On and on and his eyes would always be begging. (121-122)

Johnny realizes that under the premise of promoting tribal communality his contemporaries are “trapped” into participating in the very forces which work against this communality. In this instance, Felix’s corruption of the oral tradition’s communal function - his strategic propagation of “thing stories” of homophobia - has created a situation of mis-identification in which Johnny became the targeted scapegoat of the community’s fear and distrust of each other. Johnny, however, in recognizing the evidence of trauma in the breakdown of communality within his community, finds that his resentment is transformed into pity and ultimately into forgiveness.

Both Elba and Johnny’s acts of forgiveness can be seen as “heroic” in that they seemingly go beyond the emotional capabilities of most (traumatized) individuals. Their acts could be seen as Erikson’s “extraordinary acts of generosity” (*Everything* 227) which characterize the best expressions of functional communality in times of extreme community duress. However, as Elba attempts to teach Iris and Johnny, the cultivation and maintenance of communality must depend not solely on “heroic” acts of individual forgiveness, but equally, if not more significantly, on small acts of ‘kindness’ which engender *meaningful* bonds of mutuality.

“Kindness” as culturally meaningful communality

Elba attempts to teach her young daughter Iris the significance of “kindness” after Zelda’s daughter Billyrene tried to beat up Iris after school. Elba remarks to Iris that “Kindness is the only thing that helps us [...] [Billyrene]’s jealous. Probably has a hard life, like her mother. Say something to her, call her cousin” (358). Elba indicates that kindness in the context of tribal communality is the acknowledgment of shared relationships and their complexities (jealousy) and the re-establishment of the *culturally meaningful* bonds which characterize tribal communality - kinship. However, calling on the recognition and acknowledgement of kinship structures is calling on traumatized traditional modes of communality. The challenge of Sarris’s “kindness” as a tool for the recuperation of contemporary tribal communality is to (re)invest a myriad of such seemingly minor individual actions with a collectively recognized tribal solidarity, i.e. to (re)create a meaningful tribal communality.

“Meaning” within the context of trauma theory has been theorized as that dimension of an event *invested* with traumatic significance by those affected by it. Jeffrey Alexander

summarizes this with reference to a community understood as traumatized, stating that “only if the patterned meanings of the collectivity are abruptly dislodged is traumatic status attributed to an event. It is the meanings that provide the sense of shock and fear, not the events in themselves” (“Toward” 10). Implicit in this remark is that it is possible to influence community trauma in part by what could be called a de-traumatizing of the patterns of meaning-making in the community. This process is exemplified by the event from which the novel takes its title in which a “simple” act of kindness engenders a meaningful communality.

On the hot summer day before Johnny plans to leave the tribal community, he takes a watermelon from the back of a truck of watermelons and puts it on his grandmother’s kitchen table. His act is seen and copied by a few boys from the neighborhood. That night, unable to sleep, Johnny hears the voices of what he describes as his entire community, “folks young and old, parents and kids, relatives, crowded on the porch, packed together on the steps,” (138) laughing and all eating watermelon. Amazed at this gathering of his community, Johnny remembers his grandmother’s question put to him earlier that evening when she saw the watermelon.

She didn’t blink. “What does this mean?” she asked after a minute.

“What?” I asked.

Standing by the table, she began rolling her fingers over the watermelon’s humped green back. [...]

“You mean the watermelon, Grandma?”

“Yeah. What does it mean?” (136)

Unable to understand his grandmother’s question, Johnny looks for the answer in the faces of his community transformed by the simple pleasure of eating a watermelon in the middle of a hot mid-summer’s night. He realizes that his community has for the time being “pushed aside” sadness and worry, “and put other things in its place” (139). Johnny finds the answer to Elba’s question in his Aunt Mollie’s insight into their midnight feast.

Then Mollie brought the watermelon she was gesturing with close to her face, just inches from her lips and nose. Balancing it upright in the palms of both her hands, she studied it for a moment, taking it in with all of her senses. “You know what this is?” she said, turning her head just a notch to see me. “It’s kindness. It’s a kindness them kids done.” And then she bit full into the melon again. [...] I couldn’t tell myself then how I knowed so thorough that what Auntie Mollie said was true. [...] It settled in my body like peace. (139-140)

Johnny realizes that it was a simple act of kindness that has, at least for one evening, transported his community beyond their traumatized condition and infused the members with that sense of mutuality and communality which binds close-knit communities.

Folks was out everywhere talking to one another. They leaned against cars, talked over fences, gathered in circles in kitchens chairs on their front lawns. It was like after a power failure or earthquake. Only there was no disaster. They was happy, peaceful, spitting seeds and talking between bites of the watermelon that dripped from their hands and down their faces. [...] Them that seen me waved and hollered hello. I seen them, who they was, but at the same time didn’t. Nothing registered. [...] Everywhere it was the same. The world felt inside out. (138)

Fundamentally significant is Johnny’s comparison of the moment to a municipal emergency or natural disaster *sans* the emergency and disaster to describe the inspired closeness and solidarity of the community. The situation is in effect described as an inverted trauma. While one form of trauma has been described as a sudden event outside the normal pattern of life which disrupts the fabric of community, this sudden moment of kindness has also disrupted the “normal” traumatized patterns of life and the frayed fabric of Johnny’s tribal community, momentarily rectifying the cumulative destructive effects of historic trauma. Because Johnny’s traumatized world has been turned “inside out,” it has actually been turned “right

side in” as he sees in this moment the potential of kindness for the recuperation of tribal communality, the self-identification as a tribe.

Kindness, which is nothing more than the sweetness of watermelon and the thought that somebody might like a taste. It was always there, even in the hardest places, the sad deaths and the loud, hate-spewing meetings, only we needed to see it, like on a watermelon night. It had become more and more of a secret, something we hid with the tough times, but nothing else ever held us together. (142)

Sarris shows that the cumulative weight of tribal trauma demands a cumulative counter-weight of kindness and commitment to the tribe as both distinct cultural body and as distinct political body. Johnny’s act of kindness, his initial taking of the watermelon from the truck, instigates a new and recuperative “domino” effect which will reverse the generationally transmitted symptoms of historic trauma. As Johnny’s action was copied by the two boys and spread throughout the community, Johnny himself is influenced by this new chain of events and decides not to leave South Park but to remain and continue to work for federal recognition of the tribe. This act, itself a new act of heroic kindness in the face of potentially violent homophobia, will in turn inspire Johnny’s “assimilated” mother Iris, at the conclusion of the novel, to become involved in the community and attend a tribal council meeting.

Performing kindness, performing community

Ultimately, these recuperative acts of kindness portrayed by Sarris are in effect “simply” willful *acts* of community. Craig Womack underscores that such acts are only “simple” conceptually but demand a high degree of commitment in their *performance* for them to be *meaningful* and to contribute to the complex socio-cultural mechanisms which maintain the community identity as tribe.

...it is easy to talk about all the ways in which Native cultures, texts, and criticism are communal. It is a lot harder to *perform* community. [...] Reciprocity is highly valuable; it is seldom very easy. (“A Single” 98)

Jace Weaver (Cherokee), recognizing the significance of “performing community,” has coined the term “communitism” - a fusion of “community” and “activism” - to indicate the importance of participatory engagement and willing commitment on the part of tribal members to the maintenance of the tribal community as a “distinct body” (Justice 152). Especially in a traumatized community, in which each act may carry the cumulative weight of past acts of cruelty and betrayal, is this willingness to perform community and communality that Weaver and Sarris see as fundamental to the process of de-traumatization, Weaver stating that “to promote communitist values means to participate in the healing of the grief and sense of exile felt by Native communities and the pained individuals in them” (*That the People* xiii). This active, communal de-traumatization process is furthermore understood by Ron Eyerman as aiming “to reconstitute and reconfigure a collective identity, as a repairing of a tear in the social fabric” (63).

Part Three

Performing identity: from the multi-cultural to the multi-gender

While the writings of Greg Sarris can be characterized as addressing Native identity from the perspective of multi-raciality and a self-identifying Native community, in *Watermelon Nights* he also creates a conspicuous multi-gender frame, foregrounding a dimension of Native identity which he subsequently and just as conspicuously does not explore: the socio-cultural position and role, i.e., gender role, of the non-heterosexual individual in the tribal community.

At the conclusion of the novel, the rejection of overt homosexuality by Johnny's peers seems to be countered only in Johnny's optimistic recommitment to his tribe, not in an extended exploration of non-heterosexual gender identities within the context of tribal identity. While his clearly dangerous homophobic environment almost costs Johnny his confidence in his community, Sarris implies that Johnny, too (i.e. homosexual members of the tribe, too) will benefit from the recuperation of tribal identity and the healing of the traumatized community through kindness. Sarris seems to treat tribal homophobia as one of the many contemporary symptoms of tribal historic trauma in which, as Beth Brant (Mohawk) writes, "...we often cannot distinguish the racism from the homophobia from the sexism" (*Writing* 63). However, as tribal communities have undergone various processes of cultural and political identity revival and recuperation, tribal homosexual and transgendered people have expressed the need to specifically address non-heterosexuality and non-hetero-genders within tribal contexts. This final section of this chapter will explore Native identity in terms of gendered identities and the (re)investment of homosexuality with renewed tribal communal significance. As the "performance" of communality ultimately signaled the recuperation and maintenance of tribal community identity in *Watermelon Nights*, the "performance" of gendered identities will also prove to be the protagonists' primary strategy in the novels *The Woman Who Owned the Shadow* (1983) by Paula Gunn Allen and *Drowning in Fire* (2001) by Craig Womack.

Native American gender identities

A paradigmatic shift in gender studies during the 1990s that was represented by a metaphorical shift from the poststructuralists' terminology of (de)construction, as effectively applied by feminist literary critics since the 1960s, to the temporal, theatrical lexicon of performance, as specifically developed by Judith Butler and favored by so-called "queer" theorists since the late 1980s. These theories concerning the socio-cultural significance and impact of non-normative gender performances will be central in the analysis of novels in question in which Native American non-heterosexual gender performances will be explored in relation to what Butler has termed "performativity," a consensually perceived group-normative range of (gender) articulations. We will see that Native American non-heterosexual gender identities are performed at the site of two contesting systems of performativity: that based on the Euro-Christian interpretation of Biblical myth/parable and that founded on the myth/story-cycles of tribal oral tradition. Native non-heterosexuality thus becomes more than the performance of gender but becomes, as Butler remarks, "the nexus [...] of cultural collision" (*Bodies*, 124). To counter-act the internal tribal divisiveness caused by this "cultural collision," both Allen and Womack will draw on the distinctly performative nature of storytelling as the primary meaning-producing medium in Native societies (Ramirez 5; Jahner, "Intermediate" 223). By transposing the social realities of their homosexual characters into the symbolic realm of the oral tradition, Allen and Womack will both place contemporary performances of non-heterosexuality within a tribal performative epistemological framework and modulate the framework itself beyond the tribal societal ruptures caused by Euro-performativity.

Butler's theories of performance and performativity constitute a recent stage in the long progression of gender scrutiny which was sparked politically by First Wave Feminism, given its deconstructive and theoretical force in Second Wave and Lesbian Feminism, subsequently refracted in a myriad of vectors during what is often called Third Wave Feminism of the 1980s, and achieved its current theoretical force during the 1990s development of Gender Studies and Queer Theory. Whereas Second Wave Feminism saw its clear theoretical mission in the disclosure of the workings and legacy of the oppressive

patriarchal structuring of male/female roles in contemporary Euro-American society, subsequent gender criticism was conducted from the insight that “gender” was an access port to any number of inter-related foundational socio-cultural discourses, such as race and class, which, as Teresa de Lauretis remarks, assign meaning to individuals in society: “For someone to be represented and to represent oneself as male or as female implies the assumption of the whole of those meaning effects” (717). For most heterosexuals and homosexuals of color, these “meaning effects” directly reference the history of colonization and how, as Butler puts it, race is “lived in the modality of sexuality,” gender is “lived in the modality of race,” and both are rehearsed within the institutional and discursive matrix of (neo)colonial nation-state power (*Bodies*, 117).

The complexities of these modalities are revealed in the very task of clarifying the term “gender.” In the introduction to *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (1997), the editor Sue-Ellen Jacobs executes the necessary task of delineating the terms under investigation. Pertinent to this study is her definition of *gender* as a complex of “cultural rules, ideologies, and expected behaviors for individuals of diverse phenotypes and psychosocial characteristics.” Jacobs *et al* restricts *sex* to “biological phenotypes,” and applies *sexuality* to desire and “the range of behaviors called ‘homosexuality,’ ‘heterosexuality,’ ‘bisexuality,’ ‘trisexuality,’ and the like” (“Introduction” 1-2). Despite this generally accepted definition of the term “gender,” Teresa de Lauretis has argued in her article “The Technology of Gender” that performances of gender also occur within what Gayle Rubin called the sex-gender system, a socio-cultural context which presupposes the integral interrelation of gender and sex (721). While this interrelation itself is unquestionable, it does not affect the gender theorists’ central contention, which is that the West’s interpretation of the sex-gender system has been governed by what Janice Raymond has called “hetero-reality” and Moya Lloyd has described as

an ideology- or set of discursive practices- that has been instrumental in constructing a phantasmatic, but severely regulated, notion of compulsory heterosexuality. The discursive constitution of heterosexuality articulates a specific relationship between sex, gender and desire where gender follows from sex, and desire follows from gender. (197-198)

Applied to Native American historical situations, the ideology of “hetero-reality” meant the imposition of European ideologically constituted gender roles which were also linked inextricably to a nuclear family structure. The Euro/American “hetero-reality,” which stipulates that biological sex determines heterosexual roles as socially structured in marriage and the nuclear family, historically disrupted traditional Native kinship structures (moieties, clans, etc.), tribal conventions regulating the commitment to or dissolution of partnership arrangements (“marriage”), and the care-taking and educational roles of extended family/clan/moiety members other than the mother and father (Etienne and Leacock, (eds.)). In addition, pre-contact tribal familial structures were misrepresented by the patriarchal bias of early missionaries and explorers who described “matrilineal” tribes as patriarchal, and who did not realize that “patrilineal” tribes were not necessarily “patriarchal” in the way Europeans understood their own patriarchy (Miller, “Families”). Similarly, anthropologists from the turn-of-the-twentieth century to as late as the 1970s maintained that dominant male and subordinate female gender roles could be observed in tribal peoples throughout the world and that this reflected a “natural” ordering of sex-determined roles (Mathes; Kidwell, “The Power”; Etienne and Leacock (eds.), 1-5).

This historic imposition of European sex-gender norms and the subsequent biases instrumental in the misrepresentation of Native societies are indicative of a “hetero-reality” distinctly connected to a colonizing “Euro-reality.” This “Euro-reality” ideologically links the hetero-structuring of genders to Christianity and to the Euro-normative discourses of

humanism and “whiteness.” Christianity’s emphasis on marriage as a sanctified and morally “right” union of hetero-desiring males and females found its parallel in scientific theories of “natural” and “unnatural” biological sexual behaviors and their corresponding societal gender expressions of normalcy or aberration. This matrix can be seen as the West’s matrix of performativity, each thread of which - be it Christianity, “whiteness,” institutionalized sex-gender systems - implies an entire chain of signification which is coupled, for most Native and postcolonial theorists, to colonization and enforced assimilation into systems of Euro-normalcy. Therefore, while both Linda Martín Alcoff and Butler warn against a simplistic linking of race and gender, both argue that this linking has pervaded and still pervades strategies of societal self-regulation meant to maintain the dominance of Euro-“white”-Christian- heterosexual role-structuring as normative (Alcoff, *Visible* 164-165; Butler, *Bodies* 112,168).

Native non-heterosexual gender identification: Two-spirits

Native scholars have underscored the direct relationship between the imposition of the Euro-American sex-gender system and ideology of hetero-reality during colonization and the source of domestic violence in contemporary Native America. Patrice Hollrah relates Rebecca Tsosie’s (Pascua Yaqui) conviction that “the modern conflict between genders, for many Indian groups, has largely resulted from patterns learned from white colonial authorities whose policies destroyed traditional egalitarian systems among Indian people” (Hollrah 25-26). In relation to Native non-heterosexuals, Qwo-Li Driskill (Cherokee/Osage) similarly identifies the source of homophobia in tribal communities, remarking that “...sexual assault, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia are entangled with the history of colonization” (“Stolen”). Likewise, Sabine Lang has indicated that “Because of the influence of white ideas and Christianity, gender variance and homosexuality have come to be seen as identical by many Native Americans themselves, and both phenomena are consequently met with strong disapproval” (109). In addition, while pre-contact tribal societies most likely had, due to the nature of subsistence-level survival, social and cultural mechanisms to incorporate potentially non-normative elements into the mutual support structures of communal life, Native sociologist Bea Medicine has pointed out that Christianization and the “wholesale denigration of native belief systems” have erased the structures by which “individuals with this sexual inclination could manifest actualization” (qtd. in Lang 108).

While Second and Third Wave feminism enabled Native American women to explore the ramifications of colonization and gender-oppression in their lives, the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement which emerged during the late 1960s and early 1970s opened up avenues for lesbian and gay Native Americans to understand themselves as a group and to explore their place in contemporary tribal society. In 1975, Gay American Indians (GAI) was founded by Randy Burns (Paiute) and Barbara Cameron (Lakota) in San Francisco. Beginning as a social support group, it quickly became an organization dedicated to the concerns of gay Native Americans. During the 1980s and 1990s several academic studies were published which scrutinized the Euro-American body of scholarship concerning non-heterosexual tribal members in pre-20th century tribal society, labeled “berdaches” by anthropologists, and also documented through interviews and personal essays the experiences and views of contemporary Native American gays and lesbians, self designated as “two-spirits,” with regard to their place in contemporary tribal and Euro-American society (Walter L. Williams; Will Roscoe (ed); Jacobs et al (ed)).

The term “two-spirit” was adopted as a term of self-identification in 1990 during the third Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg, Canada. This

term was introduced in part to counter the assignation in anthropological literature of the term *berdache* to Native non-heterosexuals. The term *berdache* originally derives from an Arabic word meaning “sex slave boy” and is seen as derogatory by non-heterosexual Native Americans today. It was used by early French explorers in the America when confronted with examples of what they understood as homosexuality among the Natives they encountered. The term was adopted by early anthropologist and widely applied until the mid-20th century to refer to male-bodied tribal individuals who chose to participate in traditionally female roles (Medicine, “Berdache” 67). The re-valuation of this sexuality and gender role as traditionally significant instead of aberrant was sparked by Walter L. Williams’s seminal study *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (1986), and subsequent studies have continued to explore the traditional ritual and gender responsibilities of non-heterosexuals in various tribal societies. These studies indicate that contemporary Native non-heterosexuals are beginning to identify with these traditional roles, albeit reservedly. While some contemporary tribal non-heterosexuals have chosen to self-identify using traditional terms such as *winkte* (Sioux), *kwidó* (Tewa), and *nádleeh* (Navajo), Jacobs *et al* indicate that

as these historic tribal gender roles often had specific traditional responsibilities and referred only to men who adopt women’s roles, many non-heterosexual Native Americans feel it is inappropriate to refer to themselves as such. (“Introduction” 10)

The term two-spirit (or two-spirited) was adopted to encourage both a pan-tribal category of self-identification and to indicate the ambition to (re)create a culturally meaningful place in a more accepting tribal community. Despite the on-going homophobia in tribal communities, explored by Brian Joseph Gilley in his work *Becoming Two-Spirit: Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country* (2006), community acceptance and integration is a core ambition of two-spirits. As Sabine Lang emphasizes,

Whereas white gay and lesbian activists often feel alienated from white society and its homophobia, two-spirit activists will usually not reject Native American cultures, even though such cultures may manifest homophobia just as intensely as does white society. By tracing their ancestry to the traditional two-spirit roles and pointing out the significance of those roles in Native American cultures, two-spirit people try to reconcile themselves with their respective communities and create a role for themselves within those communities instead of withdrawing from them. Instead of seeing themselves as sexual renegades fighting back at a society that does not accept them, two-spirit people tend to emphasize their Indian/Native American identity and the special potential and skills they as lesbians and gays can contribute for the benefit of the community at large. (115)

This can be seen as the agenda of the novels by Paula Gunn Allen and Craig Womack which will be discussed below. These novels portray the desire of the main characters not to create a gay community but to re-position and anchor the Native two-spirit role in the greater tribal society, to create a sex-gender identity which coheres with their Native identity.

While these two novels span a significant period of political awareness of gay issues (the 1980s) and queer theory (the 1990s), the two-spirit experience has been sparsely represented in Native fiction. Greg Sarris in *Watermelon Nights* (1998) exposes his protagonist to homophobic violence as the young male, after discovering his latent homosexuality, is consequently subjected to peer humiliation and violence. Sarris, however, does not deal with this incident thematically, leaving this violence decontextualized and Native gay identity issues unexplored. Irvin Morris (Navajo) prefaces his novel *From the Glittering World* (1997) with a telling of the Navajo creation myth including a story in which two-spirits help the tribe survive. While, as in Sarris’s novel, the non-heterosexuality in this myth is not thematically explored in Morris’s novel, the prominent inclusion of the story as an integral part of a foundational cultural myth implies an affirmation of contemporary two-spirits as meaningful members of Native communal and cultural life. Beth Brant (Mohawk) has added a lesbian erotic tale to the cycle of trickster adventures in her short story “Coyote

Learns a New Trick” as she “uses coyote to teach that lesbianism is a normal way of being” (van Dyke 155). Maurice Kenny’s (Mohawk) short story “Hammer,” in his collection of short stories *Tortured Skins and Other Fictions* (2000), explores the emotions of a Native university professor who attempts to suppress his erotic feelings for a young male student. Sherman Alexie’s (Spokane/Coeur d’Alene) short story “The Toughest Indian in the World” in the collection of short stories by the same name (2000), following traditional mythic abduction stories in which “illicit” sexual relations results in a beneficial transfer of power, narrates the story of a young Native man whose faith in life is rejuvenated after he picks up an older Native male hitchhiker and they sleep together.

While these writers have attempted to reflect contemporary Native gay situations and to re-value two-spirit sexuality and gender roles, certain Native writers have incorporated non-normative gender into their works in such a way as to create a potential context for undermining homophobia and hetero-normalcy. Louis Owens and Louis Erdrich, drawing on postmodern literary perspectives and techniques, have included gender mixing and blurring, as well as transvestitism in their novels in an attempt to liberate their characters from normative gender performativity. However, in each instance, non-normative gender performances arguably ultimately affirm hetero-normativity. Louis Owen in *Bone Game* (1994), the Native character Alex Yazzie appears throughout the novel in various transvestite modes of dress and, being identified as a trickster figure in the novel, his role as performer of sex-gender non-normativity seems clear. However, Owen has Alex sleep with a female character, thus making him a “safe” cross-dresser whose heterosexual appeal negates any implied homo- or trans-sexuality. While Owen may have effectively used the performance of non-normative gender as postmodern “play,” he has ultimately reaffirmed hetero-normativity. Erdrich in *Report on the Miracle at Little Horse* (2002) similarly uses gender blurring as a narrative “game” as we learn that a character who in previous novels was the “male” priest Father Damien is now revealed to have been a woman (Agnes) disguised as a man. Classically, when a fellow priest falls in love with Father Damien, the potential homo-erotic evaporates as Agnes reveals herself and the heterosexual reasserts itself.

While these two authors illustrate the diffusing of the disruptive potential of gender non-normativity as heterosexual “play,” more disturbing are the instances of a negative portrayal of homosexuals and homosexuality in certain Native novels. In Erdrich’s non-Native-focused novel *Beet Queen* (1986), the loveless first homosexual experience of the young Karl Adare leaves him bitter, and his bisexual character development is linked by Erdrich to the development of the demonic dimension of his character. Another character, Wallace Pfef, re-directs his unrequited love for Karl into the de-sexualized gender role of “parent” to Karl’s daughter. One might argue that here homosexuality is simply used as a “character trait” to signify character and gender dysfunctionality. Leslie M. Silko, in *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), seems to strive for a Burroughs-like effect in which sadistic male homosexuality is used to symbolize a cannibalistic addiction to narcissism (St. Clair, “Cannibal Queers”). However, while it can be argued that Burroughs achieves a symbolism the social significance of which goes beyond homosexuality as such, the question remains whether Silko’s novel, like Erdrich’s *Beet Queen*, manages to achieve more than a stereotypical association of homosexuality with degeneration. The most overtly hostile anti-homosexual literary act is a scene in James Welch’s *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* (2000) in which the Native protagonist graphically slits the throat of a white and “predatory” gay man.

These instances of the incorporation of non-normative genders and homosexuality into contemporary Native fiction, from recuperated gender valuation to images of murderous homophobia, illustrate the problematic of Native sex-gender signification and the volatile socio-cultural contexts which Native gay authors and Native gay readers must navigate. Craig Womack, in his literary critical work *Red on Red*, asks a fundamental question in this regard:

“...what happens to the Indian gay guy writing today? [...]What’s the future for Indian gay and lesbian readers wanting to read something honest about the[m]selves?” (309).

Identity continuums

Tara Prince-Hughes remarks that the “idea of identity coherence is particularly pressing for gay Native American writers, for their work reflects the complications not only of ethnicity and mixed heritage but of gender and sexuality as well” (9). The task of contemporary Native gay writers is made more complex by the fact that they are now writing at a time when Queer theorists are emphasizing the instability of gender as an identity (Jagose, 131). While (Lesbian) Feminist, Gender, and Queer theorists struggle to accommodate or to deny the “meshings of racial and sexual identities” (Jagose 62), Native writers have indicated that these critical movements have provided the raw theoretical material and analytical techniques to explore their current gender identities and situations as a “mesh” of imposed Euro-American “performativities,” colonized Native “performances,” and fugitive Native performativities. In this analysis, Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity will be used to address the processes involved in the creation of Native non-heterosexual gender identities, processes specifically associated with the performative nature of the oral tradition. In addition, two interlinking theories will be relevant for this analysis of both the tribal community disrupted by homophobic violence and for the individual’s gender identity within those communities: Eve Sedgwick’s “homosocial” and Adrienne Rich’s “lesbian continuum.”

In her seminal essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (1980), Rich coins the term “lesbian continuum” to indicate a spectrum of “primary intensity between women” ranging from “the sharing of a rich inner life” to “the giving and receiving of practical and political support” to “genital sexual experience” (26). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in the introduction to *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), describes a similar concept but employs the social science term “homosocial,” stating that it refers to the “social bonds between persons of the same sex” (1-2). Sedgwick’s “homosocial continuum” for women resembles Rich’s “lesbian continuum”:

an intelligible continuum of aims, emotions, and valuations links lesbianism with the other forms of women’s attention to women: [...] the continuum between “women loving women” and “women promoting the interest of women,” extending over the erotic, social, familial, economic, and political realms. (Sedgwick 2-3)

Sedgwick scrutinizes these female and male continuums further, focusing on the point in these continuums where the *homosocial* becomes the *homosexual*. Sedgwick argues that the *homosexual* in the continuum for women is perceived as a potentially logical outcome, whether culturally sanctioned or not, of female social bonding. However, for men this is quite the opposite, as “male bonding” in Western society is “characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality.” In other words, male bonding would seem to be predicated on homophobia. She concludes, therefore, that for men, the homosocial/sexual continuum is “radically disrupted” (1-2).

These two continuums will provide the context for Native two-spirit identities in the novels. One continuum addresses the range of bonding interaction between same-sex women and will be referred to in the analysis of Allen’s novel as the “lesbian continuum.” In Womack’s male-centered novel, this range of bonding interaction between men will be termed the “homo-sexual continuum.” Sedgwick’s term “homosocial” will be given an expanded significance and will refer to the degree of cohesion and unity of the greater tribal community in relation to the forces that create internal antagonism and rupture. Both novels target homophobia as the force which fractures the Native American homosocial, causing Native-to-Native violence and preventing two-spirits from being part of this “ethnic

continuum” understood as Native American identity. In each novel, a respect for Native two-spirit continuums will implicitly strengthen the Native American community against the detrimental effects of Euro-American sex-gender hetero-normativity. In the novels to be discussed, the “healing” of the Native community divided by homophobia will involve both the healing of the Native lesbian/homo-sexual continuum in *individuals* (fractured and closeted by Euro-America’s compulsory heterosexuality) and the reinvestment of non-heterosexual genders (devalued by Christianity) with tribal *communal cultural* significance. This process of gender re-signification in relation to these individual and community continuums will be discussed using Judith Butler’s paradigms of performance and performativity as these paradigms apply to the oral tradition, that is, the “meaning producing” system seen by Native American writers and scholars as foundational to Native epistemologies.

