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**Self-Representations of the Misrepresented – Selfhood
and Identity in Autobiographical Texts by Native
American Authors**

**(Amerikan Yerli Otobiyografilerinde Benlik ve Kimlik:
Hatalı Temsil Edilenlerin Kendini Temsili)**

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ÖZ

Amerikan Yerli Otobiyografilerinde Benlik ve Kimlik: Hatalı Temsil Edilenlerin Kendini Temsili Defne Türker Demir

Amerikan Yerli Yazınını oluşturan metinler, politik amaçlı kimlik açılımları veya kimlik edinim eylemleri olarak özetlenebilir. Yüzyılları kapsayan bir çerçevede farklı biçimler kazanan Amerikan Yerli otobiyografilerinin bütününe bakıldığında; az sayıda istisna dışında, çeşitli kimlik kurguları örnekleyen bu metinlerin benzer yönelimler sergilediği gözlemlenir. Bu yönelimler kültürel örüntüler olup, metinsellik yolu ile kimlik kurgulayan bireylerin içselliklerine dair ipuçlarını kapsar. Amerikan Yerlilerinin otobiyografik metinlerinde Amerikan Yerli kimliği, birlik ve toplumsallık temelleri üzerine kurgulanmaktadır. Bu metinlerin merkezinde, benlik ve toplum arasında birliği sağlama amacı ve buna ait çaba yer alır. Çünkü bireyin bütünselliği için olmazsa olmaz önkoşul, birey ile aile/ toplum/ kabile arasında var olabilecek mesafenin kapatılmasıdır. Kısacası, metinlerde kurgulanan toplumsal bir kimliktir ve bu kimlik Amerikan Yerlilerinin geleneklerinden, tarihlerinden ve topraktan beslenir. Sözü edilen toplumsal yönelimin yanı sıra, Amerikan Yerli yazınında kimlik temsili özgün kılan bir diğer nokta ise, metin ve yazar arasındaki birbirini besleyen ve üreten ilişkidir. Amerikan Yerli otobiyografilerinde, benlik metin üzerinden kurgulanır ve bu yolla metin, kurgulanan kimliğin temelini oluşturur. Böylelikle kelimenin yaratıcı gücü ile toplumsal kimlik üretilir. Her ne kadar günümüz Amerikan Yerli yazınında sözün yerini yazı almış olsa da, kelimeler sözlü yazına özgü mutlak yaratıcı güçlerini korurlar. Kelimeler benliği vücuda getirirken benlik de, metnin yaratım sürecinde, toplumun ve bütünün parçası olarak ortaya çıkar. Bu bağlamda, kimlik kurgusuna verilen önem, Amerikan Yerli yazınına has bir özellik iken, öyküler de kimlik üretiminin mutlak aracı halini alır. Sonuç olarak, Amerikan Yerli otobiyografilerinde özgün toplumsal kimlikler, sözlü yazın geleneğinin beslediği benlik örüntülerinin metin üzerinden üretimi veya kalıp tipler yolu ile yapılan temsillerin bozulması yöntemleri ile kurgulanır. Bu tez özelinde, erken dönem Amerikan Yerli yazını örneklerinden yola çıkılarak, çağdaş metinleri de kapsayan bir çerçeve çizilmiş, Zitkala-Şa, Scott Momaday, John Neihardt, Louis Owens, ve Sherman Alexie'nin yazınsal metinlerinin detaylı analizleri yapılırken, Paula Gunn Allen, Vine Deloria Jr., Louis Owens ve Gerald Vizenor'a ait kuramsal metinlerden yararlanılmıştır.

ABSTRACT

Self-Representations of the Misrepresented – Selfhood and Identity in Autobiographical Texts by Native American Authors Defne Türker Demir

Native American literary practices can briefly be summarized as politically motivated acts of identity re-clamation. Looking at Native American autobiographical practices in their myriad forms over the centuries, it is possible to posit that with few exceptions, certain patterns emerge that keep informing autobiographical texts that exhibit various positioning of subjectivities. These patterns are culture bound and give us clear clues to the perceptual horizons of the individuals that construct selves in textuality. As such, The Native American self is constructed through connectedness and communality. The attempt at establishing unision between the self and the community lies at the very crux of American Indian autobiographical practices, since the individual self needs to become whole while bridging any existing gaps between the self and the family/ tribe/ clan. In short the subjectivity created in textuality is a communal selfhood, which is firmly located within the sites of the history of the Native American peoples and the land with which ties need to be forged. In a similar vein, it can be argued that the relationship between the text and the author is another marker of Native American modes of self-representation. In American Indian autobiographies, the self is constructed through textuality, and thus the text becomes the enabler of a subjectivity textually constructed. Consequently, through the creative power of the word, the communal self comes into being by way of textuality/ the written word. Thus orality now replaced by textuality, still attains the creative power of the word, since the word brings into being the self that creates the text and is created in the process as part of the community/ as part of the whole he/she does or opts to belong to. Then, the imminent aspect of Native American literary practices is its concern with identity politics, and stories are the ultimate means of identity construction. Hence, selfhoods, which are informed by traditional modes of oral literature are constructed or fake selfhoods are deconstructed through the refutation of stereotypical representations. In this context, from the earlier examples, to present day depictions, the works of Zitkala-Ša, Scott Momaday, John Neihardt, Louis Owens, and Sherman Alexie are studied in detail alongside the critical works of Paula Gunn Allen, Vine Deloria Jr., and Gerald Vizenor.

PREFACE

The purpose of this dissertation is to try and delineate the construction of selfhood and identity in self-representations of Native American authors. Accordingly, the texts chosen include the earlier examples, as well as the present day Post-modern depictions of American Indian identity configurations. Thus, this study focuses on the works of Zitkala-Ša, Scott Momaday, John Neihardt, Louis Owens, and Sherman Alexie, in attempting to comprise as broad a perspective as possible. In terms of the critical works, it is again the theories voiced by Native American authors and literary critics that form the background of this dissertation, especially those by Paula Gunn Allen, Vine Deloria Jr., Louis Owens and Gerald Vizenor. As such, the aim of the author is to be able to approach and analyze Native American literary texts from the critical perspective of yet again Native American critics. Hence, the purpose of the dissertation is to read literary works of Native American authors based on the historical perspectives, critical appreciations, and point of views of the Native American peoples, and not from a Western view point, since the mainstream readings of these texts remain oblivious to the innate cultural codes of the peoples, and consequently continue to objectify, sideline, mute and assimilate the indigenous voices. Then the objective was to approach these literary texts grounded in the cultural and critical perspectives of the peoples in question. Therefore, although such a cross-cultural analysis poses a major challenge, the author's analysis and reading of these texts were informed by the cultural norms and the inner dynamics imminent to Native American textualities and peoples.

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INTRODUCTION

The land where time has stopped and people never age, Neverland, constitutes the setting for J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, a work whose popularity has not waned in the space of a century that has elapsed since its publication. However, aside from the protagonist, and his wild boys, it is the fairy and the mermaid –mythical beings- and the pirate and the Indian -the creatures of the past- that populate this impossible geography beyond time. Then it can be argued that by early twentieth century, the Indian presence is relegated to the realm of the past, fast moving towards the mythical. The anachronical Indian is no longer allowed to co-exist in the real world, or co-inhabit the same time frame alongside the civilized beings. Thus, the Indian has become a monstrosity, an evil safely existing in the world of the impossible. Removed in terms of both geography and temporality, the Indian can now be romanticized, as he/she no longer poses a threat to civilization.

As Barrie's *Peter Pan*, among other popular works clearly illustrates, since the first encounter between the two cultures, the representation of the Indian by the white world has continuously been deeply compromised by an ideology of dominance and hegemony. Initially using the tools of visual representation, and later literature, photography, ethnography and media, the white society has posited the Indian as the Other and through this mirror image consolidated its own identity. This bifurcated view in its turn has resulted in the creation of stereotypes and fake/ false representations of the Indian, which have no bearing on the realities of the Native Americans living today in the United States.

While the white world has for the last century opted to depict the Indian as an absence, or construct the Indian as an artifact of the past, and thus deny him contemporaneity, this ongoing culture of misrepresentation has been countered by the Native American authors especially in the second half of the twentieth century. The response of the Native American authors has exhibited itself in the form of writing back to the mainstream representations, and the result was the profusion of

literary texts whose main theme is Indian identity, be them formative of communal selfhoods or deconstructive of the white construct. Hence Gerald Vizenor posits in *Bearheart*; “Indians are an invention.... 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?” (qtd in Owens *Other Destinies* 233). Invented Indians are stereotypical presences, static and dead, yet tempting models for inner colonization. Consequently, these fixed categories need to be upset, since what is necessary is the disruption of these unreal markers of identity. Only then, and through such subversion would the Native American accomplish the politically motivated act of identity reclamation, and communal self-construction.

In terms of this dissertation, instead of fictional texts, autobiographical texts have been chosen, with the exception of Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Whereas Post-modern ontology acknowledges no difference between fiction and self-writing, it can still be argued that autobiographical writing lends itself to a multiplicity of subject positioning, since in self-writing, it is the writing self that is in constant creation and in this respect autobiographical writing discloses the possibility of a plethora of selves. Furthermore, it should be posited that self-writing is open to hybridity both stylistically and content wise, which makes it the perfect medium for Native American authors, since their self-constructions are informed by oral literature, and oral literature embraces hybridity. Then, Native American authors, be them employing traditional forms, such as achronological time, or adding a Post-modern twist to the trickster discourse, utilize the hybridity autobiographical writing enables. As such, autobiographical writing becomes the medium par excellence, allowing the suffusing of drawings, and photographs, criticism and fictionality in self-construction of the Native American authors in countering racially informed stereotypes.

Of the five texts covered in detail in this dissertation, the initial example belongs to the woman author Zitkala-Ša, whereas the four more contemporary texts are written by men. This however, does not mean that women are denied a voice in the Native

American cultures –which according to Paula Gunn Allen were matriarchal prior to colonization- but reflects the fact that women prefer to express selves in poetry or novel, and that this is a culturally informed practice and preference. It can be posited that in Native American cultures women and men have separate domains, and their roles are different but complementary. Hence Allen argues, while women attend to the immutable facts of life that point at continuity, it is men in whose domain lays the mundane and the transitory. We read:

Every part of the oral tradition expresses the idea that ritual is gender-based, but rather than acting as a purely divisive structure, the separation by gender emphasizes complementarity. The women's traditions are largely about continuity, and men's traditions are largely about transitoriness or change. Thus, women's rituals and lore center on birth, death, food, householding, and medicine (in the medical rather than the magical sense of the term) – that is, all that goes into the maintenance of life over the long term. Man's rituals are concerned with risk, death, and transformation – that is, all that helps regulate and control change (Allen 82).

Selfhood entails change, not statis but alteration, and as such it follows that men engage in the practice of self-writing rather than women, because women's function is to uphold the constants in life. Consequently, since subjectivity is forever in flux, and in constant need of configuration and construction, then it is fitting that it is located within the domain of men, which is marked by transformation. Furthermore, because men's sphere is about change and transformation, and autobiographical writing is new to the tribes and transformative in that subjectivities are forged and selfhoods claimed, and reclaimed, then autobiographical writing would fall into the male domain. Moreover, the reason behind this act of writing back is political, and change is desired in the political sphere, then again it is fitting that men engage in an endeavor that brings about a major transition. Therefore, whereas Native American woman authors write novels and poetry in particular, it is Native American male authors who fashion selves in self-writing.

Arnold Krupat on the other hand remarking on the ambiguous relationship between American Indian authors and the medium of autobiography further argues that Native American women not only do not write autobiographies, but even when

prompted to, might in many instances prefer not to practice self-writing. For many Native American woman authors, conceiving of the self as a separate entity from the communal selfhood, and writing about the self is a task they are unwilling to perform. Thus Swann and Krupat elaborate on the responses they received from the authors from whom they have solicited autobiographical pieces, and these responses clearly reflect the culturally viable distance between the Native American women and self-writing. Swann and Krupat write:

While at least one of the male poets acknowledged great difficulty with the form, writing autobiographically seemed more difficult for the Native American *women* than for the Native American *men*. (emphasis in original). We note this simply ... [as] a fact that might be worth some further study. We do not have enough information – or, for that matter, a wide enough sample – to offer even tentative conclusions in this regard. Certainly, a sense of awkwardness or embarrassment at being asked to write about oneself is a deeply traditional feeling for Native Americans... (Swann & Krupat xii).

Moreover, Swann and Krupat posit that one contributor who, after “‘months of agonizing over how to write an autobiographical essay’” (Swann & Krupat xii), finally was able to come up with one but voiced in the cover letter the following reservations:

‘You should realize that focusing so intently on oneself like that and blithering on about your own life and thoughts is very bad form for Indians. I have heard Indian critics say, referring to poetry, that it is best if there are no ‘I’s’ in it. I grew up and continue to live among people who penalize you for talking about yourself and going on endlessly about your struggles’ (qtd in Swann & Krupat xii).

Then, not only does autobiographical writing pose problems for Native American women authors, but also thinking too intently on oneself is considered ill. Swann and Krupat continue:

One Native American poet was cautioned against writing her autobiography by a member of her tribe and could not, finally produce an autobiographical text for us, asserting the traditional sense of Indian peoples that not the individual as personal self but, rather, the person as transmitter of the traditional culture was what most deeply counted for her (Swann & Krupat xii).

Thus, a woman author would not write an autobiography, because what matters is not the self, but it is the person as transmitter of the traditional culture that is important. Therefore, a common denominator for Native American women authors is a traditionally informed and culturally embedded refusal to speak of oneself and to prioritize the communal in place of the individual, both in life and in literature.

In attempting to delineate selfhood and identity in the self-representations of the Native American authors, this dissertation in its first chapter looks at the earliest Euromerican representations of the Native Americans during the time of contact, which is the initial phase that marks the making of the construct. While it is argued that both cultures' representation of the other was informed by their own epistemologies, as a result of the fixed hierarchy of the chain of being, the Native was posited as the Other by the white, whereas the holistic American Indian worldview assigned the newcomers a place in their world, although this place was somewhat ambiguous. Thus, John White's watercolors drawn in fifteenth century expose the primal phases of this othering in the creation of stereotypical representations that depict the hospitable and helpful Natives -the archetypal Indian sidekick- since these drawings were meant to function as promotional material for the new world.

As the Puritans settled into the new continent, new selves needed to be fashioned. In this endeavor, self-writing proved a secure ground for the construction of the pious self, as puritan self-scrutiny and the innate insistence on the importance of Godly models were consolidated through ego-documents. Furthermore, the nation in formation was defined through alterity, since the negation inherent in the reverse mirror image of the Native Other helped create a model of monolithic nationhood. Captivity Narratives on the other hand were to provide the white alter ego with fresh models of the stereotypical Indians, especially the noble savage and the howling savage. The fact that these narratives were purportedly written by white women but authorized, edited and published by church fathers, points at the fact that the dominant discourse of the Puritan society was allowed to be voiced by women.

However, these model women's voices, who were the chosen of God, tormented and saved, and hence the living proof of God's grace, were lost through the mediation by patriarchy. Yet, in the captivity narratives the idea of the enslavement of the pure and domestic women of the empire is not only titillating when she is confronted with the overt sexual threat of the Other male, but as a result of the fear of miscegenation, such an image easily lends itself to war mongering, and thus provided sanction for the oppression and elimination of the indigenous Other.

This dissertation takes a closer look at three captivity narratives by white women. *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* is the earliest, in which the Natives are depicted as animals, barbarians, and diabolical beings. In *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* on the other hand Jemison's voice, who is a woman acculturated to Indian ways, is taken over by various male voices. And in *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity*, by Sarah F. Wakefield, while the stereotypical noble savage and the irredeemable savage are juxtaposed, Wakefield defends herself and her purity, protesting against the contentions that she is an Indian lover.

The focus of the second chapter comprises of the political and historical factors, which impact Native American self-representations; that is physical and cultural genocide, manifest destiny, expansion, dispossession and the relocation/ dislocation programmes. The aforementioned facts are brought to attention because their long-term effects continue to be experienced by Native American communities, and these effects prove to be detrimental to the communities in question. Consequently these political and historical factors keep informing the self-representations of the contemporary Native American authors. Recounting the colonial situation, and building on the works of Robert Young, Franz Fanon, J.P. Sartre, and Amílcar Cabral, humanism is established as the accomplice of cultural colonialism. Also, quoting Louis Owens, Paula Gunn Allen, and Ashcroft/ Griffiths and Tiffin, it is argued that expansionism and dispossession, and the removal, allotment, reorganization, and termination acts are all in line with social Darwinism, and

responsible for breaking the formative bond between the peoples and the land, threatening them with alienation. Moreover, drawing on Michael Hunt and Frederick Merk's works, the Trail of Tears is established as the precursor of manifest destiny, which is posited as an ideological tool, creating the necessary conflict for the crystallizing of the national identity, as land expansion coincided with the outbursts of racism in nineteenth century United States.

By the end of the nineteenth century the outcome of this atmosphere of genocide and oppression was the establishment of Boarding Schools that attempted at the true assimilation of the Indian, since their founder Richard Henry Pratt's aim was to erase the Native identity until he reached *tabula rasa*, or as Amelia V. Katanski puts it, achieve zero-sum identity. However, for the Native American psyche, loss of identity resulted in alienation, because Native identity is communal and holistic; with land, family, and clan residing at the crux of identity configuration. Thus, whereas for Gloria Anzaldua, *mestizo* is perceived of as an empowering alterity option, or Homi Bhabha's concept of *inbetweenness* means the possibility of a multiplicity of enriching subject positions; the Native American identity is not only syncretic, but also communal and not individual. Consequently, the panacea for the attempted assimilation is the re-forging of ties with nature, land, and family that would assume the form of stories, songs, myths, and ceremonies that cure duality and restore communality and connectedness, between land and the peoples.

In recognition of the severe impact of boarding schools on generations of Native Americans, this dissertation takes a close look at the construction of the Indian self by Zitkala-Ša, who belonged to the first generation of American Indians that were given a white education. Although the loss of culture means schizophrenia for the Native American peoples, and the boarding schools aimed at killing the Indian to save the man, the result was the building up of resistance. Using the newly acquired tool of literacy, in spite of the panopticon-like mechanism creating representative Indians, many boarding-school educated Indians refused to become mouthpieces of the oppressive system. Indeed, Zitkala-Ša is one such white-educated Native

American author, whose “Sketches from *The Atlantic Monthly*” follow her through her alienation and her resuming of an Indian identity, and wholeness. However, early autobiographical texts by American Indians were informed by Western models and used linear time, and only by second half of the twentieth century was the freedom attained to represent selves achronologically. Consequently, although her work employs Western form and linear time, Zitkala-Ša uses metaphors from nature, and muteness as trope, and as such creates a model to be utilized by future generations of American Indian authors in claiming an Indian voice and identity.

In the third chapter it is argued that the struggle of Native Americans for a voice and existence informs their literary works and in this respect Native American literature is a project of liberation, aiming at the attainment of a voice, visibility, and presence for the tribal peoples. Using Louis Owens’ and Paula Gunn Allen’s theories, the importance of land for identity consolidation is underlined, alongside the imminent inner-colonization brought by the enforcement of stereotypes onto the Native American communities. Reminding the fact that the Native American is denied presence even in Post-Colonial literature, it is pointed out that the American Indian has seized the powerful tool of language, which is further enhanced by the supreme importance attached to the word in oral literature. Thus, self-expression is seen as an act of resistance employed by Native authors, but the self in construction is not an individualistic, but always a collective self. The reason behind this collectivist focus is the perceived unity between the self/ family/ clan/ and the natural and supernatural, since for the attainment of unity, harmony, and balance, connectedness and communality are the basic, yet crucial premises.

If one marker of Native American self-representations is the communal focus, another is the employment of achronological time, not as a result of stylistic considerations, but because circular time is in line with the Native understanding of universe. Similarly, hybridity of form is another technique, since in the Native worldview phenomenon cannot be divided. Therefore, it is argued that both Scott Momaday, and Louis Owens are authors whose employment of hybridity and

achronology is informed by oral literature, and both construct Native American subjectivities in their self-writing that aim at forging communal selfhoods. Scott Momaday's autobiographical works are also marked by the traditional belief that the word is the creative principle of the universe, since through language the self that does not exist apart from the community is created. Momaday's texts testify to flux, which is another marker of oral literature, and consequently, the same themes are worked and reworked in texts that overlap. Because Momaday is a storyteller, his selfhood is dispersed in texts that converge, and illustrations, photographs, critical essays, stories, myths, short narrative pieces all go into these autobiographical texts, all of which Momaday perceives as parts of an intricate design. Thus the three autobiographical texts by Momaday, namely *The Man Made of Words*, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, and *Names – A Memoir* can be read as a single continuity that establishes the communal basis for Momaday's subjectivity.

Taking a closer look at *The Names*, it is posited that in this text the threads that constitute the Native American subjectivity, that is the family and the community, intersect with the formative element of land through the creative force of words. Momaday takes a spiritual journey to the past, and through this journey, the past, the future and the present are integrated within the timeless hoop of existence. At the end of the text, the circle is completed as Momaday accomplishes a journey that takes him to the very beginnings of the Kiowas, his people. Thus the starting point of the journey towards the formulation of Momaday's subjectivity is the very beginnings of the journey of his people into existence.

In *The Names* Momaday's main argument is that his selfhood does not proceed from his physical presence, but conversely, the prerequisite of his existence is his name, which derives from that of the mountain Tsoai. When Pohd-lohk had named Momaday "Tsoai-talee", the act of naming, through the creative force of the words had formed inseparable bonds between the person that was being named, and the land/ landscape from which the name derives. Accordingly, Momaday was taken to Tsoai at a very early age, to confirm the spiritual connection between the land and

the young child, establishing the bond between the generations of the Kiowa, and linking the child to the spiritual landscape of the Kiowas. Thus Momaday knows where he belongs, and with whom he belongs. Consequently, his lived experience only provides the background to a communally and mythically formulated selfhood.

Louis Owens on the other hand, in *I Hear the Train*, acknowledging the importance of the past in subject formation, uses fiction to fill in the gaps and re-create the missing links in his past by employing fragmental/ achronological time, since without the past, it is impossible to connect with the present or the future, or fashion a seamless selfhood. Hence through fictionality, Owens brings together the threads of stories that appertain to his family and attempts to reach at cohesion, connectedness and communality. Also using hybrid forms, Owens is pulling together his disparate subject positionings that comprise his selfhood; the author, the academic, and the critic. Furthermore, since land is crucial to self-knowledge, to resist dispossession and loss, which had been the lot of his family, and his inheritance, the selfhood he constructs prioritizes his connections with the land. As a result, Owens narrates how, through farming, hunting, working as a forest ranger and a forest fire fighter, he forges inseparable bonds not only with the plots of land on which he was born or raised, but re-connects with the entire North American continent.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation focuses on controversial texts by Native American authors, questioning forms of constructed Indianness, and the attempts of contemporary authors to break these constructs. While the white society locates Indianness within the site of its physical manifestations and artifacts, and thus collapses the boundaries between material objects and identities, it is argued that such markers tend to get frozen in time, and become static signifiers denying Indians contemporaneity and real presences, but instead creating the images of a defunct culture. Using Louis Owens' and Susan Sontag's contentions, photography's truth claim is established as at best suspect, since what the photographer seeks is itself an elaborate construct of the colonial fantasy, with the result that the iconic "Indian" image formulated by the Euromerican imagination obstructs the visibility of the

contemporary Native Americans. Moreover, the photographer defines and represents the photographed while denying him/her agency, and Fleming and Luskey's work is used to illustrate that historically, all government activities and military operations utilized the unequal relationship established through the medium of photography in formulating and strengthening their hegemony over the tribes. Further, it is posited that the hectic activity at the end of the nineteenth century to document the Indian in the few decades before his/her so-called complete extinction was an act that aimed at fixing the Indian in the romanticized pose of his/her "actual" demise.

Then, building on Vine Deloria Jr.'s work, it is argued that the anthropologist, empowered by epistemic truth claim, substantiated the ideological goals of Anglomericans, fabricating modes and models of Indianness, and in the process subjectifying the Indian communities. Gerald Vizenor's theories are furthermore analyzed at length; who argues that the "Indian" in the process of his/her representation has become the "absolute fake", a "hyperreal" simulation, and this construct has replaced the much-contested essence of Indianness. Then the basic premise of survival or in Vizenor's words "survivance" becomes the dismantling of these simulations, and the main objective of self-writing by Native American authors to contest the hyperreal while formulating their own selfhoods in textuality.

In discussing the artifactualization of the Indian and the attribution of defunctness to Indian cultures, *Black Elk Speaks* is analyzed in detail. One of the seminal texts of early twentieth century, it is purportedly an as-told-to narrative by a Native American. However, *Black Elk Speaks* is written by John Neihardt, and the text is suspect in (in)advertently helping to create and perpetuate false, inauthentic representations of the Indian. Then the basic question becomes, if Neihardt helps Black Elk construct an Indian identity or if Neihardt mediates a constructed Indianness for the white community, while substituting his own voice to replace that of Black Elk, since *Black Elk Speaks* is a work that is not only mediated through four voices, but also actually written by the Anglomerican poet.

In its stylistic incoherence, and employment of cyclical time, *Black Elk Speaks* is in line with the basic tenets of oral literature, and the text discloses a communal selfhood, while Black Elk's subjectivity is shaped with and for the community. Black Elk shares his sacred visions with Neihardt because he does not want the visions to get lost. The visions however, initially separate him from his community, by singling him out. Yet, for the visions to take effect, they need to be shared, and thus Black Elk starts performing the visions ritually for the benefit of the whole community. When self-doubt sets in, Black Elk joins the Wild West show to learn about the white ways, eventually deciding they are not suitable for the Oglala. Black Elk also participates in the Ghost Dance movement, and the text ends with his eyewitness account of the Massacre at the Wounded Knee. On the other hand, *Black Elk Speaks*'s narrative focus is twofold, namely Black Elk's visions and the historical period, that is the final stand of the Sioux and their definitive defeat during the Massacre at the Wounded Knee. Then it is the moment of the Indians' ultimate subjugation that is being documented by the Anglamerican poet for a white public.

Black Elk's concluding remarks to the text are; "A people's dream died there" (207), and "the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead" (164). Therefore, the text ends in despair and hopelessness, and what is reflected is a defeatist attitude. This fact fits in with Momaday's contention that "[t]he Indian has been compelled to make his way under an imposed identity of defeat" (*The Man* 59). Then *Black Elk Speaks* not only marks but also fixes and eternalizes the ultimate moment of loss and subjugation for the Native American peoples, since the Indian is depicted at both the figurative and the actual moment of his demise. As a result, the text brings to fore the stereotypical dying Indian, the epitome of a bygone past, pitifully romanticized in his helplessness. Consequently, it is argued that *Black Elk Speaks* textually documents the notion of the "death" of a culture, and in this respect strengthens the iconic image of the dying Indian.

The final text this dissertation focuses on is Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Alexie is perhaps the most controversial Native

American author writing today, and his work is frequently criticized for depicting the contemporary American Indians in a negative light, and thus pandering to the already strong stereotypes current within the mainstream representations of the tribal cultures. However, it is argued that what Alexie does in his fiction is to bring to fore the stereotypical representation of the Indians only to contest them. Using the subversive potential of humor –in like vein to Vizenor’s trickster discourse- and utilizing Post-modern techniques, Alexie not only challenges the validity of the stereotypes, but deconstructs them. Also, in line with the import Vizenor attaches to creativity, and his insistence on survivance, Alexie’s protagonist through creativity, adaptability, and humor, not only survives, but succeeds in carving himself a niche in both white and Native American societies, a fact which marks the text as a story of success, survival and survivance.