Performance and performativity

In her well-known studies *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Judith Butler has developed a conceptualization of “performativity” and “performance” which she applies as a theoretical paradigm in her analyses of gendered identities. Butler proposes that “gender” is an ineluctable enactment (performance) of a range of consensual and normative expectations of what gender should and should not be (performativity). She insists that “performativity” is not the source of *a priori* signification which a bounded (gender) performance attempts to iterate, although it achieves its normative force by being perceived as such by society. Similarly, Butler explains that a performance, although it aspires to normativity, can never truly iterate the perceived performative prescriptions of gender (Lloyd 197). According to Butler, performativity and performance interrelate as a *process* she calls “sedimentation,” a term borrowed from sociology and first hypothesized by Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz (Geertz 26). During the 1960s, the sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann developed this concept to theorize the production of meaning in societies, positing that “human experiences congeal in recollection as sediment. This sediment becomes “social” when objectivated in a sign system, that is, when the reiterated objectification of shared experience becomes possible” (Geertz 26). This concept of sedimentation is applied by Butler to the concept of gender as she suggests that iterated “gestures” and “articulations” occur within a societal context which encourages social cohesion and “shared experience” (Butler, “Performative” 252). The range of such acts which support and aid this aspiration towards cohesion produces an *a priori-like* “critical mass” which is then perceived as normative. This normativity is not stable, based as it is on a *social* process of sedimentation, but it achieves a likeness of stability through the regulating process of communal consensus and sanctioning. This becomes Butler’s “performativity,” a normative imperative that governs bounded individual gender performances.

It is this process of sedimentation and the *performative* nature of the normative imperative which will be the crux of the present analysis of Native American gender performances in relation to gender performativity in both Euro-American and Native society. However, despite the fact that Butler’s *paradigmatic* discussion of performance and performativity will prove useful in discussing Native gender identity as an enactment of communal discourses and negotiated aspirations to communal integration, her *universalization* of the characteristics of the nature and workings of performativity and performance will be signaled in the novels as a universalized Western (i.e. Euro-American)

discourse and will be challenged and countered in the novels by characterizations of the nature and workings of a “Native performativity” in tribal oral traditions.

Sedimentation

The divergent socio-cultural import of performance and performativity in Native and Euro-American society can be discussed as distinctive modes triggered by the unstable nature of the process of signification termed “sedimentation.” The sedimentation process, according to Berger and Luckman, provides society with what they call “aggregates” of meanings which, while significant within contemporary societal contexts, do not necessarily reference an “original” signifiatory cognate.

Since the actual origin of the sedimentations has become unimportant, the tradition might invent quite a different origin without thereby threatening what has been objectivated. In other words, legitimations can succeed each other, from time to time bestowing new meanings on the sedimented experiences of the collectivity in question. The past history of the society can be reinterpreted without necessarily upsetting the institutional order as a result. (qtd. in Geertz 26)

This indicates that the sedimentation process does not produce performative cultural bedrock but shifting dunes of performed social meaning perceived as cultural continuity. Due to this inflective and retroactive interpretability of sedimentation, Armin Geertz argues that “it is especially in the realm of the definition, transmission, and maintenance of social meaning that control and legitimization procedures become paramount” (26).

In the novels to be discussed, the unstable nature of sedimentation as a process of signification has triggered two distinct “procedures” of “control and legitimization” with respect to the maintenance of cultural continuity: on the one hand, the West’s policing of a dominant normativity as Butler theorizes it, and on the other, a positive valuation of adaptation and innovation within tribal socio-cultural discourses of normativity. Butler has claimed that the maintenance of social meaning in relation to gender in the traditions of Western culture has resulted in a *punitive* performativity, a “set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time” which are “discursively constructed through exclusion, taboo and abjection” (qtd. in Salih 61, 62). Non-normative performances are occluded, often violently, from normative performativity. In addition, because Butler’s work reflects the poststructuralist’s reluctance to accord an individual agency and efficacy within the system in which it is implicated, her theory implicitly invests performativity with a hegemonic meaning-maintenance and a change-resistant nature, with each individual performance’s potential subversiveness either occluded or assimilated as marginalized Other (McNay 187; Salih 67).

The Native texts in question relate this oppressive dimension of performativity *specifically* to Euro-American society, its distinctive “sedimentation” the result of “performances” of Euro-Christian discourse in tandem with colonialism as “complex and convergent chains in which ‘effects’ are vectors of power” (Butler, *Bodies* 187). Native gender, performed within the context of Euro-American performativity, will be shown to suffer censure when not in accordance with Western normativity. Tribal performativity, on the other hand, as engendered in the oral tradition will be seen to be characterized as change-oriented, the performance-as-interpretation invested with the primary meaning-producing function, and the “agency” of the performer acknowledged as effectually “innovative” in the service of cultural continuity.

The oral tradition as a performative tradition

That the oral tradition has been seen as a central meaning-producing mechanism in tribal cultures is due to its comprehensive range of foundational functions in tribal society. Angela Cavendar Wilson has pointed out its instructive function in imparting cultural-specific “moral guidelines” of “right action” to other community members and in relation “to the rest of the natural world” (111). Elaine Jahner has indicated its epistemological significance, saying that “oral forms reflect particular ways of knowing, that they are epistemological realities” (“A Critical” 223), and Leslie Marmon Silko has emphasized its ontological force.

I don't just mean sitting down and telling a once-upon-a-time kind of story. I mean a whole way of seeing yourself, the people around you, your life, the place of your life in the bigger context, not just in terms of nature and location, but in terms of what has gone on before, what's happened to other people. So it's a whole way of being. (Barnes interview 71)

Armin Geertz emphasizes that tribal mythic narratives serve as “a *model for social praxis*” (368) in that it is “*narrated tradition* which codifies, coordinates, and sometimes systematizes interpretive frameworks and categories in terms of stories ...” [emphasis added] (2). Paula Gunn Allen accords the mythic narratives of the oral tradition the social function of “culture,” within which all the above mentioned elements are synthesized.

In a sense, one might say that myth is culture; it is the roots of the people, their coherence, their significance, and their map for living. Ceremonial literatures of the tribes provide each with self-definitions and social definitions of the most fundamental sort, giving the person's relationship to being in its various forms. Myth is perhaps central to a person's and a people's sense of reality. It helps one know who one is, why one is, and what one is to express in one's life. Myth is, in literary terms, the controlling metaphor, from which all meanings are derived, all perception and sensation are ordered, all relationships are defined, and all experience is assimilated and understood. (“Teaching” 136)

This macro-sociological significance of the oral tradition is mirrored on the micro-level of the individual in the remark of a Tlingit elder, Angela Sidney, interviewed by Julie Cruikshank, who appraised her long life by saying, “Well, I've tried to live my life right, just like a story” (*Life* 1).

The myths and story-cycles which compose the oral tradition are widely accepted as providing the symbolic contexts and epistemological framework for Native societal normativity. While much has been written concerning the *content* of tribal myths and stories as illustrative of socio-cultural practices, kinship structures, and taboo conventions, more recently Native writers and scholars, as well as several Euro-American anthropologists, have taken pains to underscore and analyze the performative nature of the meaning-making *performative process* of the oral tradition, which has received less attention (Kroeber, “An Introduction” 17-18; Pulitano, *Toward* 25). Euro-American anthropologists such as Dell Hymes, Dennis Tedlock, and Karl Kroeber have insisted on prioritizing performance aspects of the story-telling moment itself, exploring in their analyses how these elements are involved in and influence the significance of the narrative for the audience. Dell Hymes has developed a system of verse-like line patterning to indicate speech rhythms which in turn influence, he feels, the significance of certain narrative elements. Tedlock has developed a graphic system (e.g. capital letters, small letter type, white space on the page, extreme indentation) to attempt to reproduce the aural nature of the story-telling moment, insisting that extra-linguistic performative elements cannot be separated from the narrative event. While these scholars have discussed in great detail the specific *elements* which make the narrative specifically “oral” or “aural,” Larry Evers has described the significance of oral narrative in terms which seem to parallel Butler's paradigm of performative signification.

Oral literature is a living reality whose whole existence, like that of a piece of music, exists in the performance, and, like music, this literature exists within a *tradition* of performance. Unlike the composed score for a musical

piece, however, and despite the deception of the printed text, no definitive text exists for a given piece, so that oral literature derives its form from its tradition of performances. (“Teaching” 33)

In this passage, a close parallel can be drawn between Butler’s concept of iterated performances having no formalized “original” template and Evers’s description of oral narratives as being without a “definitive” version. In both cases the socio-cultural significance of the performance relies on the process of “sedimentation” which results in a genealogy of iterations understood by Butler as “performativity” and discussed as “tradition” by anthropologists and sociologists. As indicated above, a key difference between Butler’s performativity and tribal performativity (i.e. “tradition”) is the latter’s characterization by Native writers as change-oriented.

Tradition as change-oriented performativity

The evolution of theories regarding the concept of “tradition” in anthropology and sociology has been cogently sketched by Armin Geertz in his study of the Hopi tradition of oral prophecy, *The Invention of Prophecy* (1992). Geertz outlines the development of theories regarding the nature and role of tradition in promoting societal and cultural continuity, from concepts which assigned a change-resistant, “self equilibrating” role to symbolic and iterated rituals and customs, to contemporary theories which portray traditions as socio-cultural “tension-management” strategies that function to negotiate the practicalities of situational change while maintaining cultural continuity (164). Geertz argues that “tradition,” despite its reliance on a rhetoric of unchangeability, “must have some degree of flexibility which in turn at least provides, if not encourages, innovation” (164) in order to ensure an enduring socio-cultural system.

As has been discussed in the chapter on Christianity, many Native writers such as Craig Womack champion definitions of “tradition” and “traditionalism” which prioritize a change-oriented paradigm as essential to cultural continuity.

I wish to posit an alternative definition of traditionalism as anything that is useful to Indian people in retaining their values and worldviews, no matter how much it deviates from what people did one or two hundred years ago... Only cultures that are able to adapt to change remain living cultures; otherwise they become no longer relevant and are abandoned. (*Red on Red* 42)

Many observers have also underscored the relevance of the above mentioned paradigm of “tradition as change” with regard to Native oral narratives as performed tradition. Elaine Jahner states that “oral literature maintains its continuity even though it exists only in forms that accept, absorb, and organically transform new influences, ” (“A Critical Approach” 213) and Larry Evers, applying the often used metaphor of “living” to describe the adaptability of the oral tradition, insists that the oral tradition is “alive and well, moving and changing” (“Teaching” 37).

The performativity embodied by the oral tradition can thus be seen as, as Geertz terms it, *inflective*, “to be understood as meaning changeable, malleable, and absorbing new details and interpretations,” in “a living ongoing process” (12). While this inflectivity is arguably inherent in Butler’s discussion of sedimentation and performativity, it is a quality repressively managed in Western systems of performed normativity. The performativity that is part of the oral tradition, on the other hand, can be seen to be constantly open to inflectivity in that at each performed iteration, i.e. each (re)telling of a story, is a hermeneutic event involving the teller and the audience, tradition and contemporary situations.

The performance and inflective performativity: storytelling as hermeneutic event, and the re-conception of “tradition”

The storytelling moment as “hermeneutic event” has been discussed by Native creative writers and scholars who have emphasized the symbiotic process of meaning-making which occurs between teller and listener during the moment of the oral performance.

Within American Indian traditions of oral storytelling, there is a power that actually transforms the listener through her or his engagement with the story. In fact, within the oral storytelling practice, the listener is an active participant whose presence is necessary to the telling-creation of the story. The storyteller and listener interact throughout the process in a conversation that reflects the inherent interrelationality of storytelling. (de Ramirez 6)

Native writers and scholars of Native oral literature have claimed that the performed story becomes meaningful in this context because storytellers will incorporate aspects of contemporary experience familiar to the listeners into the telling of the traditional story in order to indicate how contemporary situations can be understood within the framework of traditional tribal epistemological systems (Holford 110; Womack, *Red* 16; Kroeber, “Technology” 27). Geertz refers to this as “the creative interaction between paradigm and agent, where the agent continuously reworks pieces of the cultural repertoire in order to construct, adjust, and reconstruct interpretations of experience”(26). Elvira Pulitano has called this process “performed epistemology” (*Toward* 32-33), and Dennis Tedlock explains that

The teller is not merely repeating memorized words, nor is he or she merely giving a dramatic “oral interpretation” or “concert reading” of a fixed script. We are in the presence of a *performing art* [...] but we are getting the *criticism* at the same time and from the same person. The interpreter does not merely play the parts but is the narrator and commentator as well. What we are hearing is the *hermeneutics* of the text ... (“The Spoken” 70).

Hermeneutics, with respect to orally narrated story/myth, is not to be understood within the Western context of the history of textual interpretation, but as the interpretive performance of a story/myth made meaningful to the audience through the storyteller’s integration of two overlapping contexts: contemporary events/situations and “tradition.” More precisely, Geertz describes the interpretive function of the performance of oral narratives as “...an indigenous hermeneutical process in which contemporary affairs are evaluated in relation to *conceived* tradition” (emphasis added, 221).

Key to understanding tribal performativity as inflective and performance-focused is Geertz’s phrase “conceived tradition” and its similarity to the above discussion of sedimentation and performativity as “conceived.” According to Geertz, the hermeneutical characteristic of an oral narrative involves a simultaneous performance of “tradition” and an interpretation that serves to make it more applicable to contemporary situations. This moment of inflectivity and interpretation is possible, as Berger and Luckman argue, because of the nature of “sedimentation” which allows new meaning to be bestowed retroactively on “sedimented” experience (Geertz 26). While, as LaVonne Ruoff suggests, “the degree to which improvisation is permissible may vary from one form of [oral] literature to another within the tribe” (*American* 12), many Native creative writers, as illustrated above, emphasize the innovative agency of the teller to perform tradition reconceived; as Gerald Vizenor has remarked, “every act of a storier was visionary and unique, never the same. There was no liturgy” (interview Harmsen-Peraino 2). Therefore, each performed story has the potential, to a greater or lesser degree, to re-perceive the sedimentation process and re-conceive tradition.

In the novels which will be analyzed here, both Allen and Womack will have their protagonists perform narratives from the oral tradition so as to emphasize the cultural

significance of two-spirit gender. The performances will be seen to attempt to re-constitute contemporary Native gender continuums fractured by the West's hetero-normative strictures. Concurrently, the performed narratives will be shown to imply a "de-colonization" and re-sedimentation of Native gender performativity, re-conceiving Native traditions as free of the West's sex-gender system and its accompanying homophobia, thereby preparing the ground for a future unified Native homo-social inclusive of non-heterosexual gender identities.

***The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* (1983) by Paula Gunn Allen**

The Woman Who Owned the Shadows (1983) by Paula Gunn Allen, who is a member of the Laguna Pueblo, is arguably one of the first novels exploring the experiences of a lesbian woman of color (Zimmerman, *A Safe* 179). While the novel can be profitably analyzed from a lesbian feminist perspective as Bonnie Zimmerman has done in her *The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction 1969-1989*, some critics have attempted to identify in the novel a "two-spirit" experience distinct from a lesbian experience (Prince-Hughes). Allen has described her own writings and literary critical approach as "tribal-feminism," stating that "if I am dealing with feminism, I approach it from a strongly tribal posture, and when I am dealing with American Indian literature, history, culture, or philosophy, I approach it from a strongly feminist one" (qtd. in Hanson 130). In her collection of essays *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986), Allen introduces and develops her central tribal-feminist premise that tribal life was traditionally "gynocratic" in nature (Hanson 129). Allen describes gynocracies as "woman-centered tribal societies in which [...] matrilinearity, maternal control of household goods and resources, and female deities of the magnitude of the Christian God were and are present and active features of traditional tribal life" (*Sacred* 3-4).

While Allen's literary critical work has been recognized for its scholarly attention to tribal traditions in the texts it addresses, her gynocratic vision of tribal society and culture has been criticized for its subjectivity and lack of documentation in relation to pre-contact culture. Allen's work has been received as a controversial mix of well-documented instances of matriarchal tribal societies (such as the Iroquois) and her own intuited descriptions of pre-contact "gynocratic" tribal cultures (Hollrah 24, Hanson 129-130). In her "recovering" of the "feminine" in tribal traditions, she associates certain pan-Indian eco-spiritual ideas with the category "women-focused traditions and world-views" and injects certain family-oriented lesbian feminist ideals into the traditional tribal context (Zimmerman, *A Safe* 144-145).

Some distinguishing features of a woman-centered social system include free and easy sexuality and wide latitude in personal style. This latitude means that a diversity of people, including gay males and lesbians, are not denied and are in fact likely to be accorded honor. Also likely to be prominent in such systems are nurturing, pacifist...males... and self-defining, assertive, decisive women.... One of the major distinguishing characteristics of gynocratic cultures is the absence of punitiveness as a means of social control. Another is the inevitable presence of meaningful concourse with supernatural beings. Among gynocratic or gynocentric tribal peoples the welfare of the young is paramount, the complementary nature of all life forms is stressed, and the centrality of powerful women to social well-being is unquestioned. (Allen, *Sacred* 2-3)

In the absence of much verifiable evidence about pre-contact tribal culture and social structures, Allen's work can be seen as a significant "*justification* of a gynocratic, lesbian experience within the context of Native American cultures" (emphasis added, Hanson 129). Allen's first novel reflects both her tribal feminist perspective and her gynocratic, recuperative purpose. This analysis will explore how Allen's protagonist, Ephanie, attempts to understand her two-spirit gender performance in relation to a complex of Euro-American normative gender expectations. It will be shown how the performative nature of the oral tradition will enable her to re-signify her gender performance "out" of the West's compulsory

heterosexuality and “into” a “recovered” tribal gynocratic performativity and an envisioned gynocratic Native homosocial.

Performance as “interpretation”: the ramification of inflectivity

The story follows the psycho-emotional life of a Native mixedblood woman, Ephanie Atencio, who is suffering from severe depression. While her thoughts are presented as disoriented stream-of-consciousness, the narration leads the reader through her struggles to cope with the demands of a lover, then a husband, the death of a child, divorce, and an attempted suicide. Her struggles involve the search for community acceptance, in both white and Native societies, as well as her attempt to remember her personal past to find the source of her depression. Throughout the narrative, Native myths from the oral tradition are related, both as remembered stories by Ephanie, and also in the form of an extradiegetic framing structure to the novel. Ultimately, Ephanie will gain insight into her predicament as she discovers the source of her depression in the rejection of her lesbian nature during her youth. She will only be able to heal psychically, however, when she is able to interpret her gendered life in terms of Native traditions as expressed in Native myth.

Ephanie’s acts of interpretation correspond, as discussed in the introductory section, to the performative hermeneutics of the oral tradition in which each telling of a narrative offers the audience a signification of current affairs and situations within the context of conceived tradition. In the novel, Ephanie’s repetition of a certain Native myth reflects her interpretation of her present circumstances and condition, forming the performative framework from which she judges her past actions and subsequently adjusts her immediate gender performances. However, while this interpretive, inflective performance-oriented nature of the oral tradition has been characterized as essential to tribal cultural continuity as adaptability, Allen has pinpointed a problematic aspect of this performative process of signification within the oral tradition, which Ephanie wrestles with. Allen has claimed that this also allows the oral tradition to mirror prevailing hegemonic interpretive frameworks.

The oral tradition is a living body. It is in continuous flux, which enables it to accommodate itself to the real circumstances of a people’s lives. That is its strength, but it is also its weakness, for when a people finds itself living within a racist, classist, and sexist reality, the oral tradition will reflect those values and will thus shape the people’s consciousness to include and accept racism, classism, and sexism, and they will incorporate that change, hardly noticing the shift. (*Sacred* 224)

Greg Sarris corroborates Allen’s claims (*Keeping* 4-5), arguing that on the primary performative level - the moment when the teller and listener are engaged in the narrative event - the hermeneutical interplay of cultural context and current experience may for both teller and listener obscure the epistemological contexts of the story’s culture of origin. Describing the variety of responses of non-Natives to the storytelling of the well-known Pomo basket-weaver Mabel Kay, Sarris tells us that these responses do not simply reveal a multiplicity of narrative “meanings”/interpretations, but also reveal “the ways the interlocutor may be framing [Mabel’s] world, which [...] exposes the chasms between two interpretive worlds” (*Keeping* 23).

Allen has illustrated this interplay between different interpretive frameworks and the oral tradition in her essay “Kochinnenako in Academe: Three Approaches to Interpreting a Keres Indian Tale” (*Sacred* 222-243) in which she attempts to illustrate how “different modes of perception [...] impact on our understanding of cultural artifacts” (226). In this essay Allen performs a three-fold analysis of a Keres (Laguna Pueblo) myth, using what she calls a modern feminist approach, a tribal approach, and a tribal-feminist approach, to indicate how this myth can be seen to perform different normative gender performativities depending on

which interpretive framework is applied. Her feminist reading reveals a narrative in which tribal women are subjected to societal structures which hierarchically favor men. Her tribal reading, on the other hand, indicates that women were and are accorded specific and respected traditional roles in tribal society. Her final interpretation, the tribal-feminist reading, emphasizes the centrality of women's power in tribal society as the primary message of the myth.

Allen's exercise illustrates that such interpretive frameworks presuppose cultural paradigms with regard to gender performance and perceived tribal performativity. Her exercise also illustrates that sedimentation as described by Geertz is not actually a cumulative and linear process, but a process of retrospective re-signification in which contemporary hegemonic performances of culture/gender can cause a re-interpretation of perceived performativity regardless of actual historical iterated tradition and custom. Allen suggests the negative effects this process has had on tribal culture as she remarks that

When the patriarchal paradigm that characterizes western thinking is applied to gynocentric tribal modes, it transforms the ideas, significances, and raw data into something that is not only unrecognizable to the tribes but entirely incongruent with their philosophies and theories. (*Sacred* 223)

In *Shadows*, Ephanie's situation reflects the processes of narrative (re)interpretation and retrospective re-signification of performativity described above. In the novel, Ephanie's interpretation of certain Native myths are mirrored in her performance of her gender identity, both myth and gender performance reflecting the hegemonic "mode of perception" (i.e. performativity) Ephanie is wrestling with: Euro-gender expectancies linked to Christianity and the negative influence of this performativity on Native gender continuums and the Native homosocial. Only when she is able to re-interpret the Native myth in accordance with Allen's "gynocentric tribal mode" will she simultaneously re-signify tribal performativity, freeing it from the West's imposed paradigm, and positively re-evaluate her own gender performance.

The myths in Shadows: extradiegetic and diegetic

Allen uses Native myths in two narrative structural forms: the diegetic Sky Woman myth which Ephanie ponders in relation to her life, and extradiegetic framing myths which do not enter Ephanie's realm of consciousness. These extradiegetic framing myths relate the creation of the cosmos by the female creator Spider Woman and the creation of the earth and people by Spider Woman's sister/daughters Uretsete (later to be called Iyatiku) and Naotsete. The function of these extradiegetic framing myths is to impart to the reader/listener certain information which is not available to the characters of the novel's diegetic world. Greg Sarris, summarizing Richard Bauman's narrative theories, suggests that "the frame is in this sense metacommunicative; the speaker's use of a special code, perhaps the attribution of an anarchism or special formula (e.g., "Once upon a time"), keys the nature of the event or performance (genre) and how the interlocutor is to respond" (*Keeping* 18-19). Barbara Babcock, concurring with Bauman, argues that the framing device in oral narratives sets up "an interpretative frame which tells us this [...] is a performance, or more specifically, this is such and such a type of story and should be understood and judged accordingly" (Babcock, "The Story" 71). Allen's framing myth performs this function as it "teaches" the listener/reader the hermeneutical framework within which the novel's diegetic narrative should be understood i.e. interpreted.

These extradiegetic myths with which the novel begins and that recur throughout it prioritize the power of women as primary creators of "all that lives on earth" (2) and can be seen as Allen's tribal feminist "revisionist" version of these central Laguna oral narratives (Pulitano, *Toward* 23, 196; Kent 107). Allen has not only foregrounded the cardinal agency of

female deities, but she infuses one of these myths with an exclusively female sexuality, as the name associated with one of the female creator twins is also used to indicate the Sun (Uretsete) who impregnates the other woman creator (123,124). As framing narratives, these myths provide the reader with a tribal “gynocentric” hermeneutical perspective from which to judge and interpret Ephanie’s struggles. In addition, these myths signal to the reader the destination of Ephanie’s personal gender-troubled psychological and emotional journey, prefiguring (Kroeber, “Technology” 31-32) the interpretational framework necessary for Ephanie to understand her own gender performance within the gender performativity embodied by both the extradiegetic and diegetic myths.

The diegetic myth

Paralleling the personal involvement in oral narrative discussed in the introductory section and expressed by Angela Sidney’s (Tlingit) remark that she had tried to live her life “right, just like a story,” (Cruikshank, *Life* 1) the novel’s diegetic myth will be central to Ephanie’s understanding of her life in relation to gender identity. However, the diegetic myth is a narrative which reflects the inflective and malleable properties of a living oral tradition and is therefore susceptible to imposed, hegemonic interpretive paradigms. Ephanie will gradually realize that she has been living her life not simply “like” this story, but more accurately like her interpretation of this story, an interpretation governed by the dominant Western interpretive framework which Ephanie has assimilated. Ephanie must re-perform/re-interpret this myth from a tribal perspective in order to re-interpret her own gender identity.

The diegetic myth, that of Sky Woman, is a creation myth found in many forms among the Native communities along the east coast (Bredin 42). The myth relates how a woman living with her husband in the sky is tricked into jumping through a hole under an uprooted tree. She falls through the sky and lands on the water below. Attempting to build dry land for her, various animals dive to the bottom of the water to gather mud. Only Muskrat is successful and he spreads the mud on Turtle’s back, so creating the earth. This myth is retold in the novel twice and referred to generally several times as Ephanie attempts to gain insight into her various experiences and situations.

The first telling of this myth at the beginning of the novel occurs after an argument with her boyfriend. Her version describes how Sky Woman’s husband put her through “a series of unusual and cruel tests that proved her power greater than his” (38). After they are married, he becomes sick and is told that it is because of his powerful wife. He uproots the tree of light, which is hung with the flesh of his previous wife, and pushes Sky Woman into the hole beneath. Ephanie recounts that many animals died in the effort to create the earth and ends her narration with an image of isolation: “She gave birth to a daughter there on Turtle’s back, far away from the lodge of her mother, far, far away from the devastated tree...” (39). This version of the myth could be seen as a “feminist telling” in that it reveals not only patriarchal hierarchical customs (the tests) (Babb 307) but also misogynistic elements involving male subjugation of and violence towards women. Ephanie’s first telling of the myth is burdened with images of death and oppression, male antagonism and cruelty toward women, and ultimately an image of female isolation and ostracization. Ephanie’s performance of this oral narrative reflects the performed gender dynamics of her life - her problematic relationship with her male lovers and her future husband, - as well as her sense of isolation as a mixed-blood from the two communities, tribal and Euro-American, that represent her family.

The formulaic framing device which Ephanie uses to initiate this version of the myth in her thoughts is “According to legend” (38). This opening indicates Ephanie’s distance from the Native oral tradition and its performativity as she places the myth in the generic Euro-

anthropological category “legend” (Bascom 9). Ephanie’s frame, therefore, indicates that a Euro- epistemological framework controls her interpretation of this myth and that she is not interpreting it according to the woman-focused hermeneutical framework indicated in the extra-diegetic myth. While Ephanie’s version is qualified in the final lines which reflect her attitude toward the tree from which Sky Woman fell - “It was a death tree, or so Ephanie always believed” (39) - Ephanie’s implied mis-reading of the myth will be shown to be the result of an imposed hegemonic interpretive framework which mythically equates a woman’s “fall” with mortality and oppression: that of Christianity. Repeating the word “fall” as a *leitmotif* throughout the novel, Allen will focus on this “gendered” moment of mythic transformation - the “fall” from one world to the next, performed specifically by a woman - as representative of the contestation of two gender-normative performativities, the Euro-American and Allen’s tribal-feminist.

Ephanie’s “literal” fall - the tomboy gender performance

Throughout the novel, as Ephanie attempts to become aware of the source of her depression, her thoughts sift in a stream-of-consciousness through incidents from her past. She ultimately locates the germination of her condition in two seemingly unrelated incidents from her youth: “A fall, a serious fall” from an apple tree, and “a conversation a few years later that ended her friendship with Elena” (205), her best friend. These two incidents prove to be the interlocking origins of her present predicament; the first having to do with her gender and the second with her sexuality

Ephanie’s fall from an apple tree and her subsequent hospitalization were the consequences of a dare from her cousin who challenges her to swing from a rope tied to a high and ultimately weak branch of the old tree. Ephanie’s physical “fall” was directly connected to a type of female gender performance designated by Euro-American society as “tomboy” behavior. This gender behavior is revealed in the nature of Ephanie’s and Elena’s outdoor play, recalled by Ephanie as physical, adventurous, and imaginative.

The careless spinning of cowboy dreams. [...cavorting] along the roads, over the mesas, among the branches of the sheltering trees. [...] cartwheels [...] flying leaps from rooftops to horse’s backs [...] wild handsprings, or flipping head over heels from one spot to the next, diving headfirst into space, through the air to land on her feet, running, shouting, free. (202,203)

While such “play” is gender-associated as performed “boy-ness” it is naturalized for girls as a tolerated performance of “girl-ness,” i.e. that of the “tomboy.” Ephanie and Elena’s youthful tomboy-ness can be seen to sit at the border of Euro-performativity’s sanctioned normative gender performances. Seemingly assimilated into Euro-normative performativity as a dimension of behavior allowable for sexually “immature” girls, its performance becomes potentially disruptive if it is seen as the primary gender performance of sexually “mature” women who are ultimately supposed to perform heteronormality (Halberstam, *Female*). As Bonnie Zimmerman argues and Gunn’s novel illustrates, tomboy gender performance in literature concerned with lesbian experience is not actually a gender performance but signifies a liberation from heteronormality.