In the light of all the analyzed texts, from the beginning to the present cultural context, various constructions of Native American identity are traced. Then, from texts that exemplify the attempted assimilation, to deconstructive texts, this dissertation aims both to problematize and analyze the cultural codes from a historical perspective while focusing on different periods, and foregrounding how mainstream representations are deconstructed by way of self-representation. Thus, from Zitkala-Ša, to Sherman Alexie, this dissertation delineates the changing Native American cultural identity, in tracing the ways by which the Native American authors refute the otherness assigned to them, through anger or humor but always through creativity. Therefore, in subverting the otherness the mainstream representations attempt to mark the tribal peoples with, creativity inherent in the oral literature is underscored as the ultimate tool used by Native American authors.

1. EUROMERICAN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATIVE AMERICANS: THE MAKING OF THE CONSTRUCT

1.1. Early Encounters

...America first came into existence out of writing.... 'America' existed in Europe long before it was discovered, in the speculative writings of the classical, the mediaeval and then the Renaissance mind (Ruland and Bradbury 4).

Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury's comment reflect the light in which America was first conceived and then written into existence by the European mind as a repository of hopes and dreams. Just as the European mind imagined and willed America into being, so was the American self fashioned into existence, through a willful act of self-definition, and in establishing selfhood, the need for a reversed mirror image ran deep. Ruland and Bradbury further describe the European perception America in the following words: "... the idea of a western land which was *terra incognita*, outside and beyond history, pregnant with new meanings for mankind. That place that was not Europe but rather its opposite existed first as a glimmering, an image and an interpretative prospect born from the faith and fantasy of European minds" (4-5). It was this sense of the unknown, coupled with America's conjectural emptiness, which made America into the land of possibilities. Thus it was *tabula rasa*, the empty canvas, the mud, which was ready to take shape in human hands, ripe for meaning and making. Also it was America's difference from the Old World, its otherness that enabled men to shape and shift themselves, discard their old selves and be born anew. And in this quest for self-fashioning, the American self found its Other in the Native American, and it is with this inalterable sense of alterity with which the Euromericans approached the new land and its inhabitants.

Today in the United States, the American Indian population is most dense in the Southwest, particularly in the states of Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico. The region comprising of the aforementioned states is called the Four Corners

region, and according to Yazzie-Lewis and Zion, by the year 2006, over 400,000 American Indians live in these four states (1). It is possible to argue that the name given to this area itself is a live testimony to the fact that the Native Americans have indeed been cornered, compressed into one small region of a continent that formerly belonged to them entirely.

Moreover, the name Four Corners attests to a twofold irony. The Western and Native American epistemologies vary in numerous aspects, and one such difference is the way the world is conceived by these two cultures. The American Indians saw the world in terms of six directions. Apart from the East, West, North, and South, the Zenith and the Nadir are recognized as comprising the aforementioned six directions. The Zenith is also referred to as Up or Above, and the Nadir as Down or Below. Rose von Thater-Braan (Tuscarora-Cherokee) describes the direction of Above as “The Place of Beauty, Balance and the Higher Mind, the Sky”, and Below as “Our Beloved Mother, the Earth” (7-8). On the other hand, the Western episteme viewed the world in terms of four cardinal directions, and as comprising of four distinct quadrants. Felicity Nussbaum remarks on the European vision of the world in the following manner:

Its four corners were of course fictitious, an act of the colonial imagination... [Yet] these “corners” of the earth were frequently represented iconographically as female figures in ornamental frescoes that decorated the four corners of a drawing room or bedroom..., or as naked, veiled or feathered figures in the cartouches of eighteenth-century maps. In a characteristic figuration America was represented as barebreasted, with a feather headdress, carrying arrows and a bow... (*Global 18th cent.* 2).

The equation of land to the female body, which is ripe for the penetration and conquest of the European male marks the colonized lands and their inhabitants as destined for submission. Consequently, the given name of the region most densely populated by the Indian peoples today is a reflection of the fact that it is still the Western episteme, which is naming and shaping the Indian existence in accordance with Anglomean terms and images.

The earliest encounters between American Indians and the Europeans took place in the fifteenth century, and the main objective on the part of the Europeans was discovery, and trade. When we look at the earliest texts and the eyewitness accounts of the encounter, it is possible to argue that these also reveal the epistemological polarity of these two cultures in contact. According to the eyewitness accounts of the Native Americans, we can posit that the Natives conceived of the white men in concordance with their own worldview, and saw them in terms of other natural or supernatural phenomenon. Since the Native American universe is cyclical and holistic, the material and non-material beings are parts of a perpetual, on-going creative process, and there exists no distinction between the natural and supernatural orders. Hence, material and non-material beings are parts of a whole, with no set hierarchies dividing them.

The European culture on the other hand, recognized an inherently and divinely ordered universe of fixed hierarchies and immutable differences. The Great Chain of Being is an illustration of this hierarchy in creation, and implies certain repercussions for human society. With God at the very top, angels, humans, animals, plants, and minerals follow a descending order. Furthermore, each of the general categories of creation is divided into subcategories. The human society, replicates the fine divisions of the chain in terms of rank and occupation - since social classes as we know today did not exist in the Early Modern era -, and this hierarchical outlook fixes man's - and other living and non-living things' - place once and for all in the Divine Order.

It can be argued that this static perception of the world and creation left no place for appraisal of differences, or for parts of creation that did not fit easily in the Great Chain of Being. Therefore, the Natives were perceived as outside the Divine Order and the cosmic hierarchy, and in effect barely human. Consequently, the earliest texts and visual images the Europeans produced on the Natives were informed by this monolithic perception of humanity. Thus, they depict the Natives in dichotomous terms, and in terms of polarities, because the Natives are outside the Divine Plan,

cast off from God's ordered universe, with no aspirations to civilization, but barbaric, wild, and savage creatures. They are the "other" of the civilized human beings the Europeans believed themselves to be. Eventually, we may argue that the earliest textual and graphic representations of the Natives reflect a process of othering and stereotyping at its initial state.

It is needless to say that the American continent was populated by numerous Native peoples/ nations before the contact and during its initial phases. In trying to illustrate the wide diversity and complexity of the Native peoples prior to contact and colonization, we may draw on the classification by J.C.H. King. King in his book *First Peoples, First Contacts – Native Peoples of North America* attempts a delineation in terms of shared geography, history and culture, grouping the Native peoples of the North America as those living in the Northeast Woodlands, the Southeast Woodlands, California, the Northwest Coast, the Arctic, the Subarctic, the Canadian Plains and the American West.

These myriad Native peoples/ nations started having encounters with different colonial powers at different historical moments, and the contact proved to be an ongoing process. However, the reports of the initial responses at the moments of encounter, although remaining still culture-bound, exhibit similarities. The Native Americans tried to make sense of the newcomers in terms of their own understanding of the interconnectedness of human and non-human worlds, and this fact is reflected in their verbal accounts. For example, in 1633 a Montagnais girl in Quebec had told of her grandmother as "... seeing a ship as an island, the people from which offered the Indians ships' biscuits and wine, which they saw as wood and blood" (King 30). Likewise, the Delaware on the New York and New Jersey coast upon seeing a Dutch ship had taken it to be "... a house for *manitou*" (30). Another account of the encounter, taking place between the Mowachaht people and Captain Cook, recorded in the 1970s by Winifred David reads: "The Indians didn't know what on earth it was when his ship came into the Harbour... So the Chief, Chief Maquinna, he sent out his warriors...they went out to the ship and they thought it was a fish come alive into

people (sic). They were taking a good look at those white people on the deck there.... Those people, they must have been fish. They've come back alive" (qtd. in King, 123-4). Nonetheless, be them perceived as islands, dwellings of the Great Spirit or fish come alive, the new-comers were assigned a natural or supernatural place in the ever-changing, syncretic Native American universe.

The initially neutral view of the newcomers was soon to change, and become tinted and tainted by eruption of hostilities, which were aggravated by the diseases brought by the Europeans. The fear incited by the foreigners becomes visible in another fairly early depiction of the approaching ships. In 1786, seeing French ships, the Alaskan Tlingits took them for "... great black birds with white wings, as the Raven or the trickster" (32). Since it was believed that the one who laid eyes on the Raven would turn to stone, only one old chief dares approach the ship, and when offered some rice, he takes the dish of rice for worms and would not eat it. Thus, the ships take on the aspect of the Raven or the trickster, a more ambiguous and partly dangerous force of nature.

Although Europeans had willed America into existence, realizing the dream that was America was far more difficult than the English initially conjectured. Before the earliest settler colony was established in Jamestown in 1607, The English had undertaken other aborted enterprises, all of which had failed tragically. As early as the 1550s, the English were trying to establish themselves in the Americas. Yet, the dominance of Spain in Central and South America and the presence of the French in Florida were detrimental to the English colonial enterprise. Therefore, the English were forced to try their luck in the North. However, the six voyages made to the Arctic zones between 1576 and 1587 by Martin Frobisher and John Davis to discover the Northwest Passage that would lead them directly to Asia, only resulted in the discovery of fool's gold in Kodlunarn, and the consequent reluctance of the part of Queen Elizabeth to finance further ventures to the New World. However, the failed quest for gold in Kodlunarn does provide us with the earliest accounts of the English encounter with the Inuits. According to Joyce E. Chaplin, in the written accounts of

the Frobisher and Davis expeditions, the English attitude to the Inuits was hostile to say the least. Chaplin writes:

The English generally believed that the Inuit were barely human – they exhibited little of the ability to transform nature through artifice or technology that Europeans thought was characteristic of humankind. Several observers denied that the Inuit could manufacture clothing and shelter against the Arctic winter: they believed, instead, that the natives must migrate south during the winter. Some accounts implied that the local people were barely different from animals: they would ‘eate their meate all rawe’, would consume grass undressed... and would suck ice rather than drink water (53).

We may argue that these accounts of the Inuits are in perfect concordance with the general appraisal of other peoples by the Europeans; the “Others” are wild, barbaric, cannibalistic, and bestial. Rose von Thater-Braan posits that to this day, the Euromerican mindset refuses to give credit to the Indigenous experiences, communication styles, cultures, arts and sciences, medicine and mathematics (5). Felicity Nussbaum on the other hand, offers us an explanation as to why the Euromerican mind discredits not only the native Others but also their experiences, and the resultant knowledge. To quote Nussbaum:

[The] subjugated, silenced, or disqualified knowledge, less saturated by Enlightenment's premises – is often represented as irrational, natural, and primitive, and its relationship to objects, ancestors, the land, and the spirit world are determined to be ancient and superstitious (*Global 18th cent.* 9).

However, such racist assumptions will continue to inform travelers’ accounts well into the nineteenth century, the likes of which will be iterated by Darwin, when he discusses the native inhabitants he had encountered on his visit to South America, when he calls them savages and compares them to the wild animals they feed on, and further argues:

For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper; or from that old baboon, who, descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs – as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up blood sacrifices, practices infanticide without remorse, treats

his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions (qtd. in Abrahams & Greenblatt 1575).

Yet, another badly failed attempt at colonization provides us with unusually vivid visual representations of Native Americans. These are the watercolors by John White, who had made at least five trips to the New World and was appointed the Governor of the 'Cittie of Raleigh' in 1587. White was to plant and settle a colony in Virginia, to create a permanent settlement unlike the previous short-term ventures. On the 'Cittie of Raleigh', which was to be dubbed the "Lost Colony", Kim Sloan writes:

Until this time, colonies that the English had attempted to establish in North America had consisted of men whose main business had been to build and man forts and build basic structures, to find minerals, to establish trade in valuable commodities, to map and to find enough food to feed the colony over the winter. For various reasons these had failed and the aim of the present company was to 'plant' people – not soldiers but farmers, artisans, small merchants, gentlemen and above all families, not just men, but women and children, to settle and hold the land usefully for England (45).

The fate of the 117 people who landed at Roanoke to settle is unknown, since White returned to get assistance and provisions, but was unable to go back to his colony before 1590, and then unable to discover any survivors. However, in spite of the tragic outcome of the attempt at settlement, the watercolors White produced during the journey were not only to survive, but were to be copied, changed and adapted by numerous publications until the eighteenth century, forming the earliest representations of Native Americans and their way of life, and thus shaping the European perception of Natives.

White's illustrations were published, accompanied by Thomas Harriot's *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*, by Theodor de Bry in 1590. Harriot's booklet was first published in 1588 and its full name was *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia: of the commodities there found and to be raysed, as well merchantable, as others for victual, building and other necessarie uses for that are and shal be planters there, and of the nature and manner of the naturall*

inhabitants... (Kuhlemann 84). It can be argued that the full name of the text makes clear its promotional aim. As mentioned above, after sustaining substantial losses at Kodlunarn, the crown was reluctant at financing any other colonial enterprises, and it was private individuals who had to cover the costs of the settlements in the New World, a fact, which clarifies Harriot's reasons for advertising the New World.

Similarly, to quote Sloan, the account of the journey to the New World, written by Arthur Barlowe for Raleigh and published by Hakluyt in 1589, "...reads as a promotional tract for Paradise" (40). After describing the "incredible abundance (sic)" of the land, Barlowe describes the natives in the following words:

... no people in the world carry more respect to their King, Nobilitie, and Gouvernours, then these doe... Wee found the people most gentle, louing and faithful, void of all guile, and treason, and such as lived after the manner of the golden age. The earth bringeth foorth all things in abundance, as in the first creation, without toile or labour" (Barlowe qtd. in Sloan 40).

Consequently, we should approach the illustrations of White as other instances of promotional material for the colonial project. Joyce E. Chaplin argues that White's watercolors are part of a propaganda campaign and they offer a selective process of portrayal, and thus we see the Natives as smiling, waving, dancing and socializing. They are not only friendly, but also have an abundance of food, and are frequently depicted eating, drinking, and enjoying the plenty the earth offered them. Furthermore, the Natives are pictured with tools, which points at the fact that they kept themselves occupied. Finally, they are portrayed as inhabiting towns with rows of buildings, and with functional social systems of rituals, burials, and prayers. To quote Chaplin, they are "... the eager assistants of the English colonizers: they have ample food, they have free land, they make and use tools, they are cheerful and welcoming" (51). Thus White, whose paintings were to shape the perception of natives for the next two hundred years, was recreating them to fit the European expectations. To counter the image of the lazy or idle native, and as a corrective to the common bestial imagery attached to them, the Natives were depicted as

industrious and useful, and special emphasis was given to the tools they made and used.

Yet, White's illustrations of American Indians are followed and complicated by images of Picts and ancient Britons. White's drawings seem to be juxtaposing the Natives with other known types of barbarians, which include not only the Celts, but also the Turks. Thus, we may ask ourselves why else should White have included the drawings of the ancient "races" of Britain and the exotic "races" of the Turkish/Muslim lands in a collection which aims at promoting the New World, its inhabitants, vegetation and animals, if not to affirm the affinity of the Native Americans with other known kinds of savages who populated the world in the past and who continued to inhabit the world.

This decision to include yet other "savage" peoples in a book on America is also commented on by the publisher. According to Bry they are part of the publication "for to shoue how that the Inhabitants of the great Bretannie haue bin in times past sauuage as those of Virginia" (qtd in Kuhlemann 85). Thus, this affinity created between the savages of the present (America) and the past (Britain) aim at further putting the minds of the future colonialist at ease. Similar to the way Britain was colonized and civilized by the Romans, this time, it was the task of the British not to be discouraged by the savagery of the inhabitants of the new land, but civilize them in return.

"Most western textbook surveys translate other civilizations into examples of themselves or of primordial past in an effort to make the strange less troubling..." writes Felicity Nussbaum (*Global 18th cent.* 9). In a similar vein, Christian F. Feest posits that White's inclusion of the Picts could be read in terms of "...White's assumption that the Indians were somewhat more civil than his national ancestors" (56). Feest asserts that since fewer weapons and more household objects were used in depicting the Natives, this was a proof that the American Indians were more tame than the ancient Picts. Furthermore, by juxtaposing the Natives with the Celts, and

thus establishing distance in time, White was emphasizing the fact that the Natives belonged to a much earlier phase of civilization like their own ancestors. This not only helped achieve a certain affinity with the Natives, but also was a clear signal to the colonizers that the land was ripe for settlement and civilization, just like England was before the Roman rule.

Consequently, it can be argued that these earliest texts on the Native Americans marked the formation of certain stereotypes that will continue to be widely appropriated well into the twenty first century. It is also at this historic moment that the noble and friendly savage makes its appearance. He will eventually evolve into the stoic and silent sidekick, whose image keeps informing American culture and fiction to this day. Thus, from Chingachgook in *The Last of the Mohicans*, to Tonto in *The Lone Ranger*, it is this stereotypical image of the sidekick whose sole function is to aid and abate the Euromerican in his lone struggle with the wilderness that is America, always there for the white man in his hour of need.

1.1.1. Creation of Selfhood through the Other and the Imperial Ideology of Self-formation

It is possible to argue that major historical ruptures and the imminent changes brought by such displacements cause radical questionings and reconfigurations of the concept of identity. One such fundamental challenge to subjectivity can be said to have occurred with Renaissance, when the self was fashioned as a cultural artifact. We can date another historical moment in which subjectivity was reformulated to the eighteenth century and the rise of the middle class, which consequently gave rise to the emergent category of middle class identity.

Similar to the way major historical shifts cause individual identities to be contested and re-formed, it can be argued that the same is true for national identities. In discussing the relationship between the affect of change and the necessity of constructing national identities, Robert Young writes; “Fixity of identity is only

sought in situations of instability and disruption, of conflict and change” (*Colonial Desire* 4). Thus, in the face of change, it is not only the individual but also the collective identity, which needs reformation and verification. Young further elaborates that “... in the nineteenth century, the very notion of a fixed English identity was doubtless a product of, and reaction to, the rapid change and transformation of both metropolitan and colonial societies which meant that, as with nationalism, such identities needed to be constructed to counter schisms, friction and dissent” (*Colonial Desire* 3-4). Hence, just as the world is shaped by the colonial center, the center itself is also in need of cohesion, and fixity of identity to resist dissolution in the face of the change it is promoting worldwide.

Felicity Nussbaum posits that in spite of the clearly hybridizing nature of the colonial project; “... colonizing nations sought to create the illusion of uniformity by promoting fictions of a singular national identity” (*Global 18th cent.* 14). Subsequently, in creating myths of monolithic nationhood, othering and stereotyping become much-employed tools in the hands of the colonizing nation. Hence the employment of the Native Other as a stereotype in the canonized works of Western fiction is in line with imperial subject formation. Since negation and the reversed mirror image are necessary in self-definition, by extension, nationhood is also defined through alterity. The stereotyping, which was initially in line with imperialist ideology, functions in sidelining, muting, and infantilizing the Native, and thus making the other invisible in the act of depiction. Yet, this silent other, through his alterity, verifies the cohesive identity of the nation that is in formation.

Therefore, we may attest that both the perception of and the reaction to the Native Other is historically contingent. Eventually, as trade evolves into settler colonies, we see that the initial curiosity and fascination with the Native Other turns into the fear of the unknown. According to Robert Young, racial prejudice precedes and shapes racism. Consequently, this reaction of simultaneous attraction and repulsion, desire and aversion stems from racism, which is a learned response, and in that, part and parcel of the Western culture.

However, in America during the eighteenth century, notwithstanding the inherent racist assumptions of the Euromericans, the Native Americans are used in wars as allies, first in the French-English Wars, and then in the American War of Independence. Yet in the nineteenth century, the Native Americans lose their precarious position of allies, and subsequently become redundant. It is indeed in the nineteenth century when the Anglomericans start the whole scale extermination and displacement of the Native peoples. Therefore we may posit that in the attempted erasure of subject peoples, othering and stereotyping become tools in the hands of the Anglomericans. As Robert Young argues, the human mask is equated to European values, and 'man' becomes "...an assumed universal predicated on the exclusion and marginalization of his Others, such as 'woman' or 'the native'" (*White Mythologies* 122). If the category of human is conflated with white Euromerican, the remaining categories of Other(s) become easily disposable. Consequently Young writes: " ... the category of the human... was too often invoked only in order to put the male before the female, or to classify other 'races' as sub-human, and therefore not subject to the ethical prescriptions applicable to 'humanity' at large" (*White Mythologies* 123). When through othering the Native is reduced to less than human, his dehumanization becomes the basis of the justification for his extermination and displacement.

It is possible to argue that after the Independence, since the American self has to be defined and fashioned, the need for the image of Other is utmost. However, without their land, the body of the American Indian becomes superfluous. As the need arises to define a cohesive American identity, apart from the colonial self, it is through a Manichean division between the Native American and Anglomerican identities that both the American selfhood and the American nationhood are created and confirmed.

Moreover, the duality inherent in the view of the colonized by the colonizer, that the self is only knowable through his Other, has its parallel in the janus faced perception of the Native American as the noble savage and the irredeemable savage (or the

“howling savage” as Paula Gunn Allen dubs it). Thus we have not only two antithetical groups, the colonizer and the colonized, but the Other is perceived and represented as conforming to two radically different stereotypes. Consequently, the noble savage/ friendly sidekick is the polar opposite of the “howling savage”, which is a result of the innate rupture that permeates the Anglomean gaze.

1.2. Literature and National Identity: Captivity Narratives

1.2.1. Self-writing and its American Context

Autobiographies were among the earliest extant works of literature in the Western world, alongside epics, poems and plays. Autobiographical writing in its 2500 years of practice was written for disparate purposes during different periods and existed in various forms, serving diverse functions. Initially self-writing was practised only by the people that belonged to the highest echelons of the society, namely the Saint and the Emperor, because only their lives were important enough to merit being written, and only they had the privilege of access to the technology of writing.

Autobiographical writing at its outset followed two basic models, the religious and the secular. The religious autobiography proved to be the more influential model, and its first example, *Confessions* of St. Augustine (written in 397-8 AD) had a groundbreaking impact on autobiographical writing for well over a millennia. *Confessions* of St. Augustine was to prove so influential that it became the prototype for religious autobiographies by mystics and saints that were continued to be written throughout the Middle Ages.

Secular autobiographies resurface with the Renaissance, coupled with an ever-increasing output in autobiographical writing. Historians agree that secular texts were indeed rare before 1500 and Peter Burke in his essay “Representations of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes” proposes that ‘ego-documents’, which refer to a broad

category of self-writing, (including diaries, journals, memoirs and letters), increase due to urbanization and easier access to travel, since city life and travelling enabled the subject to sever the pre-existing bonds with his community and experience an ever increasing awareness of individuality.

According to Burke, another factor that helped autobiographical writing to thrive is the increased publication of fictional narratives, namely the picaresque novel and sonnet-sequences, because "... these examples suggest the importance of the diffusion of printed models for the creation of a new or sharper sense of self, as well as for the breakdown of inhibitions about writing down the story of one's life" (Burke 22). Thus we may argue that self-writing in its burgeoning and fiction in its initial state have had a symbiotic relationship. While fiction helped in easing the inhibitions on exposing the self to the public in textuality, the demand for self-writing and the popularity it derived from its 'truth claim' caused many early works of fiction to profess to be 'true stories'.

When we look at the American scene, we can argue that self-writing in America pre-dates fiction by centuries. If we move from Burke's premise that travelling was instrumental in the breaking of all existing former ties and the resultant was a new sense of individuality and an altered subjectivity that expressed itself in self-writing, it will become clear why the American letters were dominated by ego-documents for centuries. Thus as early as the fifteenth century, we have an abundance of travel accounts, ships' logs, diaries, journals, letters, and testimonies, written both to inform the public back at Europe of the wonders of the New World and also to express a new self transformed by this experience of discovery and hardship. Therefore, the newly found individuality - which is at the very basis of all kinds of autobiographical writing - is reflected in this process of self-fashioning that was inevitably taking place in first encountering and then in possessing a new land. In this land unlike the old one the Europeans had willingly left behind, the individual was coming into focus in ways impossible to imagine in Europe. Having left civilization behind, the

individuals were being willed into existence anew, in hopes of creating a new society at the wake of the old one.

Another reason why autobiographical writing was privileged over fiction in the New World was the Puritan experience and world-view. One result of the Protestant obsession with individuality and sin expressed itself in the habit of keeping conduct books. The true believer, who was constantly obsessed with his salvation, in an attempt to discover if he were one of the elect or not, would write down all his daily doings in his conduct book, and thus keep a thorough record of his spiritual and mundane existence, hoping to get a glimpse of the plight of his eternal soul during his lifetime on earth. In the latter part of the seventeenth century, the conduct books evolved into Puritan autobiographies, which were very personal and devout. Hence it can be posited that the emphasis put on the individual experience by the Protestant movement had its reflection in these religious autobiographies as the Puritan had nothing to rely on but his own conscience. In order to accomplish the all-encompassing task of salvation, the believer had to turn inwards, and diligently monitor his own subjectivity.

It can further be observed that the Puritans were particularly well acquainted with the technology of writing, unlike the rest of the existing social strata in the Early Modern era. According to Kathryn Shevelow the effect of Protestant movement with its emphasis on reading was amongst the reasons for the increase in the literacy rates in the Early Modern Europe. Likewise, in the post-Reformation period, the people were encouraged to read, as reading was "... a means to instill godliness and regulate conduct, [and] ... a means of advancing religion" (Shevelow 28). Thus, Puritan and Dissenting sects have not only had access to the technologies of reading and writing, but also been actively involved in printing since the English Civil War, as part of their egalitarian activities.

A further reason for the flourishing of autobiographical writing on American soil was the perception of fiction as a threat for the Puritan society. Arts were acceptable only

for the sake of salvation and ego-documents enabled the individual a close scrutiny of the self on a day-to-day basis, and moreover provided the community with positive models of Godly behavior. However, fiction was judged to be risky and ambiguous, if not sometimes truly menacing. Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury explicate Cotton Mather's take on poetry as dangerous because of the presence of a "devil's library" whose "muses ... are no better than harlots" (Mather qtd. in Ruland and Bradbury 19). Mather warns his readers:

...the powers of darkness have a library among us, whereof the poets have been the most numerous as well as the most venomous authors. Most of the modern plays, as well as romances, and novels and fictions, which are a sort of poem, do belong to the catalogue of this cursed library (Mather qtd. in Ruland and Bradbury 20).

Consequently, given the shady reputation of fiction and the ideological advantages of self-writing, the Puritan fathers were not only positively supportive of Indian captivity narratives, but were actually instrumental in not only financing but in authoring, editing and publishing them. The earliest of female captivity narratives *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, which according to Ruland and Bradbury presents "... a lived allegory of salvation" (27) is also remarkable in its extensive intertextual use of the Bible. In discussing Mary Rowlandson's narrative, Derounian-Stodola posits that at least four Puritan ministers were involved in the publication process and adds Mary Rowlandson's text was possibly sponsored by Increase Mather (5). Another captivity narrative worth mentioning in this context is Elizabeth Hanson's. Hanson not only escapes her captors, but succeeds in scalping them, and accordingly her exploit is recorded by Cotton Mather in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* under the name of "A Notable exploit; Wherein, Dux Faemina Facti". Thus, such autobiographical accounts help in fashioning selves other than the captives' as they provide church-approved behavioral models for the entire community to aspire for.

1.2.2. Captivity Narratives: The Early Examples of Stereotypical Indians

1.2.2.1. The Writing Women

The earliest autobiographical texts written by women can be sub-grouped as religious and secular autobiographies. The religious autobiographies written by women predate the secular models, since the historical period from 1100 to the mid-1500s is marked by an abundance of Christian women/ mystics who created texts by which they not only shared their spiritual experiences with the public, but also tried to make sense of their experiences in writing. The secular models on the other hand, which were written by aristocratic women date from the seventeenth century. The majority of these texts were written as private exercises, with no intention of publication, namely diaries, memoirs and epistolary collections and those that were published were appended to the life-writings of their husbands.

Two such Christian mystics writing in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively were Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, whose works were based on the conventions of medieval female sacred autobiography. Mary G. Mason, in her essay “The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers” contends that early autobiographical texts written by women reveal the fact that women need the alterior presence of another consciousness in order to discover and acknowledge their own identities. Mason posits that for both Julian and Margery Kempe, the other through which to establish their own selfhoods is the divine being. According to Mason: “Julian establishes an identification with the suffering Christ on the cross that is absolute” (Mason 321). As for Margery Kempe, Mason argues that this other consciousness takes the form of Christ who is “her manly bridegroom” (322).