... tomboy behavior has nothing to do with male hormones or male identification, and everything to do with freedom. [In coming out novels, it] is a sign not only of incipient lesbianism, but also of incipient feminism. (*Safe* 48-49)

It is important to note that Ephanie’s tomboy performance is not explicitly or exclusively associated with Native American cultural precepts; it seems to be “free” at that stage in her life from any normative gender performativity. However, the older Ephanie does associate

her youthful tomboy gender performance with a “self” which she feels she lost after her fall from the tree: “in the hospital for a few days, alone and scared and feeling so guilty. So guilty I never trusted my own judgment, my own vision, again” (205). As gender ultimately indicates a socially situated role, Ephanie’s mixedblood background will cause her to look for the lost context of this “self” in both Euro-American society and Native society. It will be the culture which can support this “lost self” in the form of a gender role which will enable Ephanie to heal her fractured identity.

After her fall, the message Ephanie receives from her environment is that she has, as Butler has remarked, performed her gender “wrong,” initiating “a set of punishments both obvious and indirect” (“Performative” 528).

She didn’t say much except that she was sorry. That she shouldn’t have done that. That Elena had said for her not to. That she should have listened to her, to all of them, to their warnings, to their fear, to their complaints. “I guess I am not so tough after all,” she had said. Or thought. “I guess I shouldn’t do things like that again.” [...] Hearing her mother saying, “Don’t climb those weak branches, you’ll fall.” Hearing the nuns say “Don’t race around like that. Be a lady.” Punishing her when she forgot the rules and ran, yelled, jumped on the beds and broke the slates. Sending her to confession to tell the father her unruly sins. “Bless me Father for I have sinned. I jumped on the bed. I fell from the apple tree. (202,204)

As indicated in the passage, Ephanie’s physical “fall” is now given symbolic signification in relation to Christianity’s sanctions against “incorrect” female gender performance and its perspective from which “disobedience” and tomboyishness counts as “sinful.” In her insecurity, Ephanie embraces her environment’s reassurance that to avoid the punitive consequences of gender performed in the “wrong” way, to perform one’s gender in the “right” way is to adopt a Euro-Christian performativity.

After she fell everything changed. How she dressed. How she walked. What she thought. Where she went. [...] highheels and lipstick. That she suddenly craved, intently. Instead full skirted dresses that she’d scorned only weeks before. [...] Dreamed of being tall and pretty and dated. Adored. Mated. [...] she sat with her [city cousins] and talked about boys and clothes and other girls. [...] she exerted every ounce of intelligence toward learning how they held their heads, their hands, their mouths. And practiced secretly in her room alone. Learned to prance and priss, and did not notice the change, the fear behind it. [...] After she fell she had begun rising early to attend morning Mass. [...] Bless me father for I have sinned. But I won’t sin anymore, she vowed. Had learned piety and modesty. (202,203)

In contrast to her tomboy gender, Ephanie’s new gender performance, based on Euro-Christian performativity, fuses performed heteronormality, regulated physicality, and obedience to religious authority. The distinctively “camp” terms “prance and priss” used by Allen to describe Ephanie’s hyper-self-conscious practiced hetero-gestures would later become associated with queer theory’s exploration of parodic and ironic performative strategies, such as Butler’s discussion in *Gender Trouble* (1990) of drag and passing, performed to denaturalize the hegemonic performativity of hetero-reality. However, despite the fact that the reader is given these lexical cues to interpret Ephanie’s performance as ironic, Ephanie’s performance itself is governed, as Butler indicates, by the fear of the repercussions of doing gender “wrong.”

As can be seen by her sudden interest in boys, not only does Ephanie have to “do” gender correctly, she has to “do” sexuality correctly according to the heterosexual sex-gender system. Ephanie’s “fall,” as interpreted through the Christian system of signification, not only indicates a wrong/disobedient “gender” performance but also represents the birth of a tabooed sexual awareness. This awareness is directly connected to the second event in her youth which Ephanie identifies as the source of her present depression, a conversation which ended her friendship with Elena. This aborted friendship symbolizes the fracturing of Ephanie’s “lesbian continuum.”

The fracturing of the lesbian continuum

Ephanie remembers the day Elena told her that they could no longer be friends because the nuns had said that the way they acted together, their “hugging and giggling” (30), was wrong and that “evil made Ephanie and Elena play dirty things [...] between their legs”(13). The young Ephanie had never considered their physicality in these negative terms before. However, the societal sanctioning which disturbs Ephanie the most does not primarily involve the forbidding of the sexual act itself but its designation as a tabooed “desire.”

How could [Elena] understand what Ephanie had not understood. That they were becoming lovers. That they were in love. That their loving had to stop. To end. That she was falling. Had fallen. (30)

Ephanie sees this moment of “falling” as a double revelation: firstly, that for her the “apparent simplicity,” as Sedgwick terms it, and logic of the emotional continuum in which woman-friendship/support can “[extend] over the erotic” (2-3) is tabooed by the dominant society; and secondly, that her relationship with Elena had developed from that of “friends” to “lovers,” a change monitored by society and identified as such in that their sexuality is deemed lesbian “desire.” With her formulation of the concept of same-sex support continuums, Sedgwick has explored the concept of “desire” as signaling a move from *emotional* same-sex bonding, which does not ostensibly challenge heteronormative gender relationality, to “concomitant changes in the *structure*” of this hegemonic societal scaffolding [emphasis added] (1). In other words, it is not lesbian play but lesbian desire which signals a gender continuum structured differently from normative societal structures which are based on (obligatory) heterosexual desire. It is the performance of this structural change which, as Butler indicates, brings punitive repercussions.

That it is the perceived performance of lesbian desire and not necessarily lesbian sexuality which provokes censure is illustrated in Ephanie’s memory of two nuns at her convent school in Albuquerque (154). The young Native boarding school students notice that Sister Mary Grace’s and Sister Claire’s enjoyment of each other’s “friendship” expresses itself in a physical exuberance unusual for the nuns there. During an evening of piano playing

Sister Claire had rolled up the sleeves of her habit, pinned the long veil back [...] She drew Sister Mary Grace to her feet. She pulled her out onto the floor. They began to dance, laughing, giggling like girls. Their faces growing rosy and gleaming from sweat and exertion. (155-156)

Ephanie remembers that, a week later, Sister Claire was reassigned to another school and that Sister Mary’s subsequent grieving had caused the children to realize that the two nuns had been in love. Reflecting on the impact of this expression of the lesbian continuum, Ephanie recognizes “how glad they had all been that someone there was able to love. To laugh and shine and work and play and dance. And how very bereft they all felt when that love was sent away” (155-156). The effect of the censure of the nuns’ desire on the children indicates the significance of the lesbian continuum for the greater community. The implied *communal* value of a condoned lesbian continuum suggests a correlation between Native gender continuums and the psycho-socio health of the Native homosocial, a homosocial which Allen indicates is suffering intra-community violence because of the fracturing and negative sanctioning of Native gender continuums.

The fractured Native homosocial

For Ephanie, it is because of the fracturing of the lesbian continuum described above that she describes her psychic state as “split” (3) and that she is eventually driven to attempt suicide.

Such self-destructive repercussions of the disapproval of gender continuums are shown in the novel to have a tribal-internal parallel - a fractured “homosocial” - as two instances of Native violence against Native non-heterosexuals are related. One instance involves the jailing of a youth because “he was a faggot,” the father reportedly saying that his son “should be whipped senseless [...] He should be killed. He had brought shame to them” (59). The other instance involves a Native medicine man who “had lashed out at some women [Ephanie] knew. He was angry and contemptuous because they were lesbians. How he had told them he ought to rape them. How they had put him out of their car. How hurt, puzzled they had been. How afraid” (137). Not only do these two instances exemplify Butler’s proposition that normative performativity is (self-)maintained violently, but they represent the infiltration of such internalized self-censuring mechanisms into two foundational pillars of tribal society - the “family” which, as discussed earlier, can be seen as synonymous with tribal societal structure, - and the “medicine man” who is responsible for the community’s “health,” a state most often defined as the balanced integration of the individual in his/her tribal society. These two incidents portray the violent rupturing of the tribal “homosocial” due to a homophobic censoring of two-spirit continuums. Ephanie’s condemnation of these examples of anti-homosexuality does not simply express her social critique but can be seen as a confession of a vicious circle of internalized self-disgust and community-internal antagonism which she herself is caught up in: “Sometimes my people make me sick. That was a fact. For sure” (59).

As indicated in the introduction to this discussion, both the individual psychological disturbance and community-internal disruptive forces illustrated above have been directly associated with the colonial/imperial project of which Native assimilation into the Christian worldview, embodied by Euro-Christian gender performativity, has been a key strategy. To initiate a process of remediation, Beth Brant argues, through their writings, “two-spirit writers are merging the selves that colonialism splits apart” (“The Good” 97-98). Re-wording Brant’s remark to illustrate more specifically the focus of this analysis, it could be said that two-spirit writers are using their narrative performative traditions to attempt to unify tribal gender continuums (“the selves”) and the tribal homosocial (community) that Euro-Christisan compulsory gender performativities have split apart.

Ephanie’s challenge will be to extract herself from Euro-performativity by re-interpreting and re-signifying her “fall” out of the Euro-Christian system of gender signification and into the range of positively sanctioned gender performances signaled by the tribal oral tradition, the reference point of Native gender performativity. The tribal oral tradition, however, with its ability to reflect the values most prevalent in society, must itself be divested of an incorporated heteronormality which inhibits the narration of the lesbian continuum as falling within the range of Native normative performativity. The “re-sedimentation” of tribal gender performativity which will enable the re-signification of contemporary tribal gender performance is made possible by the oral tradition’s performative hermeneutics in which the narrative “performance” is the prioritized cultural signifiatory mechanism. The moment Ephanie re-performs (i.e. re-tells) the Sky Woman myth *as reflecting* Allen’s preferred tribal gynocentric paradigm, Ephanie will simultaneously “de-colonize” tribal gender performativity, divesting it of its heteronormality, and positively re-signify her past gender performance as harmonizing with this “recuperated” tribal gynocentric performativity.

Re-signifying performance and performativity: re-interpreting the ‘fall’

As indicated in the introduction, Native writers and storytellers insist that Native myths and stories are to be lived, as they provide the listener with the interpretive tools to understand his/her life and live it accordingly (Babb 313-314, Sarris *Slug* 5). At the beginning of the

novel, while trying to understand herself in relation to the Sky Woman, Ephanie lived the Native story according to Euro- gender performativity, interpreting the metaphorical gender performance indicated by “fall” within Christian, Euro-American cultural precepts. Ephanie’s literal and figurative “fall” referenced female gender restrictions and oppression: disobedience (“wrong” gender performance) and tabooed sexual awareness (lesbian continuum). This, Ephanie’s initial “living” of the Sky Woman myth, can be seen as reflecting what Allen has discussed a “mainstream feminist” insight into the disruptive and restrictive effect of “patriarchal colonialism” on tribal culture (Allen, *Sacred Hoop* 223). Ephanie’s first telling of the Sky Woman myth is marked by a distinct absence of a positively sanctioned female gender role, this lacuna being subsequently filled by an ever-present mainstream Euro-Christian gender performativity. However, despite the fact that Ephanie’s first attempt to understand the gender performance in the myth was detrimentally affected by Euro-American performativity, Allen has indicated that tribal women do have access to “a multitude of strong models to learn from and model themselves after *so long as they are fed on the traditions of women of power* that have long shaped and sustained tribal life” [emphasis added] (Allen (ed.), *Spider* 125).

Both Allen and Leslie M. Silko have written about one such mythic “woman of power” role-model, Kochininako or Yellow Woman, the central mythic female figure in Southwestern oral traditions whose adventures regularly provoke tribal disapproval but often ultimately benefit the tribal community. For Silko, Yellow Woman “represents all women in the old stories”

because she dares to cross traditional boundaries of ordinary behavior during times of crisis in order to save the Pueblo; her power lies in her courage and in her uninhibited sexuality, which the old-time Pueblo stories celebrate again and again...In each story, the beauty that Yellow Woman possesses is the beauty of her passion, her daring, and her sheer strength to act....(Silko, *Yellow Woman* 70)

Patricia Smith and Paula Gunn Allen herself, in their essay “Earthly Relations, Carnal Knowledge,” have remarked that the traditional stories in which the sexuality of spirit-beings such as Yellow Woman are given central cultural importance often involve their being seduced by or abducted by a spirit figure to become his wife. Whether these women escape their spirit husbands or remain with them, the outcome of their sexual adventures often have positive repercussions for the tribe, implicitly challenging tribal communities to continual re-evaluate restrictive gender norms. Allen has remarked that mythic female figures such as Yellow Woman function as role-models because they encourage tribal women to envision themselves beyond normative tribal gender performances.

...she possesses some behaviors that are not likely to occur in many of the women who hear her stories. She is, one might say, the Spirit of Women. The stories do not necessarily imply that difference is punishable; on the contrary, it is often her very difference that makes her special adventures possible, and these adventures often have happy outcomes for Kochinnenako and for her people. This is significant among a people who value conformity and propriety above almost anything. (Allen, *Sacred Hoop* 227)

As indicated earlier, the performance of “disobedient” gender roles and non-normative sexuality in foundational cultural narratives signifies differently in Euro-Christian and tribal cultures. Euro-Christianity’s sedimentation has resulted in the censoring of non-normative behavior and the sanctioning of change-resistant hegemonic gender performativity, whereas tribal cultural sedimentation has been seen by many Native writers to incorporate non-normative gender performances. When Ephanie, taking Sky Woman as her mythic role-model, remembers such tribal contexts for narratives of female “disobedience” and “improper” sexuality, she will be able to positively re-signify her performances of her gendered identity as “correct.”

When the Sky Woman myth is retold near the end of the novel, Allen has Ephanie “remember” a version more representative of tribal narratives of mythic women as described above, emphasizing Sky Woman’s physical and emotional power, as well as her courage and curiosity. Sky Woman’s ability to pass her prospective sorcerer-husband’s extreme physical tests results in gifts of food for her tribe. Her sexuality is presented as what could be called gender-role independent in that she does not have sex with her husband but becomes pregnant as a petal from the tree of light falls between her thighs. Fearful of her growing power and pregnancy, her husband uproots the tree of light in order to rid himself of her. In contrast to the first story in which she was pushed into the void, her husband now encourages her to jump to the beautiful but unknown world below. Significantly for Ephanie, when Sky Woman expresses doubt about falling into the abyss, her husband appeals to her sense of herself as powerful: “Someone of your courage could do it,” he said. “You could jump” (194). Whereas the first telling ends with an image of Sky Woman’s isolation from her community, the second telling continues as a creation story of “the land she had caused to come into being” and the birth of her children (195).

As Ephanie re-tells and therefore re-performs the story, she ponders the significance of this version in relation to her own life. Elaine Jahner has described this process of paralleling life experience and story as “participation” in the mythic narrative: “In a very real sense the participant’s life becomes one term of a metaphor while the narrative becomes the other term, and from this relationship springs the energy that is often called intuition or insight” (“A Critical” 213). Allen’s narrative style reflects Ephanie’s mental struggle to engage in this process.

A blooming apple tree. A woman who was pushed into another life, one she did not choose, [...] Was it the sorcerer-chief’s jealousy, his fear that betrayed her? Or was it her own arrogance, her daring, leading her to leap into the abyss from which there was no return? Ephanie wondered about that, turning the question against many memories, against the history, against the tales, against the myths. Against her own life. (191, 195-196)

Sifting through a complex of personal (hi)stories, she is performing the process of re-sedimentation, as a new iteration of a gender narrative provides new hermeneutical possibilities to re-signify her own literal fall from the apple tree as a positive gender performance which would have typified the performance of her broader identity with others who also dared to perform this gender.

... all the years since she fell from the tree and forgot who she had meant to be, what she had meant to do. [...] And now she knew. That what she had begun had never been completed. Because she fell she had turned her back on herself. Had misunderstood thoroughly the significance of the event. Had not even seen that she had been another sort of person before she fell. “I abandoned myself,” she said. “I left me.” [...] I was going to be a hero, before I got sidetracked, she thought. I was going to be full of life and action. [...] Elena and I, we were going to do brave things in our lives. And we were going to do them together. (204)

Ephanie returns to her early tomboy gender performance and sees in it the qualities that enabled Sky Woman to jump and fall - “the truth of [...] her arrogance. Of her bravery. Of her pride” (205). These qualities, manipulated by the sorcerer-husband, do not in the second version of the Sky Woman myth lead to “moral downfall” as the young, insecure Ephanie had thought (i.e. a fall “out” of creation), but to the daring act which results in the creation of the land and the life on it (i.e. a fall “into” creation). Due to the metaphorical linking of story and life discussed above, Ephanie is now able to re-signify her material fall from the apple tree as a culturally substantiated “correct” performance of female gender. Recalling Allen’s interpretive categories, Ephanie’s re-telling can be seen as a tribal feminist narrative performance in which mythic women are not victims but risk-takers, adventurers, heroes, and while their unconventionality includes a very real element of personal danger, mythic women’s actions are valuable to and valued by the tribal community.

It is at this moment in which the gender performance represented by the metaphor of the “fall” is re-interpreted and re-signified as positive that Ephanie is able to see her earlier tomboy and subsequent gender performance as distinct from Euro-American performativity, and re-evaluate her tomboy performance as “correct,” i.e. as paralleling Sky Woman as a risk-taker. Simultaneously, this re-signification of the “fall” enables Ephanie to repair her fractured lesbian continuum now that her friendship with Elena, including its “unconventional” sexuality, is comprised by the myth within its recuperated tribal context. Ephanie’s re-interpretation of the Sky Woman myth validates a range of female gender performances disapproved of by Euro-performativity, in effect “de-colonizing” such tribal oral narratives and, with them, tribal gender performativity (Pulitano, *Toward* 32-33).

Repairing the tribal homosocial

At the end of the novel, Ephanie has performed the Sky Woman myth in accordance with the tribal feminist mode indicated as “right” in the extradiegetic framing myths. Realizing that she has lived and can live within the possibilities and bounds of this symbolic performativity, she achieves a sense of integration both within herself and with the re-conceived traditions of her tribal community. However, Ephanie’s performed two-spirit gender can only be substantiated as a Native “identity” when it is recognized by the tribal community. Likewise, the tribal homosocial, problematically and often violently divided against itself with respect to Native two-spirits, can only be reconstituted when gender continuums positively re-valued in the symbolic epistemological realm of myth acquire a social embodiment, i.e., a role in the material community. Wesley Thomas and Sue-Ellen Jacobs argue that in order to combat the “imported” homophobia on the reservations, Native communities need to incorporate “recognizable and specifically trained transgendered people” into the ritual and social structure of the community (Thomas and Jacobs, “And we are Still” 96). To this end, Allen envisions a complementary “traditional” gynocentric community role to complement Ephanie’s re-signified gender performance and re-conceived tribal gender performativity. This is done within the parameters of traditional role acquisition: the vision and vision song. As previously discussed, a predominant method of individual role-identification and role-recognition in many tribal cultures is vision-oriented, specific talents or knowledge being transferred to an individual in a vision and encapsulated in a song. The receiver of the vision is then assigned a role in the community depending on his/her vision. Ephanie likewise receives a vision and vision song, providing her symbolically re-signified gender performance with a societal validity within the context of Allen’s “perceived tradition.”

The vision and vision song: the Spider Medicine Society and Ephanie’s role

Immediately following Ephanie’s revaluation of her gender performance, she hears a “spirit woman’s” voice calling her “sister” and sees a traditionally dressed woman whose shawl is embroidered with symbols of the Spider (209). She is then overcome by a visionary dream of an ancient community of women.

...the women who had lived, long ago, hame haa. [...] The Spider Medicine Society. The women who created, the women who directed people upon their true paths. The women who healed. [...] the women who never married, who held power like the Clanuncle, like the power of the priests, the medicine men. Who were not mothers, but who were sisters, born of the same mind, the same spirit. They called each other sister. They were called Grandmother by those who called on them for aid, for knowledge, for comfort, for care. (211)

In order to reconstitute a contemporary Native homosocial that includes the gender ranges and roles of a two-spirit continuum, Allen envisions what Bonnie Zimmerman has called “an exclusively female *communitas*” which derives its cultural role from the power generated by “women creating a new consciousness of and with each other” (“What has never been” 21). Allen’s envisioned *communitas* is linked directly to historical tribal structures, such as societies and clans to which the recipient of a vision would be assigned by his/her community, Ephanie’s vision establishing a “traditional” society for two-spirit women equaling in status and power the historically recorded male medicine societies. This vision provides not only a historical tribal context for two-spirit genders, but also a culturally acceptable and accessible structural blueprint for the integration of two-spirit people into contemporary community attempts at cultural revival. This dimension of the vision is supported in the novel as Ephanie is given a “vision song” and instructions as to her new two-spirit role.

The spirit woman who called Ephanie “sister” begins to chant Allen’s gynocentric creation myth familiar to the reader as the extradiegetic framing myth. This myth has now become diegetic and thus performatively potent. The spirit woman’s retelling of this woman-focused creation story modulates from an originatory mode (i.e., “how things came to be”) to a narrative of performed cultural continuity as Ephanie is made to understand that she is part of an ongoing story of her people, from the mythic era of creation to the contemporary age and its challenges. Ephanie is told that the vision song and corresponding role she will receive is related to this continuity, to what she has endured and the insights she has gained: “Your place in the great circle spiral is to help in that story, in that work. To pass on to those who can understand what you have learned, what you know” (210). This envisioned role for Native two-spirit people, that of teacher, is also suggested by Beth Brant as she expresses the conviction that “Lesbian and gay Natives will become and are becoming the elders of our people, giving counsel and wisdom” (*Writing* 47):

What Ephanie has learned and can pass on is not a perspective, an interpretation, or body of knowledge but a performative process, the “performed epistemology” of the oral tradition.

Ephanie’s search for psychic unity is founded in ritual awareness which, in turn, is embedded within the adaptive and inclusive properties of the oral tradition...Ephanie learns to understand how her life [...] parallel[s] the tribal narratives. As she understand this and lives out the implications of that understanding, she is able to accept her place within the ritual tradition of her people and her responsibility to continue it. (Allen, *Sacred* 100)

This ritual awareness and the oral tradition are for Allen specifically founded on Native women’s traditions “long ignored by white and Indian writers alike” (*Sacred* 98). These women’s traditions find their performative foundation in “woman lore and the relationships it bears to the events in the life of an individual” (*Sacred* 99). It is this performative life-process which Allen identifies as the center of her novel.

Through the spirit woman’s address, Allen concludes the novel with a future imperative for Ephanie and for contemporary readers, a further interpretation of the Sky Woman myth as a psychological strategy for approaching and managing contemporary and future circumstances.

“Jump.

“Fall.

“Little sister, you have jumped. You have fallen. You have been brave, but you have misunderstood. So you have learned. How to jump. How to fall. How to learn. How to understand.

“We are asking you to jump again. To fall into this world like the old one, the one you call Anciena, sky woman, jumped, fell, and began in a world that was new.” (211)

Bonnie Zimmerman interprets this final injunction as a lesbian imperative to accept that “reconstructing identity and community requires falling away from old constructs and taking risks by jumping into new ways of being” (*Safe* 189-190). Allen, however, from her self-proclaimed tribal feminist position, does not see this process as a “reconstruction” and as “new ways of being,” but as the psycho-social path towards the “recovery” of the cohesion between the Native individual and the community, specifically through the reinstatement of Native two-spirit identity within a recuperated Native gynocratic society. This fusion of the repaired Native lesbian continuum and the greater Native homosocial is achieved performatively as “entry into the narrative tradition enables individuals to realize that the significance of their own lives stems in large part from the interlocking connections with the lives of all others who share a particular psycho-spiritual tradition”(Allen, *Sacred* 100).

***Drowning in Fire* (2001) by Craig Womack**

I thought to be queer you had to be concerned with a certain type of style, a certain type of look and a certain type of philosophy to live your life by, all defined by rich white gays. Being Indian didn't fit in with that look. I realized that I was seeing queer Indians all along, but I was not seeing the queerness because it didn't fit in the parameters I had set. When I saw queer Indians, I didn't see the queer, I saw the Indian.

-Red Earth (Sisseton Dakota)

In *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, Paula Gunn Allen applied both a lesbian feminist critical acumen and her own tribal feminist perspective to explore the consequences of a coercive Euro-normative gender performativity for lesbian Native gender identities. Integrating the “performative” element in western literary textual interpretation (Schechner 359-360) and the distinctive performative and epistemic nature of the Native American oral tradition, Allen has Ephanie re-signify her gender performance, lifting it out of the West's compulsory heterosexual framework and integrating in into a re-conceived tribal performativity. Craig Womack's novel *Drowning in Fire* (2001) presents a situation paralleling Ephanie's predicament and solution, but from the perspective of Native non-heterosexual men. Womack's characters similarly suffer from the ruptured conditions of the Native homo-sexual continuum and the Native homosocial. To reveal the ramifications of the Euro-American performativity governing Native male non-hetero gender performances, Womack employs the strategy of “denaturalization” (Jagose 98, 99), a tactic most associated with queer theory's interrogation of hegemonic gender normativity.

Womack first explored the dynamics of Native gay identity and mainstream socio-cultural discourses in his analysis of the 1930s gay Cherokee playwright Lynn Riggs, whose writings seemingly romanticize the struggling Euro-American Oklahoma pioneer and farmer and his “counterpart,” the vanishing Indian. In an essay entitled “Lynn Riggs as Code Talker: Toward a Queer Oklahoma Theory and the Radicalization of Native American Studies,” Womack reads Riggs's plays as encoded expressions of the closeted Native gay man in a repressive homophobic, racist society. Womack insists that Riggs's life and work bring together “gay and Native concerns” of 1930s political and social repression and illustrate how “gay sexual orientation is relevant to the larger category of Native studies” and Native nationalistic perspective (*Red on Red* 273). In *Drowning*, Womack similarly links Native homosexual concerns, Native nationalistic perspectives, and the constraints of a repressive mainstream Euro-American normativity. As in *Red on Red*, in which Womack explores his

hypothesis that Riggs was forced to become a “code talker”⁸ in his attempt to control the manner in which his gender and “race” were “read,” in *Drowning* Womack explores various (mis)readings of Native gender identities performed within the restraints of hetero-performativity. In Womack’s novel, however, the destabilizing capacity of strategic Native gender performances in the form of the “drag” and the “pass” will be seen to “trouble” and denaturalize the interlinked hegemonic sex-gender-race system which has affected Native communities and gender identities. Like Allen, Womack will engage the performative nature of the oral tradition to re-perform Native homosexual gender identities within an adjusted Native performativity. While Allen used myth, Womack utilizes the performative nature of the oral tradition in relation to “history” to re-embed non-heterosexuality into Native homosocial discourses of community cohesion and collective national identity.

Drowning, Womack’s first novel, follows the lives of two mixed-blood Creek men from their adolescence to early adulthood as they develop an understanding of what it means to be both “queer” and “Indian.” Womack draws on his own early self-denial and Christian homophobic self-rejection as he has his primary protagonist Josh Henneha struggle away from his Euro-American Baptist background towards self-awareness and acceptance of his homosexuality and a conception of its significance in the greater Native homosocial. Two secondary protagonists will guide Josh in his development: his high school friend Jimmy Alexander, who eventually becomes his lover; and Josh’s great-Aunt Lucy, whose stories and life history provide Josh with a connection to Creek tribal history.

The disrupted homo-sexual continuum: male-bonding and tabooed desire

At the outset of *Drowning*, the reader is introduced to Josh’s circle of young male friends as they all spend a lazy summer afternoon during high school on a raft in the middle of a lake – Jimmy, Josh’s cousin Lenny Henneha, and the bullying Sammy Barnhill (10). Their interaction with each other can be seen as a continuously performed substantiation of normative male gender identity. This substantiation takes the form of the verbal exploration of the taboos which delimit and therefore define “normativity” in relation to the homo-sexual continuum of male bonding activities. Sammy’s remarks will reveal this continuum to presuppose a *racialized* sex-gender system in which, as Butler postulates, the

assumption of sexual positions, the disjunctive ordering of the human as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ [takes] place not only through a heterosexualizing symbolic with its taboo on homosexuality, but through a complex set of racial injunctions which operate in part through the taboo on miscegenation. (*Bodies* 167)

Sammy’s and Lenny’s conversation is replete with terms such as “sissy” and “you fuckin pussy” for the less masculine Josh, and “dumb nigger” and “nigger Indian” for the more African-looking Jimmy. After agreeing to attempt to dive to the bottom of the lake, Josh is teased for his trepidation.

They met his statement with the usual jeers describing Josh’s mother, words about unmentionable acts performed on close kin and the family dog, comments about this female relatives’ sexual activities with ancient white men in overalls who sat on the town bench in Eufaula by the old Palmers Grocery and spat long streams of tobacco juice, and concluded with the final touch, without which any string of insults lacked finality: “I bet you’re a chicken, faggot.”(15)

⁸ During WWII, Navajo and other Native military men were asked to communicate important military messages in their own languages as “codes” which the enemy forces were not expected to be able to crack.

This is a portrait of what one could call a “normal” boy’s world in which homo-sexual bonding activities include a regulatory dimension: the need to continuously perform the denial of censured identity performances. These to-be-negated identities involve sexual and racial non-normativity: non-heterosexuality and non-whiteness. As discussed in the introduction, gendered and racialized identities, while not co-definitive, share a Euro-American performative stage (Jagose, 62). Non-normative sexual and racial identities can be seen to be linked through a distinctive transgressive act: tabooed desire. Sammy’s remarks pinpoint and underscore homosexuality and miscegenation as the central taboos which represent a threat to “the boundaries between the races and the sexes that structure the American social hierarchy” (V. Smith 45).

Sammy can be seen as the voice of normative performativity; his regulatory focus on non-normative tabooed desire reflects Sedgwick’s assertion that the homo-sexual continuum of male bonding and gender expressions is ruptured along a fault line of censured “desire.” Sedgwick, however, also argues that there is a substantial difference between the fracturing of the lesbian continuum as opposed to the homo-sexual continuum in relation to tabooed desire: While for women gender performances become non-normative *at the moment* when “friendship” becomes “desire,” male normative gender performances are predicated on the constant denial of this tabooed desire, i.e. on homophobia (1-2). While Ephanie’s woman-support-woman continuum was fractured when her performance became too “lesbian,” Josh and Jimmy’s homo-sexual continuum is “radically disrupted” from the outset in that this continuum and homosexuality are “pointedly dichotomized” (Sedgwick 1-2, 3). This can be seen in the comments made by Sammy concerning Jimmy’s support of Josh who nearly drowns during his dive to the bottom of the lake. After giving Josh mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, they swim to the bank of the lake.

... Sammy stood on top, laughing. [...] “I see the rat didn’t drown after all. [...] Yeah, I seen you lean over and kiss him on the raft. What’s the matter, Jimmy? Ashamed of your new girlfriend?”

On solid ground, Jimmy suddenly realized the way he was standing with one arm around Josh’s waist, helping him to remain on his feet. He looked down at his arm with revulsion and let go; Josh sagged to his hands and knees in the grass. [...] “I couldn’t just let him die.” Jimmy spit out his words. [...] Jimmy kept talking faster, all the while explaining, getting hoarser, looking into Sammy’s eyes for some reassurance. [...] Josh began to weep as the words drifted away from him like smoke. The other boys turned away disgustedly and walked up the bank toward the road, Jimmy was the last one to leave. Josh heard their voices, laughing, [...] As they moved up the grassy hill, playing and shoving each other [...] Jimmy paused for an instant and turned back toward the lake. [...] He waited until Sammy and Lenny were out of earshot. [...] “You know the guys. They’re just playing around. [...] you know how it is around them, don’t you? [...] I didn’t really mean it. I just didn’t want them to think, well, you know how they tease you if they think you like someone too much.” (26-27-28)

Sammy, embodying the normative performance of male-bonding within the group, interprets *all* male-supporting-male gestures as potentially homosexual. Despite the fact that Jimmy, having a girlfriend and being the school’s top athlete, has been placed firmly in the category of normative heterosexuality, he must publicly defend his actions to conform to Sammy’s performance of male hetero-normalcy and its obligatory homophobia. When Sammy and Lenny are no longer present, Jimmy indicates to Josh that his stance was pretence. This scene illustrates that the performance of hetero-normalcy is here predicated on the conscious choice to perform and maintain the rupture in the homo-sexual continuum.

The irony, central to Womack’s novel, is that this performed hetero-normalcy is a sham, as we later learn that all the young men on the raft, except Sammy, are closeted homosexuals. Jimmy, who eventually becomes Josh’s partner, narrates later in the novel that “Between me and Josh and Lenny, that must have been just about the queerest raft that ever floated on water. Sammy, far as I could tell, managed to come out of the lake straight “(147). Nevertheless, despite the absence of heterosexuality on the raft and the presence of secret homosexual desire, it is Sammy as the one heterosexual who delimits and defines acceptable

performances of male gender performativity. In their search for male bonding, these young gay men attempt to “pass” as heterosexual for each other, performing heterosexual homophobia to stay within the prescribed range of male gender performance.

The raft is Womack’s microcosm of the Native American gay community, a community unknown to itself due to compulsory “passing” performances, which seem to parallel the maneuvers of Allen’s protagonist as she attempts to conform to Euro-normativity. To counteract this situation, Womack, influenced by queer theoretical perspectives, will guide Josh through a process of “denaturalization,” a letting go of Euro-American gender performativity. This process involves the exploration of the Native “pass” and “drag” as being strategic manipulations of Euro-gender norms and as having a multiplicity of subversive and constitutive objectives. Josh’s personal development will involve becoming, to adapt Halberstam’s terms, “educated” as a “reader” of Native strategic “gender fictions” (“F2M” 767).

Josh’s hetero-normative mode of (mis)reading the body

Due to his white Baptist upbringing, Josh is initially unable to read both fellow passers’ and his own gender performance as strategic. Despite his attempts to secretly communicate that he is passing to others, his reading of their gendered responses reveals his internalization of the hetero-normative mode of (mis)reading gender. While performing to the best of his ability the required hetero-normativity on the raft in the scene discussed above, Josh attempts to “signal” his homosexuality to Jimmy but does not read recognition in Jimmy’s response.

Josh had secret words with special powers. Each time he followed the ski boat’s pass between the raft and the shore, and his eyes swept over Jimmy, Josh sent out another message. The way it worked was that only the right person would know he was receiving the thought that Josh had stored up inside his head.[...] Josh watched Jimmy for a sign that the signals had registered, but nothing seemed to be happening. (12)

Although Josh does not realize it, his “message” has been read correctly as, a year later, Jimmy responds sexually to Josh, albeit surreptitiously, when they sleep in the same bed during an impromptu sleep-over at Jimmy’s house with the friends from the raft. Josh, however, has no idea how to act with Jimmy after he realizes that he has been read correctly.

What would happen when we awoke, rose out of bed? What would he say to me? I had relied on signs, signals, secrets. Patiently, I had waited for Jimmy to answer back. [...] The messages I had kept to myself, free of danger, safe from discovery. If Jimmy knew enough to touch me, could he also sneak inside my imagination? Maybe he was the one who really controlled the secret messages, not me. I’d never planned what I would do if the messages worked. (64)

Unsure how to translate homosexual desire into a publically performed identity, Josh hopes for cues from Jimmy. The next morning Jimmy acts, according to Josh, “normal” in that “Things seemed the same to him [Jimmy] as before we went to bed” (65). Although Josh knows that non-heterosexuality was reciprocated by Jimmy, the ease and confidence with which Jimmy continues to perform his public heteronormality creates in Josh a “crisis of reading” in which his reading of Jimmy’s gender hesitates between the normative “pass” and the non-normative gender “yet to be assumed” (Ahmen 94). Instead of reading Jimmy’s performance as strategic, Josh’s internalized sense of homophobic guilt and shame cause him to reject any further homosexual “readings” of Jimmy’s behavior which arouse his own homosexual desire: “I always tried to fight it off. I quoted Bible verses. I thought of cute girls in my class I should like” (75). Even when, several years later, Jimmy admits more explicitly to Josh that he had once had a friend “who was different like I was” (103), Josh cannot believe that he is proclaiming homosexuality: “No way. He had to be lying. How could a

basketball player who never shut up and kept people all around him laughing and listening to his jokes and watching his antics feel different? That was my story, not his” (103). Because Josh’s own Baptist homophobic upbringing has taught him that “performing” hetero-gender equals an internalized *rejection of or desire to reject* homosexuality, Josh maintains a misreading of the significance of Jimmy’s gender performance in order to support his own acceptance of the distinction between the Euro-hetero-male gender continuum (athletes) and that of those that fall outside it (homosexuals like himself). As a result, Josh is unable to read heterosexual performance outside the context of Euro-America’s normative hetero-homophobia.

Josh’s task will be to unlearn his hetero-normative mode of (mis)reading gender and learn to recognize and read the cultural significance of Native gender performances which “trouble” the Euro-American sex-gender system, performances which Butler has called “gender discontinuities” (Lloyd 198). In the novel, Womack presents Josh with a variety of Native characters who perform “gender discontinuities” in which gender, sex, and desire are not linked in a normative continuum (Lloyd 198). These gender discontinuities will effectuate a denaturalization of hetero-gender performances, thus enabling Josh to free himself of his internalized Euro-American hetero-normative parameters for reading the body (Halberstam, “F2M” 767).

Gender discontinuities: the drag and the pass

Josh is confronted with several characters within his own family whose gendered performance does not conform to the expectations of Euro-American gender performativity. While looking at some old photographs of his family, Josh comes across a picture of his grandfather “as an effete figure skater.”

His arms spread wide, inviting the whole world to behold him, he had crossed one leg gaily in front of the other, the front brake of his skate touching down lightly on the floor. He was decked all out in a white costume which accentuated his handsome dark features, [...] He’d been quite a skater, they said. His blond skating partner held the championship cup, flashing pearly whites and beaming behind curls and red lipstick. It was all so unlikely, a young Indian farmer working in the fields and odd jobs and competing as a championship figure skater on the weekends. (173-174)

Josh recognizes in his grandfather’s “unlikely” performance an irony reflecting what Valerie Smith calls the “intersectionality of race and gender” (43). Furthermore, Josh’s grandfather’s dual performance involves an additional dimension of complexity in that it is not only a performance of gender-race intersectionality but also of interlinked gender and race discontinuities. Both inter-linked performances employ the phenomenon and implications of “drag” as Butler has theorized it. Butler’s exemplary use of “drag” has been succinctly summarized by Annamarie Jagose:

Butler does not consider drag to be an essentially subversive parody. Rather, in its literal staginess, it offers an effective cultural model for deconstructing those commonly held assumptions that privilege certain genders and sexualities by attributing ‘naturalness’ and ‘originality’ to them. (86)

With regard to Ephanie’s hetero-gender performance and the example of Josh’s grandfather, Butler’s claim might be expanded in the sense that the gestures and performances that “privilege” certain genders and sexualities as “natural” often simultaneously signal the performance of “racial” normativity, i.e., “whiteness.” Josh’s grandfather’s performance of gender/race intersectionality and discontinuity produces a cluster of destabilized normative and non-normative gender and race significations each involving the implication of (tabooed) “desire.”

The “troubled” gender performed by Josh’s grandfather as figure skater is signaled by Josh’s use of the word “effete” and the queer associations of the adverb “gaily,” contrasted in Josh’s imagination with images of his grandfather as a farmhand to which Josh assigns an implied masculinity. These “mismatched” gender signals are mirrored in what one could call the “drag” performance of the figure skater, involving both the drag of heterosexuality and of homosexuality. The costumes and dance gestures of a male skater are a stylized-performance of masculinity, hetero-sensuality and desire complemented by the stylized hyper-femininity and sensuality of the woman skater. However, these very stylized dance gestures and ballet-like wardrobe of the male skater simultaneously signal, as Josh recognizes, an “effete” performance of masculinity often associated by a hetero-centric society with homosexuality and homo-sensuality. Therefore, the gender performed by male skaters can be seen as a “troubled” drag which blurs the line between privileged heterosexuality and censured homosexuality, between stylized sanctioned desire and stylized tabooed desire. Despite this normative grey area and performative danger zone, the skater’s “drag” has been conditionally assimilated into Euro-American heteronormality (as has Ephanie’s tomboyishness) and the potentially disturbing homosexual “desire” performed as stylized heterosexuality is diffused.

In the case of Josh’s grandfather, however, this normalization of the performance of gender disjunctures and tabooed desire is complicated by a factor which Butler posits in *Bodies that Matter*.

What would it mean, on the other hand, to consider that assumption of sexual positions, the disjunctive ordering of the human as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ as taking place not only through a heterosexualizing symbolic with its taboo on homosexuality, but through a complex set of racial injunctions which operate in part through the taboo on miscegenation. (167)

The drag performance of Josh’s grandfather highlights a gender performative constraint in which “race” is understood as a functional element of heterosexuality due to the Euro-American censure of miscegenation. The darkness of Josh’s grandfather’s skin is brought into stark relief by the whiteness of his costume and the “whiteness” of his blond female partner with her pearly white teeth. While potential homosexuality has to be assimilated into the “heterosexualizing symbolic” performance of the skater’s sensuality, Josh’s grandfather does not perform the normative homo-racial injunction implied by normative heterosexuality. What this “means,” in relation to Butler’s question, is that the performance of Josh’s grandfather, by transgressing “the boundaries between the races and the sexes that structure the American social hierarchy” (V. Smith 45) has denaturalized the system of signification which enforces these parameters. His grandfather’s performed gender-race discontinuities offer Josh the opportunity to reappraise and reject these parameters which as yet govern his reading of Native non-normative gender. However, what this intertwined performance of race/gender “meant” for Josh’s grandfather is reflected in Butler’s warning that “there are cruel and fatal social constraints on denaturalization,” (*Bodies* 133), such non-normative performances being “regularly punished” (“Performative” 522). Indeed, Josh relates that after the photograph was taken, his grandfather was beaten up by whites outside the skating rink.

For Josh, his grandfather’s performance of gender and race discontinuity is his first exercise in “re-reading” the Native body in relation to a now denaturalized Euro-American performativity. Josh’s new manner of reading the Native body must be able to recognize and interpret the cultural complexities and potential ironies of Native gender performances within the hegemonically maintained Euro-American sex-gender-race continuum. Further aiding Josh in the development of his gender-reading skills are the stories his Great Aunt Lucy tells of her youth, leading Josh to re-consider the implications of the gender strategy discussed above: passing.

Aunt Lucy tells Josh the story of her life when she as a young woman was a trumpet player in a blues band in the 1930s. When their lead trumpet player proves to be inadequate, Lucy volunteers to take his place but is discouraged by the band leader.

...Lucille, you might could pass as colored, since you're darker than some of these high-yeller horn boys, but you'll never pass for a man. [...] Now if you was a singer, Lucy, that would be another story entirely. They'll 'low that. But you can't play a horn on the stand 'less you got one in your britches, too." (92-93)

Lucy's situation is another example of the "intersectionality of race and gender" (V. Smith 43) and an acknowledgement of the strategic usefulness of the pass. While the Native Lucy can "pass" racially to fit the stereotype of a blues player, she cannot "perform" the required body to enable her to "embody" her musical talents. Nevertheless, she proposes a variation of the pass which both performs and circumvents gender performance.

I told the second player what to do. I says, "Every time you're supposed to blow, stand up and fake it, and I'll let loose with Tiny's horn here behind the wall." [...] We got back in the swing of things that night as soon as I took over; [...] Walter waddn't about to let go of his new invisible trumpet player, nor his old square-head trumpet player who [...] turned out to be a mighty fine actor, the best fake trumpeter from here to Kansas City." (94)

Ironically, by performing physical invisibility, she performs a male-gendered role by playing the lead trumpet solo while the male trumpet player fakes his musical and gendered role. This intricate, multi-dimensional performed pass is accepted by the audience, and the band becomes extremely successful.

Lucy does not perform the visible gendered body, but she does perform its *effect* as she is able to manipulate the audience into "reading" her "pass" as "truth": Because Lucy's deployed pass is successful, the audience reads the performances as a male trumpet player *being* a male trumpet player. The gender and race discontinuity caused by this pass is extreme in that the male performer is *performing* the gendered role of black male trumpet soloist, but the performance *effect* is caused by a Native American woman. Equally distinct is the signaling of the irony and complexity of such a maneuver within the hegemonic sex-gender-race system which both makes the pass a necessity and a possibility. Lucy's performance signals to Josh that the dynamics of the "pass" do not solely involve the theatrics of assimilation into hegemonic modes, but also the positioning of oneself in the "blind spots" of dominant performativities, manipulating the "readers" to "mis-read" or "see" what the passer chooses them to. Lucy's performance indicates to Josh such monolithic performative sex-gender-race paradigms contain self-produced hiatuses enabling the performance of non-normative gender identities beyond the purview of Euro-America's performativity.

These two instances of gender discontinuities, grandfather's skating and Lucy's trumpet playing, are diametrically opposed in their visibility to their Euro-American readers, as a result of which Josh's grandfather's drag provokes public censure, while Lucy's pass elicits public sanction. Josh, performing the assimilative pass, projects Euro-American responses onto his Native "audience" as readers of his gender performance. However, as he begins to learn to read Native gender identities outside Euro-American normative modes, he begins to doubt his ability to judge his Native audience's reactions to his pass.

Josh confronts his insecurities concerning the potential homophobia within his own family when he spends an evening at the home of his devout relatives Zeke and Arlene who, like Josh's parents, attend a white Baptist church. Josh discovers that here, too, gender discontinuities thrive as Zeke and Arlene's two older daughters prove to have non-lady-like habits. Besides being expert car mechanics, they are on an over-fifty women's softball team.

Neither was married [...] the most obvious question about Docia Mae and Zadie Fay, the stereotype associated with women softball players, had never occurred to Arlene and Zeke, who were always claiming "the girls" were shy around men. [...] Actually, I'd never seen two people less inhibited. [...] [when they met someone they

knew] The twins would approach their unsuspecting victims grinning, planting themselves, feet spread, in a masculine stance and simultaneously extending arms for a hearty handshake [...] (206,207)

The daughters' performed gender discontinuity seems to be "mis-read" by their loving but very religious parents as "shy" heterosexuality. The probability that Zeke and Arlene similarly mis-read him as heterosexual makes Josh insecure as to how to understand their generosity.

As crazy as Zeke was, I had to admit he was also the most generous person I'd ever met. [...] Yet I couldn't help but wonder about the limits of his generosity - what if he knew of my sexual activities[...] Since I was family, maybe they'd think I was just pathetic and fallen in with the wrong crowd and in need of prayer, rather than evil down to my bone marrow, who knows? (213,214)

Josh is reluctant to "read" Zeke and Arlene as he reads Euro-American Christians, i.e. as aggressively homophobic. Later in the novel, while visiting a Creek Baptist Church with Jimmy, Josh continues to wonder whether the homophobia which is a part of his Euro-American Christian upbringing is equally present among Native Christians: "Of course, they didn't know about us; surely that would change things. Or did they?" (257). Josh cannot seem to decide whether, in relation to the Native congregation and their "reading" of him and Jimmy, they are successfully passing or whether, contrary to Josh's expectations, non-heterosexuality is not being judged according to a Euro-American compulsory heterosexuality, i.e. homophobia.

The gender discontinuities Josh is presented with illustrate how Native "bodies" are misread in the context of Euro-American performativity. Josh begins to realize that he has applied the "reading techniques" inculcated in him during his upbringing and must consider that the dynamics of Native gender performances need to be read, as Sara Ahmen states, "in relation to a complex set of social antagonisms" (92,93) structurally inherent to the dominating society, and also in relation to the accompanying Native performative strategies of cultural negotiation. Understood in this context, Native gender performances can be seen to reflect Butler's statement that "gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end" ("Performative"522).

Mending the Native homo-sexual continuum

Josh will fully divest himself of his internalized gender normativity when, similar to Ephanie's experience, he has a vision of the Native homo-sexual gender continuum not fractured by an imposed taboo on non-heterosexual desire. This vision involves the relationship between two Native men, Seborn and Tarbie, who were contemporaries of Josh's Aunt Lucy. While Josh first hears about these two men when visiting Lucy in an old people's home (166, 167), the reader has been introduced to them earlier in the narrative through Lucy's flashbacks to her childhood and her adventures with Dave, a full-blood Creek orphan who had become ward of Lucy's father (34,35). Lucy as narrator relates that Dave had been spending time with his Uncle Tarbie and another man, both living "away from everybody, without any women." Dave confides in Lucy's mother that

"my Uncle Tarbie comes down to the stomp dances, and he's always with the same man. The young boys giggle when they see them two in camp, but the old ones always frown and tell them to show respect." Mama just said, "Dave, those two are good men. Them old folks is right." (35)

Prefiguring Josh's revelation, in this passage non-heterosexuality is presented to the reader of *Drowning* within a traditional Native context, indicated by the attitudes of the "old ones." It is presented as something that should elicit "respect" and not "fear/phobia" or ridicule. While non-heterosexual gender performance has been thus removed from Euro-American normative signification and placed within a Native cultural system of signification for the reader, Josh

himself has yet to experience this moment of re-signification. This moment occurs as he is lying on a bed in his grandfather's guest room full of family photos and imagines that he is drawn into the world of the photos, the world of Lucy's youth a generation earlier (176). Wandering through the woods pictured in the photos, Josh comes across the imagined "home" of Dave, Seborn and Tarbie and observes them as they interact as a family. Tarbie and Seborn flirt lovingly with each other, reminisce together about how they first met, and discuss taking Dave to the park to fly a kite because "He's a good boy" (179,180). As he watches them, Josh's identity becomes closely linked to Dave, and it is through Dave's relationship with the men that Josh has his epiphany.

And then, crouched down in the cattails by the spring, listening to all that, something just broke in my mind and came flooding in on me. Those two men loved each other. They loved me. I knew if I ran fast enough, I could tell my story before I floated away, share the good news before I lost it. (180)

Tarbie, Seborn, and Dave (per)form the "nuclear family," of which Josh now feels a part and within which he has identified himself as a loved, included member of a distinctive family. By envisioning and experiencing this non-heterosexual "family," Josh has placed himself within a unified Native homo-sexual continuum, a male-support-male continuum which not only includes "desire" but also the social structures which are associated with the role of "desire" in a community, i.e., "marriage" and family. Although they seem to reproduce an institutionally hetero-normative familial structure, Josh understands this in non-homophobic terms, i.e. outside the performativity of "hetero-reality." Josh has thus envisioned a homo-sexual continuum not fractured by Euro-American normative gender performances predicated on homophobia.

That this normative gendered performance of the "nuclear family" can be uncoupled from Euro-American normative performativity of hetero-reality is supported by Lois McNay's remark that when the "repeated inscription of the symbolic norms of heterosexuality" is used to "articulate homosexual identities" a "destabilizing process of *resignification*" occurs [original emphasis] (177). Moya Lloyd illuminates Judith Butler's explanation of such a process of resignification:

...Butler claims, the recitation of "heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the heterosexual original," exposing "gay to straight *not* as a copy to the original, but, rather, as copy is to copy"(1990b:31). There is no original from which gay, lesbian, transvestite subjects deviate; the original is itself a mythical figuration. (197-198)

However, whereas McNay, Lloyd, and Butler emphasize the "subversive" (McNay 177) nature of this process aimed at de-naturalizing the hetero-structure, Womack's aim is *not* to undermine the potential normativity of a nuclear familial structure, but to "decolonize" Josh's way of reading the accompanying gendered role assignment. When Josh experiences this visionary homo-sexual family as "normal" he is able to re-adjust his entire internalized system of signification, remarking that he had "never considered the possibility that the world might be crooked, and I might be okay. [...] I had to dream a little to get a proper perspective on things" (184). Because Josh now understands the Euro-American normative world to be "crooked," he himself is now "straight," i.e., "normal," understanding the variety of Native gender performances within the multiplex condition of Native postcoloniality and negotiated cultural identifications.

Josh has fully recognized that Native gender performances reference the history of cultural confrontation in the Americas, "re-opening or re-staging" as Sara Ahmen indicates, the "fractured history of identification that constitutes the limits to a given subject's mobility" (92, 93). When Josh "decolonizes" his manner of reading Native gender performances and attempts to re-perform Native non-heterosexualities outside Euro-American normative

performative paradigms, he employs, just as Paula Gunn Allen, the oral tradition as the fundamental performative means of Native “self-definition” (Weaver 20). However, whereas Allen had her protagonist perform mythic narratives towards this end, Josh will employ the oral tradition’s genre of historical narrative, re-telling Creek national history in order to reshape what Womack has called the “communal consciousness” (*Red on Red* 26) of the Native community with regards to Native gender variance.

Josh’s narrative interweaving of two-spirit gender performance and history reflects Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal insight into the historicity of the gendered body in which Beauvoir, as quoted by Butler, claims that “the body *is* a historical situation [...] and is a manner of doing, dramatizing, and *reproducing* a historical situation” [original emphasis] (“Performative” 520-521). Josh’s (hi)story-telling intends to narrate this link of “gendered body” and “historical situation,” not as a historicization of two-spirit gender, but as a double signifiatory performance in which two-spirit gender performances reflect both the historical situation of Creek nationalist struggles and the contemporary situation of the Native homosocial.

(Hi)story-telling: performing the homo-sexual gender continuum and reaffirming the homosocial

Josh, wishing to understand more about his “epiphany,” i.e., the experience of the restored homo-sexual continuum that he has achieved through his vision of Tarbie, Seborn, and Dave, decides to re-explore the significance of their relationship by telling himself a story. Comparing himself as a potential storyteller to his Aunt Lucy, he says to himself, “Lucy told [stories], why couldn’t I? I’d always been my own best listener. So I put my mind to work, recollecting as best I could. Thought about Tarbie. About Seborn. Dave and Lucille. Family and friends to each other, just like I’d known”(220). The narrative which Josh offers the reader is the history of Creek resistance to Euro-American land encroachment in Oklahoma in 1901 led by the famous Creek leader Chitto Harjo.

Josh imagines Seborn and Tarbie among the other families gathered at the Hickory Grounds campsite in support of Chitto. Josh describes their life at the campgrounds as paralleling normative Creek familial structures, Seborn and Tarbie’s women relatives taking over the duty of “wives” while the two men performed the male tasks. Josh tells us that “If the other men noticed the two of them, it would only amount to some rough teasing anyway, and Seborn knew how to dole it out every bit as mean as they could. They had wives who kept them hopping, and he could expertly mimic the voices of their women giving them ‘advice’”(221). This form of normative comment, the tease, as discussed earlier in relation to Erdrich and Welch, is not simply a form of social control but is a technique which promotes community cohesion in that it signals group and familial recognition and acceptance of “difference.” In this case, the tease not only signals the *visibility* of “gender difference” against a background of cultural expectations of “normalcy,” but it allows for a reciprocal *response* which anchors performed “difference” into the Native homosocial as taking part in a cultural dialogic of diverse gender roles. This scene with its banter can be seen to illustrate the “ideal” situation of the non-fractured Native sex/gender continuum and the harmonious Native homosocial.

Womack links this Native homosocial ideal to a tribal nationalist ideal, as Josh’s (hi)storytelling indicates the source of the divisive forces which fractures both the Creek homo-sexual continuum and subsequently the Native homosocial.

This tolerance and teasing [of those like Tarbie and Seborn] was not the case with some of their more ‘progressive’ citizens outside Hickory Grounds, those who’d accepted the ways of the whites, gone along with the allotment of land. But he was here among the full-bloods, some of whom, like Chitto Harjo, [...] remembered the homelands in Alabama, and here Seborn and Tarbie were pretty safe.(222)

Blaming the homophobic fracturing of Native gender continuums on the effect of Euro-American normativity on tribal cultural precepts, Josh’s narrative suggests that this rupture did not exist in traditional Creek society. Furthermore, Josh links the safety of Seborn and Tarbie, and by extrapolation the preservation of such non-hetero-familial structures, to the historical moment in which the Creek, led by Chitto Harjo, fought for their sovereignty as a nation against the federal government’s continued encroachment. When one recalls the inter-relatedness and interdependence of Native family structures, tribal cohesion, and the political significance of the concept “nation,” it can be seen that Josh’s story emphasizes that, in addition to heterosexual structures, non-heterosexual relationship structures were and are equally fundamental to the *perseveration* and *cohesion* of the Creek nation. To this end, Josh re-narrates early 20th century Creek resistance to include the likely role of Native homosexuals at this pivotal moment in Creek national history. In effect, through the oral tradition, Josh narrates the homo-sexual gender continuum back into the Native homosocial, encouraging a contemporary re-sedimentation of Native gender performativity by performing two-spirit visibility in the (hi)story of the Creek nation.

In Josh’s telling, Seborn and Tarbie are at Chitto’s side during his leadership of the Creek, his battles, and his imprisonment. Interwoven throughout the narrative of Chitto’s historic actions is the “gender performance” of Seborn and Tarbie’s relationship. This is exemplified in a scene in which Seborn is tidying their campsite.

The conservatives, those guarding Creek land and traditions, had been branded as “Snakes” throughout Oklahoma because Chitto Harjo’s first name meant snake in Creek. In a bout of mischief Seborn commenced to beating Tarbie with the broom.

“Damn you, Seborn!” he hollered. “If you had a brain you’d be dangerous.”

“I’m just trying to knock some of the dirt off you,” he said, when Tarbie grabbed the broom handle and busted him a good lick across the ass.

He loved it.

And Tarbie loved *him*.

And those men loved me, I thought, once more, from outside the story. (222)

As Josh relates the political circumstances of the Creek uprising, he has Seborn and Tarbie interrupt the narration with their gendered performance of ideal domesticity. Participating in and experiencing his own narrative, Josh likewise interrupts the story-within-a-story to reinforce this performance of the homo-sexual continuum in which homosexual relationships have their gendered context, emphasizing that lovers’ “desire” is the foundation of “the family” as societal structure.