The seventeenth century was marked by the rise of secular autobiographies penned by women, and these texts were produced by the members of aristocracy, because of

the class-specific nature of the technology of writing in the Early Modern Era. One such secular autobiography was written by Margaret Cavendish, who was a prolific writer, having produced texts in a variety of genres. Cavendish's autobiographical writing on the other hand, exemplifies what Mason calls the "delineation of identity by way of alterity" (Mason, qtd. in Stanton 139). Accordingly it can be argued that Cavendish's text illustrates a process of self-fashioning, which attempts at differentiating her self from others. In Cavendish's case, the formal identity she constructs in the text is that of her husband's second wife, and as such, she forecloses an identity formulated in direct reference to her husband. In a similar vein, Felicity A. Nussbaum voices an argument that parallels Mason's and posits: "seventeenth-century gentlewomen intimated through their choice of content that their husbands' lives superseded theirs; they defined self by relationship" (*Autobiographical Subject* 137).

Although the Middle Ages was not a time when literature was highly cultivated, the abundance and fruitfulness of the writings of women mystics, mainly produced in the latter part of the Middle Ages is remarkable. In discussing this proliferation in her article "Mystical Bodies and the Dialogics of Vision", Laurie A. Finke posits that the visions they experienced endowed the women mystics with authority, which they otherwise lacked in the misogynistic and highly institutionalized Catholic church. This, according to Finke accounts for the large number of texts written by and about women mystics in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Finke further maintains "visions were a socially sanctioned activity that freed a woman from conventional female roles by identifying her as a genuine religious figure" (Finke 406). Therefore women, who from the twelfth century onwards were debarred from holding official posts in the Catholic church were able to "... claim a virtually divine authority..." (408) by means of these mystic visions that came at a high price, as they were induced through practices such as flagellation and fasting. Finke further comments that "the female mystic of the Middle Ages did not claim to speak in her own voice.... Rather, the source of the mystic's inspiration was divine; she was merely the receptacle, the instrument of a divine will" (412). Consequently, because

these mystic visions were defined and controlled by the church, the women who experienced them were endowed with enough authority to impart the word of God. Thus, partaking and imparting the public discourse of mysticism, these women were empowered and established firmly within the church.

In *Being Interior - Autobiography and the Contradictions of Modernity in Seventeenth Century France* Nicholas Paige in a similar vein posits that the writings of the women mystics had a common aspect, since "... their pens were inspired canals for the transmission of a discourse which was not their own" (Paige 104). As the writing process, which produces these texts, may be dubbed guided writing, the author becomes a mere scribe, an arm, a 'sylvus' who dictates the divine 'word'. Accordingly the author has no aspiration to selfhood or individuality, and thus the autobiographer is completely able to recede from view, as she is no more than a 'human vessel', out of whom the sanctioned discourse of the sacred flows. Paige draws our attention to the paradoxical nature of such "self-writing" since these autobiographical texts, instead of "... providing access to the most intimate recesses of the human soul" (105), debar all access to the interiority of the self in question.

Moving on from the European to the American context, it is possible to argue that class affiliation and the religious fervor, either of which enabled the Early Modern European women to write their lives, had its parallels in the conditions that induced the early American women to write narratives of their captivities. Further, we may surmise that the early American women were able to fit in both categories, as they were both aristocrats, and they were producing religious texts. The former aristocrats of England had settled in America to spread the word of God, and the Puritan society demanded full participation of the women in the religious endeavors of the newly burgeoning society. While the Puritans transformed their everyday experiences into literary texts, God and His word kept informing and inspiring their lives alongside their texts. Consequently, writing women such as Anne Bradstreet, who confirmed the Puritan way of life in their texts, were given full support by the Puritan patriarchy in publishing their works. Women were positively encouraged to write and publish

by the patriarchy, as long as their works confirmed the social norms and also upheld the religious ideology. This way, the women were becoming the mouthpieces of the Puritan Word, and world.

In case of the captivity narratives, if we resume Mary G. Mason's argument, it can be posited that if the Other through which the women mystics formulated their identities was Christ, and for the secular aristocratic women, it was the presence of their husbands, then for the American women who were taken captive, the Other through which to forge their identities were their adversaries, the wild and barbaric Indians. Through exposure to, and engagement with – or rather the refusal of such an engagement with - the Indians, the captive women confirmed their own identities as the Puritan matrons. Whereas in the European models, the affiliation with the Other, be it God or a man, was the formative moment of identity configuration, yet with the captive American women it was the negation of the values of the Other, which helped establish their own identities as white, Christian, Anglomorphic women.

It can be further argued that the captive American women gave voice to the dominant discourses of the society and thus carved themselves a niche or a space from which to reiterate the socially validated ideologies of their times. Similar to the female medieval mystics who could claim authority in a misogynistic culture through their divine experiences, the captive American women, again through their extraordinary experiences, are given the opportunity to publicize their lives, while withholding their interiority. Yet, although it is their experiences that are recorded, their voice is mediated through writers, editors, ghostwriters, and clearly their constructed personas in the texts become a channel through which the Puritan male voices speak. According to Nicholas Paige, the female mystics became human vessels speaking the word of God, and in a similar fashion, captive American women could be argued to speak the words of the Puritan patriarchy that kept shaping the experiences of the captive women to fit an allegory of salvation. Thus, the outcome is texts that function to confirm the faith of all believers. We know that such a confirmation of faith is paramount since for a good Protestant, his/ her success on this world is a proof that

he/ she is one of the chosen of God, and hence a member of the elite. Furthermore, worldly success is taken to be a confirmation of salvation in the afterlife. Consequently, captivity narratives are testimonies to the joy and strength the author derives from the confirmation of her faith, and as such set positive examples for the rest of the Puritan society. These captive women were tested by God, had paid for the original sin that weighs down every mortal, and were saved from captivity by God's grace in their mortal life, which is a clear indication that they are one of the chosen and will forego the eternal torments of hell, the fire and the brimstone in the afterlife. Moreover, while their bodies were put to trial by captivity, their faith had also been tested and had remained intact. Theirs are exemplary lives worth being written, since they inform the others by their strength, purity and virtue.

1.2.2.2. Regulating Women's Bodies and Writings

It can be argued that the advent of the Empire changed the lives and roles of the women both in the center and the peripheries. As the nationhood was established through alterity, it became imperative that the women of the empire be regulated to fit the identity configuration that was in formation. In this endeavor of domesticating the woman at home, Felicity Nussbaum argues that the creation of the Other woman of the empire was instrumental. The domestic woman of the empire whose sexuality has to be controlled was juxtaposed to the sexually active Other woman, the exotic, the savage. Thus, while the Angel in the house was in formation, the sexualized woman at home was also identified with its polar opposite, the non-European woman. Gradually, as domestic virtue became a marker of womanhood, the category of non-virtuous woman was conflated with the exotic Other, and the transgressive woman at home was seen as deformed, defeminized, and finally coded as masculine.

Nussbaum in *Torrid Zones* reiterates the view that the domination and conquest inherent in the building of the Empire is in itself an exhibition of a masculine sexual impulse. The land to be conquered becomes a trope for woman, ready to be taken and to be penetrated. Nussbaum further remarks in *The Global Eighteenth Century* that

the conquered lands of the earth were represented iconographically in the form of female figures, and these figures were frequently used in frescoes and on maps, a fact which shows the extent to which the land and the body of women were conflated by the imperialist imagination. In these widespread graphic images, America is characteristically represented “... as barebreasted, with a feathered headdress, carrying arrows and a bow” (2), a gesture which clearly conflates the vulnerable continent with the naked body of the savage woman.

The imperialist gaze on the other hand, feminized or infantilized the colonial male. In a system of hierarchies in which the colonialist male holds the highest position, the feminization or infantilization of the colonial male is only in keeping with their subordinate/ inferior status. Yet, paradoxically, the domestic and virtuous woman of the empire is represented as at constant threat from the savage men of the colonial lands, whose wild sexuality stems from the torrid geography they inhabit. Accordingly, Nussbaum posits:

... while colonizing men usually imagined European women to be domestic and maternal figures rather than sexual objects for themselves, - perhaps a projection of their racist conditioning to assume greater sexuality in the woman of color than in the European woman – European woman are curiously considered to need protection from the sexually passionate indigenous men of the empire (3).

These wild men owed their savagery to the geography they inhabited, and according to natural histories written in the eighteenth century, sexual prowess and the sun went together. Therefore, people inhabiting the warmer climates had more libidinal energy than the civilized peoples of the temperate zones of the globe, a fact which also accounts for the depiction of the East as a hotbed of all kinds of vices enumerated in the Bible, and its inhabitants as slothful, sensual, and tyrannical.

It is possible to argue that Indian captivity narratives represent a world where these imperialist/ sexist/ sexual fantasies are acted out. The white, Puritan, Anglomorphic women in the captivity narratives are juxtaposed to the Other/ native women, and are threatened by the Other/ native men. Consequently, the plots of captivity narratives

by women enact various scenarios which all involve physical, spiritual and sexual danger to the white woman in question. However, what differentiates the Anglomean woman from the Other woman, and makes her desirable is her purity, her virtue and her honor. These same qualities also act as anchors of their identities, confirming their allegiance to the Puritan society from which they are temporarily ousted.

While the Empire and the American self was defining itself against the Indigenous Other, the discourse of alterity was being employed elsewhere on the globe, since during the Early Modern era, through wars, conquest and piracy, the European Christians and African/ Ottoman Muslims confronted each other on land and on the waters of the Mediterranean. The result of these encounters was the taking of captives by both sides and enslaving them; hoping to get ransoms or merely manpower, especially muscle to be used on the galleys. The earliest extant narratives by the survivors of these trials who wrote their memoirs or travel narratives date from the mid-sixteenth century, and form a sub-genre of early autobiographical writing, usually referred to as Barbary Captivity/ or Slavery Narratives. In the slavery narratives from the Turkish/ Barbary/ Muslim lands, the lines between the Christians and Muslims is clearly drawn and the climactic moment comes when “... the white skinned, Christian, European (or Euromerican) – ...[e.i.] 'Our' women; are being enslaved, tortured, oppressed and raped by the dark skinned, Muslim, African or Asian – the 'Other'” (Schick 16-17).

It can be argued that the woman of the captivity narratives recycles to some extent the figure of the woman in disarray, and in dire need of help and protection from the danger posed by a natural or supernatural threat, a trope whose power derives from the fact that it lends itself not only to war mongering, but also to titillation. In Barbary captivity/ slavery narratives the sexual threat is more overt, sometimes even lending itself to pornography, whereas in Indian Captivity narratives although the sexual threat is present, it is seldom iterated, because the narrators are adamant in making a point of their spiritual prowess and bodily purity. The women in the

captivity narratives are facing physical and spiritual dangers personified by the Natives, and yet they survive all the hardships of captivity aided by their spirituality and virtue. However, as Irvin Cemil Schick remarks, in captivity narratives white women and their possibility of rape, while taking the form of denial of the actual assault, is still sexually charged. The image of the woman in bondage, and her sexual availability is overtly titillating.

Another danger faced by the captive white women is the possibility of miscegenation and the imminent damage to the construct of racial purity. The white woman whose sexuality is to be regulated, while being subjected to the threat of the aberrant sexuality of the Other male, comes face to face with this further repercussion. On the possibility of interracial mix-up and the resultant miscegenation, Schick writes: "... during the age of colonialism, one of the most pervasive social and cultural inhibitions was interracial or inter-religious sexuality; therefore in slavery narratives a major threat faced by the captives/ slaves was to engage in sexual relations with the natives, be them seduced or raped by the natives" (68). Thus, the trope of the helpless woman sexually at the mercy of the Other, whose both body and soul is in jeopardy, functions to evoke the already rampant fears of miscegenation, and heightens the public anxiety, and finally accounts for the huge appeal of captivity narratives and their all time bestseller status.

Alongside the regulation of woman's sexuality and titillation of the public at large, captivity narratives on another level help in the justification of the oppression/ extermination of peoples through this same powerful trope and the discourse created therewith. As mentioned above captivity narratives highlight the vulnerable nature of the domestic woman whose sexuality is to be regulated by patriarchy. When we equate the body of the woman with the land, and underline the imminent threat she (the woman, the land) faces from the savages, the propaganda function of these texts become clear. Schick argues that the importance of captivity narratives "... lies not in a faithful illustration of the country they are depicting, but in representing the mentality of the country they were written, published and read in" (16). As such we

may surmise that in agitating the public, captivity narratives helped in the justification of white aggression against the Indigenous Other. Hence, the discourse that insists on the fragile nature of woman and forefronts her objectified body becomes instrumental in legitimizing imperialism and its physical assault on the bodies of native men and women.

Another major selling point of captivity narratives and reason for the popularity of the genre lies - as in all autobiographical writing - in its claim of authenticity. Claim of real life was in such high demand that the testimonies of felons and convicts were frequently published in the eighteenth century England (Langford 156). As mentioned elsewhere, the authenticity of self-writing was aped by the rising novel, a fact which highlights the esteem “real” life narratives were held in. On the other hand, a close analysis of woman's captivity narratives reveals the fact that some, such as the 1787 *A Surprising Account of the Discovery of a Lady Who Was Taken by the Indians* by Abraham Panther, known as “Panther Captivity”, were purely fictional texts, feeding on the craze for real life narratives.

However, captivity narratives, many of which were written by women, only simulate being the “authentic” voices of women because these texts were heavily edited - perhaps out of recognition - by white men whose objective was to prove the indomitable nature of the Indian. Hence, captive women's narratives become the battleground for men, in the war waged by the whites on the Indian. Consonant with Derounian-Stodola's comment that captivity narratives are about “... power and powerlessness” (xii), in these narratives, white women's voices are sometimes in part, and sometimes totally suppressed, and substituted by the voice of the white men. In the editing process, women lose their authority over their texts, and their authority, which is usurped by white men, is used in stereotyping and demonizing the Indian. Thus, captivity narratives could be read as texts of propaganda that use the body of the white woman while suppressing her voice. The body of the white woman is equated with her virtue, and it is this virtuous woman that upholds the Puritan tradition, and becomes the mouthpiece of the Puritan propaganda. Captivity

narratives on the other hand, tend to become reflections of a nightmarish vision in which the wild savages hold the innocent white women in thrall, forming one of the most persistent and far-reaching stereotypical depictions of the Indian. It is the same stereotypical Indian we see well into the second half of the twentieth century in western movies, the attacker of the innocent whites on their westward march or at their homesteads in the wilderness, whose industrious taming of the land is disrupted by the savages.

In discussing the extent of male intervention into women's narratives, we may look at a selection of women's captivity narratives edited by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola. The captivity narratives in question cover an extensive period from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, and nine of the ten texts in the collection were prefaced by or heavily edited by male editors, while some were actually written by male authors or ghostwritten or even produced through a collaborative effort by more than one male author. Derounian-Stodola in her introduction warns the reader against presuming that the texts were actually written by women, that "... readers should be skeptical of the authenticity and authorship of all the narratives.... [they] are certainly not completely true, genuine, correct or authentic" (xxvi) as is insistently argued in the texts themselves. She also brings to fore the fact that at least half were edited, published, or actually written by churchmen of different denominations. Cotton Mather falls into this final category, since his narrative on Hannah Dustan called *A Notable Exploit; wherein, Dux Faemina Facti*, was part of his *Magnalia Christi Americana*.

It would be an overreaching statement to posit that women's captivity narratives represent women as helpless victims, because there are examples of captive women turned avenger as in Hannah Dustan narrative (*A Notable Exploit*) or even female castrator as in the "Panther Captivity" narrative. Yet, others provide representations of women whose experiences might translate as subversive in the white ethnocentric culture. To illustrate, the 1824 *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* by James E. Seaver tells of Mary Jemison's full acculturation into the Indian life and

customs, and the 1864 *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity*, actually written by Sarah F. Wakefield herself is a vindication of herself against the claims of being an “indian lover”.

Yet, one common denominator of these texts is the way Indians are represented, or rather misrepresented. The Indians in these narratives are reduced to one-dimensional figures, a mob of wild creatures out to terrorize the innocent white women, harbingers of mindless destruction. *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, which is the earliest of these narratives (published in 1682), was probably sponsored by the influential Puritan father Increase Mather. In its preface, the readers are reminded of “... the causeless enmity of these Barbarians against the English, and the malicious and revengeful spirit of these Heathen...” (Derounian-Stodola, 7), and later warned that “... none can imagine, what it is to be captivated, and enslaved to such Atheistical (sic), proud, wild, cruel, barbarous, brutish, (in one word) diabolical Creatures as these, the worst of the heathen....” (8). Thus the preface highlights the points of censure in relation to the Indians; they are wild, barbarous, and cruel. However their ultimate defect lies in their Godless nature. They are heathens, and atheists. In short, they are diabolical, and it is their diabolical nature, which marks the Indians as the living and breathing antitheses of the Godly Puritans.

In recounting her captivity and trials, the through and through Puritan Mary Rowlandson introduces her readers to her antagonists in the very first sentence of her text, which points to the fact that the part of her life that merits being written starts when she meets her adversaries whom she dubs the “murtherous (sic) Wretches” (12) and the “bloody Heathen.... [coming] to devour” (13) the whites. Soon most of her family were “... butchered by those merciless Heathen.... the Infidels.... wallowing in their Blood” (13). Next, verbose racial slurs in the form of animal imagery (“ravenous Bears”) are coupled by the visual imagery of their fiendish looks (“those black creatures”), and through further references to hell (“hell-hounds”), “a lively resemblance of hell” (14) is established. Soon, the enmity between whites and

Indians is reinforced by phrases like “savageness and brutishness (sic) of this barbarous Enemy!” (15), and “Pagans (now merciless Enemies)” (16).

Rowlandson sees her captivity as a test of her faith, and the fact that she has triumphed, is a confirmation of her place among the elect. In spite of her religious fervor, which makes itself explicit in the frequency of quotations from the Bible, Rowlandson yet questions God and his motives on the plight of the natives, and writes: “... I cannot but take notice of the strange providence of God is preserving the Heathen...” (22). However, Rowlandson is able to make sense of this paradox, when she realizes that the Indians, “black as the devil” (40), who are “... like Bears bereft of their whelps, or so many ravenous Wolves” (43) are preserved by God “... to be a scourge to his people” (44). Therefore, Gods spares the Indians the express tortures of hell, and lets them survive and bother his elect only to test His flock.

According to her narrative, Rowlandson refuses to cooperate with the natives on any level. Yet, she is given leave to return to her own people after her ransom is paid. After her redemption, as is the custom, she tries to establish her physical and spiritual purity in the following manner: “I have been in the midst of those roaring Lions, and Salvage (sic) Bears, that feared neither God, nor Man, nor the Devil, by night and day, alone and in company, sleeping all sorts of (sic) together; and yet not one of them ever offered the least abuse of unchastity (sic) to me, in word or action” (46). According to Rowlandson the fact that her virtue has remained intact is another proof of the grace of God, and has nothing to do with the morals or propriety of the devilish Indians: “God’s power is as great now, and as sufficient to save, as when he preserved Daniel in the Lions Den, or the three Children in the Fiery Furnace” (46). Thus, Rowlandson as the chosen of God has suffered, and triumphed in her ordeal with the scourge of God, who takes on the shape of the devilish Indian: “*Heb. 12.6. For whom the Lord loveth (sic) he chasteneth (sic), and scourgeth (sic) every Son whom he receiveth (sic):* but now I see the Lord had his time to scourge and chasten me” (emphasis in original) (30).

A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison by James E. Seaver (1824) on the other hand, testifies to the power of male authority over the authentic voice of a woman acculturated to the Indian ways and culture. From the Introduction to the text we learn that Jemison relates Seaver her life-narrative orally over a period of three days. However, the author's claim in the Preface that "Strict fidelity has been observed in the composition: consequently no circumstance has been intentionally exaggerated by the paintings of fancy, nor by fine flashes of rhetoric: Without the aid of fiction, what was receive as matter of fact, only has been recorded" (123) reads as little more than fine rhetoric and literary convention once we read the text in full. On Mary Jemison's text Derounian-Stodola writes: "In Seaver's *Narrative*, we find a white, male, establishment author who is loath to allow Mary Jemison, a fully transculturated woman, to prevail. Yet along Seaver's voice, readers can discern Jemison's own voice penetrating and, according to one scholar, even manipulating the text (Walsch)" (xxiv). Derounian-Stodola also draws our attention to the heteroglossic nature of the resultant text, in which "... to use Tara Fitzpatrick's term, the voice of the captive 'duels' with the voice of the editor" (xxvii). Thus, it can be argued that throughout the text, while Jemison tries to explain when and while Indians would actually act in a manner recognized as atrocious by the white culture, and enumerates the kind and empowering ways of Seneca (especially for a woman), the text is also overridden with many negative comments on the Indians and their way of life, which possibly point at liberties taken by the white male author for the sake of mainstreaming.

In the narrative, the contending voices multiply in detailing the bloody deeds of Jemison's second husband Hiokatoo, who was a renowned Seneca warrior. We read:

In an expedition that went out against Cherry Valley and the neighboring settlements, Captain David, a Mohawk Indian, was first, and Hiokatoo the second in command. The force consisted of several hundred Indians, who were determined on mischief, and the destruction of whites. A continued series of wantonness and barbarity characterized their career, for they plundered and burnt everything that came in their way, and killed a number of persons, among whom were several infants, whom Hiokatoo butchered or dashed upon the stones by his own hands (187).

After we read more illustrations of Hiokatoo's vicious nature and the tortures he subjected the whites to, the text is interrupted by a note by the author, which explains that the sections in question were related not by Jemison herself, but by Jemison's cousin, who is a white man (in fact a conman who lived off Mary and her estate for years, making her believe he was her cousin). Seaver writes:

The subject of this narrative in giving the account of her last husband, Hiokatoo, referred us to Mr. George Jemison, who, (as it will be noticed) lived on her land a number of years, and who had frequently heard the old Chief relate the story of his life; particularly that part which related to his military career. Mr. Jemison, on being enquired of, gave the foregoing account, partly from his own personal knowledge, and the remainder, from the account given by Hiokatoo (192).

Therefore, we have at least one other white male voice, that of the cousin/ conman, making its way into the text. It is also worth noting that these parts, which were related by the white cousin/ con man illustrate the gory details of the Indian warrior's cruelty and in that aspect would be most interesting for a white public. Further, we are informed that the cousin/ conman had arguably heard these war tales related by the warrior Hiokatoo himself. Then it is Indian warfare, told by an Indian (Hiokatoo) for an Indian audience and appropriated orally by a white man (the cousin/ conman), and written down by another white man (Seaver), for a white audience. Thus, Mary Jemison's narrative, which has actually become Seaver's *Narrative*, is a medley of voices, all with different agendas, fighting for supremacy in a truly Bakhtinian heteroglossia.

Another captivity narrative, *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity*, by Sarah F. Wakefield is important in that the text employs and juxtaposes the two of the most persistent stereotypical Indians, the noble savage and the irredeemable savage or the "howling savage" as Paula Gunn Allen dubs it (4). The narrative, actually written by the former captive to vindicate her conduct against the allegations of being an "indian lover", appears to be remarkably free of editorial interference. However, from Wakefield's narrative we learn that other former captives had remolded their testimonies to fit the expectations of the white

patriarchy, while she stuck to the “truth”, which resulted in her being ousted by the white public. Thus, Wakefield’s is a testimony to what befalls a woman if she were to refuse becoming a pawn in the propaganda for the war waged by the Anglomean patriarchy on the American Indians.

As well as defending her own conduct, in an unusually objective vein, the author delineates the injustice done to Indians before and after they mutiny, in what is known as the Dakota War or the Sioux Uprising. This text is surprising also in that it deals specifically with the issue of sexual threat, since Wakefield openly admits to being subjected to threats of sexual harassment, and rape, from a number of native and mixedblood men. This fact she brings to the fore, even to discard and to dismiss any charges of transgressive behavior on her own part. According to the narrative, she has pretended to be the wife of the Indian Chaska, only to stop the sexual advances of primarily Chaska’s brother-in-law, Hapa, and later on other Indian and mixedblood men.

As early as the preface we read that Wakefield has suffered at the hands of the Indians, but was spared from more suffering “... by a Friendly or Christian Indian” (241). Hence Wakefield realigns the friendliness of Indian Chaska with his Christianity, further conflating the categories of the good Indian (and the noble savage) with the Christianized savage (or the Farming Indians as she dubs them). Wakefield’s main argument is that the Indians can be civilized, and in that all they need is more food and more assimilation. Wakefield writes: “... if the Farmers would be fed by the white men, and try to be like the whites.... That is the only way the wild Indian can be kept quiet, by just filling them with food” (246). Yet, Wakefield not only infantilizes the Indians and also reminds her readers of their true nature: “... we must remember that the Indian is a wild man and has not the discrimination of a civilized person” (250). It can be argued that these and similar comments are rhetorical strategies on the part of Wakefield, in an attempt to pander to the white public, and their hard-set prejudices. A line has to be drawn between the whites and

the Indians, as Wakefield cannot be expected to equate the whites with the Indians and still hope to get sympathy from her white reading public for her apology.

We meet the two stereotypical Indians very early in Wakefield's narrative. On hearing the rumors of an Indian mutiny, Wakefield tries to escape with her children but is overtaken by two Indians. We read:

Hapa sat facing me all the way, pointing his gun at my breast; and he kept saying, "Those children I will kill: they will be a trouble when we go to Red River." But Chaska said, "No! I am going to take care of them." Chaska was a farmer Indian, had worn a white man's dress for several years; had been to school and could speak some English, and read and spell very little.

Hapa was a wild "Rice Creek Indian", a horrid, blood-thirsty wretch; and here can be seen the good work of the Missionaries. The two men were vastly different, although they both belonged to one band and one family; but the difference was this: the teaching that Chaska had received; although he was not a Christian he knew there was a God, and he had learned right from wrong (255).

According to Wakefield Indians who are savages by nature can only be redeemed by Christian teaching and this noble task is fulfilled by missionary schools. By learning about white ways and most importantly about God, the Indians can tell right from wrong, and act in ways against their own nature, e.i. form alliances with whites that will eventually be their undoing. During the six weeks Wakefield spends with Chaska and Hapa, while Hapa and other "wild" Indians and mixedbloods keeps attempting to assault her, Chaska always acts as her champion, defending and saving her from the other Indians. When the whites' bloody reprisal starts, and the Indian insurgents are scattered, Chaska refuses to run away and surrenders, trusting Wakefield's promises that she won't let him come to harm. However, the white patriarchy is not sympathetic to the pleas of a white woman and her Indian savior, and Chaska is executed "by mistake", hung in place of another by the name of Chaskadon, who had murdered a pregnant woman. Wakefield is informed of the hanging by a letter, and admits that she thought the execution "... was done intentionally" (308). Thus, although according to Wakefield "... God [had] raised ... up a protector among the heathen" (264) for her sake, Wakefield in her turn is unable to save the Indian man who had taken care of her, protected her and her children

from physical and sexual dangers during the six weeks she remains a captive to the Indians.

Yet, Wakefield's comment that Chaska's execution was not merely due to a mistake, but an intentional act, requires attention. It can be posited that in siding with an Indian male and trying to protect him, Wakefield is transgressing the socially validated norms and rules of the white society. During the mutiny dubbed the Sioux War, both the Americanized land, and the white women were subjected to danger caused by the unruly behavior of the Indians. Consequently, not only was violence against the Natives justified, but also retaliation of the severest sort was visited on the Natives seen as culprits. According to Wakefield, however, other captive women changed their stories to meet the negative expectations of the public after their return, and thus incriminated the Indians further. Yet, Wakefield refuses to do so, and as a result, is charged by being "an Indian lover". The accusation itself is a double entendre, pointing at suspicions of a romantic or sexual affair between the white woman and the Indian man in question, a fact which would account for Wakefield's survival among the Indians in a time of war and upheaval, and help explain her attempts at protecting an Indian man after her return to the white community.