The narrative integration of Creek history and a performance of the homo-sexual continuum continues in various forms throughout Josh’s (hi)story. While the instance discussed above illustrates the association through a juxtaposition of the macrocosm of Creek national history with the microcosm of the Creek nation as (homosexual) family, Womack also parallels history and gender performance on a personal, anecdotal level as Chitto and Seborn and Tarbie exchange stories during a journey on horseback. After Chitto has related accounts of his journeys to Washington, D.C. to attempt to negotiate a settlement for the Creek nation, it is Seborn and Tarbie’s turn to offer their story. Seborn goes back to the day he met Tarbie at Bacone Indian University. The story he tells focuses on the moment of recognition during a school dance as Tarbie is clumsily trying to attach a corsage to his date’s dress.

“These things are really embarrassing, aren’t they?” [Seborn] had directed his question at Tarbie rather than Betty, who looked puzzled [...] Knowledge passed between Tarbie and Seborn in that very moment, a code Betty could not crack, an unspoken understanding of how truly embarrassing all this *really* was.(236)

Tarbie and Seborn’s communication illustrates both the “correct” reading of the pass as strategy and the acknowledgement of this reading which Josh had struggled with in relation to Jimmy. Seborn’s story narrates the recognition of Native homosexual performances within Native heterosexual contexts even as the Creek traditionalists struggle to maintain the Creek nation under the pressure of “progressive” Creeks and within U.S. hegemonic contexts. This association of homosexual gender performances and cultural and political contexts is reflected in Womack’s own discussion of the usefulness of the word “queer.”

The term “queer” works for me because it me because it acknowledges the importance of cultural differences and the usefulness of maintaining those differences rather than simply submitting to dominant-culture norms. (*Red on Red* 301)

Womack’s paralleling of anecdotal stories interrelates the preservation of gendered “difference” within Creek culture with the preservation of Creek distinctive sovereignty within a complex of Euro-American hegemonic forces and influences.

Womack’s interweaving of the historical narrative of the struggles of the Creek nation and the performance of the homosexual gender continuum ultimately encompasses the contemporary concerns of the protagonists as Josh narrates himself and Jimmy into his (hi)story: “Me and Jimmy had gathered at Chitto’s house [...] along with the other Snakes, because we planned on going to the council grounds before all the trouble broke out” (242). Finding themselves suddenly under attack, Josh flees the camp with Jimmy and concludes “his” (hi)story. That “his” story is the inter-linked story of the Creek nation and contemporary two-spirit situations is indicated by Josh’s remarks which fuse Chitto’s resistance with his own personal challenge to accept the “desire” which will mend the Native homo-sexual continuum. Expressing the conviction that “the resistance [Chitto] started continued long after his death and continues today,” Josh parallels this tribal struggle with his own struggle to perform his gendered identity: “I was still here, Jimmy was still in Weleetka, and Creek land was still waiting for us to take it back” (247). As Michelle Henry affirms, in *Drowning* Womack “shows how being gay and being Native are linked to political and social struggles and the responsibility inherent in confronting those struggles” (35).

By giving non-heterosexual gender performance a visible role in Creek national history, Womack has Josh offer a re-conceived foundation for a contemporary Native homosocial, a “re-sedimentation” of contemporary Native performativity that includes gender performances excluded from tribal narratives because of the influence of Euro-American homophobia. Accordingly, Josh understands his narrated gender performance as a way to re-align and de-colonize a tribal cultural narrative that has gotten “crooked”:

shaped out of words. An invented history, a history of invention. A choice to invent your own history. As early as birth, there’s the danger of getting stuck to a bad story if you stick your hands inside the wrong words. [...] I’d have to climb out, up over the words, and into a new story. (246, 247)

Womack’s “invented” history of non-heterosexual involvement in Creek history, however, should not be seen as a wishful “fiction” implicitly dubious in the absence of historic “facts” concerning two-spirits. Josh’s (hi)story in relation to the likelihood and even inevitability of the involvement of gay tribal members in Chitto’s resistance reflects Butler’s discussion of the gendered “body” as a “cultural sign” indicating “an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities” (“Performative” 520-521, 522). Josh’s (hi)story-telling can be seen as the performance of the Native homosexual body that constitutes such a “cultural sign” of “historical possibilities” and that may effectuate the contemporary

rehabilitation of a Native homosocial inclusive of the restored Native homo-sexual continuum.

From symbolic re-sedimentation to social realities: the problem of AIDS

The *possibility* of this move from a “symbolic” (narrative) to the socio-political (homosocial), as well as the move from *individual* performances of gender re-signification to the reconfiguration of *societal* structures, has been viewed as weakly theorized in Butler’s work. Lois McNay has criticized Butler’s discussion of her performative model for prioritizing the “primarily symbolic notion of resignification” over “a more sociocentric conception of agency” (181).

... while it provides an ontological account of the psychic conditions that permit resistance on an individual level, it fails to explore fully how the active appropriation and reshaping of values and resources by actors may result in changes, at a collective level, to socio-symbolic definitions of identity. (190)

Apropos of Allen’s novel, similar criticism has been leveled at what Leslie Rabin, in her discussion of Hélène Cixous, has called “symbolic feminism.”

...the blind spot in the discursive practices of symbolic feminism is that they tend to repress the social dimension of gender by collapsing the social into the symbolic. [...] Strategies of feminine writing can subvert symbolic gender while leaving social gender oppression intact if they do not also adopt social feminist strategies of institutional transformation. (472, 474)

One can argue that in both novels the socio-political agency of the re-performed Native gender identity and its effect on the Native homosocial seems to remain an envisioned potentiality. In both *Shadow* and *Drowning*, while the respective gender continuums have been restored on a private level – involving a successful move from the symbolic to the material experience of the individual - in the public realm, the symbolically recuperated Native homosocial has no “real world” counterpart in the novels; the reader learns nothing of Ephanie’s life after her vision, as the reader learns nothing of Josh and Jimmy’s life together after the final scene of the consummation of their relationship.

Nevertheless, in *Drowning* it is exactly this consummation which signals the treatment in the novel of the complexity of the move from symbolically re-valued homosexual gender identities to their physical expression and societal status. Specifically, Jimmy and Josh’s relationship references the socio-political issue which has more than any other problematized the integration of the gay movement’s recuperated homo-sexual gender continuums, based as they were on a symbolic legitimization (i.e., “pride”) of homosexual desire, into the greater homo-social: AIDS. When Josh and Jimmy, as Womack’s contemporary parallel of Seborn and Tarbie, are ready to make a similar commitment to each other, Jimmy reveals that he is HIV positive.

During the 1980s, AIDS was exclusively associated not only with homosexual intercourse, but with “the homosexual lifestyle.” This lifestyle was seen as typified by promiscuity, a characterization of homosexual desire as implicitly the opposite of heterosexual desire which was presumed to lead to monogamy and marriage. In addition to being a health concern, AIDS became the focal point of discussions concerning the institutionalized exclusive legitimization of heterosexual relationships (i.e., legal marriage and common-law marriage) to the detriment of homosexual partnership rights.

...in a culture in which gay relationships don’t get legitimated as real relationships, [...] when they dissolve, or when a partner dies, the loss isn’t really legitimated as legitimate loss- hospitals don’t release the body to the lover, courts don’t accept the status of the partner, families do or do not convene to grieve the spousal death...(V. Bell 172)

In the context of Womack's novel, the importance of legitimizing non-heterosexual relationships as real in the Native community directly involves the structures, rights, and support systems predicated on the definition and recognition of family and kinship which give coherence to a culture. Native writers have indicated that not only have Native homosexuals faced this mainstream negation of their relationships, but that Native AIDS sufferers have often faced rejection by their tribal communities both in relation to gender and a concept of ethnicity.

Each of us has heard personal stories from men who were not welcome "home" because they had that "white gay man's disease" and that gayness was not part of traditional culture. (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang "Introduction" 3)

While Josh has performatively re-conceived "traditional culture" to be gender-inclusive, Josh and Jimmy must perform the physical act which will embody his (hi)story telling of a unified Creek nation. Ironically, the homo-sexual desire which Josh has performatively recuperated – "desire" being Sedgwick's key structural element governing gender continuums (2) - must now also be understood as a fatal threat to these continuums and relationships. Josh, frustrated that Jimmy will not allow sexual intercourse, attempts to argue a negotiation of risk and desire.

I continued to stake my claim to my right to decide for myself what level of risk I wanted to take with an HIV-positive partner, still believing that his need for friendship without sex was related to his fears about spreading the disease. Of course, his point that he had the same right to decide what level of risk he was willing to expose others to, giving his HIV status, was also hard to argue against. (271)

As they attempt to understand and define their relationship, they indicate the complexity of "performing" the contradiction of lovers' abstinence. This sexual non-performance can be seen as an inversion of the very continuum Josh has performatively repaired in that "desire," as the basis of a consummated homo-sexual gender continuum, must now be substituted by "friendship without sex."

While Josh and Jimmy cannot as yet satisfactorily perform this problematic gender situation, Womack directs them to the actions they can perform. Josh and Jimmy begin to volunteer at an Indian-run AIDS center which attempts "to get families and communities involved in supporting their members living with the disease" (248). While not described in more detail in the novel, this AIDS center, called "Project Vision," presents a concrete vision of current institutional efforts to repair the Native homo-social, efforts which encourage the cooperative integration of Native AIDS sufferers back into their communities and the acceptance of these individuals by their families. In addition to helping take care of Native AIDS sufferers, "just driving them around, taking them meals, everyday chores" (249), Josh tells us that he and Jimmy are getting to know some of the other Natives in the gay bars that they frequent, "listening to their stories. It was a good feeling, like we were kind of sticking up for each other" (272). These story-telling and personal-help activities indicate what Butler has called, in her analysis of the film *Paris is Burning*, "the social and discursive building of community," of

... a community that binds, cares, and teaches, that shelters and enables. This is doubtless a cultural re-elaboration of kinship that anyone outside of the privilege of heterosexual family (and those within those 'privileges' who suffer there) needs to see... (*Bodies* 137)

While Womack has Josh and Jimmy socially and discursively perform familial and communal relationships along the homo-sexual gender continuum, their performances are now, due to the threat of AIDS, predicated not on consummated desire but on non-consummated desire. Womack's narrative depicts not only the possibility but the reality of socially performable

homo-sexual and homo-social inter-relational identities which manage but do not negate the contemporary problematics of “desire.”

The novel concludes with the physical and “symbolic” consummation of Josh and Jimmy’s relationship, their love-making becoming the pivotal act which fuses Native two-spirit gender identities and Native cultural contexts. After making love in a river, Josh dreams that a giant red cedar tree has grown “at the exact spot where Jimmy had come in the creek.” Josh’s Aunt Lucy appears from behind the tree and tells Josh “now you know where those trees come from” (279). This storied context which embeds two-spirit sexuality into Native ontological and epistemological cultural systems has been remarked upon by Beth Brant as essential: “To deny our sexuality is to deny our part in creation. To understand our place in creation, I look at the stories within my tradition that celebrate difference” (qtd. in Driskill). Womack, also a champion of the importance of “difference” both in relation to queer-theoretical discussions (Jagose 77) and discussions of Native American non-assimilationist strategies, has attempted in this novel, as Allen did in hers, to re-perform and re-place the “different” two-spirit identity within a re-conceived Native tradition and tribal homo-social that celebrates this difference.

As explored in the analyses above, Native writers see in the performative nature of the oral tradition a promise of continuity with the past and of the ability to adapt to new situations and challenges. Both Womack and Allen have employed the “performance focused” aspect of the Native oral tradition to influence a Native gender performativity that is seen as “colonized” the West’s hetero-normative hegemonic performativity. Their implicit objective is to facilitate the impact that such performances of culturally significant narratives could ultimately have on socio-political realities. As Karl Kroeber has said, “The story *repeated* is a means not only of sustaining but also of changing established judgments of a personal life, the life of society, the life of our kind” [emphasis added] (Kroeber, “Technology” 31).

In Sum

In the introduction to her *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Eve Sedgwick rhetorically asks “Why should the different shapes of the homosocial continuum be an interesting question? Why should it be a literary question?” (5). These questions can be transposed to the focus of this study: “Why should the different shapes of Native subjectivities and identities be an interesting question? Why should it be a literary question?” Sedgwick’s answer and applied textual analysis, addressing the Foucauldian/Saidian role literary representation plays in the dominant society’s symbolic meaning-making processes and affirmation of hegemonic power structures, has been paralleled in this thesis regarding Native literature’s exploration of the socio-symbolic dynamics of the primitivist Other and oppressive identity contexts. With respect to this dimension of contemporary Native fiction, this study focussed on the desire of Native American writers to create, through the deconstruction and de-stabilization of these hegemonic discourses, the potential to counteract the oppressive socio-political effects of Euro-authored subjectivities and identity structures on their communities.

In tandem with Native literature’s deconstructive purpose, the creation of the potential for socio-cultural change can be seen as the constructive aim of the works explored. This aspect of literature is reflected in a complementary response to Sedgwick’s question in which literary representation is recognized as a generative site in which new socio-cultural contexts and constructs are envisioned. That this envisioning is a prerequisite for social change is implicit in Judith Butler’s remark that there are certain “social contexts and conventions within which certain acts not only become possible but become conceivable as acts at all” (252). As Butler and Sedgwick argue, a primary “social context and convention” within which “acts” which will lead to social change become “conceivable” is literature. Supporting the view that literature is not static “representation” but a participatory dialogic site of socio-cultural activity, Henry Louis Gates Jr. remarks that “a book is a cultural event” (141) and Bill Ashcroft states that “the written text is a social situation [...] for it exists in the participations of social beings whom we call writers and readers [...]” (qtd. in Bradford 15). In this study, Native American literature has also been seen as a generative site of “conceivable acts” - contemporary agential Native subjectivities and performed identities - from which new empowered social, political, and cultural contexts can be realized by a Native readership. Exemplary of this process is the development of Native gay identities from the inconceivable to the performable, as noted by Craig Womack who remarks that until the mid-20th century

“There simply was *no* available framework to provide a context for imagining the queer Indian” [original emphasis] (*Red on Red* 279). In his novel *Drowning*, this “conceptual” framework is provided so that the “continuum” of Native conceivable and realizable identities continues to broaden.

The *process* by which such a broadened symbolic framework of subject-ivities and identities in literature becomes actualized and performed is addressed by Lois McNay in her criticism of Judith Butler. McNay challenges Butler to attribute more agentiality to “creativity” and the “constitutive role of *imagination*” by which “values are fashioned and transmitted” and which “may result in changes, at a collective level [...]” (emphasis added, 188-190). In relation to Native literary contexts, N. Scott Momaday has famously formulated in his essay “The Man Made of Words” the power of the imagination to create the constitutive contexts of the self, stating that “we are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves. Our best destiny is to imagine [...] who and what, and *that* we are” (167). With respect to this confidence Native writers have in the power of words and imagination to stimulate personal and social change, the following section will be offered as a logical “coda” to this study of contemporary Native American fiction, providing an introductory exploration of a genre of Native writing which is arguably directly concerned with the very process by which empowered Native contexts are “conceived” of in literature in the hope of eventual realization, and whose readership is arguably the most “susceptible” to the constitutive effect of *imagination* and creativity on the actualization of both their individual and collective “conceivable” future identities and social contexts: children’s literature.

The following analysis of two children’s books will explore, as an applied integrated review of the issues discussed in this study, how the foci of this study have been portrayed as pertinent to the experience of Native children. While several Native authors have achieved a reputation specifically as writers of children’s literature – such as Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve (Lakota Sioux) and Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee Creek)- this “coda” will continue this study’s examination of Native writers of contemporary fiction by focusing on two who have written children’s books to communicate their insights into Native subject-ivity and identity to the next generation.

Coda: “For those who come after” (Crashing Thunder)

Katharine Capshaw Smith has remarked that “reconsidering our major writers as children’s author” reveals the distinctiveness of this genre’s “complicated aesthetic and political purpose” (5). Since the 1960s, ethnic children’s literature has become “a particularly intense site of ideological and political contest” (K. Smith 3) as minority parents and writers, themselves “children” of the Civil Rights Movement, attempt to monitor the representation of their communities in the institution which is the initial conveyor of social discourses: the school. Indeed, “multicultural” children’s literature is most often discussed in terms of its perceived pedagogical function to teach children not only accurate ethnic histories within the United States and to cultivate multicultural tolerance, but also to address the redressing of social injustice and oppression (Short, Fox 6-9). Revealing an implicit faith in “the role of literature in children’s lives, specifically in the power of literature to change the world” (Short, Fox 8), minority parents and writers desire to arm their children with the tools necessary to combat the legacy of Euro-authored subjectivities (racist stereotypes and inaccurate histories), and foster a confidence in viable contemporary ethnic identities (involving concepts such as “self-esteem” and “empowerment”).

In relation to “the complicated aesthetic purpose” of children’s literature, Smith has additionally remarked that “there is much thematic crossover between adult and child ethnic

literature: issues of identity, assimilation, nationalism, and cultural pluralism permeate both genres [...but] take on a different cast when examined through the lens of children's literature" (K. Smith 5). Central issues which have arisen in relation to the aesthetic "purpose" and "quality" of Native children's books are "authenticity and accuracy," which can be seen to correspond to the analytical domain of subject-ivity, while the thematic issues which have been recognized as "taking center stage" in Native children's literature involve "identity formation" (K. Smith 5). In the following analysis, two Native-authored books for the age group 9-13 will be compared with regard to their presentation of an "authentic" and agential (i.e. "empowered") Native child subject and in their thematic exploration of contemporary Native children's identity needs, specifically in relation to post-1960s multicultural contexts and ongoing (post)colonial concerns. These two books, *The Owl's Song* by Janet Campbell Hale (Coeur d'Alene) published in the 1970s and *Eagle Song* by Joseph Bruchac (Abenaki) published in the 1990s, have been chosen because the texts span the time-frame of this study of contemporary Native literature, because their authors have established a reputation as writers of both adult and children's literature and therefore can be seen as reputable representatives of the adult-children literary "thematic crossover," and because Bruchac's text is an *homage* to Hale's text, his plot paralleling that of Hale's and thereby highlighting the distinctive approaches offered in the 1970s and 1990s to similar situations and issues facing Native children.

Both novels explore their child protagonists' experience of the move from the reservation to an urban environment, their familial situations, and their difficulties in the city school. In *The Owl Song* (1974), the reader is introduced to the fourteen-year old Billy White Hawk whose mother died when he was six and whose sixty-five-year old father, Joe, has succumbed to alcoholism. After the suicide of his favorite cousin, Billy feels stifled by his familial and by reservation conditions and decides to leave the Benewah (Idaho) Coeur d'Alene Reservation. He moves in with his half-sister who, after following a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) "assimilative" education program, has found work in San Francisco. Attending a predominantly African-American high school, Billy is verbally teased and physically bullied, specifically by one boy named Curtiss Brown, because he is an Indian. In an attempt to demand more respect from his fellow students, Billy tells a story in class about Natives and colonialism. This action, however, creates an even more hostile school environment for Billy, and he becomes increasingly isolated, eventually falling seriously ill. In the hospital, Billy dreams about an owl, which he interprets as presaging his father's death. Returning to the reservation, Billy witnesses the brief rejuvenation of his father's health and vitality a few days before his death. Billy finds in this rejuvenation a new confidence in his own sense of self and in his future.

As indicated above, the plot of *Eagle Song*, published in 1997, parallels that of *The Owl's Song*. Danny Bigtree, ten years old, has moved from the Mohawk/Iroquois Akwesasne reservation on the banks of the St. Lawrence River to Brooklyn, New York City, where his parents have found work, his mother as a social worker and his father as a high-rise construction worker. Like Billy, Danny is teased and bullied because he is an Indian in his urban school, specifically by one boy called Tyrone, and attempts to influence this situation by having his father tell a Native story in class. While Danny apprehensively waits to see if the story has improved his situation, he has, like Billy, a dream associated with his father. After Danny dreams that an eagle is falling from a tree, his mother receives news later that day that his father was injured saving another worker from falling from a building. Returning to school after visiting his father in the hospital, Danny discovers that Tyrone has changed his attitude towards Danny, and they become friends.

Subject-ivity and Native children's literature: "authenticity"

Both novels portray the Native child subject specifically in relation to the concept of “authenticity.” As we have seen earlier, the concept of authenticity in relation to the Native subject in literature for adults is a dubious concept and has been scrutinized by proponents of poststructural and deconstructive cultural analysis for its essentialist presumptions and its implication in the hegemonic Civilized Self/Primitive Other dichotomy and the subsequent production of detrimental stereotypes. However, in relation to Native children’s texts, as in the critical appraisal of ethnic children’s literature in general, “authenticity” has come to mean the avoidance of these stereotypes and a critically accepted “truthful” portrayal of the Native subject. This truthfulness has been discussed in relation to two primary factors - the concept of authentic experience (in which the text conceivably reflects the reality of the young reader’s world) and cultural accuracy (in which historic and cultural facts are recorded correctly and within the appropriate context) (Fox and Short, eds.).

Despite the advances since the 1960s in the representation of people of color in children’s books⁹, the primary complaint of Native American writers is that contemporary non-Native authored children’s books continue to perpetuate popularized Indian stereotypes for Euro-American children (Stewart 182). Corrective moves by Native writers for children have ranged from historically “accurate” novels to those portraying an “authentic” contemporary urban experience; representative of this being Louis Erdrich’s *The Birchbark House* (1999), written to counter the brief “savage” stereotypical encounters and otherwise distinct absence of Natives on the Plains in the iconic book of the Euro-American child, Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie* (1935), and Hale’s *The Owl’s Song*, which has been described as “groundbreaking” by Frederick Hale (qtd. in Molin 27) and by A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff as “one of the few works about an adolescent urban Indian” (*American* 90).

In order to help educators and librarians judge the “authentic” subject-ivity of children’s books about Natives, studies such as those edited by Beverly Slapin and Doris Seale, *Through Indian Eyes: The Native Experience in Books for Children* (1998/2003) and Arlene B. Hirschfelder, *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography* (1982/1999), critically evaluate and provide criteria for judging the quality of books published about Natives for children. In the debate concerning who is most qualified to be the arbiter of the authenticity of such texts, it has been argued that, ultimately, the text itself must stand the test of critical appraisal from a variety of sources, from “insiders” who are members of the culture in question to “outsiders” who have dedicated themselves to becoming knowledgeable literary critics (Harris 124, Bishop 27, 30). While neither the authenticity of Hale’s nor that of Bruchac’s text has been challenged by the critical community, their portrayal of the Native child subject’s “authentic” experience will be seen to distinctively reflect their socio-political times: a “social realism” indicative of the 1970s, and a culturally affirmative idealism characteristic of the 1990s.

Identity and Native children’s literature: salience and empowerment

Linked to the rather different portrayals of authentic Native child subject-ivity in these two novels is the shared thematic of identity. As mentioned above, identity has been seen as a central focus in ethnic children’s literature with the coming-of-age story and the *Bildungsroman* the favored narrative forms (K. Smith 5). Perhaps the best known literary exploration of the identity development of Native American children is the young adult (age

⁹ After the *Saturday Review* article by Nancy Larrick (1965) titled “The All-White World of Children’s Books,” the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) was founded in 1967 to encourage writers of color to write for children and publishers to market these books.

15+) text *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) by Beatrice Culleton Mosionier. In this novel, two Native Métis (mixedblood) sisters are taken from their alcoholic parents in the 1960s and placed in a series of separate foster homes. As each sister identifies with one half of their Métis background, they experience the racist repudiation of Native identities from different perspectives: the light-skinned April, passing for white, hides her Native blood in shame in racist white society, whereas her dark-skinned sister Cheryl, developing a defiant, militant Native pride, experiences the societal degradation of Native peoples first hand. While this novel has been discussed in terms of the social oppression which polarizes Native identity options (Native identity erasure through assimilation or Native identity vilification as “other”), Mosionier’s narrative can also be seen to illustrate that mainstream society is not conducive to the development of a *range* of contemporary Native identities, from “middle class” ambition to tribal-centered commitment.

As *The Owl’s Song* and *Eagle Song* were written for an age group preceding that of *April*, ages 9-13, the texts explore the condition preceding the identity development of Cheryl and April, focusing on the conduciveness of societal contexts to the child protagonists’ potential for developing a contemporary Native identity and on the means they have to influence oppressive contexts. Accordingly, the identity concerns of the protagonists in *The Owl’s Song* and *Eagle Song* will be analyzed in terms of “salience” and “empowerment.” Identity theorists understand identity “salience” generally both as “the activation of an identity in a situation” (Stets and Burke 229) and as the probability, likelihood, possibility, or potential for an identity to be activated or invoked “across a variety of situations” (Stryker and Burke 286). While identity salience seems to presuppose an *a priori* identity waiting to be activated to some degree in appropriate identity contexts, this analysis will explore what could be seen as a pre-condition of identity formation for children: the extent to which social contexts facilitate the saliency of developing identities. As various social contexts continue to pose multiple barriers to the uninhibited development of contemporary minority children’s identities, educators have employed the concept of “empowerment” to encourage children to demand from their social contexts mutual respect, equal participation, and the freedom to develop their potential. As the protagonists in the texts move between home and school, the central challenge they face will be to find a mode of empowerment with which to change their environments to be more conducive to the saliency of contemporary, emergent Native identities.

Clare Bradford has suggested that in ethnic children’s literature there are two central social contexts in which in which children’s identity salience is made (im)possible: home and school (Bradford 157-159). Quoting bell hooks, Bradford emphasizes that contexts such as “home” and “school” in ethnic children’s literature “reveal more fully where we are, and who we can become” (qtd. in Bradford 146). While “where we are” can be understood, apropos this discussion, as the child’s social context, hook’s quotation notably does not contain the future modality “who we *will* become,” which can be seen to refer to identity as such. Instead, hooks employs the modality of possibility and ability, “who we *can* become,” which can be understood to indicate identity saliency.

Home

Clare Bradford has noted that in their portrayal of “home” in their books for children, “contemporary Indigenous authors are often caught between agendas of celebrating and affirming Indigenous cultures, and depictions, especially in realistic texts, of the negative effects of colonialism” on the reservation community and individual families (162). The two texts to be discussed reflect these two agendas as protagonists attempt to find favorable conditions for the saliency of their present and future identities in two interlocking facets of

“home”: the reservation and the nuclear family. The protagonists look to the reservation as their “cultural home” and to their parents as role-models for indications of what they “can” become. In the “realistic” 1970s text *The Owl’s Song*, the alcoholism of the widowed father and the culturally and economically depressed situation on the reservation present Billy with a distinctively limited vision of his future possibilities and his future self, limitations which he must try to overcome. In the “affirmative” 1990s text *Eagle Song*, the stability, affection, and cultural confidence of Danny’s parents as they cope with urban life in Brooklyn present Danny with an example of successfully salient Native identities outside the reservation, which Danny tries to emulate. While Hale’s arguably relentless realism in *Owl* can be deemed “pessimistic” and Bruchac’s affirmative stance in *Eagle*, which carefully regulates the negative aspects of Danny’s experience, can be seen as “idealistic,” both authors represent a spectrum of authentic experience in their “portraits” of Native child subject-ivity.

1970s realism

Billy’s sense of the reservation as “home” is a combination of affection for the land and a realization that there are no prospects for him there: “He looked out over the quiet, rolling hills of Benewah and wondered of his future. What was there here, he wondered” (6). Billy’s question implies not only doubt concerning future employment but also concerning the cultural context for a salient identity, having been told by a tribal elder that “once the whole of the Benewah as the people’s to live in roaming freely [...] There were no [white] soldiers then, no Jesuit missionary [...] there is little left of what once was. The time is coming when even this will be gone - taken away. And we will be no more. The time is coming when the owl’s song will be for our race” (6, 7, 8). Pondering the colonization of his people, Billy cannot accept this message of cultural extinction and looks to his father and cousin as role-models pointing to future viable and salient Native identities.

Despite his father’s alcoholism, Billy sees his own identity potential in his father’s traditional coming-of-age experience: the acquiring of a vision, and a “man’s name.” Having been told that his father was “among the last of those to seek a vision” (39), Billy repeatedly asks his father to tell him of this experience and how he received his man’s name Sah-húlt-sum. Billy, however, witnesses the gradual vitiation of this experience in his father’s mind, as his father sings his man’s song when drunk and later suggests to Billy that his vision had been a UFO sighting. This latter remark suggests to Billy that his father no longer treats his experience as indicative of Native identity saliency, but only as an inexplicable event. Nevertheless, Billy does not see his father’s present identity predicament as detracting from the role-model significance of his father’s coming-of-age experience. Billy hopes that one day he too will have a vision and acquire a “man’s name,” indicating that he sees the saliency of his future “adult” identity within the traditions of his tribal community.