Wakefield however, in trying to refute the insinuations of the sexual nature of the accusation "Indian lover", and in attempting to vindicate her own conduct, paradoxically does what other authors of captivity narratives shun; and brings to fore the real sexual threats she had been subjected to. This Wakefield does only to forefront Chaska's role as her protector, and to dismiss any slurs to her reputation and honor. She argues her chastity and purity had remained intact, as a result of Chaska's gallantry, and this was the reason why she was trying to protect Chaska, in order to return his goodness and charity.

In her narrative, Wakefield tells time and again that hearing rumors of other Indians who intend to kill the white captives, Chaska and his family had hid Wakefield in the woods. After one such escapade in the woods, we read:

I learned after a while, that the Indians who threatened us came.... concluded to wait till morning to put their threats into execution, which it appears was not death, but what would have been worse. Now my readers, what say you? Am I not indebted to those friendly Indians for my life and honor? What would have been my lot that night if they hadn't interested themselves to save me, you can imagine (268).

The one marker of the white Anglomean identity for a woman is her chastity and her honor, and even when under duress, Wakefield cannot openly verbalize the true nature of the threat, but decorously leaves it to the imagination of her readers. However, in relating further peril, this time from Chaska's brother-in-law Hapa, who had initially wanted to kill her instead of taking her captive, Wakefield becomes more opaque in her description of the full scope of the danger she faced:

... I slept very well until near midnight, when Hapa came home, first time since my captivity. He was drunk as usual. ... but I little thought of his daring to molest me in the tepee in the presence of all the family.... he ... with knife drawn, came towards my place, saying, "You must be my wife or die!" I said "Chaska, come here; he will kill me" He said, "Be still! I will take care of you;" whereupon he arose and came toward me, asking Hapa what he wanted. He said, "She must be my wife or die!" Chaska said, "You are a bad man; there is your wife, my sister. I have no wife, and I don't talk bad to white women." I told Chaska to let him kill me, only kill my children first. He said, "Stop talking, then." He turned to Hapa, who had his knife drawn and was still flourishing it, and said, "You go lie down; I will take her for my wife, for I have none." Hapa said, "That is right; you take her, and I will not kill her." Chaska said, "Yes, as soon as I know her husband is dead. I will marry her;" but Hapa said I must be his (Chaska's) wife immediately Then Chaska said, "You must let me lie down beside you or he will kill you, he is so drunk. I am a good man, and my wife is in the 'spirit world', and can see me, and I will not harm you." (271)

Thus, when the risk of sexual attack is imminent, this time from Hapa, it is again her champion Chaska who saves Wakefield's life and honor. This lengthy episode on the near attack on Wakefield's chastity serves another function alongside the opportunity for asserting her purity, and her unblemished womanhood, and giving due credit to Chaska's good character; that of giving her a chance to explain the source of the rumor that she was actually married to Chaska. Wakefield reiterates and dismisses the imputations in the following manner:

When Chaska thought [Hapa] was asleep he very quietly crawled back to his own place, and left me as he found me. My father could not have done differently, or

acted more respectful or honorable; This was not the only time he saved me in a like manner. Very few Indians, or *even white men*, would have treated me in the manner he did. I was in his power, and why did he not abuse me? Because he knew it was a sin... (emphasis in original).

It was constantly reported and many believed that I was his wife, and I dared not contradict it, but rather encouraged everyone to believe so, for I was in fear all the while that Hapa would find out we had deceived him. I did not consider the consequences outside of the Indian camp, for I had my doubts all the while of my getting away. I supposed if I was ever so fortunate as to get back I could explain all, never once thinking people would consider me a liar, as many call me. Mine is a sad case, after all I have passed through, to receive now so many reproaches from those that I thought would pity me (271-272).

Therefore, Wakefield is confessing that she had done whatever was necessary for her survival, which included lying. Her rationale is that she was intent on lasting another day, and did not consider what might happen to her reputation if and when she made it back home.

Perhaps because Wakefield tries to dress and act like an Indian to survive, and even promises to the chief "... never to leave his Band... and be like a squaw" (273), she is always in high demand by the Indian men. Another incidence occurs when Chaska warns her that a farmer (e.i. Christianized) Indian she knew from before the riot, named Paul wanted her as his wife. Later, when they happen to live in the same camp, Paul keeps up with his advances. Wakefield writes: "... Paul troubled me very much; was continuously hanging around me, wanting me to go with him as his wife.... I told Paul I would stay, for I was well treated by Chaska, for he had never asked me to be his wife, and it was wrong in him to ask such a thing, being a Christian" (282). According to Wakefield, the reason for her continued alliance with Chaska lies in the fact that Chaska treats her with the respect due to a white woman, and never ogles her.

According to Wakefield, all through the time she spends with the Indians, it is not only her honor but also her life that is in constant peril. The initial reason for the riots was starvation, and the Indians continued to face a severe shortage of food, a circumstance, which made the upkeep of prisoners almost impossible. However, Chaska has a solution to that as well. We read: "... Chaska has many times told me,

that if I was in danger, to tell the Indians I was his wife, and I would be saved.... I would have called myself the evil spirit's wife if I thought by so doing I could save my life. I suppose many Indians really thought I was his wife..." (289). Hence, pretending to be the wife of an Indian man, not only saves her from the sexual advances of others, but also stops the others from disposing of her as a liability, or seeing her as an extra mouth to feed.

Although Wakefield refuses adamantly all rumors of transgressive behavior, and vehemently protests against these insinuations, the mere fact that she has had to write this apology proves that her body lies objectified, and soiled, at best slandered. In trying to save her savior, she loses to the white patriarchy, both her honor and the life of her defender, who trusted her with his life. The patriarchy cannot be expected to take serious the vindications voiced by an "Indian lover", a woman whose honor is suspect, and her name blemished. While Wakefield is ousted, because she had reputedly lost her purity to no other than to a wild Indian, the Indian Chaska loses his life, because he had taken a white woman, if only to protect her honor. It is not surprising that it is the Others who lose both the battle and the war.

2. A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: FROM “INDIAN” TO THE STEREOTYPICAL “DYING INDIAN”

2.1. Genocide: Historical and Cultural

In *The Manufacture of Consent* Noam Chomsky writes in reference to the Native Americans that: “[t]hey were slaughtered, decimated, and dispersed in the course of one of the greatest exercises in genocide in human history... which we celebrate each October when we honor Columbus – a notable mass murderer himself – on Columbus Day” (qtd. in Roy 86). The Native American genocide, which according to Chomsky started as early as the discovery of the continent by Columbus, is today an indisputable fact. That the Native Americans were massacred brutally for centuries, even before the Native American genocide gained impetus in the nineteenth century are facts frequently voiced by many.

However, it can also be argued that the Native Americans had partaken the grim fate of all colonized peoples, who have fallen prey to the colonizing project. When we look at the consequences of colonization on a global scale, we can see that not all Indigenous populations have physically survived the mass murdering impulse on the part of the colonizers. Sven Lindqvist in his notable work *“Exterminate All the Brutes”* offers examples of populations that were completely exterminated by the colonizers and the first example he draws is the Guanches, the native population of the Canary Islands (110). By 1478, the Spanish had started to colonize the Islands and the Guanches were the first peoples to have been exterminated in the world history. The natives of Tasmania on the other hand, where the first colonists arrived in 1803, were another population that was totally wiped off the face of the earth. Lindqvist further posits that in the South and North Americas, 100 years after the arrival of the Europeans, the native populations dropped by 90 to 95 percent (111). It is Lindqvist’s contention that the Natives were not totally wiped out by the colonisers in battles, but the diseases brought by them, the ruthless labour they demanded, and

the hunger that resulted from the Natives' removal from their ancestral lands and finally the collapse of their social systems were the factors that contributed to these mass deaths.

Moving back from the global picture to the particular plight of the Indigenous populations of North America, what is clear is that while the colonial project has resulted in the total extermination of some tribes, many other tribes have survived, in spite of the depletion in numbers they have had to endure. Michael H. Hunt in *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* estimates that the number of people living north of the Rio Grande before the first European settlements was at least two and perhaps as many as ten million (14). And in comparing the fluctuation of the Native American and Anglo-European populations over a comparatively short period of hundred years, he writes: "In 1700 native peoples constituted three-quarters of the population within the boundaries of what would become the United States. By 1820 Europeans were nearly 8 million out of a total of almost 10 million inhabitants overshadowing both natives and a much expanded slave population" (13). Hunt further posits:

Warfare, starvation, and exposure reduced the number of Indians living in the continental United States to about 600,000 in 1800, already then out-numbered by 5 million Euro-Americans and 1 million slaves brought from Africa. By 1930 Native American numbers had fallen still further—to roughly half the 1800 figure. White Americans had not inherited the fabled empty continent. Rather, by their presence and policies, they had substantially emptied it.(17)

The facts presented by Hunt illustrate the devastation experienced by the Natives as colonialism changed the outlook of the continent. Imminent to the Anglo expansion, which took place both in terms of population and geography the Native populations started to decline at a rapid pace. It is Hunt's contention that the continent, perceived as empty by the colonizer, was by twentieth century, ironically almost emptied of its original inhabitants.

Kenneth Lincoln respectively offers the official census numbers for the remaining number of tribes in the United States today as three hundred and fifteen, "... where once four to eight million peoples composed five hundred distinct cultures speaking as many languages" (15). The numbers of extant tribes are based on the estimates provided by Vine Deloria Jr., who had had to arbitrate figures that varied from two hundred to six hundred (Lincoln 54). Evidently the numbers of the Native peoples/tribes both before and after the conquest of North America and today are open to dispute, yet what is clear is that, perhaps half of the tribes that once comprised distinct Native American cultures had fallen victim to the colonizing project and were exterminated.

Yet, genocide was only one facet of the liquidation the Native American populations of North America had had to endure. It can be argued that genocide, evolving into policies of dislocation/ relocation, and taking the form of ongoing cultural genocide, has kept on disrupting the lives of generations of Native Americans to this day. As a result, the Native communities suffer from numerous ills, which according to Andrea Smith include: "... physical, sexual, and emotional violence...; unemployment and underemployment...; increased suicide rates; increased substance abuse; loss of language and loss of religious and cultural traditions; increased depression and post-traumatic stress disorder; and increased child abuse" (43). This bleak picture has its counterpart in the health figures of American Indians today. To quote Smith:

On reservations, American Indians have a life expectancy of 47 years. The tuberculosis rate for Natives is 533 percent higher than the national average; accident mortality rate 425 percent higher; the infant mortality rate 81 percent higher; the sudden infant death syndrome rate 310 percent higher; the alcoholism rate 579 percent higher; the diabetes rate 249 percent higher; and the suicide rate 190 percent higher than the national average (116).

Thus, it is the contention of the Native Americans that the colonial period is still in continuation, since the physical and cultural losses sustained by the tribes still reflect on their day-to-day lives. Nor have the Native peoples achieved political sovereignty in the twenty first century.

Robert Young, in his work *White Mythologies* reiterates Frantz Fanon's views on the effect of colonialism, that while colonialism dehumanized the Native, paradoxically, it was the Western humanism which provided the justification for the explicit dehumanizing of the colonized by the colonizer (120). Young next reiterates Sartre's opinion that humanism was not only complicit in the colonial project, but was also a crucial component in colonialist ideology (121). Sartre further contends that ideas of human nature and the universal qualities of the human mind were constructs that were elaborated during the era of Western colonialism. Accordingly, humanism was first used to legitimize colonizers' doings back at home, and then through neo-colonialism, humanism was used as a form of ideological control of the subjected peoples (122). Young finally posits that the dehumanization of subject peoples has enabled and even justified the acts of the colonizers when they took away the tradition, language and culture of the subjected people, without even giving them access to the cultural codes of the colonizers (122). What the colonizer did was, in Sartre's words, "to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours" (Sartre qtd. in Young 121).

While such acts of cultural decimation mark Western colonialism and neo-colonialism, Amílcar Cabral in his article "National Liberation and Culture" remarks the importance of culture as a factor of resistance to foreign domination. According to Cabral, for a people to be dominated, their cultural life has to be repressed, a process which will eventually result in cultural alienation and assimilation. Cabral further elaborates:

... [D]omination ... can be maintained only by the permanent, organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned. Implantation of foreign domination can be assured definitively only by physical liquidation of a significant part of the dominated population.

In fact, to take up arms to dominate a people is, above all, to take up arms to destroy, or at least to neutralize, to paralyze, its cultural life. For, with a strong indigenous cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation. At any moment, depending on internal and external factors determining the evolution of the society in question, cultural resistance (indestructible) may take on new forms (political, economic, armed) in order fully to contest foreign domination (53).

It is Cabral's view that foreign domination could only hope to be successful, when and if the culture of the subjected peoples are stifled. Oppression can then become permanent and take root, as long as the dominated people are alienated and assimilated, since intact cultural codes and values will enable the colonized peoples to rise up against the colonizers and free themselves of foreign domination. Then, culture will be, or will become the true foundation of resistance.

Returning to the American scene, it can be posited that from nineteenth century onwards, the national policies of genocide, warfare, starvation and removal, in tandem with acts of cultural decimation and cultural genocide, had been employed to subjugate the Native Americans. The buffalo were killed intentionally to force the starved plains tribes into lands that were to become reservations. Their livelihood and pursuits terminated, and their life style changed for good, the Natives were forced to wear white man's clothes and expressly ordered to civilize. A statement by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1889 reads:

The Indians must conform to "the white man's ways", peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must. They must adjust themselves to their environment, and conform their mode of living substantially to our civilization. This civilization may not be the best possible, but it is the best the Indian can get. They cannot escape it, and must either conform to it or be crushed by it (T.J. Morgan qtd. in Lincoln 21).

The statement above explicitly illustrates the white perspective. Accordingly, the American Indians have no say in their own fate, but need to obey the demands of the Anglomericans, that is to assimilate or be destroyed. And in order to become civilized, the American Indians need to become assimilated. What is openly demanded of the American Indian is conformity to the white rule. Or else, the Indian courts his own destruction.

On the other hand, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. remarks on the innate relationship between colonialism and cultural loss, which results in schizophrenia and loss of identity for the colonized. We read:

... [C]olonial culture and the colonial condition... alienate the colonized from his or her own history, culture, and even self. Colonialism works to refute identity and create a new identity from the colonizer's perspective. This results, says Fanon, in a kind of schizophrenia in the colonized, who learns to hate him or herself, his/ her identity, and what he/she represents. Again, the only possible healthy response to this is a violent decolonization, not just of society, but of the mind. The colonized must learn not to think of her or himself in the colonizer's terms (Wetmore 37).

Thus, the Native self is caught in an impasse, neither able to partake of the cultural codes of the colonizer, nor able to reach back to his/ her own identity configurations, as his/ her perception is tainted by what he/ she has learned from the colonizer's gaze: that he/ she is the other of the colonizer, incomplete, flawed, lacking in intellect and culture. Furthermore, decolonization proves to be a very painful and difficult process, not only because of the physical and cultural losses sustained by the people(s) in question, but also because of the fact that the colonial world is permeated by the negative representations of the colonized by the colonizer, since “[t]he colonial world is centered on the white male” to quote Wetmore (37). It is the gaze of the colonizer, which shapes the world the colonized live and breathe in, which in turn through negative representations of the colonized by the colonizer subverts the self-perception of the colonized.

As mentioned elsewhere, the duality inherent in Western thought has its reflection in the stereotypical representations of American Indians by the dominant culture, namely the silent sidekick, the uncomplaining assistant of the whites, and the wild or “howling” Indian. It can be argued that the nineteenth century ushers in a third stereotypical Indian, one that was to survive well into the twenty-first century, ironically that of the “dying Indian”. Now that the howling Indian was exterminated and the silent sidekick somewhat assimilated, the survivors of the physical and cultural cleansing were romanticized as the “dying”, or “vanishing” Indian(s). Thus, the Native American is stripped from his/ her own cultural codes and turned into an icon, an artifact, shaped again by the Western consciousness, reflecting in Manichean fashion both the wish for the extermination of the Native, alongside some sense of guilt on his/ her demise.

It is perhaps a paradox that the “dying” Indian has survived for so long in the collective imagination of the dominant culture. Yet, this recurring image is one that still enjoys a vast popularity in the mainstream cultural products to this day, and one the Native Indian peoples are countering and parodying in their own works. In Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, Nector, the boarding school educated, assimilated and Westernized Indian is picked up from his graduating class by a talent scout, to act in one of the many Western movies that were being made at the time. However, what is expected of him is only to pose literally as the “dying” Indian. We read:

... I got hired on for the biggest Indian part.... [but] right off I had to die.
“Clutch your chest. Fall off that horse,” they directed. That was it. Death was the extent of Indian acting in the movie theater.
So I thought it was quite enough to be killed the once you have to die in this life, and I quit (123).

Having had to do nothing but die in his acting career, Nector moves on to do odd, manual jobs. Soon enough, he is approached by a rich woman who wants Nector to model for her painting, her masterpiece as she dubs it, and offers a tidy sum. Nector is put off by the whole thing as soon as he learns that he has to model stark naked. Nevertheless, the rich woman raises the sum so much so that Nector “...forget[s] [his] dignity” and gives in to her proposition (124). Soon after the painting is finished and Nector learns its theme:

I could not believe it, later, when she showed me the picture. *Plunge of the Brave*, was the title of it. Later on, that picture would become famous. It would hang in the Bismarck state capitol. There I was, jumping off a cliff, naked of course, down into a rocky river. Certain death. Remember Custer's saying? The only good Indian is a dead Indian? Well from my dealings with the whites I would add to that quote: “The only interesting Indian is dead, or dying by falling backwards off a horse”.
When I saw that the greater world was only interested in my doom, I went home on the back of a train (124).

Thus, whereas during the nineteenth century, the whites were actually adamant in killing the American Indians off, in an organized effort of genocide, well into the late twentieth century, it is the image of the “dying Indian” that the white psyche keeps projecting onto the American Indians who have actually survived. Survival on the

other hand has come at a hard price, since the American Indians have sustained severe losses not only physically as having been subjected to mass destruction, but also in the cultural arena, having had to survive cultural decimation.

2.2. Expansionism and Dispossession

‘We have been guilty of only one sin – we have had possessions that the white men coveted’ (Eagle Wing qtd. in Lincoln 63).

Thus spoke Eagle Wing to his people in 1881. In discussing the historical events that shape the cultural displacement the Native American peoples were subjected to, we need to move one step further from the intrinsic Othering between the colonizer and the colonized and concentrate on the material circumstances that resulted in the removal of the Native peoples from their ancestral lands. The Native Americans, whom the Europeans initially tried to represent as the hospitable wild men ready to assist the colonizers, become redundant especially after America earned her freedom from the British, and the frontier kept steadily moving towards the furthest reaches of the American West. What drove the settler onwards was the promise of fertile land, which was perceived to be uninhabited and theirs for the taking. The only impediment to this utopic picture was the physical presence of the Native Americans, the true owners of the land the Anglomericans coveted.

In discussing American expansionism, Michael H. Hunt remarks on the identity consolidating nature of spatial expansion, which inevitably coupled with the extermination of the Native peoples. He writes:

In dialectical fashion, the more the conflict with these others, the sharper became the Anglo sense of difference and superiority. In other words, the struggle to subjugate ethnic competitors for control of the continent served to consolidate Anglo identity. Nowhere was the process of negative stereotyping more evident than in the practice of extermination and the policy of removal practiced toward Native Americans... Only in the latter half of the nineteenth century, with the land issue basically resolved, did the image of the Indian begin to take a positive turn - toward that of the noble savage. (37)

Thus, through conflict and expansion, the nation in formation crystallized its own identity at the price of exterminating and dislocating the Native populations. It is also Hunt's contention that during this period of massacre and brutality, the image of the Native also suffered; since it was imperative to demonize the Native to justify the suffering they were subjected to.

Yet, it would be wise to question the extent to which the image of the noble savage/ the dying Indian is a positive representation as Hunt puts it. In discussing the persistence and frequency of this late stereotype, especially in the fiction written by non-Indians about the American Indians, Paula Gunn Allen draws our attention to the fact that what is portrayed as the noble Indian is in fact a pathetic figure "...who is the hapless victim of civilized forces beyond his control" (77). This stereotype again to quote Allen "... reinforces the belief common among both Indians and whites that Indians who attempt to adopt the white ways in any sense are doomed to death" (77). Allen further posits that the foretold representation of the Native "...underscore[s] General Sherman's observation that "the only good Indians are dead" or... reflect America's view of the Indian "as a noble red man, either safely dead or dying as fast as could reasonably be expected" as A. La Vone Ruoff succinctly summarizes it" (77). What is problematized in terms of this representation is the morbid image of the "Indian" the Native American authors living and writing today are countering in their own works.

Louis Owens in *Other Destinies – Understanding the American Indian Novel* dwells at length on the historical events that resulted in the dispossession experienced by the Native populations of North America. This history of dispossession is imminent to understanding both the representation of Native Americans in mainstream culture, which are still in currency, and also the self-representations by the Native Americans that counter the existent stereotypes. Furthermore, the events that exemplify the atrocities are still fresh in the memory of the Native Americans, informing their self-representations, and finally, these historical facts actually form the matrix of death and dispersion, which resulted in the romanticized image of the "dying" Indian.

Owens terms the Indian Removal Act of 1830 “[o]ne of these disastrous moments for Native Americans” (*Other Destinies* 30), by which the tribes of the Southeast, the so-called “civilized tribes” were forcefully removed to the wilderness west of the Mississippi River. The removal was implemented by President Jackson’s policies, whose one address to the public read:

What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms, embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion? (qtd. in Hunt 16)

The “few thousand savages” in question were the Cherokees, the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, Seminoles and other neighboring tribes, and what distinguished them from the other Native American tribes, and accounted for their given name; “civilized tribes” was the fact that the Southwestern tribes had lived in permanent settlements before contact with the AngloEuropeans. This had enabled them to adapt to Western customs more easily, and due to the extended duration of contact, by the nineteenth century, they were fully assimilated to white ways and livelihoods, to the extent of living in Southern style plantation houses, and owning African slaves. Another indication of the tribes’ full acculturation was the fact that the Cherokees took the decision for removal to the U.S. Supreme Court (30) and were even able to win the case, which illustrates clearly that the Cherokees knew their legal rights and had the means to try and defend them¹.

Nevertheless, some sixty thousand Native Americans, and no other than the so-called “civilized tribes” were forced to relocate. This consequently demonstrates that the motivating factor was greed for valuable land the Natives owned, and lifestyles and culture, be them similar or dissimilar had no bearing on the harsh realities of

¹ We further learn from Owens that in order not to lose their ancestral lands, the Cherokee tribe took its case for self-government to the U.S. Supreme Court under Chief Justice John Marshall and won the case. However, this result was met by President Andrew Jackson’s nonchalant attitude. Jackson responded that since it was John Marshall who had made the decision; it was up to him to enforce it. Hence the President took no heed of the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, and the Cherokee were forcefully removed alongside the other tribes.

expansionist ideology. The relocation in turn proved to be a traumatic event, during which the tribes spent months in concentration camps and then force-marched. With thousands dying on this long march, the survivors named it the “Trail of Tears”². The Trail of Tears, which will make its way into the consciousness and the literary works of generations of Native Americans to come, proves to be the first of mass removals, more of which was to come in the nineteenth century, as all tribes were eventually moved into designated reservation lands en-masse.

According to Owens, the second historical catastrophe experienced by the Native Americans was the General Allotment Act of 1887, also known as the Dawes Act, designated to “... end traditional ways of life for Indian tribes by breaking communal tribal lands into individual allotments” (*Other Destinies* 30). Frederick Merk in turn argues that the Dawes Act was an extension of racist premises such as those voiced by Carl Schurz, who as early as the 1870s posited, “Indians could be regenerated and assimilated, if their tribalism were broken up” (242). As planned, the Dawes Act had the express result of sabotaging traditional ways of life in that not only the land was split into small parcels, but people who formerly identified as members of a tribe were made to fragment into individual entities. Consequently, the traditional ways of fending for the whole tribe and considering the welfare of the community were made to give way to individualism, as the fragmented individuals were expected to pursue their own material gains. The individuals who accepted the allotment and agreed to “adopt ‘the habits of civilized life’” were also given citizenship, an exceptional status considering the fact that the majority of American Indians did not become citizens until 1924 (*Other Destinies* 30). Thus, as a result of the Dawes Act not only were Indian tribes split in more than one way, but also the government was enabled to

² The death march dubbed the “Trail of Tears” spanned over a period of eight years and the number of Native peoples thus removed amounted to 46,000. The Choctaw were the people to be removed first, in 1831, and were followed by the Seminoles in 1832. The Creek were made to walk the trail in 1834, the Chickasaw in 1837, and the Cherokee in 1838. During the march, exposure to hunger, illnesses and the elements claimed thousands of lives. Eyewitness accounts claimed that the peoples who traveled in groups varying from 700 to 1,600 would leave behind dozens of dead whenever they stopped. The unofficial numbers for the Cherokee casualties only are estimated to be four to eight thousand.

purchase the surplus land, which amounted to 90 million acres in the next forty-five years (30).

It is Owens' contention that the third phase of decimation comes in the twentieth century, in the form of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, followed by House Concurrent Resolution 108, passed in 1953. While the former removed Native Americans from rural reservations to be relocated into urban centers, the latter terminated tribes "...forcing Indians to join the American mainstream" (*Other Destinies* 31). Vine Deloria, Jr. on a similar vein argues that the relocation program into urban centers was another pretext on the part of the US government for more land grab. It also had the additional benefit of finally putting an end to the tribal existence. We read: "In the 1950s, in order to get Indians off their reservations so that the lands could be sold and the tribal existence terminated, the BIA³ began a massive 'relocation' program that placed thousands of Indians in low-paying jobs in the urban areas..." (Deloria qtd. in Hebebrand 15). The result in most cases was total dispersal of identity, as the tribe and land were at the crux of Native American identity, and communalism was the core to identity formation.

While removals and dislocation gained impetus in the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth in the form of relocation, there seemed to be no scruples on the part of the Westerner in their hunger for land, which went on unchecked. Or rather, the expansionist ideology was fueled by the racist theories that were formulated during the late eighteenth century, and ran rampant in the nineteenth, finding their ultimate justification in social Darwinism. The nonchalant attitude of the colonizer is fully illustrated in the following words of Winston Churchill:

³ BIA is the abbreviation for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is an agency of the federal government, functioning within the US Department of the Interior. The Bureau was founded in 1824 and named the Office of Indian Affairs. Yet, similar agencies have existed since 1775. The agency was founded initially to negotiate treaties with the Native populations. Today, the Bureau's foremost objective is the administration and management of land held in trust by the United States Government for the Native Americans in the United States.

I do not agree that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there for a very long time. I do not admit that right. I do not admit, for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America, or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade race, a more world-wise race, to put it that way, has come in and taken their place (qtd. in Roy 58).

Thus Winston Churchill declares in discussing the plight of the Palestinians in 1937, that the subject races have no claim to their own land. Accordingly, the subjected peoples are no better or worse than dogs, who were let to inhabit some abstract geographical space, as long as they did not impede the progress of civilization. The colonizer, who is genetically more advanced than the Natives, therefore and by definition holds the title to the lands of the “lesser” peoples. The Natives, respectively belong to a lower step in evolution, and are destined to extinction. The white men simply steps in to physically replace the Natives as they inevitably die away.

Physical and cultural displacement has been the common lot of all colonized peoples regardless of color and geography, and as Owens remarks, the American Indians have been experiencing this catastrophe since the sixteenth century. However, the loss of ancestral land has a further connotation for the Native American peoples in that land and connection to land are crucial components of Native American identity configuration. Stemming from the Native Americans’ holistic outlook on life and existence, Self is not defined individually, and marked as different from others, like the Western self, but in converse fashion defined relationally, as part of the whole creation. In terms of Native American self-definition, land becomes the crux of identity, since self is defined not by or through land but as land itself. In discussing the relationship between the Native self and the land, Lincoln quotes Allen and writes:

“We are the land,” Paula Allen stated simply, directly. And the Indian identity is the land, not pre/ positionally “in” or “of” or “on,” but *is*: “the Earth is the mind of the people as we are the mind of the earth.... That perfect peace of being together with all that surrounds one” (Lincoln 76).

Thus, according to Allen, the Native self is equated to the land, without which coherence of Native identity is inconceivable, and dispersal of selfhood inevitable. Displacement, in breaking the ties that existed between the people and the land from time immemorial, not only results in dispossession, but also makes it impossible for tribal people to form a cohesive subjectivity. Consequently, displacement *is* crisis of identity for the Native Americans.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in discussing post-colonial literatures' concern with place and displacement posit that the special post-colonial crisis of identity becomes explicit in "...the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (9). Therefore, the inability to construct a coterminous selfhood stems from displacement, and accordingly, unless a formative relationship is established between self and place, attempts at fashioning a coherent identity are destined to fail. In discussing the reasons for the fragmentation and dispersal of the native self, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin further write:

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement.... Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model (9).

This statement expressly summarizes step by step what the Native Americans have experienced in the last two hundred years, the dislocation starting by the "Trail of Tears" and gaining momentum as the Western mind imprints its own view point onto the lives of the Native Americans, destroying their cultural integrity on the way.

While the result of displacement, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin is "alienation of vision and the crisis in self-image" (9), Joy Harjo argues "that which has happened to the earth has happened to all of us as part of the earth" (qtd in Lincoln 76). Therefore, the loss and the division of the land have proved to be the dispersion, and fragmentation, of not only the Native peoples, but also the Native self.

2.3. What Was Manifested by Manifest Destiny

What Every Indian Knows
Auschwitz ovens burn bright
in America
twenty-four million perished in the flame
 Nazi
 not a people
 but
 a way of life
Trail of Tears Humans
ends in Oklahoma
 an Indian name for
 Red Earth
Redder still
soaked in blood
on two hundred
removed tribes
the ovens burn bright
in America
Ancestral ashes
sweep the nation
carried in
 Prevailing winds
Survivors know
 the oven door stands wide
 and some like mouse
 cat crazed and frenzied
 turn
 and run into the jaws
at night
the cat calls softly
to the resting
us (Pam Colorado, qtd. in La Duke, xv-xvi)

Pam Colorado's poem "What Every Indian Knows" reads like a scream, resonating with the nightmarish visions of both the holocaust and the Native American genocide. Sven Lindqvist, on the other hand, in discussing the Jewish holocaust posits that Nazism is simply one facet of imperialism and racism that have in tandem devastated the tribal societies globally. According to Lindqvist, for the first time in human history, an imperial war was brought home to Europe and practiced upon white populations, and it was this aspect of the holocaust that horrified and had a deep impact on the Western mind. Yet, Lindqvist also remarks the fact that the

Europeans were indeed reluctant to acknowledge the affinity of imperialism to Nazism. Thus Lindqvist writes: "...when what had been done in the heart of darkness was repeated in the heart of Europe, no one recognized it. No one wished to admit what everyone knew" (172).

In a similar fashion, Pam Colorado in her poem "What Every Indian Knows" emphasizes the fact that Nazism is not an isolated instance of violence employed by a few people, but a way of life, one that had held its sway over three continents for half a millennia. Thus, the mass murdering impulse on the part of the colonizer was at work in North America, claiming twenty-four million indigenous lives, decades before the Nazi ovens choked away European lives. Furthermore, in Colorado's poem, the Trail of Tears is depicted as clearly one more exercise in genocide. Colorado ironically remarks that the trail ends in Oklahoma, which we learn means red earth, made yet redder by the multitudes removed thither. The survivors of the two hundred tribes, whose land was coveted by the Euromericans, had reached the "red earth", soaked red in their own blood.

Yet, the fact that history still bears upon the lives and minds of the Native Americans to this day is made explicit by Colorado's intertextual usage of the popular graphic novel *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman, and the imagery thereby employed. In the *Maus* series, the Cat, symbolizing the Nazi regime is the deadly antagonist of the Jews, who are represented as Mice. In a similar vein, Colorado alludes to some survivors of the Native American genocide as cat crazed mice, who, because of the trauma the entire society had suffered and the resultant internalized colonization, might run into the snares of imperialism willingly and let themselves be destroyed in this suicidal act.

That the "Trail of Tears" is compared to Auschwitz in "What Every Indian Knows" is a testimony to the fact that the Native American genocide is still fresh in the memory of its victims. The comparison with holocaust, the Jewish genocide, which perhaps is the only genocide that exists in the global collective memory, inevitably

draws our attention to the fact that other genocides around the world, such as the Native American genocide, go un-remembered and un-remarked, except by their own survivors. Yet works by American Indian authors to this day attest to the all-permeating nature of the sufferings of the past, which keep informing Native American selfhood and self-representation.

It is possible to posit that behind the historical facts that culminated in Native American genocide, lays the enabling tool of ideology, particularly the concept of Manifest Destiny. Indisputably one of the most famous phrases in American history the term Manifest Destiny was coined by the expansionist editor John L. O'Sullivan. According to John Mack Faragher the term came into currency in 1845, when O'Sullivan wrote that it was "... manifest destiny to spread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (qtd. in Faragher ix). Micheal H. Hunt on the other hand, who defines manifest destiny as "the mid-nineteenth century encapsulation of an emerging U.S. nationalism" (34) argues that O'Sullivan coined the term in an article published in 1839, when he wrote:

'Our national birth was the beginning of a new history, the formation and progress of an untried political system, which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only; and so far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity' (qtd in Hunt 34).

In discussing the relationship between expansionism and Manifest Destiny, the latter of which Frederick Merk defines as "expansion, prearranged by Heaven, over an area not clearly defined" (24), it is helpful to draw on William Appleman Williams comment that "expansionism has been one of America's central defining traits" (Faragher xii). Thus it can be posited that Manifest Destiny provided justification for the already existent policies of expansionism. Historians today remark on the propagandist nature of the concept of Manifest Destiny, and argue that Manifest Destiny was the means by which the public was rallied for the expansionist cause. Hence, Norman Graebner contends:

‘Manifest destiny doctrines – a body of sentiment and nothing else, avoided completely the essential question of *means*... Manifest destiny created the sentiment that would underwrite governmental policies of expansion; it could not and did not create the policies themselves’ (qtd in Faragher xii).

Consequently, while the ideologue of manifest destiny O’Sullivan urged the people on for more and more land “... till [their] national destiny is fulfilled and ... the whole boundless continent is [theirs]” (qtd in Merk 52), his arguments were taken up by the President James K. Polk, who became the man who actualized the dream. Frederick Merk posits that Polk’s term in office affected “an unprecedented growth in territorial expansion of the nation”, since the national domain, which had remained fixed at 1,788,000 square miles for a quarter century, was increased by 1,204,000 square miles by the end of his term (xv). Thus, Polk had almost doubled the US territories, while he contended “the addition of new territories was consistent with the U.S. role as a special agent of freedom and progress and as a special country with boundless possibilities” (Hunt 34).

Thus, Polk government was suitably aided and abated by the discourse of Manifest Destiny, most vociferously voiced by O’Sullivan. In an editorial appearing in the *New York Morning News* in 1845, headed “The True Title”, O’Sullivan writes:

‘Away, away with all these cobweb tissues of rights of discovery, exploration, settlement, contiguity, etc.... [The American claim] is by the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative self government entrusted to us. It is a right such as that of the tree to the space of air and earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth – such as that of the stream to the channel required for the still accumulating volume of its flow’ (qtd in Merk 32).

However, while O’Sullivan argued that it was the natural right of US to expand, what partly impeded the Polk government in its expansionist agenda was the presence of colored peoples who inhabited the coveted lands. This concern on the part of the Anglomean politicians becomes clearly visible in the case of the occupation of Mexico, the population of which according to Fisher Ames comprised of “Gallo-Hispano-Indian *omnium gatherum* of savages and adventurers” (qtd in Merk 11).

Yet others, such as Daniel S. Dickinson insisted on the civilizing task of the white men. In a speech he gave at the Senate in 1848, on the issue of Mexican peace Daniel Dickinson spoke thus:

‘But the tide of emigration and the course of empire have since been Westward. Cities and towns have sprung up upon the shores of the Pacific.... Nor have we yet fulfilled the destiny allotted to us. New territory is spread out for us to subdue and fertilize; new races are presented for us to civilize, educate and absorb; new triumphs for us to achieve for the cause of freedom’ (qtd in Merk 29).

Yet, not all were equally intent on helping the primitive races or optimistic about these lesser races’ future performance. Another editorial by Cass published in 1848 by the *Cincinnati Gazette*, is completely free of bigotry, and states in a very straightforward manner that the whites desired land, and not the inhabitants of the lands in question. We read:

‘We do not want the people of Mexico, either as citizens or subjects. All we want is a portion of territory which they nominally hold, generally uninhabited, or, where inhabited at all, sparsely so, and with a population which would soon recede, or identify itself with ours’ (qtd in Merk 159).

However, moral obligations – if any - cease to exist when the people in question is the American Indian populations, since discussions on Manifest Destiny evade the issue of Native American populations completely. The press, which was the hardest proponent of Manifest Destiny, tried to ensure that the perception of land as uninhabited remained intact in the perception of the public at large. In an exemplary propagandist editorial published in the *New York Morning News*, on October 13, 1845, on the admission of Texas to the United States, we read:

‘We are contiguous to a vast portion of the globe, untrodden save by the savage and the beast, and we are conscious of our power to render it tributary to man.... We take from no man; the reverse rather – we give to man. This national policy, necessity or destiny, we know to be just and beneficent.... With the valleys of the Rocky Mountains converted into pastures and sheep-folds, we may with propriety turn to the world and ask, whom have we injured?’ (qtd in Merk 25).

Consequently, the Anglomerican press tried to ease the conscious of the public, by means of denying the existence of the Native American. The land was uninhabited, since it was populated by none but the savage and the beast. Thus the savage and the beast conflated neither deserve apology for rendering their habitat useful to the civilized man, and the Anglomerican can face the world at large with an unburdened conscience, as they have injured none.

The fact that the taking of the land, which belonged to the Native Americans deserved no qualms from the whites is also remarked on by Frederick Merk. In comparing the concern surrounding to the issue of the regeneration of the Mexican population to the non-reaction on the issue of the American Indian peoples, Merk writes:

Regeneration had not been part of the thinking of the American government in dealing with the red man of the wilderness. The Indian was a heathen whose land title passed, according to canon well established, to the Christian prince and his heirs who had discovered and conquered him. Natives retained only rights of occupancy in their lands. Numbering but a few hundred thousand in the latitudes of the United States, they were provided for by concentration on reservations (33).

However, Merk's contention that "Natives retained only rights of occupancy in their lands" is highly disputable considering the mass deaths they experienced in the nineteenth century, from the Trail of Tears to the Sioux Wars, or the massacre of the Wounded Knee. The massacre of the Wounded Knee, which was to make its way into the self representations of American Indians for generations to come, occurs not surprisingly, at a time when the peak of expansionism meets the high moral ground of racism. Michael H. Hunt briefly summarizes this massacre of the Lakota, remarking that it was the point of termination of Native American resistance to white aggression:

In the 1890s the last spark of native resistance flickered out among a defeated, dispirited remnant. The massacre at Wounded Knee on 29 December 1890 conventionally and appropriately marks the end. A band of Lakota Sioux led by Big Foot were rounded up by a cavalry force with simple orders: "If he fights, destroy him." Fearful Indians surrounded by impatient troopers on South Dakota's Pine Ridge

Reservation proved a volatile mix. What was to have been a peaceful surrender of weapons suddenly erupted in gunshots and then turned into a prolonged massacre. Nearly three hundred Sioux died, two-thirds of them women and children (Hunt 17).

Frederick Merk also draws our attention to the fact that both the expansionism of 1840s, and the 1880s-1890s demands for overseas colonies coincided with revivals in racism (237). Thus it comes as no surprise that the crushing blow to Native American resistance to white expansion that took the form of the massacre of unarmed women and children in flight came at this epoch of racism. While in Europe the racist discourse was being perfected by ideologues such as Matthew Arnold, Ernst Renan, Thomas Carlyle, and Arthur Balfour, who had inherited it from the pseudo-scientists of eighteenth century, American racists were formulating their own discourse, with a strong Puritanical fervor. One such propagandist was Reverend Josiah Strong, who wrote in mid 1880s. It was his contention that the Anglo-Saxon race, which meant all English speaking Americans, had been “prepared by Providence to spread the tenets of Protestant Christianity” (Merk 240). Strong was clearly well versed in social Darwinism, and had applied it to his Puritanical zeal. The resultant was a system of beliefs quite consistent with the wished for dispersion of the Natives. Merk summarizes Strong’s opinions in the following manner:

No war to exterminate the inferior races would be necessary. The feeblest of them would be wiped out mercifully, merely by the diseases of, and contacts with, a higher civilization, for which they were unprepared. Races of marked inferiority are intended to be precursors merely of the superior. They are voices crying in the wilderness: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord!” Races, somewhat stronger, will simply be submerged. Decay already is far along in their superstitions and creeds.... The pieces left in the process will be assimilated or simply neutralized by the stronger Anglo-Saxons. The plan of God is to weaken weaklings and supplant them with better and finer materials (240).

Consequently, the accidental death of a few hundred Indians, who were destined to die away and be replaced by the high Protestant civilization, is a small price to pay in a head start in the “final competition of races” (240).

Thus Manifest Destiny, as formulated by the ideologues of the expansionist agenda, had provided America in late nineteenth century with the much-needed pretext for its

Southward expansion, and had helped ease the consciousness of the public, by affirming them of the complicity of God in the extermination project at hand. However, in late twentieth century, the idea of Manifest Destiny is taken up again, but this time by the Native American author Gerald Vizenor, to be distorted into another concept, namely the “Manifest Manners”. As will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, Gerald Vizenor deconstructs the ideological tool of Manifest Destiny, emphasizing the concept of “Indian survivance” in its stead.

2.4. From Boarding School to Domestic Labor: A Trail of Loss Reversed

'We wish you to live in peace, to increase in numbers. . . . In time you will be as we are: you will become one people with us: your blood will mix with ours' (Jefferson qtd. in Hunt 15).

'History is right here in everybody's face, in everybody's heart, and it doesn't stop and end, but its ongoing, and it's circular, and we're in it, and we're in it together' (Joy Harjo qtd. in Hebebrand 7).

While President Jefferson's address to Native American peoples clearly iterates the assimilationist agenda of the white humanitarian, Joy Harjo's remarks on the all-encompassing nature of history points at an epistemological universe which is at odds with the linear concept of history embedded in the Western consciousness. According to Native American episteme, unless the past is reconstructed, the forging of a coherent present or past is impossible, a task that is clearly destined for failure in a cyclic understanding of time. Consequently, in discussing the historical facts that informed both the way the American Indians were represented and the way their self-representations were shaped, the experience of boarding schools cannot be overemphasized. Initially a huge step in the attempt to assimilate the tribal peoples, critics today agree that the boarding schools have in fact provided the Native Americans with the technological tool of literacy, and opened up for them new venues for self expression and self-representation. Although the white schools tried to regulate the self-representations of their students strictly, the result was the

creation of syncretic⁴ identities, which made their way into the mainstream culture, since the texts produced by the former boarding school students were in English and not in their native tongues. Thus, instead of robbing the tribal peoples of their true identity and further enslaving them to the white ways and the white society, the attempts at assimilation had resulted in a wave of Pan-Indian resistance, and the forging of syncretic identities on the part of the Native Americans.

Perhaps the most blatant attack on Native American cultural sovereignty; the boarding schools were founded for the express purpose of “civilizing” the Native American children, and thus creating a domestic work force from which the whole white society could benefit. Forcefully removed from their families, tribes and clans, the children were instructed in the white culture. Denied the right to speak in their native languages, and given Western names (in stark contrast to their earned names), the children were visibly whitewashed as their hair was shorn, and they were made to wear “civilized” clothes. While everything appertaining to their “savage” past was thus erased, the children, stripped off all emotional and spiritual solace and succor, were expected to adapt to the white culture completely during their time at the boarding school. When their time at the school expired, upon returning to the reservation, they were then expected to teach the white ways and habits they have mastered to the rest of the clan, and become not only mere examples, but also active agents of the assimilationist agenda.

The prototype of the late nineteenth century boarding schools was the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, founded in 1879 by Richard Henry Pratt, a former army official, whose aim was to “kill the Indian to save the man” (qtd. in Katanski 3). His

⁴ The dictionary definition of syncretism is a combination, reconciliation or fusion of varying, or opposing principle or practices. Syncretism was initially used to describe religions that have incorporated heterogeneous elements into their system of beliefs. However, Paula Gunn Allen uses syncretism in terms of identity politics, to denote the fact that Native American identity is not purist in self-definition but can add, or absorb elements of other Native American or Anglo cultural practices as long as they pertained to the holistic outlook of the individual/ group in question. Thus, Native American identity does not exist in a state of stasis, but is one that is open to new influences, and practices, integrating the new to the present set of identity markers. Later, Ashford, Griffiths & Tiffin use the term syncretic cultures in describing the cultural variance and multiplicity of post-colonial peoples.

assimilationist aims, strongly infused with his Christian sense of mission and intensified with the pride he felt in his philanthropic endeavors are hence illustrated in a speech Pratt gave in 1883: “In Indian civilization, I am a Baptist, because I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization, and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked” (qtd. in Katanski 2). Thus, Pratt's mission is to be understood as not only philanthropic, but also in line with the duty of a good Christian. Yet, the trope for civilizing the Indian is immersion in water, which when followed by the phrase “holding them there until thoroughly soaked”, inadvertently brings to mind the image of a child almost drowning, and saved at the last minute. This trope speaks for the nature of the experiment, which by Pratt's admission will be no easy task, either for the taskmaster or the children in question.

Pratt had initially tried “educating” Native American prisoners during his military career, and not surprisingly implemented military like discipline at Carlisle to create the desired effect of full assimilation. Bringing forth a change in the identity configurations of the Native American children was clearly his main objective. This fact Pratt openly iterates in his autobiography, the title of which, *Battlefield and Classroom* clearly conflates any distinction between his efforts at times of war and peace, and attests to his questionable methods. We read:

‘I suppose the end to be gained, however far away it may be, is complete civilization of the Indian and his absorption into our national life, with all the rights and privileges guaranteed to every other individual, *the Indian to lose his identity as such, to give up his tribal relations and to be made to feel that he is an American citizen*. If I am correct in this supposition, then the sooner all tribal relations are broken up; the sooner the Indian loses all his Indian ways, even his language, the better it will be for him and for the government and the greater will be the economy to both To accomplish that, his removal and personal isolation is necessary’ (qtd. in Katanski 4) (emphasis added).

Apparently, Pratt has a very comprehensive and quite complete understanding of the Native American identity formation, and the strong bond that connects the individual to his/ her tribe and thus his/ her culture. Consequently, Pratt first attacks and destroys the formative link between the child and his family/ tribe/ clan. As the ties

between the child and the community are severed, the loss of “Indian” identity is imminent. Accordingly, what Pratt would be left with, would be the mold out of which to shape the assimilated Indian, whose “Indianness” was completely stripped off him/her, alongside his/her name, language and clothes. The tabula rasa the Indian had become was ready for the metamorphosis Pratt intended would take place.

Amelia V. Katanski in her book entitled *Learning to Write “Indian” - The Boarding-School Experience and American Indian Literature* draws on the similarities between Pratt's ideology and the social evolutionary theories of the time. Pratt, according to Katanski, was a proponent of “replacement” model of identity, which claimed that education would totally transform students as they “progressed” from tribal “savagery” to Western “civilization” because they would lose their Indianness as they gained knowledge of English and other elements of “civilized” culture” (4). The “replacement” model of identity, with its emphasis on the acquisition of the language of the dominant culture by the marginalized group, is in line with the forced imposition of the Western episteme with the result of subversion. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write in discussing the symbiotic relationship between language of the dominant culture and the structure of power that; “Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’, and reality become established” (7). Consequently, the marginalized group is further oppressed through the loss of the native language and the adoption of the language of the colonizer, since the language of the colonizer strengthens the hold of the colonizer on the colonized, at the same time, subverting the epistemological universe of the colonized, as concepts abstract and absolute begin to be determined by an epistemological frame foreign and unfamiliar to the colonized.

However, Pratt and his vision acquired popular support, as his arguments were parallel to those of the “Friends of the Indian” who were white philanthropists, for whom assimilation was the only alternative to extermination. Hence, the Native

needed to become useful, and to that end, had to become educated and civilized. In 1880, the Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners reads:

The most reliable statistics prove conclusively that the Indian population taken as a whole, instead of dying out under the light and contact of civilization, as has been generally supposed, is steadily increasing. The Indian is evidently destined to live as long as the white race, or until he becomes absorbed and assimilated with his pale brethren. We no longer hear advocated among really civilized men the theory of extermination, a theory that would disgrace the wildest savage. As we must have him among us, self-interest, humanity and Christianity require that we should accept the situation and go resolutely to work to make him a safe and useful factor in our body politic. As a savage we cannot tolerate him any more than as a half-civilized parasite, wanderer or vagabond. The only alternative left is to fit him by education for civilized life (qtd in Katanski 3).

Yet again, the decision having been made by the whites on the fate of the Native Americans, the Native American children attended the boarding schools. Although Paula Gunn Allen summarizes the educational methods employed by government and mission schools as "... torture, imprisonment, battering, neglect and psychological torment..." (39), in many instances, the parents not only encouraged the children to leave for school, but further made them, since the families also believed in the necessity of learning the white ways, hoping that the children would benefit from a white education. We can easily estimate the high number of children who attended the schools merely by looking at both the autobiographical and fictional texts that started to be produced by the end of the century. However, the extensiveness of the boarding school project is also reflected by the fact that the boarding school experience makes its way into texts produced not only by the late nineteenth century, but well into the twentieth. Amelia Katanski on the other hand argues that by 1889, 10,500 out of the 36,000 children at school age attended boarding schools that were modeled on Carlisle (4).

Therefore, it can be posited that one out of every three children were subjected to cultural genocide by the end of nineteenth century. That this was another time of loss and dispossession for the Native American peoples is obvious, since what was obliterated at the boarding schools was communal identity, customs, traditions,

religion, and language. All in all, it was an attempt at cultural genocide, because the system at boarding schools left no formative code intact on the part of the children. To this day, Native American peoples are suffering from the ills instigated by the assimilationist agenda that tried to erase identities of the people by obliterating their markers of identity, and Old Dog Cross summarizes what came to pass in the following manner:

The dominant society devoted its efforts to the attempt to change the Indian into a white-Indian. No inhuman pressure to affect this change was overlooked. These pressures included starvation, incarceration and enforced education. Religious and healing customs were banished.

In spite of the years of oppression, the Indian and the Indian spirit survived. Not, however, without adverse effect. One of the major effects was the loss of cultural values and the concomitant loss of personal identity The Indian was taught to be ashamed of being Indian and to emulate the non-Indian. In short "white was right" (qtd. in Allen 192).

Thus, the effect of boarding schools on tribal peoples was as devastating and as lethal as starvation or incarceration. Old Dog Cross equates the loss of cultural values to the loss of self, and the resultant is non-identity. Neither white, nor Indian, what is achieved is only an emulation/ simulation of whiteness, a shell of an identity with no core or substance to it. This was caused by the racial denigration, leading to self-hatred and therefore inner colonization that was taught to students at boarding schools.

Yet, in discussing the key components of American Indian identity, Paula Gunn Allen emphasizes the importance of stories, rituals, songs and ceremonies in identity formation, and the damage sustained by the tribes as their traditions were suppressed and supplanted with enforced Christianity, since Christianity introduced duality to a people whose most basic spiritual tenet is wholeness. According to the holistic Native American worldview, the "two-legged people" cannot be imagined in isolation from the land, the natural world, the family/ tribe/ clan, and the stories/ songs/ myths/ ceremonies that affect a ritual understanding of the universe. Allen

posits that the attack on all these markers of American Indian identity did not come about in a haphazard fashion, but was a very systematic act of decimation. We read:

The genocide practiced against the tribes is aimed systematically at the dissolution of ritual tradition. In the past this has included prohibition of ceremonial practices throughout North and Meso-America, Christianization, enforced loss of languages, reeducation of tribal peoples through government-supported and Christian mission schools that Indian children have been forced to attend, renaming of traditional ritual days as Christian feast days, missionization (incarceration) of tribal people, deprivation of language, severe disruption of cultures and economic resource bases of those cultures, and the degradation of the status of women as central to the spiritual and ritual life of the tribes (195).

Separation is a key concept in discussing Native American dispossession, since separation from the clan/ tribe/ family, coupled with separation from the land and the natural world, disables the people from forming communal experiences that impart meaning to their lives. The resultant is an enforced individuality, which is incompatible with their holistic worldview. The search for unity, union, completeness on the part of the Native American tribes is in line with their religious beliefs, so much so that the natural and supernatural worlds are one and the same. The physical existence of the peoples is informed by their spiritual oneness and health. Allen writes:

In American Indian thought, God is known as the All Spirit, and other beings are also spirit – more spirit than body, more spirit than intellect, more spirit than mind. The natural state of existence is whole. Thus healing chants and ceremonies emphasize restoration of wholeness, for disease is a condition of division and separation from the harmony of the whole. Beauty is wholeness. Health is wholeness. Goodness is wholeness. The Hopi refer to a witch – a person who uses the powers of the universe in a perverse or inharmonious way – as a two-hearts, one who is not whole but is split in two at the enter of being (60-61).

Thus, unity, harmony, wholeness is so imminent to Indian American existence, that division and separation means the loss of well-being, and results in sickness, or even evil. Alienation then, the common plight of the Modern and Postmodern existence is inconceivable for the Indigenous psyche, since evil is the anti-thesis of wholeness, and a split person is at least sick, or worse. As Allen puts it; "... 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” (88). Yet Christianity, which was enforced onto the tribes, and was mandatory in boarding schools, introduced an inherently dualistic outlook of the universe, a concept wholly foreign to the tribes. The concepts of pure good and pure evil, the oppositional understanding of creative and destructive forces, and woman’s perception as goddess or whore are some of the dichotomies that were introduced to the American Indian episteme by Christianity. What is more, the Christian outlook on creation illustrates the ultimate polarity. On the tribal peoples’ relationship with the Creator and all that is created, Allen writes:

... these people acknowledge the essential harmony of all things, and see things as being of equal value in the scheme of things, denying the opposition, dualism, and isolation (separateness) that characterize non-Indian thought. Christians believe that God is separate from humanity and does as he wishes without the creative assistance of any of his creatures, while the non-Christian tribal person assumes a place in creation that is dynamic, creative, and responsive. Further, tribal people allow all animals, vegetables, and minerals (the entire biota, in short) the same or even greater privileges than humans. The Indian participates in destiny on all levels, including that of creation (56-7).

The innate Puritan duality of Creator and His creations is antithetical to the Native American understanding of the universe, in which the creatrix(es) accord their creations, the two-legged and the four-legged, the privilege of partaking in creation that is not yet done, but is ongoing. Consequently, the Manichean chasm that separates the I and the Creator is impossible to comprehend in terms of the Native American spirituality, since according to the Native world view, the I is not simply part of the creation, but in part a creator, always actively partaking in creation. Therefore, the tribes share in the responsibility of their daily existence, alongside the responsibility for the world, which is in constant flux, being generated and regenerated infinitely. Thus, it can be surmised that the difference between the Puritan and Native American worldviews is not only one of epistemic disparity, shaping their perceptions and understandings of the world at large, but a dissimilarity in terms of spirituality. Whereas the Puritan mind is riddled with concepts of sin and guilt induced by the innate duality of the Creator and the created, the Native

American soul gets its spiritual sustenance from the sense of unity between the self and nature, and the creative force that imbues the self with responsibility and spirituality on a day-to-day basis.