The relative who most represents for Billy the achievability of his own hoped for future identity saliency is his cousin Tom who functions as Billy’s older brother, teaching him the skills which are both practical and symbolic in a boy’s development towards “manhood”: how to shoot, to hunt, to drink, and to have sex. When Tom returns from Vietnam, Billy sees him within the metaphors of tribal culture, as a returning “warrior” (14). However, Tom returns traumatized, unable to care about “the future” which Billy wishes to explore together with him (17) and ultimately commits suicide in Billy’s presence. Having lost his mother to illness, his cousin to suicide, his father to alcoholism, and unable to find work or viable cultural contexts, Billy can no longer recognize “home” as the foundation of a future salient identity and decides to leave the reservation and move to the city. At his new urban school, however, he will face a new identity challenge, assimilation.

While Hale's text can be termed "realistic," its "agenda" clearly reflects the spirit of 1970s Native activism which aimed to draw attention to the multiple hardships that Native children face whose home as place (reservation) and home as family have been traumatized by the interlinked repercussions of colonial history and contemporary situations. By way of contrast, Bruchac's text portrays the other end of the spectrum of a Native child's experience of "home" and identity salience, and is informed by a decidedly affirmative cultural conviction and a 1990s multicultural confidence.

1990s affirmation

For Danny (ten years old), now living in Brooklyn, the reservation does not represent the site of (post)colonial traumatization as it does for Billy but a secure site of "sameness" and community with "lots of other Indian kids who looked and talked the way he did"(10). Insecure in his new urban environment in which he is "different," Danny does, however, have access to a reservation-like sense of belonging at Brooklyn's American Indian Community House where he regularly meets other "Skins" or "brother Indians" from other tribes (64). Danny is thus able to experience that Native "culture home" identity contexts can extend beyond specific culture home geographies. Both Bruchac and Hale manipulate this move from the reservation to an urban environment to serve their portrait of authentic Native child experience. Despite the fact that Native urban community centers were being established in the 1970s, to intensify Billy's predicament Hale has Billy leave a reservation-bound Native cultural identity context for a city inhospitable to Native culture. Bruchac, on the other hand, by failing to detail problematic socio-economic conditions on Danny's reservation and highlighting the existence of a supportive Native cultural context in the city, intensifies for his young readership a 1990s confidence in a Native "multi-cultural" mobility between culturally "hospitable" reservation and urban settings.

The intensification of affirmative situations which characterizes Bruchac's text applies most distinctly to the relationship between Danny's mother and father who are portrayed as ideal Native parental role-models. The significance of role-models in ethnic children's literature is arguably linked to their idealization in that such role-models signal the possibility of personal success "against all odds," odds such as slavery for African-Americans and cultural degradation and erasure for Native Americans (Harris 121). In both texts, the intensification of the parents' function as role-models, both in Billy's problematic and in Danny's idealized situation, can be seen to serve a common purpose: to urge not only the protagonists but the young *and* adult readership to aspire to adult responsibility and empowerment. As Julia Mickenberg remarks, ethnic children's role-models serve for the adult and child reader as a reminder that "*adults* have the responsibility, along with the power, to make the world better for the young people who will inherit it" (original emphasis, 86). Likewise, young readers need to aspire to become empowered and agential adults. Both Billy's and Danny's parents represent positive role models for meaningful and empowered Native adult identities, the primary difference being that Billy's father's core identity which Billy wishes to emulate (represented by the vision) is no longer salient, whereas it is Bruchac's purpose to present the successful saliency of contemporary Native adult identities to his young readership.

In *Eagle Song*, Danny's mother and father exemplify culturally affirmative and salient Native identities in both the work and home environments. At home, Danny's parents are not only loving but, most significantly, they frame their relationship within the context of a vital contemporary Iroquois tradition, as reflected in their playful banter which Danny witnesses. When Danny asks why he belongs to his mother's Iroquois clan and not to his father's, his father responds

“Clan membership always comes from the mother. That is the way it always is among our Iroquois people. It goes back a long time that way. The women are the ones who hold our nations together. We have to remember that.” Richard Bigtree looked across the room at his wife. “And if we don’t remember it, the women make sure to remind us of it!” Danny’s mother made a fist and shook it at her husband as he pretended to be afraid. Danny laughed. (19)

The use of the present tense in this passage is a clear signal to Danny and to Bruchac’s readership that traditional Iroquois familial structures can be defining aspects of a contemporary Native nuclear family, even in non-Native, patrilineal contexts. In his highlighting of traditional Iroquois matrilineal structures, Bruchac also encourages in his boy-protagonist and girl-readership the continued valuation and empowerment of women in both Native and mainstream societies. Ultimately, this passage goes beyond cultural didacticism to illustrate for Danny the successful saliency of this Native parental identity. As Bradford remarks, it interpolates fundamental cultural information “into a represented relationship characterized by playfulness and humor,” respect and affection (12-13).

In the environments beyond home in which parents act as intermediaries between the adult world and their children’s world, Bruchac has Danny’s parents introduce Danny to various multicultural situations in which the saliency of Native identity is affirmed. The American Indian Community House, where Danny’s mother works, is a multi-tribal site providing a context of Native identity normativity outside the reservation, its primary goals being to support and facilitate salient urban Native identities. Danny’s father, on the other hand, works in the non-Native context of high-rise construction work where Native identity is not normative. Despite the conceivable potential for ethnic hostility in such an environment, Danny’s father consciously makes his Native identity salient at work, displaying on his hardhat the Iroquois symbol of an eagle. In addition to the parents’ work environment, Bruchac briefly signals a religious environment which poses, as discussed in Section 2, distinctive challenges to Native identity: the church. Describing a wintery Sunday morning, Bruchac writes

As Danny and his mother walked to church, the wind whipped at their coats. In the stories his father told him, the winter wind was an old man with long, skinny fingers. Danny shivered at the feel of those cold fingers touching his skin.

By the time church ended, the sun had come out and the wind was gone. (67)

This seemingly insignificant detail is nevertheless distinctive in two respects: the generic use of the word “church,” empty of denominational specificity, and the lack of context concerning the cultural positioning of Christianity within Danny’s family. This generic and decontextualized mention of Christianity is not only striking in its contrast with the narrative’s primary involvement in traditional Native culture, signaled by Danny’s thoughts about his father’s stories, but also in Bruchac’s choice not to address potential intra-group identity tensions, such as those explored in Section 2. Bruchac’s brief mention of “church” arguably acknowledges and accepts the presence of Christianity in Native communities, but presents it as not influential with respect to Native identity as represented by Danny’s parents, thereby deactivating any potential it might have to problematize or impede Danny’s Native identity saliency and that of the novel’s young readership.

If, as the text indicates, Danny’s parental role-models embody affirmative salient adult Native identities in various multi-cultural contexts with confidence and ease, they are able to do this because Bruchac chooses not to present moments of inter-cultural tension, racism, or marginalization in the text’s adult world. While this can be seen thematically as multi-cultural idealism, it can also be seen as a narrative focusing device which singularly locates the confrontation with these realities in the child’s experiences at school.

School

While the portrayal of Billy's and Danny's experience of "home" has been characterized by the disparate agendas of realism and cultural affirmation, "school" is portrayed by both Hale and Bruchac in identical experiential terms and as posing identical challenges to both protagonists. In both texts, the urban school is for the protagonists not only a multi-cultural contact zone, but is arguable the site where the Euro-Native "subject" meets Native "identity" for the first time in the life of a Native American child. While this study has consciously separated the discourse of subject-ivity from the concept of identity, the influence of the discourse of the "other" on the development of individual and group identity has been touched upon in both Section 1, in which Vizenor discusses the danger of the "invented Indian," the adoption of romanticized Euro-authored subjectivity as "identity," and in Section 2, in which demeaned subject discourses had been internalized by the Native protagonists in their individual and group self-image. In the texts discussed here, both protagonists are confronted with Euro-authored Native "subject" terms applied to them mockingly as identity markers by their classmates. In the 1970s text, while Billy's primarily African-American fellow students are infused with a sense of black pride and confidence, they show him little ethnic acceptance, taunting him with stereotypical Euro-Native attributes: "'Do a war dance for us [...] Sing an Injun song for us.' [...] He heard someone make that war whoop sound, then another and another. 'Wooo wooo wooo. [...] go ahead, chief. Go ahead, Geronimo! [...] How about a rain dance. [...] Imitate Sitting Bull[...]' (116-117). Bruchac indicates that this situation has not changed, as the first line of his 1990s text is "'Hey, Chief, going home to your teepee'" (7). Attempting to explain that the Iroquois never lived in teepees but in longhouses, Danny is jeered at once again: "They'd just laugh again. Then Tyrone and Brad would ask him where his war pony was" (8).

The context for this teasing is clearly the typical dynamics of school children's grouping behavior in which the group is defined and unity maintained by the identification of a singular child as "different." When the child is from a marginalized ethnicity, the taunts used most often employ the dominant culture's stereotypical construction of the "other," which in its contrastive role defines the normative culture group. Therefore, for ethnic children, such "teasing" is not simply characteristic of or limited to the incidental or temporary marginalization within the school environment, but confronts the minority child with a microcosm of racist discourses and oppressive societal situations that they will also have to face as adults.

The reaction of both protagonists, as they attempt to avoid the psychological as well as the physical bullying, is to become as "invisible" as possible. In *Eagle Song*, indicative of the microcosm mentioned above, Danny extrapolates the consequence of his ethnic "difference" beyond his school environment and attempts to avoid society's gaze: "When he came out of the subway station, he kept his eyes down on the sidewalk, not looking up at the windows. He could imagine people looking at him from those windows, pointing and laughing"(12). In *The Owl's Song*, after several unsuccessful confrontations with his classmates, Billy attempts to keep out of their way, ignoring "their taunts. He put up with their jibes and insults and did nothing, said nothing. [...] He was anonymous, unnoticed, almost not there at all" (133). Both of these situations reflect the "silencing" of the subaltern subject. As children who have yet to explore their own Native identity potential, both Billy and Danny experience the impossibility of a contemporary Native identity saliency within these contexts, being only allowed to fulfill the role of Euro-authored Native subject-as-"other."

Both Hale and Bruchac have their protagonists attempt to gain "author-ity" over the oppressive dynamics of this situation by creating a new "discourse," i.e. by telling a story to

their class. Through this story, the protagonists hope to influence their social context, a process described by Bradford as central in many Native children's books in which "the liminal space of the school is a site of intercultural engagement where Indigenous subjects move through insecurity and fear to an enhanced sense of agency" (164). This agency, in which Billy and Danny demand from their society the liberty to develop and express a contemporary identity unhindered by racism is the process more specifically referred to as "empowerment."

Empowerment

Empowerment is ultimately the attempt to create a more egalitarian society and has been described as "an interactive process [...] through which people and controlling institutions are changed in ways which provide those people with greater influence over individuals and institutions which are in some way impeding their efforts to achieve equal status in society" (Delgado-Gaitan 42). One element considered by Paulo Friere in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) as critical to this process of societal change is an insight into current situations, i.e. a "critical analysis of the world" (Valentine, de Jong, and Kennedy 148). The stories told in the novels under discussion reveal a "critical analysis" of Native American predicament and imply "interactive" strategies, indicative of their times, meant to create a less oppressive social environment more conducive to the boys' identity salience. In *The Owl's Song*, Billy's story portrays contemporary situations in terms of on-going colonialism and suggests a "separatist" stance as an empowering attitude demanding recognition and respect in much the same spirit as the 1970s American Indian activist movement AIM. In the 1990s text *Eagle Song*, on the other hand, Danny has his father tell his class a story which implies that contemporary situations are due to historic misrepresentation ("othering") of Natives and suggests education as an empowering corrective as well as the cultivation of a sense of multi-cultural mutuality.

In *The Owl's Song*, Billy is taunted into telling a story in front of the class. He begins "Once there was a big country" and proceeds to describe how "funny-looking, white-skinned" people came, took over the land, and eventually brought black-skinned people. Billy, taking revenge for being teased and humiliated by his African-American schoolmates, goes on to say that "as it turned out, as free men [black-skinned people] were just as bad, if not worse, than their white captors" (119). Billy's story envisions the formation of an intertribal coalition which decides to ship the "uppity whites" and "uppity blacks" back across the ocean, the result being that "the country went back to being much like it was before, open and wild, quiet" (120). Within the context of postcolonial discourse discussed in Section 1, Billy's oppressive school experience, given a narrative parallel in his story, implies an ongoing colonial situation for Natives. The story he creates in an attempt to influence this situation could be called a "fairy tale" about the decolonization of the Americas with a "happily ever after" ending for Natives, and can be seen to echo the separatist rhetoric which fueled many ethnic nationalist movements of the 1970s. Considering that *The Owl's Song* was published one year after the historic 1973 American Indian Movement armed occupation of Wounded Knee, Billy's story can be seen to resonate with AIM's provocative oppositionality and resistant spirit, the goal of which was not a multicultural society but the immediate recognition of historic injustice, a refusal of racist disrespect and oppression, and ultimately political empowerment and autonomy (sovereignty) for tribal communities.

If Billy's story is one of cultural separatism and (post)coloniality, the story that Danny's father tells the class in *Eagle Song* can be discussed in terms of "intercultural engagement" and postcoloniality in which "post" means "beyond" colonialism and indicates the formation of new socio-cultural structures and discourses. Danny's father chooses to tell

the class the traditional tale of Aionwahta which Henry Wadsworth Longfellow misrepresented in his epic composite of romanticized Native legends “Song of Hiawatha” (1855). Danny’s father relates the legend of the historical Aionwahta’s role in the formation before European contact of the Iroquois League, which unified warring northeastern tribes and created a centuries-long peaceful alliance. Danny’s father’s story not only repatriates the Native story from its cooptation by Longfellow and the Euro-authored Native subject, it serves as a parable not only addressing the teasing in the world of children, but also the broader issue of racism in a society striving for multicultural tolerance. Furthermore, unlike the (post)colonial separatist stance of Billy’s story, Danny’s father augments his story of the Iroquois League with information meant to impress upon the class a postcolonial vision of United States and Native mutual structures, telling the class that “a lot of people who study how governments are made now think that the United States Constitution is partially modeled after the Iroquois,” and adding that the image on the United States quarter of an eagle holding thirteen arrows, representing the original thirteen colonies, was taken from the Iroquois League’s image of an eagle holding five arrows, representing the five allied tribes (46). Danny’s father’s story is meant to create a sense of respect and mutuality through a process of “multi-cultural education” in Native cultural accuracy and Native/United States concomitant histories. The aim is to create new cooperative social contexts which cross culture group boundaries and are conducive to all identities.

When Danny indicates that his father should tell this story at school because “I think they need to hear it in my school,” Richard Bigtree agrees (37). Both Billy and Danny feel their social contexts “need” to hear their stories, their “critical analysis” of society, in order to create new structures of respect, in Billy’s case, and understanding in Danny’s situation. Both protagonists engage in a process of empowerment as they attempt to demand from their social context the liberty to develop salient contemporary Native identities free from oppressive Euro-authored subjectivities. While the immediate effects of their stories seem to be a worsening of their situations, the result of each protagonist’s strategy to gain Native authority is presented as ultimately successful and meant to encourage the authors’ young readership to strive for empowerment despite social challenges.

Saliency achieved

In the 1970s “realistic” text, Billy’s situation at school deteriorates after his confrontational story, suggesting the scope of the change necessary to adjust a society founded on a long history of primitivist thought and ensuing discourses of Native assimilation. After Billy’s story, there is more hostility from his classmates and more pressure from his teachers and his assimilated half-sister to “fit in” and “adjust.” Strikingly, Hale draws a parallel between Billy’s situation and that of the school’s art teacher Mr. Barrows who, due to his homosexuality, has been told that he will be fired if he does not “watch his step” (130) and “play their game” (132), i.e. keep his sexual identity hidden and conform to the dominant performed mode of (gender/sexual) normativity. In a private moment, Mr. Barrows vents his frustration to Billy.

And he went on to talk about how power was always in the hands of the stupid and insensitive and since they were the ones running the show then people like Barrows and Billy would have to learn how to play their game, if only on a superficial level. “And then we’re free to do our own thing,” he said. (132)

The association of Billy’s situation with that of Mr. Barrows’ reflects the issue which the two-spirit writers discussed in this study explored in more detail: that there are meaningful parallels between the dominant society’s insistence that Natives “erase” their identity by performing assimilation and that same society’s insistence that homosexuals/lesbians “closet”

their identities and perform hetero-normativity. Assimilation proves to be what Billy fears the most as he imagines the complete erasure of his identity: “He was afraid of adjusting, of losing what he was and becoming someone different, someone tailored to the specifications of Lincoln Junior High School” (133).

In the worsening of Billy’s situation after his empowerment strategy, Hale indicates that despite the rise of militant ethnic identity movements in the 1970s, the recognition Native Americans needed from a society itself grappling with an uneasy multiculturalism remained difficult to achieve. Despite the fact that Billy is unable to influence this multicultural society at the micro-level of school, Billy’s confrontation with this oppressive “identity context” leads him to the realization of the Native adult identity he has been searching for (a vision) and which he believes will be salient and resilient no matter what his future socio-cultural contexts may be.

Unsure of how to act at school, he wanders to the coast and looks out at the sea. As he ponders the waves, he has an experience which he will later realize is his “vision.”

Look at the ocean! Always changing, yet always remaining the same. Old, old, everlasting, always-there ocean. Always changing, shifting, old things coming apart and new things forming, old life dying and new come into being. Always, the waves coming and going. Always changing, still always there, remaining the same. Way in the mist there was a place where waves rose and fell all together and repeated the motion. Staring at that place it looked like it might be a big ocean-going fishing canoe heading out toward the open sea, the steady rise and fall, the white foam in a row like the foam men might make pushing oars through the water and lifting them. He kept watching that thing. An optical illusion, he thought, and nothing more. (127)

The concept of change and continuity which comforts Billy has been discussed in Section 2 as the perceived nature and resiliency of Native traditions as they self-modify and remain viable in contemporary situations. Indeed, Billy’s experience has been described as a contemporary “vision quest” successfully achieved after he survives the extreme deprivations of various environments (Charles, “Out of the Cupboard” 178). Billy’s vision, however, will only become meaningful when he returns to the reservation and witnesses the rejuvenation of his identity role-model, his father.

At Billy’s return, Joe is infused with a renewed physical strength which communicates to Billy an affirmation of his life and self. Enthusiastically chopping wood for their fire, Joe

...spoke happily, short of breath, “Just like the old days. Just like it used to be.” [...] Joe wouldn’t slow down. He kept on and on, seemingly tireless. Strong he was, as he said, strong as a bull, and not old...no, not old at all. Joe grinned at Billy, a happy strong grin and Billy felt that he’d caught a glimpse of Joe as he once was, Joe just-like-in-the-old-days” (150).

Revealing the endurance of a core “self” rooted in “the old days” before both personal tragedy and cultural dissolution, Billy’s father becomes in the few days before his death the role-model Billy has needed and comes to represent the endurance of Native identity in acutely adverse contexts.

Likewise, Billy realizes that, despite the symptoms of oppressive colonial history, the home-culture of the reservation is similarly sustained in the perseverance of each individual.

He loved these Benewah hills, this place where the people of his tribe first came into being when the earth was young. [...] there was very little of what had been. It seemed there was no way of staying and living any more. Still, all this would remain with him when he went away and would not change. (152)

Now cognizant that he had acquired a vision at the seaside and with it the wisdom to see living continuity in what seemed like terminal change, he recognizes himself as carrying on the “identity traditions” of his people through his father as role-model. Imagining his future beyond the reservation, he is now confident “it would be different, yet, he knew it would be

all right. He was Billy White Hawk, he'd been sent his vision. He was a man like Sah-húltsum had been [...] and he would always be" (152). Referring to his father using "Joe" as his "man's name," Billy similarly affirms his own Native identity, proclaiming "Billy White Hawk was his man's name. He needed no other"(152). This declarative "speech act" is self-empowering; despite the fact that there is no tribal representative to "name" Billy within the coming-of-age traditions of his people, Billy affirms the tenacity of tribal identity contexts by deeming his contemporary name a reflection of his vision-experience and empowered sense of contemporary Native identity salience. These tribal identity contexts are ultimately, in the final passages of the text, seen by Billy to extend beyond the reservation, as he portrays all environments as extensions of the Native world.

It was all right, now. It was all right. Manitous, spirits of earth, wind, rain, sun. Father and grandfather and unknown ancestors. Benewah country and Lapwai and Clearwater, oceans, deserts, cities, it was all the same, now. It was all right. (153)

Not only does this deny the marginalization of tribal cultures, but it similarly implies that Native identity will be "all right": "right" in "all" environments.

While in the 1970s *The Owl's Song*, Billy's Native identity must be asserted and activated in the face of a persistently hostile and oppressive "multi-cultural society," in the 1990s *Eagle Song*, Danny's achievement of empowerment and identity salience can be seen to reflect, as discussed in Section 2, a "liberal multiculturalism" which, while emphasizing the equalities of all ethnicities and encouraging empowerment, has been criticized for being "color blind" in its vision of humanist societal solidarity. The "color blindness" of Bruchac's text is apparent in the complete absence of ethnic descriptors of Danny's classmates. The name of one of Danny's bullies, Tyrone, could be seen to encourage the reader to stereotypically picture this child as African-American. This tenuous narrative "clue" is supported only by the illustration on the second to last page of the Puffin 1999 edition of Danny and Tyrone's reconciliation, in which Tyrone is indeed African-American. While the purpose of Bruchac's reticence in portraying an explicitly multi-cultural school is unclear, the narrative effect of this "strategy" is that it focuses ethnic specificity primarily on Danny as Native American.

Like the immediate effects of Billy's story, Danny's relationship with Tyrone seems to worsen after the story of Aionwahta, Tyrone calling Danny "Hiawatha" and hitting him in the face with a basketball. Danny does not report this incident to the teachers, and after his father's near fatal accident, returns to school to face Tyrone, who begins to show respect for Danny as a person but has yet to show respect for Danny as a Native person.

Tyrone smiled. "Anyhow, Hiawatha, you cool. You didn't tell [the teacher] on me."
 Danny didn't smile back. "My name isn't Hiawatha. And it isn't Chief. My name is Daniel."
 Tyrone laughed. "Okay, Daniel. So what you want?"
 "I just don't want us to be enemies," Danny said. "Maybe we could be friends." He held out his hand.
 "She':kon?" That means "peace."
 Tyrone took his hand.
 "We're not enemies," Tyrone said, "She':kon, man." (77)

Unlike Billy's unsuccessful attempt to change the social dynamics of "school," Danny's attempted empowerment strategy is shown to positively influence this societal microcosm. Danny refuses the epithets of racist identity stereotyping, no matter how "good natured," and insists that Tyrone recognize his self-defined Native identity. This denial of stereotyping and the affirmation of contemporary identity is signaled, as it was for Billy, by a reference to his name: not Hiawatha, not Chief, not even the "child's" name Danny, but a more mature

“Daniel.” Tyrone accepts the terms of this new social structure of mutual respect when Danny offers Tyrone his hand in friendship and Tyrone accepts.

This reconciliation can furthermore be seen as the realization of liberal multicultural ideals through Native discourses. The culture-specific Native story about Aionwahta has been interpreted by Danny’s father as primarily concerning “peace” and “friendship,” and Danny and Tyrone’s exchange illustrates the story’s message that “a bad human being could be made into a good one. If you believe in peace, then an enemy can become a friend”(47). Bruchac has arguably employed humanist universalizing tactics to empower his Native child subject who subsequently insists on and achieves societal contexts of equality and mutuality conducive to a self-defined Native identity.

In both texts, neither protagonist sets out specifically to discover what a Native identity is, i.e. what it means to “be” Native American, but to discover how to create environments conducive to the discovery and expression of a developing contemporary Native American identity. Both texts attempt to help their young readership imagine this process in their own times and in relation to their specific challenges of “home” (reservation/family) and “school” (mainstream/multi-cultural society) environments and discourses. The texts’ differing approaches to the achievement of identity empowerment can be seen in the light of Rocío G. Davis’s remarks that the evolution of recent ethnic children’s texts has been

towards intercultural works that emphasize the varied cultural influences a child growing up in the United States experiences, rather than on acquiring a pure heritage identity. In American multicultural society, contemporary ethnic literature for children tends to highlight ways of affirming and celebrating difference as they simultaneously seek ways to cooperate and collaborate across different ethnic boundaries. (140-141)

However, Billy’s “pure heritage identity” of the 1970s and Danny’s intercultural “collaboration” of the 1990s need not be seen as mutually exclusive, era-bound strategies but as complementary approaches to contemporary situations. While the texts have been discussed primarily as reflections of their socio-political times, they can both also be seen to offer valid reflections of a range of contemporary realities (from the ongoing socio-economic and domestic problems of the reservations to the achievement of tribal community prosperity and domestic support programs) and a range of contemporary strategies for Native identity empowerment (from the instigating of “pure heritage” education programs in reservation schools to the ongoing tribal political insistence on mainstream acknowledgement and change).

Future subject-ivities, future identities

These texts presume that for children to be able to change their world, they must first be able to *imagine* “salient” futures: new subject-ivities and new identity contexts. However, as mentioned above, Friere has indicated that in order to imagine an empowered future, one must also be able to critically analyze the present. Ethnic children’s texts do not only offer visions of empowerment, but also seek to teach children those analytical skills which will enable them to understand, navigate, and influence their complex contexts (Short and Fox 21). Vivan Yenika-Agbawhas calls this “critical literacy” and directly connects it in the symbolic imaginative realm of children’s literature to the concept of empowerment in national and international contexts. Her discussion of the portrayal of African stereotypes in children’s texts is applicable to all ethnic children’s literature.

Critical literacy demands that individuals from across cultures be socially responsible for the establishment of a just and equal society [...]. The ability to question signs and meanings embedded in texts empowers readers with

skills that enable them to construct new knowledge by subverting these signs and the dominant messages they are expected to retrieve. Teaching children to “consciously subvert signs” (Myers, 1995, p. 582) enables them to read varying kinds of books in an empowering manner. Rather than accept these signs as absolute truths, children ask questions to uncover the different layers of meaning that are undergirded by specific ideologies.

Children should also realize that because society is complex, there is no formula for portraying life in African texts. It then becomes each reader’s social responsibility to negotiate personal meanings from existing texts, as well as other meanings that would make social change possible in our immediate and global communities. (243-244)

The linking in this passage of the child’s world to a broader societal context is echoed within the context of literature in Katherine Capshaw Smith’s remark that “we cannot tell the story of ethnic American writing without the voice of children’s literature” (7). The interlinking of ethnic adult and children’s literary “voices” as mutually implicated in each other’s development can be seen as a process noted by Clare Bradford, in her response to Perry Nodelman’s 1992 article “The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism and Children’s Literature.” In this article he proposes what, according to Bradford, “has come to be accepted almost as a given in children’s literature criticism: that children constitute a colonized group spoken for by adults just as Orientals are spoken for by Orientalists” (7). Bradford, however, qualifies this hypothesis by stating that unlike “Orientals” who remain in their “othered” subjectivities and are always spoken for, “children are always seen as occupying a state or stage that will lead to adulthood” (7) and, one might add, the empowered condition of speaking for themselves. These “critically literate” children will become the critical and creative adult “voices” producing *new* narratives of contemporary Native subjectivities, reflecting the continuity of changing Native traditions and culture, and imagining the saliency of Native identities in the multifarious social contexts of the future.

Bibliography:

- Adam, Ian, and Helen Tiffin, eds. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990.
- Ahmad, Aijaz. "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the "National Allegory." Eds. Bill Ashcroft, et al. *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995. 77-84.
- Ahmen, Sara. "'She'll Wake Up One of These Days and Find She's Turned into a Nigger': Passing through Hybridity." Ed. Vikki Bell. *Performativity and Belonging*. London: Sage Publications, 1999. 87-106.
- Alcoff, Linda Martín. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma." Alexander, Jeffrey C, et al. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. 1-30.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C., Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Alexie, Sherman. *The Toughest Indian in the World*. New York: Grove Press, 2000.
- Allen, Paula Gunn. "'Border' Studies: The Intersection of Gender and Color." Ed. Joseph Gibaldi. *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1992. 303-19.
- , "Introduction." Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. *Voice of the Turtle: American Indian Literature 1900-1970*. New York: Ballantine books, 1994. 3-19).
- , "Lesbians in American Indian Cultures." *Conditions* 7 (1984): 67-87.
- , *Off the Reservation: Reflections on Boundary-Busting, Border-Crossing Loose Cannons*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.
- , *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in America Indian Traditions*. Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1986.
- , ed. *Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women*. New York: Fawcett Columbine Books, 1989.
- , ed. *Studies in American Indian Literature*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983.
- , "Teaching American Indian Women's Literature." Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. *Studies in American Indian Literature*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983. 134-144.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1991.
- Angus, Patricia Monture. "Native America and the Literary Tradition." Ed. Renée Hulan. *Native North America: Critical and Cultural Perspectives*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1999. 20-46.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Making Face, Making Soul/ Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990.
- Apess, William. "The Eulogy on King Philip." Ed. Barry O'Connell. *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts press, 1992. 275-310.
- , "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man." Ed. Barry O'Connell. *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts press, 1992. 155-161.
- , William. "The Indians: The Ten Lost Tribes." Ed. Barry O'Connell. *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts press, 1992. 113-115.

- , William. "A Son of the Forrest." Ed. Barry O'Connell. *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts press, 1992. 3-97.
- Appiah, Anthony. "Topologies of Nativism." Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. 945-957.
- Archambault, Marie Therese. "Native Americans and Evangelization." Ed. James Treat. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 132-153.
- Armstrong, Meg. "'Buried in Fine White Ash': Violence and the Reimagination of Ceremonial Bodies in *Winter in the Blood* and *Bearheart*." *American Indian Quarterly* 21.2 (Spring 1997): 265-298.
- Arnold, Ellen L., ed. *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000.
- , "The Word Made Visible: Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*." Ed. Ernest Stromberg. *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. 214-237.
- Arnold, Philip P. "Black Elk and Book Culture." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67.1: 85-111.
- Ashcroft, Bill. "Excess: Post-colonialism and the Verandahs of Meaning." Eds. Chris Tiffin, and Alan Lawson. *De-scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality*. London: Routledge, 1994. 33-44.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- et al. "General Introduction." Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995. 1-7.
- et al, eds. *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Astrov, Margot, ed. *The Winged Serpent: American Indian Prose and Poetry*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1946/1992.
- Babb, Genie. "Paula Gunn Allen's Grandmothers: Toward a Responsive Feminist-Tribal Reading of *Two Old Women*." *American Indian Quarterly* 21.2 (Spring 1997): 299-320.
- Barbara A. Babcock. "The Story in the Story: Metanarration in Folk Narrative." Ed. Richard Bauma. *Verbal Art As Performance*, Rowley: Newbury House Publishers, 1977. 61-79.
- , "A Tolerated Margin of Mess": The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered.' *Critical Essays on Native American Literature*. Ed. Andrew Wiget. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985. 153-185.
- Bal, Mieke, Jonathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, eds. *Acts of memory: cultural recall in the present* Hanover: University press of New England, 1999.
- Baldridge, William. "Reclaiming Our Histories." Ed. James Treat, James. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 83-92.
- Barker, Francis, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iverson, eds. *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.
- , "Introduction." Eds. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iverson. *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994. 1-23.
- Barnes, Kim. "A Leslie Marmon Silko Interview." Ed. Arnold, Ellen L. *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000. 69-83,
- Barnett, Louise K., and James L. Thorson, eds. *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999.

- Bascom, William. "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives." Ed. Alan Dundes. *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. 5-29.
- Basso, Keith H. *Portrait of "The Whiteman: Linguistic Play and Cultural Symbols Among the Western Apache*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Bataille, Gretchen M., ed. *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981/1994.
- Bauman, Richard. *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1986.
- , ed. *Verbal Art As Performance*, Rowley: Newbury House Publishers, 1977.
- Bayoumi, Moustafa, and Andrew Rubin, eds. *The Edward Said Reader*. New York: Vintage Books, 2000.
- Bell, Betty Louise. "Almost the Whole Truth: Gerald Vizenor's Shadow-Working and native American Autobiography." *A/B Auto/Biography* (Fall 1992): 180-195.
- Bell, Michael. *Literature, Modernism and Myth: Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Bell, Vikki. "On Speech, Race and Melancholia: An Interview with Judith Butler." Ed. Vikki Bell. *Performativity and Belonging*. London: Sage Publications, 1999. 163-174.
- , ed. *Performativity and Belonging*. London: Sage Publications, 1999.
- Berkhofer, Robert, Jr. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- Berry, B. *Almost White: A Study of Certain Racial Hybrids in the Eastern United States*. New York: Macmillan, 1963
- Bertens, Hans. "The Debate on Postmodernism." Eds. Hans Bertens, and Douwe Fokkema. *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1997. 3-14.
- , *The Idea of the Postmodern*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- , *Literary Theory: The Basics*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Bertens, Hans and Douwe Fokkema, eds. *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1997.
- Best, Steven, and Douglas Kellner. *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*. New York: Guilford Press, 1991.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- , "The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse." *Screen* 24.6 (1983): 18-36.
- , "Of Mimicry and Man: Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *October* 28 (1984): 125-33.
- , "Postcolonial Criticism." Ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn. *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1992. 437-465.
- , "Representation and the Colonial Text: A Critique of Some Forms of Mimeticism." Ed. Frank Gloversmith. *The Theory of Reading*. Brighton: Harvester, 1984. 93-112.
- , "Signs Taken for Wonders." *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1984): 144-65.
- Bierhorst, John, ed. *Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature: Quetzalcoatl, The Ritual of Concolence, Cuceb, The Night Chant*. New York: Rarrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974.
- Bishop, Rudine Sims. "Reframing the Debate about Cultural Authenticity." Eds. Dana L. Fox, and Kathy G. Short. *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in*

- Children's Literature*. Urbana Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003. 25-40.
- Blaeser, Kimberly. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996.
- , "Pagans rewriting the Bible: Heterodoxy and the Representation of Spirituality in Native American Literature." *A Review of International English Literatures* 25.1 (1994): 12-31.
- Biolsi, Thomas "The Birth of the Reservation: Making the Modern Individual among the Lakota." *American Ethnologist* 22.1 (February 1995): 28-53.
- Booker, M. Keith. *A Practical Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism*. New York: Longman Publishers, 1996.
- Bowers, Maggie Ann. *Magic(al) Realism*. London: Routledge, 2204.
- Bradbury, Malcolm, and James McFarlane, eds. *Modernism: 1890-1930*. New York: Penguin Books, 1981.
- Bradford, Clare. *Unsettling Narratives: Postcolonial Readings of Children's Literature*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007.
- Brant, Beth. "Coyote Learns a New Trick." Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. *Song of the Turtle: American Indian Literature 1974-1994*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994. 156-159.
- , "The Good Red Road: Journeys of Homecoming in Native Women's Writing." Ed. Duane Champagne. *Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1999. 91-102.
- , *Writing as Witness: Essay and Talk*. Toronto: Women's Press, 1994.
- Bredin, Renae. "'Becoming Minor': Reading *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 6.4 (Winter 1994): 36-50.
- Brownlee, Kimberly. "Civil Disobedience." *Stanford Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 13 November, 2007 from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/civil-disobedience/>
- Bruchac, Joseph. *Eagle Song*. New York: Puffin. 1997.
- , *Survival This Way*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987.
- , "Whatever Is Really Yours: An Interview with Louise Erdrich." Eds. Allan Chavkin, and Nancy Chavkin. *Conversations with Louise Erdrich and Micheal Dorris*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994. 94-104.
- Brumble III, H. David. *American Indian Autobiography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Bryson, Susan J. "Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self." Eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer. *Acts of memory: cultural recall in the present* Hanover: University press of New England, 1999. 39-54.
- Burnham, Michelle. "Pomo Basketweaving, Poison, and the Politics of Restoration in Greg Sarris's *Grand Avenue*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 14.4 (Winter 2002):18-36.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993
- , *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York : Routledge 1990
- , "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40. 4 (December 1988): 519-531.
- Carroll, Peter N. and David W. Noble. *The Free and the Unfree*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988.
- Carroll, Rhoda. "The Values and Vision of a Collective Past: An Interview with Anna Lee Walters." *American Indian Quarterly* 16. 1 (Winter 1992): 63-73.
- Caruth, Cathy. "Introduction." Ed. Cathy Caruth. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995. 151-157.

- , ed. *Trauma: Explorations in memory*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- , *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Champagne, Duane, ed. *Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1999.
- Charles, Jim. "Out of the Cupboard and into the Classroom: Children and the American Indian Literary Experience." *Children's Literature in Education*. 27. 3 (1996): 167-179.
- Chavkin, Allan, and Nancy Chavkin, eds. *Conversations with Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994.
- Chavkin, Nancy Feyl, and Allan Chavkin. "An Interview with Louise Erdrich." Ed. Allan Chavkin, and Nancy Chavkin. *Conversations with Louise Erdrich and Micheal Dorris*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994. 220-253.
- Cheyfitz, Eric. "The (Post)Colonial Predicament of Native America Studies." *Interventions* 4.3 (November 2002): 405-427.
- Churchill, Ward. "The Crucible of American Indian Identity: Native Tradition versus Colonial Imposition in Postconquest North America." Ed. Duane Champagne. *Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1999. 39- 68.
- , "Contours of Enlightenment: Reflections on Science, Theology, Law, and the Alternative Vision of Vine Deloria, Jr." Eds. Richard A. Grounds, George E. Tinker, and David E. Wilkins. *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003. 245-272.
- , *From a Native Son: Selected Essays on Indigenism, 1985-1995*. Boston: South End Press, 1996.
- Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Code of Federal Regulations, Procedures for Establishing that an American Indian Group Exists as an Indian Tribe* Part 83 of Title 25 <http://www.doi.gov/bia/ofa.html>
- Cohen, Robin, and P. Kennedy. *Global Sociology*, London: MacMillan, 2000.
- Coltelli, Laura. *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.
- Conley, Robert J. *Mountain Windsong: A Novel of the Trail of Tears*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.
- "A Conversation with Louise Erdrich." Retrieved on April 20, 2001 from http://harpercollins.com/hc/readers/erdrich_interview.asp.
- Cook-Lynn, Elizabeth. "American Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story." Ed. Devon A. Mihesuah, Devon. *Natives and Academics*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. 111-138.
- , *Anti-Indianism in Modern America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.
- , "Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, the Third World, and Tribal Sovereignty." *Wicazo Sa Review* 9 (1993): 26-36.
- , *From the River's Edge*, New York: Arcade Publishing, 1991.
- , "Literary and Political Questions of Transformation: American Indian Fiction Writers." *Wicazo Sa Review* 11.1 (Spring 1995): 46-51.
- , "Who Gets to Tell the Stories?" *Wicazo Sa Review* 9 (1993): 60-63.
- , *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays: A Tribal Voice*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996.
- , "Who Stole Native American Studies?" *Wicazo Sa Review* 12.1 (Spring 1997): 9-22.
- Cruikshank, Julie, ed. *Life Lived Like a Story*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

- Daniel, G. Reginald. "Passers and Pluralists: Subverting the Racial Divide." Ed. Maria P. Root. *Racially Mixed People in America*, London: Sage Publications, Ltd, 1992. 91-107.
- Davies, Jude. "Naturalism." *The Literary Encyclopedia*. Retrieved on 6 January 2006 from <http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopic.php>.
- Davis, Rocío. "Metanarrative in Ethnic Autobiography for Children: Laurence Yep's *The Lost Garden* and Judith Ortiz Cofer's *Silent Dancing*." *MELUS* 27.2 (Summer 2002): 139- 156.
- Delgado-Gaitan, Concha. *Literacy for empowerment: The role of parents in children's education*. London: Falmer Press, 1990.
- Deloria, Philip Joseph. *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Deloria, Vine Jr.. *Custer Died For Your Sins*. New York: Avon Books, 1969.
- , *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994.
- Deloria, Vine, Jr., and Clifford M. Lytle. *American Indians, American Justice*. Austen: University of Texas Press, 1997.
- , *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*. Austen: University of Texas Press, 1998.
- DeMallie, Raymond J.. "Kinship: The Foundation of Native American Society." Ed. Russell Thornton. *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. 306-356.
- , "Nicholas Black Elk and John G. Neihardt: An Introduction." Ed. Raymond J. DeMallie. *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. 3-99.
- , ed. *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974.
- , "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." Ed. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh. *Modern Literary Reader*. London: Arnold, 1989. PAGES
- , *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- D'Haen, Theo. "Postmodernism: From Fantastic to Magic Realist." In *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice*. Ed. Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1997. 283-293.
- Dirlik, Arif. "The Past as Legacy and Project: Postcolonial Criticism in the Perspective of Indigenous History." Ed. Troy R. Johnson. *Contemporary Native America Political Issues*. London: Altamira Press, 1999. 73-97.
- Dollimore, Jonathan. *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*. Brighton: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1984.
- Dorris, Michael. *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*. New York: Warner Books, 1988.
- Drinnon, Richard. *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980.
- Driskill, Qwo-Li. "Stolen from Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 16.2 (2004): 50-64.
- Dundes, Alan, ed. *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Duran, Bonnie, and Eduardo Duran, and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. "Native Americans and the Trauma of History." Ed. Russell Thornton. *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1998. 60-76.
- During, Simon. "Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?" *Landfall* 39.3 (1985): 366-80.

- , "Postmodernism or Postcolonialism Today?" *Textual Practice*, 1.1 (1987): 32-47.
- Eagleton, Mary, ed. *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
- Durix, Jean-Pierre. *Mimesis, Genres and Post-Colonial Discourse: Deconstructing Magic Realism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998
- Dwyer, Margaret. "The Syncretic Impulse: Louis Owens' Use of Autobiography, Ethnology, and Blended Mythologies in The Sharpest Sight." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 10.2 (Summer 1998): 43-69.
- van Dyke, Annette. *The Search for a Woman-Centered Spirituality*. New York: NYU Press, 1992.
- Eisenstein, Paul. "Finding Lost Generations: Recovering Omitted History in *Winter in the Blood*." *MELUS* 19.3 (Fall 1994): 3-18.
- Ellis, Richard N. "Forward." Luther Standing Bear. *Land of the Spotted Eagle*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1933/1978. vii-xiii.
- Elias, Amy J. "Holding Word Mongers on a Lunge Line: The Postmodernist Writings of Gerald Vizenor and Ishmael Reed." Ed. A. Robert Lee. *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Poplar Press, 2000. 85-108.
- Emberley, Julia V. *Thresholds of Difference: Feminist Critique, Native Women's Writings, Postcolonial Theory*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- Epes Brown, Joseph. *Animals of the Soul: Sacred Animals of the Oglala Sioux*. Rockport: Element Press, 1992.
- Erdrich, Louise. *Love Medicine*. London: Flamingo, 1984/ revised edition 1993.
- , *Tracks*. London: Flamingo, 1988/1994.
- Erikson, Kai. *Everything in its Path*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1976.
- Erikson, Kai. "Notes on Trauma and Community." Ed. Cathy Caruth. *Trauma: Explorations in memory*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995. 183-199.
- Etienne, Mona, and Eleanor Leacock, eds. *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980.
- Evers, Larry. "Teaching American Indian Oral Literatures." Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. *Studies in American Indian Literature*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983. 33-47.
- Evers, Lawrence J. "Words and Place: A Reading of *House Made of Dawn*." *Western American Literature* 11 (February 1977): 287-320.
- Eyerman, Ron. "Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity" Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, Piotr Sztompka. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. 60-111.
- Fanon, Franz. "On National Culture." Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995. 153-157.
- , *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1961/1963.
- Felman, Shoshana. *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992
- Fiedler, Leslie A. *The Return of the Vanishing American*. New York: Stein and Day, 1969.
- Fixico, Donald L., ed. *Rethinking American Indian History*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.
- Fleck, Richard F., ed. *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*. Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1993.
- Fogelson, Raymond D. "Perspectives on Native American Identity." Ed. Russell Thornton. *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospect*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. 40-59.

- Fokkema, Douwe. "The Semiotics of Literary Postmodernism." Eds. Han Bertens, and Douwe Fokkema. *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1997. 15-42.
- Foshay, Tobias. "Intentionality, Originarity, and the 'Always Already' in Derrida and Gans." *Anthropoetics - The Electronic Journal of Generative Anthropology* Volume IV.1 (Spring/Summer 1998). Retrieved 16 January 2009 <http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0401/foshay.htm>
- Foucault, Michel. "Technologies of the self." Eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988. 16-49.
- Fox, Dana L. and Kathy G. Short, eds. *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature*. Urbana Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English. 2003.
- Francis, Daniel. *The Imaginary Indian*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992.
- Friedman, Susan Standford. "Identity Politics, Syncretism, Catholicism, and Anishinabe Religion in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *Religion and Literature* 26.1 (Spring 1994): 107-133.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1972,
- Fur, Gunlog. "Some Women are Wiser than Some Men." Ed. Nancy Shoemaker. *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2002. 75-106.
- Garber, Linda. *Identity Poetics: Race, Class, and the Lesbian-Feminist Roots of Queer Theory* N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Garcia, Mario. "Multiculturalism and America Studies." *Radical History Review* 54 (1992): 49-58.
- Garrouette, Eva Marie. *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Gates Jr., Henry Louis. "Authenticity or the Lesson of Little Tree." Ed. Dana L. Fox, and Kathy G. Short. *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature*. Urbana Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English. 2003. 135-142.
- Geertz, Armin W. *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning in the Hopi Indian Religion*. Special Danish Edition. Knebel, Denmark: Brunbakke Publications, 1992.
- "General Assembly adopts Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples" Sixty-first General Assembly Plenary 107th & 108th Meetings (GA/10612): Department of Public Information. Retrieved 17 December 2008. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/ga10612.doc.htm>
- Gill, Sam D. "Prayer as Person: The Performative Force in Navajo Prayer Acts." *History of Religions* 17.2 (November 1977):143-57.
- Gilley, Brian Joseph. *Becoming Two-Spirit: Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2006.
- Gish, Robert. "Mystery and Mock Intrigue in James Welch's *Winter in the Blood*." Ed. Ron McFarland. *James Welch* Lewiston, Idaho: Confluence Press, Inc., 1986. 45-57.
- Glancy, Diane. *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears*. New York: Harcourt, 1996.
- Gleason, William. "'Her Laugh an Ace': The Function of Humor in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*," Ed. Hertha D Wong. *Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine: A Casebook*. Wong, Hertha D. (ed.) *Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine: A Casebook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 115-135
- Goldberg, David Theo. "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions." Ed. David Theo Goldberg. *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. 1-44.
- , ed. *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

- Gordon, Avery G. and Christopher Newfield. "Introduction." Eds. Avery F. Gordon, and Christopher Newfield. *Mapping Multiculturalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 1-18.
- , eds. *Mapping Multiculturalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. *Ever Since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History*. London: Penguin Books. 1977.
- Green, Michael, ed. *Issues in Native American Identity*. Bern: Peter Lange, 1994
- Grim, John A. "Cultural Identity, Authenticity, and Community Survival: the Politics of Recognition in the Study of Native American Religions." *American Indian Quarterly* 20. 3 (Summer 1996): 353-376.
- Grounds, Richard A., George E. Tinker, and David E. Wilkins, eds. *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003.
- Guibernau, Montserrat. *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1996.
- Gutierrez, Ramon A. "Ethnic Studies: Its Evolution in America colleges and Universities." Ed. David Theo Goldberg. *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. 157-167.
- Gutmann, Amy, ed. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Haddad, Beverly. "Constructing Theologies of Survival in the South African Context." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 14.2 (1998): 5-18.
- Hershel, Helena Jia. "Therapeutic Perspectives on Biracial Identity Formation and Internalized Oppression." Ed. Naomi Zack. *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity*. London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995. 169-181.
- Halberstam, Judith: *Female Masculinity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- , "F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity." Ed. Julie Rivkin, and Michael Ryan. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. 758-767.
- Hale, Janet Campbell. *The Owl's Song*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974.
- Handler, Richard. "Is 'Identity' a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?" Ed. John R. Gillis. *The Politics of National Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. 27-39.
- Hanson, Elizabeth I. "Paula Gunn Allen." Ed. Janet Witalec. *Native North American Literature*. New York: Gale Research Inc., 1994. 128-132.
- Hardin, Michael. "Greg Sarris's *Grand Avenue*: Variations on Three Themes in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*." *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 29.4, (1999): 5-7.
- Harlow, Barbara. *Resistance Literature* New York: Methuen, 1987.
- Harmsen-Peraino, Suzanne. "Apocalypse and Utopia in the Works of Gerald Vizenor." Ed. Jaap Verheul. *Dreams of Paradise, Visions of Apocalypse*. Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2004. 228-238.
- , "Gerald Vizenor." *Post-war Literatures in English: A Lexicon of Contemporary Authors*. Groningen: Martinus Nijhoff publishers, Supplement December 2001. 1-26.
- , "The Ghost Dance Vision in Leslie M. Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and *Gardens in the Dunes*." Ed. Hans Bak. *First Nations of North America: Politics and Representations*. Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2005. 128-141.
- , "Reclaiming the Power to Narrate: Harry Robinson, Jeanette Armstrong, Thomas King." Eds. Jaap Lintvelt and W.M. Verhoeven. *European Perspectives in Canadian Culture and Society*. 's Gravenhage: Phoenix Press. 2001. 9-27.
- , "Writing from a Postindian Visionary Center: An Interview with Gerald Vizenor." *European Review of Native American Studies* 16.1 (2002): 1-6.

- Harris, Violet J. "The Complexity of Debates about Multicultural Literature and Cultural Authenticity." Eds. Dana L. Fox, and Kathy G. Short. *Stories Matter: The complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature*. Urbana Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003. 116-134.
- Hassan, Ihab. "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective." *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Spring 1986): 503-520.
- , *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987.
- Henry, Jr., Gordon. *The Light People*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994.
- Henry, Michelle. "Canonizing Craig Womack: Finding Native Literature's Place in Indian Country." *American Indian Quarterly*. 28 no. 1/2 (Spring 2004): 30-51.
- Hobson, Geary, ed. *The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979.
- Hochbruck, Wolfgang. "Cultural Authenticity and the Construction of Pan-Indian Metanarrative." Eds. Winfried Siemerling, and Katrin Schwenk. *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1996. 18-28.
- Holford, Vanessa. "Re Membering Ephanie: A Woman's Re-Creation of Self in Paula Gunn Allen's *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 6.1 (Spring 1994): 99- 113.
- Hollinger, David A. *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*. New York: BasicBooks, 1995.
- Hollrah, Patrice E. "*The Old Lady Trill, the Victory Yell*:" *The Power of Women in Native American Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Horne, Dee. *Contemporary American Indian Writing*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999.
- Howard, June. *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Hoxie, Frederick E., ed. *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996.
- Huang, Hsinya. "Catastrophe, Memory, and Testimony in Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman*." Ed. Michael Hanne. *Creativity in Exile*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004. 89-106.
- Huggen, Graham. "Postcolonialism and Its Discontents." *Transition* 62 (1993): 130-135.
- Hultkrantz, Ake. *Native Religions of North America*. New York: Harper Collins, 1987.
- "Humanism." *New World Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 16 Jan 2009 from <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Humanism?oldid=804620>.
- Hulan, Renee, ed. *Native North America: Critical and Cultural Perspectives*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1999.
- Hunter, Lynette. *Modern Allegory and Fantasy: Rhetorical Stances of Contemporary Writing*. London: Macmillan Press, 1989.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge, 1988.
- , *The Politics of Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- , *A Theory of Parody*. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- Hymes, Dell. "*In Vain I Tried to Tell You*": *Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.
- Isernhagen, Hartwig. *Momaday, Vizenor, Armstrong: Conversations on American Indian Writing*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.
- Isernhagen, Hartwig. "They Have Stories, Don't They?": Some Doubts Regarding an Overused Theorem." Ed. Elvira Pulitano. *Transatlantic Voices: Interpretations of Native North American Literatures*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2007. 3-23.

- Jacobs, Sue-Ellen, Wesley Thomas, Sabine Lang. "Introduction." Eds. Jacobs, Sue-Ellen, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang. *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997. 1-18.
- , eds. *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997.
- Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.
- Jahner, Elaine. "A Critical Approach to American Indian Literature." Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. *Studies In American Indian Literature*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983. 211-224.
- , "Intermediate Forms Between Oral and Written Literature." Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. *Studies In American Indian Literature*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983. 66-74.
- , "Trickster Discourse and Postmodern Strategies." Ed. A. Robert Lee. *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Poplar Press, 2000. 38-58.
- Jaimes Guerrero, M. Annette. "Academic Apartheid: American Indian Studies and "Multiculturalism." Ed. Avery F. Gordon, and Christopher Newfield. *Mapping Multiculturalism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 49-63.
- , "Some Kind of Indian: On Race, Eugenics, and Mixed-Bloods." Ed. Naomi Zack. *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity*. London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1995. 133-154.
- Jameson, Frederic. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text* 15 (Fall 1986): 65-88.
- Jones, Stephen Graham. *The Fast Red Road: A Plainsong*. Tallahassee: Fiction Collective Two, 2000.
- Johnson, Troy R., ed. *Contemporary Native American Political Issues*. London: Sage Publications, 1999.
- Johnson, Troy. "Introduction." Ed. Troy Johnson. *Contemporary Native American Political Issues*. London: Sage Publications, 1999. 7-15.
- Johnson, Troy, Duane Champagne, and Joane Nagel. "American Indian Activism and Transformation: Lessons from Alcatraz." Ed. Troy Johnson. *Contemporary Native American Political Issues*. London: Sage Publications, 1999. 283-314.
- Josephy, Alvin M., Joanne Nagel, and Troy Johnson, eds. *Red Power: American Indian's Fight for Freedom*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999.
- Justice, Daniel Heath. "Go Away Water!": Kinship Criticism and the Decolonisation Imperative." Eds. Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton. *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. 147-168.
- Karrer, Wolfgang, and Hartmut Lutz. "Minority Literatures in North America: From Cultural Nationalism to Liminality." Eds. Wolfgang Karrer and Hartmut Lutz. *Minority Literatures in North America: Contemporary Perspectives*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990. 11-64.
- Kelly, Paul. "Introduction: Between Culture and Equality." Ed. Paul Kelly. *Multiculturalism Reconsidered*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002. 1-17.
- , ed. *Multiculturalism Reconsidered*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002.
- Kenny, Maurice. *Tortured Skins and Other Fictions*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000.
- Kent, Alicia. "Native American Feminist Criticism in the Contact Zone." *Northwest Review* 35.3 (1997): 100-114.

- Kidwell, Clara Sue. "The Power of Women in Three American Indian Societies." *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 6 (1979): 113-21.
- Kidwell, Clara Sue, and Peter Nabokov. "Directions in Native American Science and Technology." Ed. Russell Thornton. *Studying Native North America: Problems and Prospects*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. 357-384.
- King, Thomas, ed. *All My Relations*. Toronto, Ontario, 1990.
- , "Introduction." Ed. Thomas King. *All My Relations*. Toronto, Ontario, 1990. ix-xvi.
- , "A MELUS interview: N. Scott Momaday- Literature and the Native Writer." *MELUS* 10.4 (Winter 1983): 66-72.
- Kroeber, Karl, ed. *American Indian Persistence and Resurgence*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.
- , "Deconstructionist Criticism and American Indian Literature," *Boundary* 2.7 (1979): 72-87.
- , "An Introduction to the Art of Traditional American Indian Storytelling." Ed. Karl Kroeber. *Traditional Literatures of the American Indian: Texts and Interpretations*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 1-24.
- , "Technology and Tribal Narrative." Ed. Gerald Vizenor. *Narrative Chance*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989. 17-38.
- ed. *Traditional Literatures of the American Indian: Texts and Interpretations*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.
- Krupat, Arnold. *Ethnocriticism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- , *For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American Autobiography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- , "Foreword." Roy Harvey Pearce. *Savagism and Civilization: A study of the Indian and the American Mind*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.vii-xv.
- , ed. *I Tell You Now*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.
- , "Identity and Difference in the Criticism of Native American Literature." *Diacritics* 13.2 (1983): 2-13.
- , ed. *New Voices in Native American Literary Criticism*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993.
- , "Postcoloniality and Native American Literature." *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7.1 (1994): 163-80.
- , "Post-Structuralism and Oral Tradition." Ed. Brian Swan and Arnold Krupat. *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. 113-28.
- , *Red Matters: Native American Studies*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
- , *The Turn to the Native*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.
- , *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Krupat, Arnold, and Brian Swann, eds. *Here First: Autobiographical Essays by Native American Writers*. New York: Random House, 2000.
- Kymlicka, Will. *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- LaDuke, Winona. *Last Standing Woman*. Stillwater MN: Voyageur Press, 1997.
- Lang, Sabine. "Various Kinds of Two-Spirit People: Gender Variance and Homosexuality in Native American Communities." Eds. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang. *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997. 100-118.
- de Lauretis, Teresa. "The Technology of Gender." Eds. Julie Rivkin, and Michael Ryan. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. 713-721.

- Landrum, Larry. "The Shattered Modernism of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 42.4 (1996): 763-786.
- Lawrence, D.H. *Studies in Classic American Literature*. New York: Penguin books, 1978.
- Lazarus, Neil. "Frederic Jameson on 'Third-World Literature: A Qualified Defence.'" Eds. Sean Homer, and Douglas Kellner. *Frederic Jameson: A Critical Reader*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 42-61.
- Lee, A. Robert, ed. *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Poplar Press, 2000.
- , *Multicultural American Literature: Comparative Black, Native, Latino/a and Asian American Fictions*. Edinburgh: University Press of Mississippi, 2003.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Tristes Tropiques*. New York: Penguin, 1955/1973.
- Lincoln, Kenneth. *Indi'n Humor: Bicultural Play in Native America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- , *Native American Renaissance*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Lloyd, Moya. "Performativity, Parody, Politics." Ed. Vikki Bell. *Performativity and Belonging*. London: Sage Publications, 1999. 195-213.
- Lomba, Anita. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* London: Routledge, 1998.
- Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." Ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table, 1983. 98-101.
- de Lotbinière-Harwood. 'Interview with Lee Maracle.' *Trivia: A Journal of Ideas* 14 (Spring 1989): 24-36.
- Lubiano, Wahneema. "Like Being Mugged by a Metaphor: Multiculturalism and State Narratives." Eds. Gordon, Avery F., and Christopher Newfield. *Mapping Multiculturalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 64-75.
- Luckhurst, Roger. "Mixing Memory and Desire: Psychoanalysis, Psychology, and Trauma Theory." Ed. Patricia Waugh. *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 497-507.
- Lyman, Christopher M. *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis*. Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982.
- Lyons, Scott Richards. "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?" *College Composition and Communication* 51.3 (February 2000). 447-68.
- Lytard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Madsen, Deborah L. "On Subjectivity and Survivance." Ed. Gerald Vizenor. *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. 61-88.
- Madsen, Deborah L. "Of Time and Trauma: The Possibilities for Narrative in Paula Gunn Allen's *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*." Ed. Elvira Pulitano. *Transatlantic Voices: Interpretations of Native North American Literatures*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2007. 111-128.
- Manuel, George, and Michael Posluns. *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*. New York: The Free Press, 1974.
- Maracle, Lee. *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1996.
- Maxey, Rosemary McCombs. "Who can Sit at the Lord's Table?: The Experience of Indigenous Peoples." Ed. James Treat. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 38-50.
- McCluskey, Sally. "'Black Elk Speaks': And So Does John Neihardt." Ed. Janet Witalec. *Native North American Literature*. New York: Gale Research Inc., 1994. 48-52.