Then, the duality inherent in Western thought, when adopted by a Native people, results in alienation. When unison with the people/ land/ history/ the whole of creation is lost, so is identity. The result of duality and isolation is a coreless identity, a shell that lacks substance. Allen summarizes the Native identities that result from the internalization of Western dichotomies in the following manner:

The world is seen in terms of antagonistic principles: good is set against bad, Indian against white, and tradition against cultural borrowing; personal significance becomes lost in a confusion of dualities. For many, this process has meant rejection of Indianness. The “apples”, who categorically reject the Indian culture they were born to, choose one side, the white (134).

.... [Others] choose the other course of self-rejection. These persons often work out their struggle through rage directed against whites and “apples”....

A third category of victims of alienation are people caught up between two cultures. These are most likely to be suicidal, inarticulate, almost paralyzed in their inability to direct their energies toward resolving what seems to them an insoluble conflict (135).

Thus, the self that is unable to get sustenance from the communal formative elements of the Native culture is alienated, and as such unable to construct a coherent identity configuration. It is Allen’s contention that, this “socially induced loss of identity” stems from a “sense of self distorted” (90). Accordingly, this coreless self might exhibit itself in a number of ways. For one, the individual might opt for a simulated whiteness, fuelled by self-hatred, which is induced by inner colonization; or could display hatred towards his/her Others (whites or the whitewashed Natives, the “apples” as Allen dubs them), or finally might turn into a self-victimizing individual, suicidal, forced into a silence of his/her own choosing.

In consequence, the loss of identity immanent in the assimilationist white agenda becomes solidified as alienation robs the self of the shreds of any remaining cultural markers, while bridging the breach between the fissures of Native American identity

becomes an impossibility. Then, the Native self, whose root of identity is annihilated experiences a total dispersal of selfhood. Neither the reservation nor the town will be able to sustain the individual who is thus alienated. When both options fail, what remains will be an impasse.

According to Allen, the cure of alienation for the Native peoples lies in the reclaiming/ reconstruction of syncretic identities. Allen further points at the importance of identity as a life/ death decision, and an imperative for survival:

Colonization does not, after all, affect people only economically. More fundamentally, it affects a people's understanding of their universe, their place within that universe, the kinds of values they must embrace and actions they must make to remain safe and whole within that universe. In short, colonization alters both the individual's and the group's sense of identity. Loss of identity is a major dimension of alienation, and when severe enough it can lead to individual and group death (90).

The Native American episteme that conceives of universe in terms of unities and not dualities, perceives fact and fiction, the natural and the supernatural, body and soul as one. Therefore, the triad of ritual, song and ceremony nourish the soul and help form the communal identity that is essential for survival. Yet, the boarding schools aim at destroying these very founding blocks of Native American existence. However, Allen posits that it is possible to reclaim the loss through ceremony, which is the all-healing panacea. Thus Allen writes: "... the dichotomy of the isolate individual versus the "out there" only appears to exist, and ... ceremonial observance can help them transcend this delusion to achieve union with the All Spirit" (68). The repercussion of this need for re-unison makes itself explicit in ceremonial literature, and the use it is put to in the works of Scott Momaday, and Leslie Marmon Silko. We read:

[T]he tribes seek – through song, ceremony, legend, sacred stories (myths), and tales – to embody, to articulate, and share reality, to bring the isolated, private self into harmony and balance with this reality, to verbalize the sense of majesty and reverent mystery of all things, and to actualize, in language those truths that give to humanity its greatest significance and dignity. To a large extent, ceremonial literature serves to redirect private emotion and integrate the energy generated by emotion within a cosmic framework (55).

Consequently it is Allen's contention that the sole answer to alienation that stems from cultural loss is the recovery of unity with the community, and establishment of harmony with the universe and its very spiritual dimension. And what will reverse this loss of customs, traditions, religion and language, which evolves into the loss of the sense of self, and will enable the desired re-integration, is ceremony, which encompasses song, legend, myth, tales, and ritual, and its verbal representation, that is ceremonial literature.

It can be argued that in this respect, the Native American self cannot be read in terms of hybridity, unlike the Chicano/a self that is sustained by two identity configurations that can add up to a new and third, a mestiza identity. The Chicano/a multiple identity configuration is a border identity, and thus has two sides to it. Yet, it does not function through a duality of either/or but encompasses both sides, and consequently, the two identities are able to add up to a third, the new mestiza identity. Gloria Anzaldua in her influential work *Borderlands – La Frontera – The New Mestiza* defines the Chicano/a people as “a synergy of two cultures with varied degrees of Mexicanness and Angloness” (85). Yet, Anzaldua sees it imperative to “[account] with all three cultures – white, Mexican, Indian”, and to claim her “own space, making a new culture – *una cultura mestiza*” (emphasis in the original) (44). In defining the new mestiza culture, Anzaldua elaborates:

In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has adopted a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness - a *mestiza* consciousness – and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm (101-2).

Thus, as Sonia Saldivar-Hull puts it, Anzaldua's apprehension of mestizo/a as hybrid people is one which “interpolates them as both native to the Americas and with a non-Western, multiple identity” (2) and in this sense, Anzaldua's is an understanding that perceives of “...alterity as power” (5). Consequently alterity, which had been deployed by the colonizer in disempowering the colonized, is turned against the colonized in a gesture that posits otherness as empowering. Since identity was

construed and constructed in terms of othering, the mixing of races was perceived as a threat by the Anglomean colonizer, one that not only blurred the lines, but also openly displayed the physical desire for the Other. Robert Young remarks on the actuality of hybridity and how it was demonized by the nineteenth century mind in the following words:

... desire, constituted by a dialectic of attraction and repulsion, soon brings with it the threat of the fecund fertility of the colonial desiring machine, whereby a culture in its colonial operation becomes hybridized, alienated and potentially threatening to its European original through the production of polymorphously perverse people.... South America was always cited as the prime example of the degenerative results of racial hybridization ('Let any man turn his eyes to the Spanish American dominions, and behold what a vicious, brutal and degenerate breed of mongrels has been there produced, between Spaniards, Blacks, Indians, and their mixed progeny' remarks Edward Long; 'they are a disgrace to human nature', adds Knox, blaming the perpetual revolutions of South America on their degenerate racial Mixture; observations that are dutifully repeated by Spencer and Hitler) (*Colonial Desire*, 175-177).

While the pseudo-scientists of the nineteenth century colonialism diligently studied and catalogued hybridity, determining and naming twenty-three crosses between peoples, a whole range starting with mulatto and mestiza, and concluding at zambo-negro and mulatto-obscure (*Colonial Desire* 176), Anzaldúa rejoices in hybridity, which has been scapegoated by the colonialist ideologues as pointing at an innate/biological inferiority, which in its turn gave valence to their supremacist rhetoric. Yet the mestizo/a identity is now celebrated as a unique position, enriching both the individual, and the people, since the cultural sum of these identity options is greater than its parts.

Concurrently, the Indian American identity, unlike Homi Bhabha's theory on post-coloniality, which posits a self empowered by hybridity, does not lend itself to in-betweenness. In *Locations of Culture*, Bhabha posits that the liminal or interstitial spaces constitute contact zones where identity configurations are questioned, adapted or adopted. Thus these complex cultural spaces provide the opportunity for new possibilities of a selfhood, since racial identity constructs are replaced by multiplicities that validate cultural hybridity. To quote Bhabha:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (1-2).

Then, according to Bhabha, origins and initial subjectivities are reduced to mere narratives when compared to the import of cultural difference, since in absence of fixities and monolithic constructs, the culturally hybrid individual, empowered by his alterity, is free to negotiate a range of new identities. For Bhabha, it is the ambiguity imminent to 'in-between' spaces, where cultures crisscross that the opportunity for collaboration and contestation of identities arise.

Therefore, it can be argued that the cultural crises that marks the initial contact between the colonizer and the colonized can also be read as creating a zone of interstices where the cultural interaction fosters a richer climate for the formation of complex identities, and Bhabha's concept of hybridity or Anzaldua's theory of mestiza identity exemplify such richness and complexity in terms of identity construction. Yet, it should also be remarked that the Native selfhood is already extremely complex, and multipartite. Native American subjectivities are formulated through connections to the land, history, and spirituality; the latter of which is a culmination of myths, rituals, ceremonies, and orally transmitted tales. And perhaps most importantly, the Native identity in question is conceived not in terms of individuality, but of community. Thus, it is a communal selfhood, which is sustained by connectedness. Approached from this perspective, it becomes clear that assimilation through the boarding schools posed the greatest danger for Native American peoples, since it was not only their cultural markers that were forcefully obliterated, but the severing of the organic ties between the individual and his/ her community caused the greatest damage, resulting in alienation, and an imminent loss of selfhood.

2.5. The Construction of the Indian Self Through the White Lens: The Boarding School Experience of Zitkala-Ša

As mentioned elsewhere, the full impact of boarding schools' assimilationist agenda has repeatedly been vividly displayed in works of Native American authors to this day. Even those who have not experienced it first hand had a clear sense of this cultural genocide through the oral accounts of their family/ extended family/ tribe or clan members. Yet, we learn from Amelia V. Katanski that one major objective of the boarding schools was to control and manipulate the self-representations of the boarding school students, since to the educators, the boarding school students were representative students, in that they were the ultimate manifestation of their assimilationist efforts. Moving on from the premise that once they were stripped of their own cultural markers, the Native students would become *tabula rasa*, ready to be shaped anew, the educators assumed that they would be fully indoctrinated in white ways. On the total transformation that was expected on the students, Katanski writes:

This model of evolutionary assimilation assumed a “cultural replacement” or “zero-sum” approach to identity formation: cultural evolution was progressive (the direction of the movement was always from savagery to civilization), and as one moved up the evolutionary scale one “would replace Indian ways with White ways.” Indian ways and white ways of practicing religion, social organization, and literate expression would not and could not coexist, except among “transitional” or “marginal” groups that were doomed to a speedy extinction. The “light and contact of civilization” would eradicate the darkness of savage ways. (37)

Thus, Social Darwinism was put to use once again, in the attempt to fully replace the Indian American identity with a simulated whiteness, and in the process to eradicate the Indian American subjectivity, with the hopes of reducing it to a “zero-sum”, which is a virtual void, ready for imprinting or rather mal-imprinting.

It can be argued that the way the Indian boarding students deployed the tool of literacy illustrate the desire on the part of the educators for total transformation and monitoring of the students. The educators both diligently controlled the articles and

the letters written by the students in which they were expected to parrot the ideology of the schools, and also ventriloquized the voice of the students in fiction that were promoted as texts authentically written by the students themselves. The self-colonizing articles by the students that replicated the ideology of the boarding schools on the other hand, were published in the school newspapers. Thus, according to Katanski;

Boarding schools used newspapers as instruments of disciplinary power to control representations of Indians and Indian identity, and, in fact, to create their own representations—or narratives—of Indian students as subservient and receptive to the assimilative goals of the schools.... This voice was created in Carlisle's student newspaper, the *Indian Helper*, between 1885 and 1900, as if spoken by "the represented Indian"—the Indian identity most amenable to the school's goals. The represented Indian was constructed and narrated in the pages of the newspaper both by "paper Indians" (fictional Indian characters invented by the educators) and by appropriating the writing of Indian students (allowed into print under tight control so they would appear to vocalize the ideology of the educators). These represented Indians would serve to establish and reinforce hegemony over the students, who were expected to conform to a unified, assimilated, "American" identity without question or resistance (47-8).

The name of the Carlisle student newspaper, the *Indian Helper* is itself very loaded, open to at least three different readings. While emphasizing the positive role of the white humanitarian in helping with the acculturation/ assimilation of the Indian, the name of the newspaper could also be read as pointing at the future of the students, as helpers of the whites in their capacity as household servants. Meanwhile, the students, either as "representative" or as "paper" Indians, were made to take active part in the attempted cultural genocide, or thus expected to become the tools or helpers of the whites in their assimilationist agenda.

However, despite the panoptican-like monitoring and surveillance mechanisms employed by the institution and reinforced by the school newspaper, these measures apparently fall short in controlling the self-representations of some of the former Carlisle students. Namely Francis La Flesche, Charles Alexander Eastman, and Zitkala-Ša all clearly refuse to become mouthpieces of Pratt, and openly put up a stance against the attempted cultural genocide. Furthermore Zitkala-Ša has a unique

position in that she synthesized an insider's insight with that of the object of surveillance. Having been monitored by the system, and later expected to monitor the students, she had been situated at both sides of the oppressive mechanism.

Zitkala-Ša's autobiographical sketches reached a large public due to her shrewd tactic of publishing in periodicals, and the sketches when read consecutively disclose a subjectivity at odds with the mainstream expectations. Her white education, instead of generating assimilation and an assumed whitewashed consciousness, results in alienation and cultural loss, and wholeness is only established after she reconstructs herself an identity that is fully Indian. One clearly visual and representational aspect of this Indian identity is her chosen Indian name. Although given an English name by birth, Gertrude Simmons, she dubs herself Zitkala-Ša, a Lakota name, which means Red Bird. This can be read as a big step in her re-claiming and re-constructing a coherent Indian subjectivity.

As mentioned earlier, the authorities at Carlisle expected Zitkala-Ša to become a mouthpiece of the assimilationist ideology. However, she refutes their efforts and expectations by writing her autobiographical sketches, in which she wryly criticizes the system. Thus, utilizing the technologies of writing and English she had been force-taught, Zitkala-Ša employs Western autobiographical forms and a linear time frame – though choppy – to display an identity antithetical to the representational Indian who would parrot the ideologies of Pratt, and challenges the system of boarding school in its entirety.

Pratt and his cohorts on the other hand, are clearly enraged by the fact that Zitkala-Ša's autobiographical sketches undermined their very efforts at Carlisle, and consequently attempted to discredit her autobiographical representations by writing against and trying to refute her sketches in press. What follows is a war that takes place on the pages of newspapers, in which Zitkala-Ša writes back to negate the accusations put forward by Pratt. It is clear that Zitkala-Ša's writing came as a shock to Pratt and his fellow humanitarians who expected not only continued obedience but

gratitude from the former students, who as representative Indians were to publicize and advertise the endeavors of the boarding school authorities by their very presence and public visibility as Indian authors integrating to the white society.

Therefore, it can be argued that Pratt's main objective of complete erasure and then replacement of Indian identity through first subversion and then an ongoing disruption of tribal relations apparently backfires, since the textual identity Zitkala-Ša creates for the white consumption is not only clearly Indian, but the text is also a testimony to the failure of the attempt at the reduction of Indian selfhood to "zero-sum identity", a blank sheet, ready for imprinting, because the persona fashioned by Zitkala-Ša derives its strength and affirmation from its Indianness. As a direct result of indoctrination, oppression and psychological torture at boarding school, Zitkala-Ša starts forming and exhibiting a rebellious and resistant stance, an early indication of the activist she would become. Having experienced the ills of alienation, she survives it having in turn mustered a clear sense of who she is, and her chosen identity is an Indian identity.

On the particulars of Zitkala-Ša's and other boarding school educated Indians' autobiographical practices, Katanski suggests that Paul Kroskrity's definition of "repertoire of identity" proves to be a helpful tool, as it "... highlights individuals' agency to select from and switch among identities to meet their needs and desires" (133). Thus, according to Katanski, the preferences made by these authors in shaping their self-representations are placed within a theoretical framework by the concept of situational identities. In discussing the boarding school educated Indians' autobiographical practices Katanski argues that "[t]heir formal choices must be interpreted within the context of their communicative goals in order to understand their active goal in shaping the textual representations of their identities, which are not fixed but, instead, mobile within a repertoire of choices" (134).

Approached from this perspective the fact that Zitkala-Ša in her autobiographical pieces picks and chooses certain aspects of her past to create a coherent selfhood, in

her case an Indian identity that perseveres in the face of the “civilizing” forces that try to eradicate it seems to be in line with Kroskrity’s definition of “repertoire of identity”. Yet, it can be posited that Katanski's suggestion of utilizing Kroskrity’s definition of “repertoire of identity” becomes redundant when we take into consideration autobiographical theories of textual self-formation. It can be argued that autobiographical writing by definition, discloses the processes by which authors forge textual identities to fulfill public expectations and/ or private yearnings. Thus, out of a wide range of subjectivity options and positions, some are consciously (or sometimes less consciously) chosen, and others discarded. While formally one coherent selfhood is expected to dominate the text, yet in many autobiographical texts, a multiplicity of subject positions are displayed, or are gleaned from the absences as well as the presences in these texts. Whereas such fluidity and multivalence are markers of autobiographical writing, the shifts in selfhood are defined by the historical and material circumstances of both the author and the society that actively shapes his/her subjectivity. Then, essentially out of numerous subjectivity positions available to the autobiographer, Zitkala-Ša opts to reveal a subjectivity that defines itself through resistance to assimilation. Consequently, she relates the particular events that illustrate the construction of a self that experiences alienation due to her boarding school education, and then recovers wholeness through reclaiming of an Indian identity.

Critics agree that the subjectivity created by Zitkala-Ša is very individualistic and in that respect fits in with the Western mode of self-representation, and not the Native American mode of communal self. However, although the constructed self is individualistic, and not communal, in her texts it is possible to glimpse the import she places on family, tribe, land, customs, traditions, and spirituality, which are the very components of a communal identity. Thus it can be argued that although her selfhood remains individualistic, Zitkala-Ša is aware of what she had lost, and what she lacks, and yearns for a selfhood that would bring about wholeness through the restoration of connectedness, unity and harmony.

In terms of the time frame Zitkala-Ša employs in her sketches from *The Atlantic Monthly*, her focus falls on three particular periods of her life. Those are her “Indian” childhood, related in “*Impressions of an Indian Childhood*”; her days at Carlyle, entitled “*The School Days of an Indian Girl*”; and finally her later life at Carlyle where she has become a teacher, named “*An Indian Teacher among Indians*”. Thus if we look at the sketches in their entirety, we can see a tripartite structure. The Indian ways of her childhood that make up the first sketch are juxtaposed in the second sketch with the white ways she was taught at boarding school. What is more, when read together, the second and third sketches are climactic in that they are thematically and structurally very much in line with the expectations and norms of Western narrative forms, since these deal with a major conflict in the text and its resolution. Accordingly, in the second text, Zitkala-Ša illustrates her alienation as a result of her white education, and recovery will come in the form of reclaiming her lost Indian identity, to be related in the third text.

Zitkala-Ša in “*Impressions of an Indian Childhood*” refutes the white educator’s proposition that the Indians are uneducated until they reach the boarding schools. In this first sketch, while relating her childhood days, Zitkala-Ša keeps fore fronting the education she had received at home from her mother, alongside the social mores of the clan, and their affirmative nature. When Zitkala-Ša reminisces of her childhood days, this is not done with sentimentalism and nostalgia, but it is the formative qualities of that time that is underlined. The names she has given to the first four sub-sections of the text is indicative of this fact; “My Mother”, “The Legends”, “The Beadwork”, “The Coffee-Making”. Therefore, the happy and carefree days of childhood are also the time when she learns to be an Indian: It is also a formative period when her selfhood is forged by particularly her mother and the Indian society at large.

It is also from her mother Zitkala-Ša learns that their lives are being shaped and shifted by the whites, who have moved into their territories and in turn are forcing the Indians out of their ancestral lands. As Zitkala-Ša puts it, the Indians were being

“driven like a herd of buffalo” by the Anglomericans (301). From the text we also understand that Zitkala-Ša's and her mother's evenings are spent in company, when legends, and stories were told, and during the day her mother taught Zitkala-Ša the chores necessary for survival. Her mother's methods of teaching also reflect the Indian way, in that the instructing is done not through harsh disciplinary measures, but by example. Thus Zitkala-Ša would watch, learn and practice the necessary skills, and gradually come to master them.

Yet, Zitkala-Ša's idyllic life comes to a premature end, when because of peer pressure, she decides she wants to go to East - riding on the iron horse, to where red apples abound - and leaves home soon afterward, to her mother's dismay. However, Zitkala-Ša's dreams are very short lived. At the beginning of the second part of her reminiscences, “*The School Days of an Indian Girl*” we learn that Zitkala-Ša and her fellow Indian children were being stared at by the white public on the train ride they had so much anticipated. Therefore, Zitkala-Ša's first glimpse of the white civilization is as the object of their discriminating gaze. We soon find out that this objectifying gaze will keep following her as long as she continued interacting with the white society.

Once the journey ends, and she reaches Carlyle, this time Zitkala-Ša begins experiencing enforced losses, psychological, emotional and physical. The civilized clothes are tightly fitting and perceived as immodest by Zitkala-Ša, and what follows is the cutting of the Indian children's hair, an act which in itself functions as an initiation ritual of the white world, which was strictly observed by the white educators. When she learns of the threat, Zitkala-Ša's response reads: “Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!” (318). Thus, according to the cultural codes Zitkala-Ša's been educated in, short hair is equated to being vanquished and captured by the enemy, and this understanding of her situation triggers a resistant stance. Declaring she would struggle first, she hides under a bed until she is “dragged out, ... kicking and

scratching wildly” (319). The young warrior that she is yet Zitkala-Ša is tied to a chair, and her “long hair was shingled like a coward’s!” (319).

This enforced cropping of her hair is scorched in Zitkala-Ša’s memory as an “extreme indignity”. However, more pain and indignity was to follow, since Zitkala-Ša summarizes her days at Carlyse as an “Iron Routine” which was next to impossible to leave “... after the civilizing machine had once begun its day’s buzzing” (323). Days of routine and harsh discipline take their toll on her, and on the far reaching effects of those days Zitkala-Ša writes: “The melancholy of those black days has left so long a shadow that it darkens the path of years that have since gone by” (323).

In the section entitled “Four Strange Summers” Zitkala-Ša iterates the memories of her alienation. After her first three years at school are completed, upon returning home to West, she experiences a dispersal of self, as she had lost her sense of wholeness and belonging. We read:

During this time I seemed to hang in the heart of chaos, beyond the touch or voice of human aid. My brother, being almost ten years my senior, did not quite understand any feelings. My mother had never gone inside a schoolhouse, and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write. Even nature seemed to have no place for me. I was neither a wee girl nor a tall one; neither a wild Indian nor a tame one. This deplorable situation was the effect of my brief course in the East... (324-325).

Feelings of separateness and isolation engulf Zitkala-Ša, who perceives of literacy as a chasm separating her from her mother. Yet, the only ties that have been severed are not the ones between Zitkala-Ša and her family members, since the gap dividing her from who she used to be is so wide that even her innate connection with nature is terminated. Consequently, Zitkala-Ša feels unnatural, odd, fractured, and hallow inside. Whereas the Indian whom she used to be intuitively perceived the unison between the self and community and nature, her vision had been tainted by the duality of the Western consciousness she had been taught at school. Now, back at home, she is hit by the realization that her connection to the essence of who she is

has been dissolved. In the light of this new perception that conceives life in terms of polarities, she is unable to envision herself as either Indian or white, and the outcome is the alienation of the true outcast, who belongs no where, and identifies herself with no one.

Zitkala-Ša's sense of alienation makes itself manifest while she compares herself with the rest of the white educated young people. She is able to apprehend the visual aspect of the transformation the others have gone through, alongside the more material and cultural metamorphosis that has taken place. The other young people's assimilation appears so complete that they are speaking in English among themselves even back at home. Zitkala-Ša writes:

That moonlight night, I cried in my mother's presence, when I heard the jolly young people pass by our cottage. They were no more young braves in blankets and eagle plumes, nor Indian maids with prettily-painted cheeks. They had gone three years to school in the East, and had become civilized, the young men wore the white man's coat and trousers, with bright neckties. The girls wore tight muslin dresses, with ribbons at neck and waist. At these gatherings they talked English. I could speak English almost as well as my brother, but I was not properly dressed to be taken along. I had no hat, no ribbons, and no closefitting gown. Since my return from school I had thrown away my shoes, and wore again the soft moccasins (325).

Not being able to go to a party, since she does not have the right clothes to become accepted by the in-group, serves as a pretext by which Zitkala-Ša underlines the pain caused by her newly acquired status of the outsider. Her alienation stems from the fact that she has not only lost her Indianness, but was also unable to become truly assimilated, unlike the rest of the white educated people of her age. Whereas the rest of the young folk were bonding over their white civilized ways at the party, in terms of her attire or her sentiments, Zitkala-Ša's estrangement is in stark contrast with the rest of the group.

In the months that follow, Zitkala-Ša's feelings of isolation, separateness and not belonging keep haunting her. We read: "Many schemes of running away from my surroundings hovered about in my mind. A few more moons of such turmoil drove

me away to the Eastern school. I rode on the white man's iron steed, thinking it would bring me back to my mother in a few winters..." (326). Thus, for the second time Zitkala-Ša chooses East to West. The first time it was the promise of bounty and the urge to belong to the in-group that had driven her thither, but the second time, it is her inability to fit in with either, the traditional or the assimilated Indians. In consequence, it is her peripherality that drives her towards the East, and towards the risk of a truer assimilation.

In the third sketch entitled "*An Indian Teacher among Indians*", Zitkala-Ša provides her readers with the reasons of her disappointment with the white world she had fought so hard to become a member of. Due to the treatment she receives from the school authorities, she realizes that no amount of assimilation or adoption of white civilization is enough to remove the stigma of her innate Indianness. When she is about to be sent to the West to bring in more Indian students to be churned away by the boarding school system, the superintendent's words hurt her to the core: "I am going to turn you lose to pasture!" Once a savage, an animal, she realizes she will always remain so in the gaze of her white superiors.

Another illuminating moment comes when Zitkala-Ša visits her own village in her tour for boarding school recruits. She finds out that her mother in her old age is "... left without means to buy even a morsel of food" (332). Her mother had had enough foresight to send her elder brother Dawee to boarding school too, so that he would have better chances of getting employed. However, his post as government clerk at the reservation had been taken over by a white, and he was not only unemployed but without any chances of using her white education. Hence, the educated Native has first been used in the capacity of the go-between, in bridging the existent gap in language and culture between the indigenous population and the colonizers. This has continued for as long as it was convenient for the colonizer, and then the Native informant was discarded as soon as he had fulfilled his purpose of aiding the colonizer.

After her reunion with her mother, Zitkala-Ša returns to school, to the realization that the posts the Indians had worked so hard to get were becoming the livelihood for inept whites. She writes:

When I saw an opium-eater holding a position as teacher of Indians, I did not understand what good was expected, until a Christian in power replied that this pumpkin-colored creature had a feeble mother to support. An inebriate paleface sat stupid in a doctor's chair, while Indian patients carried their ailments to untimely graves, because his fair wife was dependant upon him for her daily food (334).

Following this realization, we get a clear sense of Zitkala-Ša's full epiphany, when she writes; "In the process of my education, I had lost all consciousness of the nature (sic) world about me" (334-335). She resumes:

For the white man's papers I had given up my faith in the Great Spirit. For these same papers I had forgotten the beating in the trees and brooks. On the account of my mother's simple view of life, and my lack of any, I gave her up, also. I made no friends among the race of people I loathed. Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature and God. I was shorn of my branches, which had waved in sympathy and love for home and friends. The natural coat of bark which had protected my oversensitive nature was scraped off to the very quick. Now a cold bare pole I seemed to be, planted in strange earth. Still, I seemed to hope a day would come when my mute aching head, reared upward to sky, would flash a zigzag lightning across the heavens. With this dream of vent for a long-pent consciousness, I walked again amid the crowds (335).

Thus Zitkala-Ša has reached a clear assessment of her plight, of what she had to forgo, for the sake of integration to the world of the white man. Her objective in her endeavors was the achievement of the tool of literacy, and hence the ability to express herself in writing. This way, she would be able to become the voice of her people, and disclaim the ills done to American Indians in the name of civilization. Yet, in the process, Zitkala-Ša had lost her sense of self. Alienation, stemming from the chasm that separated her from spirituality, nature and family, the very formative links that made her who she was, had been the price of her newly gained power over the white man's words and papers.

In describing her situation, the trope Zitkala-Ša utilizes is informed by nature. She compares herself to a tree that had been uprooted and denied all sustenance. Just like a tree, which had been ripped off her native soil, Zitkala-Ša had lived a life devoid of all that made her who she was; her family, her spirituality, and the bonds with the natural world. Moreover, similar to a tree which had its branches torn, helpless in reaching out for the sun, Zitkala-Ša had had found no solace or replacement for the losses she had had to endure from the white society, which she had tried so hard to become a member of.

Zitkala-Ša who visualizes herself as “a cold bare pole”, barely alive in a foreign land, is yet able to foresee her panacea, now that she had realized her ailment, the ill of alienation that had beset her. Hence, she can imagine a day when she would raise her mute aching head and reclaim her voice alongside her identity. It is also worth noting that Zitkala-Ša uses muteness as a trope for Indian alienation, a trope, which would be utilized by generations of Native American authors to come. Consequently, the lightning Zitkala-Ša hopes might one day flash, points at the coming of rain, and rejuvenation, and could be read as a chance for healing, and recovery of wholeness. Now that Zitkala-Ša has named her losses, she is ready to reclaim her Indian identity, which would bring unity and harmony with the universe and hence the restoration of her selfhood. We may argue that Zitkala-Ša’s dream-vision takes effect immediately, since she writes that after experiencing this vision, she recovers enough strength to continue her fight in the midst of the white society.

Thus, it is possible to posit that Zitkala-Ša’s meticulously constructed subjectivity is forged by way of reclaiming an Indian identity. After recanting her refusal of white ways, and detailing her alienation, she comes to a full realization of the causes for the dispersal of selfhood she was experiencing and consequently returns to her Indian roots, that is her family, culture, and religion. To that end, Zitkala-Ša resigns from her position as teacher at Carlisle, and goes to “... an Eastern city, following the long course of study” she had set for herself, since “[i]t was a new way of solving the problem of [her] inner self” (335). Since she had lost and recovered her selfhood,

Zitkala-Ša's life had come full circle, and we leave her adamant in fighting for the cause of her people by means of utilizing the hard-won tool of literacy.

Zitkala-Ša's textually fashioned selfhood indicates that when the syncretic identity of the Native American peoples is lost, it cannot be replaced by any other identity configuration. In stark contrast to expectations of white educators, instead of a “zero-sum identity” which is ready for imprinting of a whitewashed consciousness, what ensues cultural genocide in the name of a white education is alienation. Although the Native Americans are ready for adapting certain aspects of the white culture, provided it is them who will pick and choose, when physically enforced to forgo all of their own cultural markers, the Native consciousness experiences a dispersal of selfhood. However hard the white humanitarians might try, the result will not be the achievement of the “whiteness” the assimilationist project desired, but alienation in the form of a fractured identity. In this respect, Zitkala-Ša's life experiences as she displays them in her autobiographical sketches are a clear illustration of the failure of the assimilationist agenda.

Yet, shielded with an individualistic subjectivity that helps create a critical distance from which she could comment on her experiences, Zitkala-Ša who is now also well-versed in English, and thus empowered by the tool of literacy, is ready to try and counter the ills done to her people by the cultural genocide exercised in the name of boarding school education. She will not only illustrate this episode of cultural genocide, making it explicit in her writing, but also will raise questions to shake the foundational beliefs of the white public she is addressing. Consequently Zitkala-Ša writes; “... but few there are who have paused to question whether real life or long-lasting death lies beneath this semblance of civilization” (336), and challenges the white public to a critique of the cultural genocide practiced in the name of civilizing the Indian.

3. SELF - REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATIVE AMERICANS: THE BREAKING OF THE CONSTRUCT

In a world where language and naming are power, silence is oppression, is violence (Adrienne Rich 204).

American Indians, who like Palestinians have had to struggle just to have a voice and be acknowledged as “real”, have espoused what has seemed to be a losing cause for five centuries. In the face of such history, it is truly remarkable that American Indian people exist at all today; and it is more incredible that in 1994 there were more than three hundred published Indian writers whose collective project is resistance to and the destruction of that colonial American metanarrative that has long been and is still determined to make them invisible. The American Indian, looking back at this brutal history, might well echo Kurtz’s final words in *Heart of Darkness*: “The horror! The Horror!” But unlike Kurtz, we are not dead, and unlike the native people in Conrad’s novel, we do not need a Marlow or a Costner to tell our story (Owens *Mixedblood Messages* 130).

While Adrienne Rich equates language and naming to power and silence to oppression and violence, Louis Owens remarks on the impossible odds against which the American Indian peoples struggled to have a voice in a world where they were denied not only a voice but also presence. In this struggle that has been ongoing for five hundred years against oppression, the Native Americans have finally wrenched for themselves a niche from which to reclaim their voices, and their existence. This site of liberation is the Native American literary canon, the creation of which Louis Owens rightfully acclaims a collective project. In the American Indians’ fight against domination and obliteration, their worst foe has been the status of invisibility accorded them by the American metanarrative. Therefore, for Owens, the three hundred American Indians writing and publishing are engaged in an act of resistance, against the forces that have deemed them invisible and inarticulate. Yet, now that the Native Americans have been empowered by this literature of resistance, they are no longer the subaltern for whom it is necessary for others to speak. Today the American Indians have reclaimed not only their voice and visibility, but also what comes with it, the power to represent themselves and to turn the absence accorded them to powerful presences again using the tool of literature.

The inability/ unwillingness on the part of the colonizer to come to terms with the existence of the indigenous other exhibits itself in a number of ways. One common response to the indigenous other has been to deny his/ her presence completely and reduce the other to an absence through denial. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam describe the motivation behind this act of denial that posits the Native American as the absent other in the following words:

‘an ambivalently repressive mechanism dispels the anxiety in the face of the Indian, whose very presence is a reminder of the initially precarious grounding of the American nation-state itself... In a temporal paradox, living Indians were reduced to ‘play dead’, as it were, in order to perform a narrative of manifest destiny in which their role, ultimately, was to disappear’ (Shohat & Stam qtd. in Smith 9).

Accordingly, for the Anglomeican to exist, and for the nation-state to rule the newly acquired land, it is imperative that the presence of the Indian should be hidden from sight, since their visibility reminds the Anglomeican their own ungrounded presence in a land that is only in the act of becoming theirs. What is expected of the Native American in this scenario is to “play dead”, hid behind stereotypical images of the Indian constructed for mass consumption, biding their time when they will further the fantasy of manifest destiny and physically disappear, no longer to burden the consciousness of the Anglomeican. In a similar vein Andrea Smith reiterates Kate Shantey’s words that the U.S. colonial imagination refuses to see the Native peoples in any way other than as a “permanent ‘present absence’” (9), which is an ideological tool used to fore front the stereotype of the “vanishing Indian”, in an attempt to justify the conquest of Native lands. Thus, the Native American is not only denied a voice, just like the rest of the colonized peoples, but also denied existence both physically and also figuratively by the colonizer.

Louis Owens on the other hand, while analyzing the hegemonic relationship between the Native American and Anglomeican takes the argument one step further, positing that the ultimate goal of the colonizers is not only to use the absent other to promote their own ideologies, but eventually and actually replace the colonized, and in this way become entitled to his/her land, as well as his/her selfhood. According to

Owens, the foremost objective of the Anglomechan is to take the place of the vanishing Indian since “the Euramechan [is] suffering from Heidegger’s *Unheimlichkeit*, or “not-at-homeness” that torments the colonizer...” (*Mixedblood Messages* 123-124). Owens contends further:

It is nothing less than the indigenous relationship with place, with the invaded and stolen earth, that the colonizer desires. If that pure, original relationship represented by the Indian can somehow be claimed, the American imagination believes, then the morally tainted invader may be reborn from the womb of the landscape in all innocence, springing from his own Platonic conception of himself as the great American child-man... (124).

Then, Owens argues that the deepest desire on the part of the colonizer is to be born afresh in this new landscape. The purity he has lost in claiming the coveted land can only be reclaimed and the Euramechan can only be redeemed in his own eyes through this act of rebirth. And when born again, he shall be reborn not only in the image, but in the person of the other, who already has the claim to an innate relationship with the land. However, this desire is complicated by the fact of the physical existence of the Indian. Owens resumes:

On the one hand the European invader has demonstrated an extraordinary determination to exterminate the Indian through every means possible, including genocidal warfare, uncountable massacres of women and children, the deliberate spread of deadly diseases, and the calculated destruction of Native cultures. On the other hand, from the beginning of the colonial enterprise, the European invader has simultaneously demonstrated (and continues to demonstrate) a perverse and almost grotesquely paradoxical yearning to be Indian, to inhabit not merely the continent but the original inhabitants as well. Ultimately, the dark heart of this desire is to kill and replace the Indian (125).

Hence Owens highlights the problematical approach of Anglomereans towards the Native other, not as one of alternating desire and fear, but one that builds upon the fantasy of physically replacing the other. And as Owens has also demonstrated, when genocide failed, it was cultural decimation that was employed to disperse of the Indian, since the loss of culture can eventually be equated to the loss of selfhood.

In a similar vein, Allen contends that the imperial wars are not waged simply to contest the ownership of the Natives' ancestral lands, but truly to disperse of the identities of the Native peoples. We read "... the wars of imperial conquest have not been solely or even mostly waged over the land and its resources, but they have been fought within the bodies, minds, and hearts of the people of the earth for dominion over them" (214). As Allen aptly describes, the conquest is foremost of the peoples, although the land appears to be the objective. What is at stake is the domination of the bodies, minds and hearts of the Indian peoples. Since they cannot be exterminated or obliterated, then they need to be blotted out of the picture, and silenced, as individuals and as a group/ groups.

While domination of the land and the peoples enables the colonizer to construct, manipulate and control the mainstream representation of the other(s), in this process stereotyping comes to the aid of the colonizer. The cultural representations of the Indian by the Anglomerican become so powerful, and the stereotype attains such lucidity and crystallization that the other finds himself lacking when compared with the stereotype, or the alienating distance between the indigenous self and the stereotype confirms the need to identify with the Anglomerican. Sherman Alexie elaborates on the influence of stereotypical Indians in "*i hated tonto (still do)*" by the following words:

I rooted for John Wayne as he searched for his niece for years and years. I rooted for John Wayne even though I knew he was going to kill his niece because she had been "soiled" by the Indians. Hell, I rooted for John Wayne because I understood why he wanted to kill his niece.
I hated those savage Indians just as much as John Wayne did (1).

As Alexie explicates the representation of the Native American as the savage gains such universal validity that the Indian children would identify with the white hero, and not the bestial Indian. The stereotype urged on by any means possible, gets further urgency as its impact is strengthened by the wide media coverage. This pertinent effect of stereotype could clearly be read as an instance of the internalization of the gaze of the colonizer and the concomitant internalized

colonialism. Yet, the savage is not the only representation of the Indian, and when Alexie compares himself with another stereotypical Indian, the cinematic Indian, he realizes this time he falls far short:

A cinematic Indian is supposed to climb mountains.
I am afraid of heights.
A cinematic Indian is supposed to wade into streams and sing songs.
I don't know how to swim.
A cinematic Indian is supposed to be a warrior.
I haven't been in a fistfight since sixth grade and she beat the crap out of me.
I mean, I knew I could never be as brave, as strong, as wiser as visionary, as white as the Indians in the movies.
I was just one little Indian boy who hated Tonto because Tonto was the only cinematic Indian who looked like me (4).

When and if Alexie does not identify with the white hero, he then opts for the whitewashed representations of the Indians, the cinematic Indian in particular. The cinematic Indian is on the one hand idealized beyond recognition, but on the other is a white prescription of Indianness. This cinematic Indianness is defined by the whites and while it is offered to the whole public for consumption, it fulfills the additional function of tainting the self-definition of the Indians. Yet, according to Alexie the worst kind of Indian is Tonto, since Tonto looks too Indian, too much like him, and it is this stereotype's closeness to reality that is most disturbing for the author.

Tonto is perhaps the best-known stereotypical Indian, one that numerous Native American authors problematize in their works. Sherman Alexie for instance takes on Tonto again in the title of his short story collection *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. From the name of the volume it is possible to infer that the account will only be settled in the future, or in another life. Yet, on the 1993 cover of the book the two characters are clearly engaged in a fistfight. Moreover, as Gordon Slethaug also draws our attention (9), in this fight while Lone Ranger is silent (his mouth is set closed), it is the stoic Tonto whose mouth is open, and by both talking, and also fighting back Tonto is undermining the authority of the whites. Vine Deloria Jr on the other hand, elaborates on the initial appearance of Tonto and the impact of this figure by the following words:

The supreme archetype of the white Indian was born one day in the pulp magazines. This figure would not only dominate the pattern of what Indians had been and would be, but also actually block efforts to bring into focus the crises being suffered by Indian tribes.

It was Tonto –the Friendly Indian Companion – who galloped into the scene, pushing the historical and contemporary Indians into obscurity.

Tonto was everything that the white man had always wanted the Indian to be. He was a little slower, a little dumber, had much less vocabulary, and rode a darker horse. Somehow Tonto was always *there*. Like the Negro butler and the Oriental gardener, Tonto represented a silent subservient subspecies of Anglo-Saxon whose duty was to do the bidding of the all-wise white hero....

But Tonto never rebelled, never questioned the Lone Ranger's judgment, never longed to go back to the tribe for the annual Sun Dance. Tonto was a cultureless Indian for Indians and an uncultured Indian for whites (200-201).

Thus, Tonto, the silent backdrop, whose sole function is to aid and abate the Anglomeerican in his need, makes his debut in magazines, soon to gain universal recognition as he was carried to the white screen. In describing this fantasy Indian, Deloria emphasizes the fact that this is a “subservient, subspecies of Anglo-Saxon” formulated to fit the psychic need on the part of the colonizer to infantilize the other, to make him “less” than he is. A visible demonstration on the part of the colonizer of subjecting the other to his own will, and subjugating the other in the act of representation, Tonto becomes “the Indian” in these mainstream cultural products. On the issue of Tonto's silence, Deloria writes that he is “inarticulate to a fault” (201), which is a confirmation of his absence. Yet, again to quote Deloria Tonto is always “*there*” (emphasis in original), fundamentally present in his subservience, always the prop, the sidekick to the white hero. Tonto as the absent other confirms and enhances the heroic status of the Anglomeerican, since Tonto's visibility, although he is always there, is seriously compromised by his inarticulateness.

Louis Owens on the other hand remarks on the necessity of the Anglomeerican to stereotype and misrepresent the American Indian, since through insubstantial representations, the presence of the other can be contested, and denied. If the Native American can be reduced to a fixture of the past, then his/her reality and presence in

the present will become highly questionable, and in this respect disposing of him/her in the real world becomes easier. We read:

The United States likes to pretend that the colonial era in North America is long over, that the colonies threw out the colonial oppressor and became a new nation. Native Americans, however, are fully aware that the colonial powers did not leave; they simply changed their names from British (or French, or Spanish) and became “Americans”. And the erasure of the indigenous people, who stubbornly remain an obstacle to the total appropriation of the continent, continues to be the usually unspoken goal of Euramerica. Media representations of Indians as romantic, noble, savage artifacts who inhabit an unchanging past are important weapons in this war of eradication. As long as the world is encouraged to imagine that “real” Indians exist only in the past, it will be easier to ignore the presence of actual Indian people living today... (*Mixedlood Messages* 130)

According to Owens the colonial era in North America is ongoing, and only the name of the oppressor has changed. Since colonialism seeks to eradicate the subjected peoples, and when full erasure is not accomplished, then through their stereotypical representations, the subjected people are represented as belonging to an older, bygone age. Denial and silencing will naturally follow, when the reality/ the actuality/ the presence/ the existence of the indigenous peoples are thus contested.

The silence of women, of the working classes, of the colonized, in short the Other, through the silence induced by hegemony is a universally acknowledged fact. Since the world is defined by the colonizer, through the word of the colonizer, the silencing of the other is inevitable, as the other is pushed to the margin and made to talk in the language of the colonizer. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin; “[e]ven those post-colonial writers with the literal freedom to speak find themselves languageless, gagged by the imposition of English on their world” (84). Yet although the colonized have had to learn the discourse of the center, they have since then made it their own, first adopting and then adapting the discourse of the colonizer. To quote Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin; “[t]he crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the center and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place” (38). Therefore, it can be argued that the breaking of this imposed silence is what post-colonial

literature actually does. Through the redeeming acts of writing and writing back, land and culture are reclaimed. Thus existence is reclaimed through disrupting the white imposed silence. Then, through the sheer act of writing, identity is constructed and consolidated. For the Native American on the other hand, writing *is* survival, since silence is culturally equated to non-identity and a state of non-being. Consequently, silence as fragmentation and the reclaiming of a voice as wholeness are among the foremost, all encompassing tropes in Native American writing.

Yet paradoxically enough, the Native American has been unable to become a presence even in post-colonial literature. Texts by Native American authors are excluded from the post-colonial canon, and left out in critical texts on post-colonial literatures. Louis Owens elaborates on this fact in the following words:

... examples of this refusal to hear or recognize Native American voices are astonishingly and depressively easy to discover. How else can we explain, for example, the fact that such a perceptive study as *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, published in 1989, considers Euramerican literature within its discussion of post-colonial writing but ignores entirely the impressive body of literature written by American Indian authors? Is writing by an American Indian less post- or neocolonial than that by a native Nigerian or by those other Indians from India? How could such an oversight have occurred? (*Mixedblood Messages* 50-51).

Thus Owens questions the rationale behind this very clear act of omission, which he dubs “to ignore the voices of Native Americans who would seek to construct and represent themselves” (50). Therefore, it can be argued that the Native American is ousted, and marginalized even by those peoples who have shared a similar fate. And in this act, the shroud of silence around the American Indian is confirmed. Then it can be argued that absence and silence are the ways by which the Native American can make it to even post-colonial literature.

However, the presence and voice of the Native American comes to its own in Native American literature, a movement that has gained recognition since the late 1960s. The Native American literature is then responsible for breaking the silence, as well as deconstructing the stereotypes by which the Anglomericans have misrepresented

the Native Americans. Thus through writing the Native Americans have not only been making themselves visible but also heard, shifting the paradigms that have confined them to a state of non-being, the culmination of efforts to gradually obliterate the American Indian. It can be observed that even the appropriation of the term “Indian” by the Native Americans is an act of empowering, by which they claim the term as their own, make it their own, stripping the term of its derogatory connotations, upsetting its former signification, and hence using the tool of language to turn the tables upon the colonizer, who previously had had the power of the language.

Then, while the native was hidden from sight, reduced to a backdrop in their own continent, their silence confirmed by stereotypes that fed the perception of their demise, the answer to all efforts at silencing comes in the form of textually created subjectivities. To quote Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin; “... writing, once seized, retains the seeds of self-generation and the power to create and recreate the world. By inscribing meaning, writing releases it to a dense proliferation of possibilities...” (87). However, the written texts produced today by American Indian authors are a continuation of the oral tradition practiced since time immemorial. On the import and function of narrativity for the tribes Kenneth Lincoln writes:

Indian narrative, old and new, portrays living history, an angle of truth, a belief in people telling their lives directly, with pride and beauty. To tell a story the Indian way, no less to write, means not so much to fictionalize as to inflect the truth of the old ways still with us... (Lincoln qtd. in Allen 76)

That is how Kenneth Lincoln describes Native American literary practices, both the old and the new. History and truth are revealed in telling, as lives and fiction merge in narrativity. The aim in telling is to revise and revisit the old ways and confirm their affect and efficacy. Then, Native American writing still attains the importance, the life giving force of oral literature. The present day enabler of creativity and subjectivity is still the word, but now written on the page, although still endowed and informed by the creativity of orality. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin also remark; “... words bring into being the events or states they stand for, to embody rather than

represent reality. This conviction that the word can create its object leads to a sense that language possesses power over truth and reality” (81). Paula Gunn Allen in a similar vein comments on the sustaining power of oral literature in the following words:

The oral tradition is more than a record of a people’s culture. It is the creative source of their collective and individual selves. When that wellspring of identity is tampered with, the sense of self is also tampered with...

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. (Allen 224).

Then, oral literature, and the literary endeavor are not simply acts recording a static past, but the main creative tool of the peoples. The culture was, is and will be created by the word, and the individual self will be created and sustained in connection with the community through this active endeavor. Narrative becomes the enabler of both the individual subjectivity and communality, since a rigidly individualistic selfhood is foreign to the tribes, and even in autobiography, aptly named an ego-document, in the hands of the Native Americans becomes the enabler of a subjectivity communally constructed. Thus, whereas Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin posit that in post-colonial literature there emerges a “... dialectical pattern... between a traditional insistence on the collective, family, group and society, and the opposed demands of the European ideology of the independent ‘individual’ whose social inflection is one of the strongest trace marks left by Europeanization on the post-colonial world” (114), the American Indian literary tradition seems to be immune to this bifurcation. To quote Owens:

Rather than merely reflecting back to him the master’s own voice, we can, in an oft-quoted phrase, learn to make it bear the burden of our own experience. We can use the colonizer’s language, as Momaday demonstrates so brilliantly in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, to articulate our own worlds and find ourselves whole. This has been the project of Native American writer for a long time (*Mixedblood Messages* xiii).

Therefore it can be argued that American Indian literature has kept its ground against this Europeanization, since while writing back to the center, making the language of the colonizer bear the burden of their own experiences, the Native American authors,

like Momaday construct their own worlds and use their own words with the purpose of reclaiming not individual voices, but to claim collective identities. Wholeness can only come from communality for the American Indian, and as Owens puts it the articulation of this communality is *the* project of Native American literature.

3.1. Native American Self-Representations: Stylistics - Narrative Time and Hybridity

Looking at autobiographical practices by contemporary American Indian authors, it is possible to posit that certain patterns emerge that keep informing autobiographical texts which exhibit various positioning of subjectivities. Especially in terms of stylistics, these patterns appear to be in line with postmodernist expectations. Yet, non-linear narrative time and hybridity as employed by Native American authors are culture bound and give us clear clues to the perceptual horizons of the individuals that construct selves in textuality. Thus, it can be argued that American Indians forefront their own cultural codes in their self-representations, and traditional forms inform these representations. Since the autobiographical works of today that strive to establish communality in self-representation are continuations of the oral literature, then non-linear time and hybrid forms which are qualities innate to oral literature, become tools in the autobiographical texts by Native American authors.

According to Paula Gunn Allen, the narrative time frame used by Native American authors is not simply a technical problem, but has a further significance because it functions as a determinant of the consciousness reflected in that particular work. We read:

While the time structuring used in novels by American Indian writers is a technical problem, it is also a factor in the ultimate significance of the book. It determines which kind of consciousness will be reflected in the novel – western industrial consciousness or Indian consciousness (150-151).

Thus, in Allen's words, a work which employs a linear time frame reflects a western industrial consciousness, while non-linear time frames forefront an Indian

consciousness. Allen further contends on the significance of these contesting temporalities in the following words:

Chronological time structuring is useful in promoting and supporting an industrial time sense. The idea that everything has a starting point and an ending point reflects accurately the process by which industry produces goods.... Chronological organization also supports allied western beliefs that the individual is separate from the environment, that man is separate from God, that life is an isolated business... (149).

Then, linear temporality with its developmental pattern is well suited to describe and reflect the progressive approach of the Western mind. In terms of the Western episteme, the past, present and future follow a chronological order, but remain separate entities, and the linear time frame according to Allen, also emphasizes the separateness of humanity from the natural world. However, in American Indian autobiographies, selfhoods that are shaped by the cyclical understanding of the universe are depicted, and it follows that cyclical or fragmental time is employed in American Indian autobiographical works. Since all phenomena is connected, so is the past, present and the future, and fragmental time provides the freedom and the opportunity for providing the missing links that couldn't be retrospectively re-created in a linear model of temporality. Furthermore, Paula Gunn Allen dubs the temporality used in the works by American Indian authors "achronical time", and dwells on the qualities of such temporality in the following words:

Achronicity is the kind of time in which the individual and the universe are "tight". The sense of time that the term refers to is not ignorant of the future any more that it is unconscious of the past. It is a sense of time that connects pain and praise through timely movement, knitting person and surroundings into one (150).

Thus, non-linear time assumes an important role in autobiographical works by American Indian authors, since the deployment of achronological time - non-sequential and non-developmental - highlights the interconnectedness of the present with the past and the future. Moreover, achronological time underlines the significance of movement, and the utter importance of the individual in aligning oneself with the movement of the universe, and in this way forging of inseparable

links with one's surroundings. This in turn is a clear illustration of the American Indian perception of time as a circle, and attests to an epistemically informed difference in terms of the subjectivities created by American Indian authors.

Yet, it should also be remarked that early Native American autobiographies were influenced by the Western models and consequently employed a linear temporality, and hence Native American autobiographies attain the freedom by which to employ achronological time to underwrite Native American subjectivities only in contemporary literature. Historically then, at their emergence, American Indian autobiographies use a linear time frame, which is replaced by cyclical or fragmental time, as Western models were no longer adequate in describing Native American subjectivities.

Among these earlier examples informed by the Western models are Alexander Eastman's autobiographical works namely *Indian Boyhood* and *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*. Joseph Iron Eye Dudley's *The Choteau Creek* on the other hand is a later example. Although it was written in the latter half of the twentieth century, it stands as a testimony to the far-reaching influence of the linear time frame. Zitkala-Ša's autobiographical sketches may be an exception in terms of temporality. As mentioned earlier, Zitkala-Ša chooses certain periods of her past to narrate and publish as "*Impressions of an Indian Childhood*", "*The School Days of an Indian Girl*" and "*An Indian Teacher among Indians*". Although her sketches appear fragmental because she focuses on different periods of her life, yet her reminiscences proceed in a linear manner.

Thus, we may surmise that the Native authors have had to imitate the temporality of the Western mind in order to find their works a niche in the mainstream white tradition. This adoption of the linear time frame had made their autobiographical works accessible for the white audiences, with the result of providing the authors with the possibility of publication. It was only after the mid twentieth century that the Native authors were able to start writing for their own audiences and hence discard

this Western marker of autobiography in favor of the circular or fragmented temporality through which they were able to express subjectivities forged in the traditional manner both in terms of form and also content.

Furthermore, it could be posited that in American Indian autobiographies, what is true for the discarding of linear narrativity in favor of achronological time is also true for the move from more formal styles to hybridity in form. Hence, Native American autobiographical works while initially deployed a more formal style, modeled on Western autobiographies that retained linear temporality, moved towards structural hybridization, intertextuality and multifaceted forms alongside circular or fragmental time frames. Consequently, autobiographical narratives by contemporary Native American artists include visual and critical materials alongside the texts they produce. The rationale for the creation of these multifaceted forms is again elaborated on by Paula Gunn Allen in the following words:

Indeed, the non-Indian tendency to separate things from one another – be they literary forms, species, or persons – causes a great deal of unnecessary difficulty with and misinterpretation of American Indian life and culture. It is reasonable, from an Indian point of view, that all literary forms should be interrelated, given the basic idea of the unity and relatedness of all the phenomena of life. Separation of parts into this or that category is not agreeable to American Indians, and the attempt to separate essentially unified phenomena results in distortion. (Allen 62).

Then, since separation is not only undesirable but also potentially disruptive, separating literary forms into genres becomes redundant in discussing American Indian literary works. Furthermore, it can be observed that all artistic endeavors is basically a form of narrativity, and this holds true for not only literary forms but also painting, drawing, and pictography. Scott Momaday consequently, lists prehistoric rock art as literature. In *The Man Made of Words*, while elaborating on the pictographs at Barrier Canyon, Utah, that date back 2000 years, Momaday refers to these as the earliest literature of the American continent, since “... they are invested with the very essence of language, the language of story and myth and primal song” (14). Thus, the literary/ artistic forms are only facets of the same instinct, to observe, to express, to share while narrating and finally to connect with the land in particular,

and with the universe at large. Accordingly Momaday observes; “American literature begins with the first human perception of the American landscape expressed and preserved in language” (14).