- McCulloch, Anne Merline, and David E. Wilkins. " 'Constructing' Nations within States: The Quest for Federal Recognition by the Catawaba and Lumbee Tribes." *American Indian Quarterly* 19.3 (Summer 1995): 361-389.
- McFarland, Ron. "An Interview with James Welch." Ed. Ron McFarland. *James Welch* Lewiston, Idaho: Confluence Press, Inc. 1986. 1-19.
- , ed. *James Welch* Lewiston, Idaho: Confluence Press, Inc. 1986.
- McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1987.
- McLaren, Peter. "White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism." Ed. David Theo Goldberg. *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. 45-74.
- McLoughlin, William G. *The Cherokees and Christianity: 1794-1870*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994.
- McNay, Lois. "Subject, Psyche and Agency: The Work of Judith Butler." Ed. Vikki Bell. *Performativity and Belonging*. London: Sage Publications, 1999. 175-193.
- Magdaleno, Jana Sequoya. "How (!) Is an Indian? A Contest of Stories, Round 2." Eds. Amritjit Singh, and Peter Schmidt. *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2000. 279-299.
- Mallikarjuna Rao, P., Rajeshwar Mittapalli, and Damodar Rao. "Introduction." Eds. P. Mallikarjuna Rao, Rajeshwar Mittapalli, K. Damodar Rao. *Postcolonial Theory and Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2003. v-xiv.
- Maristuen-Rodakowski, Julie. "The Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota: Its History as Depicted in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* and *The Beet Queen*." Ed. Hertha Wong. *Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine: A Casebook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 13-16.
- Mathes, Valerie. "A New Look at the Role of Women in Indian Societies." *American Indian Quarterly* 2 (Summer 1975): 131-39.
- Mathews, John Joseph. *Sundown*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988.
- McNickle, D'Arcy. *The Surrounded*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.
- Medicine, Beatrice. "American Indian Family: Cultural Change and Adaptive Strategies." *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 8.4 (Winter 1981): 13-23.
- , "Berdache." Ed. Frederick Hoxie. *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996. 67.
- , "Role and Function of Indian Women." *Indian Education* 7 (January 1977): 4-5.
- , "The Role of Women in Native Societies: A Bibliography." *Indian Historian* 8 (Summer 1975): 50-53.
- Mickenberg, Julia. "Civil Rights, History, and the Left: Inventing the Juvenile Black Biography." *MELUS* 27.2 (Summer 2002): 65-92.
- Mihesuah, Devon A. "American Indian Identities: Issues of Individual Choice and Development." Ed. Duane Champagne. *Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1999. 13-38.
- , ed. *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998.
- Miller, Jay. "Families." Ed. Frederick Hoxie. *Encyclopaedia of North American Indians*, New York: Houston Mifflin Company, 1996. 192-197.
- Milun, Kathryn. "(En)countering Imperialist Nostalgia: The Indian Reburial Issue." *Discourse*. 14.1 (Winter 1991-1192): 58-74.
- Minh-ha, Trinh T. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Molin, Paulette F. *American Indian Themes in Young Adult Literature*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005.

- Momaday, N. Scott. *House Made of Dawn*. New York: Signet Books, 1966.
- , "The Man Made of Words." Ed. Geary Hobson. *The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979. 162-173.
- , *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969.
- Mooney, James. *The Ghost-Dance Religion and Wounded Knee*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1973.
- Moore, David L.. "Decolonizing Criticism: Reading Dialectics and Dialogics in Native American Literatures." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 6.4, Winter 1994, 7-35.
- Moore, David L. "Myth, History, and Identity in Silko and Young Bear: Postcolonial Praxis." Ed. Arnold Krupat. *New Voices in Native American Literary Criticism*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993. 370-395.
- , "Return of the Buffalo: Cultural Representation as Cultural Property." Ed. Gretchen M. Bataille. *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. 52-79.
- Moraga, Cherríe, and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981.
- Morris, Glenn T. "Vine Deloria, Jr. and the Development of a Decolonizing Critique of Indigenous Peoples and International Relation." Eds. Richard A. Grounds, George E. Tinker, and David E. Wilkins. *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003. 97-154.
- Morris, Irvin. *From the Glittering World: A Navajo Story*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1997.
- Morrison, Kenneth M. "The Mythological Sources of Abenaki Catholicism: A Case Study of the social History of Power." *Religion* 11 (1981): 235-263.
- Mourning Dove. *Cogewea: The Half-Blood*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991.
- Murray, David. *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts*. London: Pinter Publishers, 1991.
- Nagel, Joanne. *American Indian Ethnic Renewal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Nagel, Joanne and Troy Johnson, eds. *Red Power: American Indian's Fight for Freedom*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999.
- Nakashima, Cynthia L. "Voices From the Movement: Approaches to Multiraciality." Ed. Maria P. P. Root. *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the new Frontier*. London: Sage Publications, 1996. 79-97.
- "Native struggles for Land and Life: An Interview with Winona LaDuke." Retrieved 12 November 2008 from <http://yeoldconsciousnessshoppe.com/art11.html>
- Needham, Anuradah Dingwaney. *Using the Master's Tools: Resistance and the Literature of African and South-Asian Diasporas*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Neihardt, John G. *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of A Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961.
- Nelson, Cary, and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Newfield, Christopher, and Avery F. Gordon. "Multiculturalism's Unfinished Business." Eds. Gordon, Avery F., and Christopher Newfield. *Mapping Multiculturalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 76-115.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Black Skins, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.
- , *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: Curry, 1986.
- Niezen, Ronald. *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

- Norris, Christopher. *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 1982.
- O'Connell, Barry. "Introduction." Ed. O'Connell, Barry. *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts press, 1992. xiii-lxxvii.
- , eds. *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts press, 1992.
- Olick, Jeffrey K. "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures." *Sociological Theory* 17.3 (November 1999): 333-348.
- Ortiz, Simon J. "Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism." *MELUS* 8.2 (Summer 1981): 7-12.
- Ortiz, Simon J., ed. *Earth Power Coming*. Tsale: Navajo Community College Press, 1983.
- , *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998.
- Osborne, Stephen D. "Legal and Tribal Identity in Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus*." *Studies in American Indian Literature* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 115-127.
- , " 'The Voice of Law: John Marshall and Indian Land Rights.' " Ed. Michael K. Green. *Issues in Native American Cultural Identity*. Bern: Peter Lang, 1995. 57-80.
- Owens, Louis. "Afterword." Gerald Vizenor. *Bearheart*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1978. 247-254.
- Owens, Louis. "As If An Indian Were Really An Indian: Native American Voices and Postcolonial Theory." Ed. Gretchen Bataille. *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. 11-24.
- , *Bone Game*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994.
- , *Dark River*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.
- , " 'Grinning Aboriginal Demons': Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart* and the Indian's Escape form Gothic." Ed. David Mogen *et al.* *Frontier Gothic*. London: Associated University Presses, 1993. 71-83.
- , *Mixedblood Messages*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998.
- , *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.
- , *Sharpest Sight*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.
- , *Wolfsong*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.
- Parker, Robert Dale. *The Invention of Native American Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Parry, Benita. "Directions and Dead Ends in Postcolonial Studies." Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995. 66-81.
- , "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse." *Oxford Literary Review* 9.1 and 2 (1987): 25-58.
- , "Resistance Theory/Theorising Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism." Eds. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iverson. *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994. 172-196.
- Pearce, Roy Harvey. *Savagism and Civilization: A study of the Indian and the American Mind*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Penn, William S., ed. *As We Are Now: Mixblood Essays on Race and Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Phelan, Peggy and Jill Lane, eds. *The ends of Performance* New York: New York University Press 1998.

- Pfister, Joel. *Individuality Incorporated: Indians and the Multicultural Modern*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Powers, William. "When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens." *Social Text* 24 (1990): 43-56.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact zone." *Profession* (1991) : 33-40.
- , "Transculturation and Autoethnography: Peru, 1615/1980." Eds. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iverson. *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994. 24-46.
- Prince-Hughes, Tara. "Contemporary Two-Spirit Identity in the Fiction of Paula Gunn Allen and Beth Brant." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 10.4 (Winter 1998): 9-31.
- Pulitano, Elvira. *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.
- ,ed. *Transatlantic Voices: Interpretations of Native North American Literatures*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.
- , "Waiting for Ishi: Gerald Vizenor's *Ishi and the Wood Ducks* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 73-92.
- Quayson, Ato and David Theo Golderberg. "Introduction." Eds. Ato Quayson, and David Theo Goldberg. *Relocating Postcolonialism* Oxford: Blackwell publisher, 2002. xi-xxii.
- , ed. *Relocating Postcolonialism* Oxford: Blackwell publisher, 2002.
- Purdy, John. "'He Was Going Along': Motion in the Novels of James Welch." *American Indian Quarterly* 14.2 (Spring 1990): 133-146.
- Rabin, Leslie W. "No Lost Paradise: Social Gender and Symbolic Gender in the Writings of Maxine Hong Kingston." *Signs* 12.3 (1987): 471-92.
- Radin, Paul. *The Trickster*. New York: Schocken Books, 1956.
- Rainwater, Catherine. *Dreams of Fiery Stars: The Transformation of Native American Fiction*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- , "Reading Between Worlds: Narrativity in the Fiction of Louise Erdrich." Ed. Hertha D. Wong. *Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine: A Casebook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 163-178.
- de Ramirez, Susan Berry Brill. *Contemporary American Indian Literatures and the Oral Tradition*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999.
- Ramsey, Jarold. *Coyote Was Going There: Indian Literature of the Oregon Country*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977.
- , *Reading the Fire*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.
- Red Earth, Michael. "Traditional Influences on a Contemporary Gay-Identified Siseton Dakota." Eds. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang. *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997. 210-216.
- Redfield, Karen A. "Inside the Circle, Outside the Circle: The Continuance of Native American Storytelling and the Development of Rhetorical Strategies in English." Ed. Ernest Stromberg. *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. 149-164.
- Reichard, Gladys. *Navaho Prayer: The Compulsive Word*. Seattle: Washington University Press, 1944.
- Revard, Carter. "History, Myth, and Identity Among Osages and Other Peoples." *Denver Quarterly* 14 (1980): 84-97.
- , "Report to the Nation: Claiming Europe." Ed. Simon J. Ortiz. *Earth Power Coming* Tsaile: Navajo Community College Press 1983. 166-181.

- Renan, Ernest. "What is a nation?" Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990. 8-22.
- Rice, Julian. "Akicita of the Thunder: Horses in Black Elk's Vision." *MELUS* 12.1 (Spring 1985): 5-23.
- Rice, Philip and Patricia Waugh, ed. *Modern Literary Reader*. London: Arnold, 1989.
- , "Postmodernism and Postcolonialism." Eds. Phillip Rice, and Patricia Waugh. *Modern Literary Reader*. London: Arnold, 1989. 289-292.
- , "The Subject." Eds. Phillip Rice, and Patricia Waugh. *Modern Literary Reader*. London: Arnold, 1989. 123-125.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." Ed. Mary Eagleton. *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. 24-29.
- Rich, Elizabeth. "'Remember Wounded Knee': AIM's Use of Metonymy in 21st Century Protest." *College Literature* 31.3 (2004): 70-91.
- Rivkin, Julie, and Michael Ryan, eds. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.
- Roediger, David R. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. London: Verso, 1991.
- Ronnow, Gretchen. "Tayo, Death, and Desire: A Lacanian Reading of Ceremony." Ed. Gerald Vizenor. *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. 69-90.
- Root, Maria P. P., ed. *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the new Frontier*. London: Sage Publications, 1996.
- , "The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as a Significant Frontier in race Relations." Ed. Maria P. P. Root. *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the new Frontier*. London: Sage Publications, 1996. xiii-xxviii.
- , ed. *Racially Mixed People in America*. London: Sage Publications, 1992.
- , "Within, Between, and Beyond Race." Ed. Maria P. P. Root. *Racially Mixed People in America*. London: Sage Publications, 1992: 3-11.
- Roscoe, Will, ed. *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.
- Rose, Margaret A. *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern*. New York: Atheneum Press 1995.
- Rosenberg, Morris. "The Self-Concept: Social Product and Social Force." Eds. Morris Rosenberg, and Ralph H. Turner. *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives* NY: Basic books, 2004. 593-624.
- Ruoff, A. LaVonne Brown. *American Indian Literatures*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1990.
- , "Old Traditions and New Forms." Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. *Studies in American Indian Literature*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983. 147-168.
- , "Reversing the Gaze: Early Native American Images of Europeans and Euro-Americans." Ed. Gretchen M. Bataille. *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. 198-223.
- Ruppert, James. "Discovering America: Mary Austin and Imagism." Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. *Studies in American Indian Literature*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983. 243-258.
- , *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1993.
- , *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979.

- , "Yeats and Decolonization." Eds. Moustafa Bayoumi, and Andrew Rubin. *The Edward Said Reader*. New York: Vintage Books, 2000. 291-416.
- Salih, Sara. *Judith Butler*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Sand, Kathleen M. "Alienation and Broken Narrative in *Winter in the Blood*." *American Indian Quarterly* 4.2 (1978): 97-105.
- , "Cooperation and Resistance: Native American Collaborative Personal Narrative." Ed. Gretchen M. Bataille. *Native American Representations: First Encounters*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. 134-151.
- Sarris, Greg. *Grand Avenue: A Novel in Stories*. New York: Penguin, 1994.
- , *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- , *Watermelon Nights*. New York: Penguin, 1998.
- Scarberry-García, Susan. *Landmarks of Healing: A Study of House Made of Dawn*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990.
- Schechner, Richard. "What is Performance Studies Anyway?" Eds. Peggy Phelan, and Jill Lane. *The Ends of Performance*. New York: New York University Press 1998. 357-362.
- Schedler, Christopher. "Formulating a Native American Modernism in John Joseph Mathews' *Sundown*." *Arizona Quarterly* 55.1 (Spring 1999): 127-149.
- Schöler, Bo, ed. *Coyote Was Here: Essays on Contemporary Native American Literary and Political Mobilization*. Aarhus, Denmark: SKELOS/University of Aarhus, 1984.
- Schubnell, Matthias, ed. *Conversations with N. Scott Momaday*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997.
- , *N. Scott Momaday: The Cultural and Literary Background*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.
- Schultz, Paul, and George Tinker. "Rivers of Life: Native Spirituality for Native Churches." Ed. James Treat. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 56-67.
- Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Scott, Joan W. "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity." *Bulletin of the Conference Group on Women's History* 23.61 (October/November 1992): 12-19.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Shanley, Kathryn. "The Indians America Loves to Love and Read." Ed. Gretchen Bataille. *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. 26-51.
- Shoemaker, Nancy, ed. *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Short, Kathy G., and Dana Fox. "The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature: Why the Debate Really Matters." Eds. Dana L. Fox, and Kathy G. Short. *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature*. Urbana Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English. 2003. 3-24.
- Silko, Leslie. *Almanac of the Dead*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.
- , *Ceremony*. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.
- , "Here's an Odd Artifact for the Fairy-Tale Shelf." *Studies in American Indian Literature* 10 (1986): 177-184.
- , *Yellow Woman and the Beauty of the Spirit* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.
- Silvio, Carl. "Black Elk Speaks and Literary Disciplinarity: A Case Study in Canonization." *College Literature* 26.2 (Spring 1999): 137-150.

- Singh, Amritjit, and Peter Schmidt, eds. *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2000.
- Slemon, Stephen. "Modernism's Last Post." Eds. Joseph P. Natoli, and Linda Hutcheon. *A Postmodern reader*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1993. 426-440.
- , "Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing." *KUNAPIPI* 9.3 (1987): 1-16.
- , "Post-colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 23.1 (1988): 156-168.
- , "The Scramble for Post-colonialism." Eds. Chris Tiffin, and Alan Lawson. *De-scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality*. London: Routledge, 1994. 15-32.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Regeneration Through Violence*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973.
- Smith, Katharine Capshaw. "Introduction: The Landscape of Ethnic American Children's Literature." *MELUS* 27.2 (Summer 2002) : 3-8.
- Smith, Patricia Clark. "Ain't Seen You Since: Dissent among Female Relatives in American Indian women's Poetry." Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. *Studies in American Indian Literature*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983. 108-126.
- Smith, Patricia Clark, and Paula Gunn Allen. "Earthly Relations, Carnal Knowledge: Southwestern American Indian Women Writers and Landscape." Eds. Janice J. Monk, and Vera Norwood. *The Desert is No Lady* edited by New York: Yale University, 1987.
- Smith, Valerie. "Reading the Intersection of Race and Gender in Narratives of Passing." *Diacritics* 24.2-3 (Summer/Fall 1994): 43-57.
- Sollors, Werner. *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- , "Introduction: The Invention of Ethnicity." Ed. Werner Sollors, *Invention of Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. ix-xx.
- , ed. *Invention of Ethnicity*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Spicer, Edward H. "The Nations of a State." Ed. Karl Kroeber. *American Indian Persistence and Resurgence*. Durhan: Duke University Press, 1994. 27-49.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak." Eds. Cary Nelson, and Lawrence Grossberg. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. 271-313.
- , *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* New York: Routledge, 1988.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Translator's Preface." Jacques Derrida. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974. ix-lxxxvii.
- Standing Bear, Luther. *Land of the Spotted Eagle*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1933/1978.
- , *My People the Sioux*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1928/1975.
- The State of the Native Nations: Conditions under U.S. Policies of Self-Determination*. The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- St. Clair, Janet. "Cannibal Queers: The Problematics of Metaphor in *Almanac of the Dead*." Eds. Louis K. Barnett, and James L Thorson. *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Collection of Essays*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999. 207-222.
- Stiehm, Judith. "Diversity's Diversity." Ed. David Theo Goldberg, *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. 140-156.
- Steltenkamp, Michael F. *Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 1993.

- Stets, Jan E., Peter J. Burke. "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63.3 (September 2000): 224-237.
- Stewart, Michelle Pagni. "Judging Authors by the Color of their Skin? Quality Native American Children's Literature." *MELUS* 27.1 (Summer 2002): 180-196.
- Strickland, Rennard. "The Eagle's Empire: Sovereignty, Survival, and Self-Governance in Native American Law and Constitutionalism." Ed. Russell Thornton. *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. 247-270.
- Stromberg, Ernest. "Resistance and Mediation: The Rhetoric of Irony in Indian Boarding School Narratives by Francis La Flesche and Zitkala-Sa." Ed. Ernest Stromberg. *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. 95-109.
- , ed. *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006.
- Stryker, Sheldon, and Peter J. Burke. "The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63.4 (December 2000): 284-297.
- Styvendale, Nancy van. The Trans/historicity of Trauma in Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* and Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*." *Studies in the Novel* 40. 1 and 2 (Spring/Summer 2008): 203-223.
- Summary Under the Criteria and Evidence for Final Determination against Federal Acknowledgment of the Mobile - Washington County Band of Choctaw Indians of South Alabama Prepared in response to a petition submitted to the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs for Federal acknowledgment that this group exists as an Indian Tribe. 1997. Retrieved November 12, 2008 from http://www.doi.gov/bia/docs/ofa/adc/086_MOWA_Choctaw/086_fd.pdf
- Swann, Brian, ed. *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.
- , ed. *Smoothing the Ground: Essays on Native American Oral Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Swann, Brian and Arnold Krupat, eds. *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Taylor, Charles. "The Politics of Recognition" Ed. Amy Gutmann, Amy. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. 25-73.
- Tedlock, Dennis. *Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians*. New York: The Dial Press, 1972.
- , "The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation in American Indian Religion." Ed. Karl Kroeber. *Traditional Literatures of the American Indian: Texts and Interpretations*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 68-87.
- Teuton, Sean. "Placing the Ancestors: Postmodernism, Realism, and Native American Identity in James Welch's *Winter in the Blood*." *The American Indian Quarterly* 25.4 (Fall 2001): 626-650.
- Thackeray, William W. "'Crying for Pity' in *Winter in the Blood*." *MELUS* 7.1 (Spring 1980): 61-78.
- Thomas, Wesley, Sue-Ellen Jacobs. "'...And We Are Still Here': From *Berdache* to Two-Spirit People." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 23.2 (1999): 91-108.
- Thornton, Russell. "The Demography of Colonialism and "Old" and "New" Native Americans." Ed. Russell Thornton. *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. 17-39.

- , ed. *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.
- Tiffin, Chris, and Alan Lawson. *De-scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Tiffin, Helen. "Introduction." Eds. Ian Adam, and Helen Tiffin. *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990. vii-xvi.
- , "Post-Colonial Literature and Counter-Discourse." *KUNAPIPI* 9.3 (1987): 17-34.
- Tinker, George E. "American Indian Religious Traditions, Colonialism, Resistance, and Liberation." Eds. Richard A. Grounds, George E. Tinker, and David E. Wilkins. *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003. 223-244.
- Touraine, Alan. "The Subject is Coming Back." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 18.3/4 (Spring - Summer, 2005): 199-209.
- Treat, James. "Introduction: Native Christian Narrative Discourse." Ed. James Treat. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 1-27.
- , ed. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Tusmith, Bonnie. *All My Relatives: Community in Contemporary Ethnic American Literatures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993.
- Utter, Jack. *American Indians: Answers to Today's Questions*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001.
- Valentine, J. Jeanette, Judith Ann De Jong, and Nancy Jean Kennedy. *Substance Abuse Prevention in Multicultural Communities*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Vangen, Kate. "Making Faces: Defiance and Humour in Campell's *Halfbreed* and Welch's *Winter in the Blood*." Eds. Thomas King, Cheryl Calver, and Helen Hoy. *The Native in Literature*. Oakville, Ontario: ECW Press, 1987. 188-205.
- Vaughan, Alden T. "From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American Indian." *American Historical Review* 87.4 (October 1982): 917-953.
- Vecsey, Christopher. *Imagine Ourselves Richly*. New York: Harper Collins, 1991.
- Velie, Alan R. "American Indian Literature in the Nineties: The Emergence of the Middle-Class Protagonist." *World Literature Today* 66.2 (Spring 1992): 264-268.
- , *Four American Indian Literary Masters*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.
- Vernon, Irene S. "Religious Rights." Ed. Frederick E. Hoxie. *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996. 541-543.
- Vizenor, Gerald. "Authored Animals: Creature Tropes in Native American Fiction." *Social Research* 62.3 (Fall 1995): 661-683.
- , *Bearheart*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1978.
- , *Crossbloods*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976.
- , "Crows written on the Poplars: Autocritical Autobiographies." Ed. Arnold Krupat. *I Tell You Now*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987. 99-110.
- , *Dead Voices*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.
- , *Earthdivers: Tribal Narratives of Mixed Descent*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981.
- , *Fugitive Poses*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1998.
- , *The Heirs of Columbus*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1991.
- , *Hotline Healers*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1997.

- , "I Know What You Mean, Erdupps MacChurbbs: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors." Ed. Chester G. Anderson. *Growing Up in Minnesota*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976. 79-111.
- , *Interior Landscapes: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.
- , *Manifest Manners*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.
- , ed. *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989.
- , *The People Named the Chippewa*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- , "Postmodern Introduction." Ed. Gerald Vizenor. *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989. 3-16.
- , ed. *Summer in the Spring: Anishinaabe Lyric Poems and Stories*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965.
- , "Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games." Ed. Gerald Vizenor. *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989. 187-211.
- , *The Trickster of Liberty*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
- , *Wordarrows*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978.
- Vizenor, Gerald, and A. Robert Lee. *Postindian Conversations*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999.
- Wagner, Roy. *The Invention of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- Walters, Anna Lee. "The Devil and Sister Lena." Anna Lee Walters. *The Sun is Not Merciful*. Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1985. 63-82.
- , *The Sun is Not Merciful*. Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1985.
- "Watermelon Nights: A Penguin Readers Guide." Greg Sarris. *Watermelon Nights*. New York: Penguin, 1998.
- Warrior, Robert Allan. "Literature and Students in the Emergence of Native American Studies." Ed. Russell Thornton. *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. 111-129.
- , "Reading American Indian Intellectual Traditions." *World Literature Today* 66.2 (Spring 1992): 236-40.
- , *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Intellectual Traditions*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.
- Waugh, Patricia, ed). *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006
- Weaver, Jace. *Other Words: American Indian Literature, Law, and Culture*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001.
- , *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Weston, Jessie L. *From Ritual to Romance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993
- West, James L. "Indian Spirituality: Another Vision." Ed. James Treat. *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 29-37.
- "White Earth Timber Fight" *Indigenous Environmental Network*. Saturday 13 August 1994. Retrieved 20 March 2008 from <http://www.native-net.org/archive/nl/9408/0123.html>
- Wilkins, David. "Judicial 'Masks:' Their Role in Defining and Redefining the Tribal/Congressional Relationship 1870-1924." Ed. Michael K. Green. *Issues in Native American Cultural Identity*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1995. 81-166.

- Williams, Patrick, and Laura Chrisman. "Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: Introduction." Eds. Patrick Williams, and Laura Chrisman. *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993. 1-20.
- Williams, William Carlos. *In the American Grain*. New York: New Directions books, 2004.
- Williams, Walter L. *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1986.
- Williamson, George. *T.S. Eliot: A Reader's Guide*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1980.
- Wilson, Angela Cavenda. "Power of the Spoken Word: Native Oral Traditions in American Indian History." Ed. Donald L. Fixico. *Rethinking American Indian History*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997. 101-116
- Wilson, Terry P. "Blood Quantum: Native American Mixed Bloods." Ed. Maria P. P. Root. *Racially Mixed People in America* London: Sage Publications, 1992. 108-125.
- Witalec, Janet, ed. *Native North American Literature*. New York: Gale Research Inc., 1994.
- Womack, Craig S. *Drowning in Fire*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001
- , *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- , "A Single Decade: Book-Length Native Literary Criticism between 1986 and 1997." Eds. Womack, Craig S., Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton. *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. 3-104.
- Womack, Craig S., Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton, eds. *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008.
- Wong, Hertha D., ed. *Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine: A Casebook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- , *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years: Tradition and Innovation in Native American Autobiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Wunder, John R. "Retained by The People:" *A History of American Indians and the Bill of Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Yenika-Agbaw, Vivan. "Images of West Africa in Children's Books: Replacing Old Stereotypes with New Ones?" Eds. Dana L. Fox, and Kathy G. Short. *Stories Matter: The complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature*. Urbana Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English. 2003. 231-246.
- Zack, Naomi, ed. *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity*. London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995.
- , "On Being and Not-being Black and Jewish." Ed. Maria P. P. Root. *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the new Frontier*. London: Sage Publications, 1996. 140-151.
- Zamora, Louis Parkinson. "Magical Romance/Magical Realism: Ghosts in U.S. and Latin American Fiction." Eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora, and Wendy B. Faris. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997. 497-550.
- Zamora, Louis Parkinson, and Wendy B. Faris, eds. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Zimmerman, Bonnie. *The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction 1969-1989*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1990.
- Zimmerman, Bonnie. "What Has Never Been: an Overview of Lesbian Feminist Literary Criticism Feminist Studies." Ed. Mary Eagleton. *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. 18-24.

Deze studie is een literair-kritische analyse van de Native-Amerikaanse fictie van na de jaren zestig en haar engagement in de concepten subject-iviteit en identiteit met betrekking tot zowel de van oorsprong tribale als Euro-Amerikaanse sociaal-culturele discoursen en paradigma's. Aangetoond wordt dat contemporaine Native schrijvers vanuit tribaal perspectief de positie van hun subject-iviteiten, binnen de paradigma's van modernisme, postmodernisme en postcolonialisme, en de legitimering van hun identiteiten, binnen multiculturele en gender-diverse contexten, evalueren en opnieuw bepalen.

Suzanne Peraino (American/Dutch naturalized) did her Bachelor's degree in English and American literature, specializing in radio drama, at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, in the United States. She received her Master's degree (*doctoraal*) at Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands, specializing in the works of the Native American writer Gerald Vizenor. She has taught American literature and English language skills at Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Free University in Amsterdam, and Tilburg University in Tilburg. She has published a number of articles on Native American writers.