Momaday further observes the intrinsic relationship between language and oral literature and comments on the fact that language by far predates writing, and consequently “[o]ral tradition is the foundation of literature” (14). Accordingly, oral literature is a formidable subject, since it includes “... the body of songs, prayers, spells, charms, omens, riddles, and stories...” (14). Momaday also observes that while writing deteriorates one’s sensitivity to language, oral literature keeps highlighting and reminding the vast import of words and their creative qualities. We read:

...in the oral tradition one stands in a different relation to language. Words are rare and therefore dear. They are jealously preserved in the ear and in the mind. Words are spoken with great care, and they are heard. They matter, and they must not be taken for granted; they must be taken seriously and they must be remembered (15).

Then it is most fitting those subjectivities, which aim at disrupting false representations of Native Americans, should rest on the immense power invested in language. The oral tradition and consequently oral literature still reside at the core of Native American existence, as constant reminders of the import and efficacy of words, and keep informing selfhoods created textually by American Indian artists today.

Although we should take heed of Allen’s warnings, and refrain from separating phenomenon, and also literary genres, approached from a pure historical perspective, autobiographical writing is genre new to the Americas, and even a foreign conceptual category for the American Indian peoples. It can then be argued that the need to write autobiographies stems from an exposure to, and adoption of Western modes of thinking. Arnold consequently remarks on the fundamental difference between the practice of autobiography in Western and Native American cultures in the following manner:

The high regard in which the modern west holds egocentric-autonomous individualism – the “auto” part of autobiography” - found almost no parallel whatever in the communally oriented cultures of Native America.

Just as the “auto” part of “autobiography” was alien to Native understanding, so, too, was the “graph” part, for alphabetic writing was not present among the cultures of Native America. Tribal people were oral people who represented personal experience performatively and dramatically to an audience. Personal exploits might be presented pictographically (i.e., in tipi decorations and other types of drawing), but never in alphabetic writing (*Native American Auto* 3).

Therefore, the self that exists as part of the whole does not require a separate niche from which the individual experience as different from the masses will be pronounced and fore fronted. However, writing was a Western technology, which gradually replaced orality, performance and pictography. Then, it was the influence of the white world that created the initial American Indian texts in the image of Western examples. Krupat further posits; “For the Native American to become author of such a text requires that he – and later she – must have become “educated” and “civilized” and, in the vast majority of cases, also Christianized” (3). Thus, whereas Western models heavily influenced the earlier examples of Native American autobiographies, it is only in the second half of the twentieth century, and after the Native American Renaissance that authors gained the freedom to express their selfhoods in writing by employing more traditional forms, and as such the use of hybrid forms start to dominate American Indian subjectivities created textually.

Consequently, as autobiographical works by Native American authors move further away from stylistic cohesion towards hybridity, subjectivities are constructed not by employing self-writing in its pure Western form, but the texts created emphasize the connectedness of all phenomenon as personal experience is supplemented by fiction, criticism and visual data, all of which comprise the writing self. The use of visual data, revealing presences or absences help strengthen the links between the past and the present, whereas the employment of fiction and criticism is more than relevant when we take into consideration the fact that many Native American autobiographers are novelists as well as literature professors. As such, Owens’ *Mixedblood Messages*, aptly subtitled *Literature, Film, Family, Place* locates the Native American self in

relation to literature, film, family and place. Thus, Owens who insists on the necessity to “articulate our own worlds and find ourselves whole” (xiii), just as Momaday had in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, does so in creating his own selfhood through analyses of the American Indian in literature and film, besides his own remembrances, supplemented by fiction and images of lost presences/ or absences in the family photographs.

Therefore, it can be argued that achronological time and the employment of hybrid forms are visible expressions of the understanding of the unison between all phenomena and have their precedence in oral literature. Since oral literature remains at the core of American Indian literary practices, these stylistic qualities keep informing the texts by American Indian authors. Consequently, achronological time and hybrid forms are employed by Native American authors today as cultural markers in disclosing subjectivities that contest the mainstream representation of Native Americans.

3.2. Native American Self-Representations: Content - Not the Individual but the Communal

American Indian and Western literary traditions differ greatly in the assumed purpose they serve. The purpose of traditional American Indian literature is never simply pure self-expression. The “private soul at any public wall” is a concept alien to American Indian thought. The tribes do not celebrate the individual's ability to feel emotion, for they assume that all people are able to do so (Allen 55).

Paula Gunn Allen in elaborating on the holistic understanding of Native Americans, takes a jab at the importance placed on self-expression by the Western consciousness, positing that the mere ability to “feel emotion” is a shallow and redundant assertion, since such sensitivity is a given for the American Indians, and at that, no occasion for jubilation. Allen's ironical remark inevitably draws our attention to the disparity between Western and Native American understandings of autobiographical practices. The American Indians perceive the world in line with their holistic episteme, which insists on the unity between the self/ family/ clan/ and

the natural and supernatural forces in their myriad representations. Then we may argue that Native American autobiographies are also clearly informed by this multiplicity, the outcome of which is the shift of focus from the individual to the communal.

It can be argued that the Native American understanding of the universe is informed by the circular nature of all existence, which binds one to the whole, and emphasizes the interconnectedness of all phenomena. The circle or the hoop is the perfect metaphor that illustrates American Indian episteme, since to quote Kenneth Lincoln “the circle remains a balanced form in motion, evincing unity among the people” (89). Individualism in the Western sense is alien to the American Indian, and as mentioned in the earlier chapter, results in alienation and the concomitant fragmentation of the Native American psyche. In terms of Native American autobiographies then, the focus inevitably becomes the communal, and the aim in writing, not self-reflection, but establishing the link between the self and the community the self derives his/her wholeness from.

Therefore it can be posited that in terms of Native American autobiographical practices, the self is textually formed as part of the community. Then the resultant subjectivity is one, which is marked by his/her connectedness, since selfhood is not only fashioned, but constructed verbally/ textually as part of the whole. Consequently, Native American fiction or autobiography, far from acknowledging a necessity for an innate breach between the individual and the community, conversely tries to breach such a gap when and if it exists, since alienation as discussed earlier is considered to be a conflict that needs imminent resolution.

In illustrating the inseparable link between the self and the community, we may look at Black Elk's oral account of his lifelong spiritual quest. Black Elk's narrative that encompasses his visions was written down by John Neihardt and published as *Black Elk Speaks*. This autobiographical work is difficult to classify by Western standards, since the private spiritual experiences of Black Elk are such that they are meant to

illustrate the plight of the community as a whole. As a result, according to Lincoln, *Black Elk Speaks* may be referred to as “the people’s history” rather than “a ‘life-story’” of an individual (95). Although it is the record of one individual recounting the events of a lifetime, *Black Elk Speaks* takes as its focus the lived experiences of the whole community of the Oglala Sioux experiencing one of the worst catastrophes of the nineteenth century. Moreover, as Momaday remarks, this narration by one individual starts and ends by summing up the fate of the entire people. In Momaday’s words; “it begins and ends at the same point” (*The Man* 26) that of the people’s dream dying in bloody snow. Thus, the visions and experiences of Black Elk become the enablers of the narration of the fates of the Oglala Sioux in their entirety.

The privileging of the communal against the individual again comes to the fore in literary assessment of works by Native American authors, again by Native American critics. As such, the chief criticism directed by Louis Owens to Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer*, which parallels Gloria Bird’s reflection on Alexie’s *Reservation Blues*, is that the characters never return to their own reservation or communities, and show “no signs of being a product of any coherent community, Indian or otherwise” (*Mixedblood Messages* 79). Then, it is this sense of connectedness, and the shift of focus from the individual self to the communal that constitutes the very core of American Indian writing, be it autobiographical or fictional.

Having said that the Native American self is construed through connectedness and communality, the attempt at establishing unison between the self and the community is underscored in American Indian autobiographical practices, since the individual self needs to become whole while bridging any existing gaps between the self and the family/ tribe/ clan. In short the subjectivity created in textuality is a communal selfhood, which is firmly located at the crux of the identity configuration of the Native American peoples, and it is this communal selfhood, which lies at the very heart of American Indian existence as well as fiction and self-narration. Then, in American Indian autobiographies, the self is constructed through textuality, while the text becomes the enabler of a collectivity textually reaffirmed. Consequently,

through the creative power of the word, the communal self comes into being by way of textuality/ the written word. Thus orality now replaced by textuality, still attains the creative power of the word, since the word brings into being the self that creates the text and is created in the process as part of the community/ as part of the whole he/she does or opts to belong to.

3.3. Native American Autobiographical Practices: Scott Momaday - A Self Verbally Constructed

Language is power because words construct reality (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 89).

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's observation on the intimate relationship between language and power, and the ontological strength of words attain greater urgency when we consider the Native American autobiographical practices, which can be summed up as acts that try to unite the self with the community through textuality. Approached from this perspective language becomes the tool by which this objective of unification is achieved. In the Native American universe, then the power of words and oral literature are not only important as markers of creativity, because the import accorded to words in particular and oral literature in general transcend the quotidian. The word is the creative principle of the universe, a way by which the peoples share in the day-to-day creation of the world they inhabit. Consequently, in contemporary Native American autobiography, although orality is replaced by textuality, the word attains its creative force.

It can be argued that Native American autobiographies construct the selfhood of the writing subject in the act of writing/ wording. Then autobiographical writing becomes the ultimate creative act, further illustrating the power of words that exhibit their full impact in textuality. As a result, Native American self-representations do not detail the noteworthy achievements of the individual, but create in the act of writing the subjectivity of the writing subject anew. The threads employed in the creation of this fabric of selfhood is not only the self, but also the ancestors, the land,

and history/ stories, all supplemented by fiction in an attempt to reach cohesion and connectedness, since to quote Louis Owens, “in traditional American Indian cultures “I” has little place” (*Mixedblood Messages* 153).

Then the objective of unision and wholeness will be achieved by the power that resides in language, and in telling. Suzanne Lundquist in *Native American Literatures* elaborates on Momaday’s “unconditional belief in the efficacy of language” that he feels abides “at the heart of American Indian oral tradition” (60), and further quotes Momaday:

‘Words are intrinsically powerful.... By means of words can one bring about physical change in the universe. By means of the words can one quiet the raging weather, bring forth the harvest, ward off evil, rid the body of sickness and pain, subdue an enemy, capture the heart of a lover, live in the proper way, venture beyond death. Indeed, there is nothing more powerful. When one ventures to speak, when he utters a prayer or tells a story, he is dealing with forces that are supernatural and irresistible.’ (qtd Lundquist 60)

Since words are ultimately powerful, it follows that language becomes the supreme creator of subjectivities that aim at unity with the community. Accordingly, Paula Gunn Allen remarks on the cohesion that will result from the efficacy of language in the following words:

The artistry of the tribes is married to the essence of language itself, for through language one can share one's singular being with that of the community and know within oneself the communal knowledge of the tribe. In this art, the greater self and all-that-is are blended into a balanced whole, and in this way the concept of being that is the fundamental and sacred spring of life is given voice and being for all (55).

Language in this respect is the enabler of the unison that will be achieved with the universe at large, as subjectivities are forged as part of the whole. Moreover, the creative force that is language pure and simple means process and flux. Then autobiographical practices in Native American understanding cannot be objective or subjective re-narration of past events, since in Native American autobiographies the non-static aspect of the act of writing is emphasized. Therefore, it can be argued that in terms of Native American autobiographies, language in its flux and constant

change is fore fronted, similar to the way stories/ histories will inevitably change in retelling in oral literature.

Autobiographical texts by N. Scott Momaday illustrate this process of ongoing change and flux that are inherent qualities of oral literature. Apart from his novels and books on poetry, Momaday's self-writing could be said to constitute another aspect of his oeuvre. Moreover, Momaday's three autobiographical texts *The Man Made of Words*, *The Names*, and *The Way to Rainy Mountain* have themes that overlap. Then, it can be argued that when we consider Momaday's body of work and his autobiographical texts in particular as a continuity then flux as exemplified by re-narration of particular stories is augmented into the textualities Momaday creates.

Therefore, the issues Momaday takes up in his three autobiographical books are worked and re-worked in the writing of these texts. Since Momaday is a storyteller, his main theme, that is the story of his self-fashioning through his communal ties, changes in telling in the true oral tradition storyteller fashion. Also, because Momaday's art is informed by oral literature, there can be no compulsion to create anew or fictionalize afresh different themes in every telling/ writing. As a result we see Momaday going back and forth between the important aspects of his own selfhood and shaping/ reshaping them in telling. As such, Momaday is diffusing these threads into separate autobiographical texts, but in terms of the overall process, also pulling together/ unifying these separate texts by way of working and re-working of the same tropes relevant to the communal selfhood he configures. Hence flux, the constant in the Native American worldview, through this active process is integrated into Momaday's autobiographical texts, and becomes integral to his self-definition.

The most recent example of Momaday's self-writing is *The Man Made of Words*. The book, subtitled *Essays, Stories, Passages* is divided into three parts, namely "The Man Made of Words", "Essays in Place", and "The Storyteller and his Art", all prefaced by illustrations by the author. Therefore it can be posited that in this

volume, critical essays, stories -that are histories in the Native American understanding of the concept-, and short pieces/ passages that appertain to the author are supplemented again by his own drawings. In the Preface to *The Man Made of Words*, Momaday while elaborating on the diversity of his scope also reminds the readers of his objective of unification. We read:

The essays, stories, and passages in this volume.... may seem random observations, recollections, and evocations of place and procession.... Rather, I perceive the writings herein as the pieces of a whole, each one the element of an intricate but unified design. They are the facets of a verbal prism, if you will, patterns like the constellations. The design, in this instance, is the very information of language, that miracle of symbols and sounds that enable us to think, and therefore to define ourselves as human beings (*The Man* 1).

Hence, Momaday is clarifying for us once and for all that what seems disparate, or random are in fact parts of a whole, the whole being who Momaday is, or he chooses to construct/ represent textually as part of the communal selfhood. And in this task, his chief aid, or sole enabler is language, as embodied by the power of words. Imagining and thus constructing are the ways to self-definition, and self-creation is a mere impossibility without the infinite possibility that resides in language.

As mentioned earlier, alongside the vital importance of words, flux is another constant in oral literature. As a result, certain themes in *The Man Made of Words* are dealt with in more detail in *The Names*. These recycled themes are sometimes life changing, and at other times trivial, such as the supreme importance of the creative impact of words, the naming of the author, the story of the mythical arrow maker, and the purchasing of a dog. As Momaday aptly puts it; “[t]elling of the story is a unique performance” (*The Man* 3), and themes imminent to self-creation, while re-narrated, become the core of separate but connected texts, that constitute unique performances/ texts in every telling/ wording.

Similarly, the flux and fluidity continue with the interpenetration between fictional and autobiographical texts by Momaday. For instance, the Jemez ceremonies Momaday relates in *The Man Made of Words* are used as markers of the time and the

seasons, which determine the pace of the lives of the Jemez pueblo inhabitants in *The House Made of Dawn*. The same is true for the short informative pieces Momaday had annexed to *The Man Made of Words*. These brief stories appertaining to the people he had met in his childhood and youth have apparently been used in the substantiating of the fictional characters in *The House Made of Dawn*.

Similarly, the earliest of Momaday's autobiographical pieces, and by far the most well known and acclaimed, is *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, which is another illustration of flux in the making. In the Preface to *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Momaday points out that this text unifies three separate voices. We read: "the first is the voice of my father, the ancestral voice, and the voice of the Kiowa oral tradition. The second is the voice of historical commentary. And the third is that of personal reminiscence, my own voice" (*The Way* ix).

This triptych of voices in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* might come as surprise in an autobiographical text. However, Louis Owens in *Other Destinies* elaborates on the Native American understanding of authorship in the following words:

The concept of the single author for any given text, or of an individual who may conceive of herself or himself as the creative center and originating source of a story, or of the individual autobiography, would have made as little sense to pre-Columbian Native Americans as the notion of selling "real estate" (9).

Then, the Native American author who is not confined to the restriction of being the sole authorial voice or the creative source of the text is free to invite in a plurality of viewpoints. Therefore, what might appear as disembodied voices contending for attention at first glance becomes in fact a superimposition of perspectives that embody a unified Native American subjectivity. As Momaday explains; "[t]here is a turning and returning of myth, history, and memoir throughout, a narrative wheel that is as sacred as language itself" (*The Way* ix). Thus, the first voice, that belongs to Momaday's father, that is his ancestry/ the Kiowa oral tradition is the mythical voice, which accompanied with the historical record, and Momaday's own reminiscences constitutes the "narrative wheel" which is made sacred by the use of language itself.

The text of *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is further supplemented by illustrations by Al Momaday, Momaday's father. This is not only a visual testimony to the collaboration between father and son, but an apt way to conclude the cycle of narrativity, which as Momaday describes, starts with the father telling the ancestral/ tribal stories to the son, and thus linking one generation to the other. And the son, in integrating the timeless stories with his own personal history, and then linking them with received history, and finally unifying them with the images again created by his father, completes the cycle of narrativity while unifying his own selfhood with that of his ancestors and of his people, the Kiowa.

Some of the narratives that Momaday relates in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* are the beginning of the journey of the Kiowa from the Northern Plains, the creation myth of the Kiowa peoples -that of entering the world through a hollow log-, and the coming of the Tai-me to the Kiowa peoples. These stories/ histories are the foundational myths of the Kiowa and therefore integral to Kiowa existence, and as such these mythological/ foundational stories are echoed in Momaday's other two autobiographical works. Moreover, while Momaday begins his prologue to *The Way to Rainy Mountain* by the journey of the Kiowa, he completes *The Names* by recording a spiritual journey that takes him to the olden days of the Kiowa. Then when we approach these three autobiographical texts as a single continuity, they also constitute a circle, starting and ending and re-starting by the journey of the Kiowa, an act by which the peoples are integrating themselves into the unifying motion of the seasons, the earth and the universe.

The third of these autobiographical texts is *The Names*, dubbed by the author a memoir. In this work the threads that constitute the individual, the family, and the people –the Kiowa-, intersect with the formative element of the land/ landscape, and this is made possible with the creative force of words. Momaday in *The Names* takes a spiritual journey to the past, and through this journey, the past, the future and the present are integrated within the timeless hoop. This journey backwards in time is not only towards his own personal past and formative moments but constitutes a

bridge through which Momaday reaches back to the lives of his ancestors. As mentioned previously, achronological time enables such a bridging of past and present in Native American literary tradition. Paula Gunn Allen elaborates on achronology as employed by herself, Leslie Marmon Silko and Momaday by the following words:

... the protagonist wanders through a series of events that might have happened years before or that might not have happened to him or her personally, but that nevertheless have immediate bearing on the situation and the protagonist's understanding of it (Allen 148).

Allen's description of achronology sheds light on Momaday's dream visions and/ or his journey to the mythical time of Kiowa ancestors and Kiowa creation myths in his memoir. The events appertaining to the past of his ancestors and to the past of his tribe are crucial to Momaday's self-formation, and achronology allows him access to these foundational moments in the history of his people. Thus, Momaday's journey is not only one that is enhanced by visions of his ancestry, the people who shape his subjectivity, but the journey takes him directly to the past of the people he identifies with, and enables a true communion with them. In a similar vein, in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Momaday while reminding us of the flux, and fluidity, also elaborates on the theme of journey by the following words:

The journey herein recalled continues to be made anew each time the miracle comes to mind... It is a whole journey, intricate with motion and meaning; and it is made with the whole memory, that experience of the mind which is legendary as well as historical, personal as well as cultural. And the journey is an evocation of three things in particular: a landscape that is incomparable, a time that is gone forever, and the human spirit, which endures (*The Way* 4).

Accordingly, the journey is etched in memory, personal and racial, and with each new enactment, it is re-created. The memory that constructs and re-constructs the journey lies at the crux of legend, history, the individual and the entire culture of the Kiowa people. And in its every re-enactment, the journey confirms the ties between the land, the past, and the communal spirit of the people that survive.

Therefore, at the end of *The Names*, the circle is completed as Momaday starts/ or accomplishes a journey that takes him to the very beginnings of the Kiowas. Near the end of the text, when Momaday's journey is about to take a new direction, we are made aware that this is no ordinary journey. Momaday writes: "I knew where the journey was begun, that it was itself a learning of the beginning, that the beginning was infinitely worth the learning" (*The Names* 159). Thus Momaday clarifies that this journey does not constitute a linear, forward motion in time and space, but will circle back towards the beginnings, and it is the beginnings -of the Kiowa people- that is worthy of record. Consequently, at some point in his journey, it becomes clear to him that he "was moving against the grain of time" (163), and soon Momaday reaches the plains where "the buffalo parted before [them]" (163). From this it can be inferred that the journey had taken Momaday backward in time, to the plains of the olden days, when the buffalo still roamed undisturbed. Soon, Momaday comes within sight of the Rainy Mountain, significant since "Kiowa was the language of the homestead on Rainy Mountain Creek in Oklahoma, where [he] heard [his] first words" (*The Man* 2). As he continues onwards, Momaday meets his ancestors, the third, the fourth and fifth generations on his father's side, whose stories and photos had laid the foundations of this particular memoir, *The Names*.

Momaday describes what he comes to experience with his ancestors in the following words: "In the evenings we told stories, the old people and I.... There was no end to the land, and the land was wild and beautiful..." (*The Names* 166). Moving on, Momaday comes across the Tsoai, the mesa after which he had been named and remarks; "...this Tsoai, I saw with my own eyes and with the eyes of my own mind, how in the night it stood away and away and grew up among the stars" (167). Momaday's psychic bonding with Tsoai had initially been formed when he had been taken to the mountain as a baby, and afterwards confirmed when he was named after the mountain. Now that he is finally able to see it not only with his mind's eye, but with his own eyes, his spiritual communion with the land is complete.

And Momaday concludes his memoir with the words "... I touched the fallen tree, the hollow log there in the thin crust of ice" (167), thus reaching not only his own ancestry but the log out of which the Kiowa people had issued in their creation myths. Finally Momaday had touched upon the sacred foundation of his people. The circle is now complete, since the vision of the log, while marking the end of Momaday's personal quest for selfhood, is also pointing at the very beginning of the journey of the Kiowa people.

Hence it can be argued that the very last words of Momaday's text illustrate the circular motion of his memoir *The Names*. However, the circular motion is not only established in this particular text, but it is an objective, an achievement of Momaday's autobiographical texts in general and finally a marker of the American Indian world view in its entirety. Then through this circular journey, not only connections with the past are forged, but also a full reconstruction of the past is achieved by means of a merging of personal and racial memory, through stories and histories, through Momaday's own past and that of his ancestors and the whole Kiowa tribe. As a result, Momaday does not fill in the gaps and try to patch up his own past, -as Louis Owens in *I Hear the Train* does-, but is able to situate himself squarely in the past of the Kiowas, which consequently allows him to establish this shared past as the crux of his own subjectivity.

It can be argued that autobiographical writing is located at the interstice where the outer world and the inner self coalesce. Then self-writing is the expression of such coalescence in arts and artifacts that signify the multiply positioned selfhood of the writing subject. Momaday's memoir *The Names* displays a subjectivity that is positioned at such an interstice, yet informed by an understanding of narrativity, which openly embraces fictionality. The memoir offers us Momaday's own reminiscences interspersed with fiction, now reconstructing a particular house or a landscape that was/ is imbued with spiritual importance, later constructing conversations that would have/ could have taken place between his ancestors at a definite or an indefinite time in the past. Furthermore, the text encompasses

Momaday's thoughts as to what his father would have seen, or what his mother could have thought in certain given situations. Therefore *The Names* fictionalizes and reconstructs not only Momaday's own past, but also the pasts of the people who are crucial to Momaday's definition of self.

Moreover, *The Names* is a memoir also enriched by Kiowa songs, as well as the inner ruminations of the ancestors, imagined and re-invented/ re-enacted by Momaday. The emotive power of this multi-textured text is further enhanced by insertions of not only the family photos, but also designs by the author, that locate him within the Kiowa artistic tradition. In *The Names* the information about the photos of his ancestors is given in the author's own handwriting, in the post-script fashion, and Momaday resorts to sketching his ancestors from ancestral/ racial memory when no photographs of them are to be found. Finally, a genealogical chart precedes the text, which details both the Kiowa and the mixedblood sides of his family, and therefore reveals the locus of the memoir as the author's ancestors in its entirety. Thus, *The Names* points at an Indian consciousness that is not restrained by stylistic coherence, but embraces hybridity.

Not surprisingly, the prequel to *The Names* turns the Western Cartesian Dualism on its crux and as such gives us an insight on the nature of the subjectivity that will be constructed in this particular memoir. As early as the Prequel to *The Names*, Momaday argues that his selfhood does not proceed from his physical presence, but conversely, the prerequisite of his existence is his name, which derives from that of the mountain Tsoai. Accordingly, Momaday's existence proceeds from his name and the name from which his existence stems from is his Indian name Tsoai-talee. Then it follows that the existence that proceeds from the Indian name is an Indian existence, and the text is one that discloses an Indian subjectivity. We read:

My name is Tsoai-talee. I am, therefore, Tsoai-talee; therefore I am.
The storyteller Pohd-lohk gave me the name Tsoai-talee. He believed that a man's life proceeds from his name, in the way that a river proceeds from its source.

In general my narrative is an autobiographical account. Specifically it is an act of the imagination. When I turn my mind to my early life, it is the imaginative part of it that comes first and irresistibly into reach, and of that part I take hold. This is one way to tell a story. In this instance it is my way, and it is the way of my people. When Pohd-lohk told a story he began by being quiet. Then he said Ah-keah-de, "They were camping," and he said it every time. I have tried to write in the same way, in the same spirit. Imagine: They were camping (*The Names* vii).

Since it is an Indian existence that proceeds from the Indian name, Tsoai-talee, it is an Indian selfhood that Momaday is constructing in textuality. As Momaday quotes his ancestor the storyteller Pohd-lohk "a man's life proceeds from his name". Thus this text is an Indian autobiography, and the author will remain true to tradition, that is the oral tradition, and consequently Momaday will take on the role of the storyteller in verbalizing/ textualizing/ inscribing the story/ history of his subjectivity formation.

Accordingly, imagination is the prerequisite of becoming a storyteller and in apt fashion; Momaday argues that when he thinks of his past, it is the imaginative part of his life that comes to the surface. Hence the task that lies ahead, that is the reconstructing of a subjectivity in the writing of this memoir will be an act of imagination. And imagination is not only the first principle of the telling of a story, but it is *the* way to tell a story, Momaday contends, the way of the Kiowa. Then the truth of Momaday's self lies not in the most realistic depiction of events past, but in imagining in the true storyteller fashion, as his ancestor, the person who gave him his name and thus his existence Pohd-lohk did.

As mentioned above, Momaday's memoir ends with the conclusion of his spiritual journey when he reaches the very formative moment of his people. And in keeping with the hoop, the Prologue to the text of *The Names* is a narration and re-narration of the emergence of the Kiowa. Approached from this perspective, it is clear that for Momaday, the starting point of the journey towards the formulation of his subjectivity is the starting point of the journey of his people. Consequently, how the Kiowa started their journey, how they came to inhabit the world, and how they became the people that they are crucial to Momaday's self-definition. We read:

You know, everything had to begin, and this is how it was: the Kiowas came one by one into the world through a hollow log. They were many more than now, but not all of them got out. There was a woman whose body was swollen up with child, and she got stuck in the log. After that, no one could get through, and that is why the Kiowas are a small tribe in number. They looked all around and saw the world. It made them glad to see so many things. They called themselves **Kwuda**, “coming out”.

Kiowa folk tale

They were stricken, surely, nearly blind in the keep of some primordial darkness. And yet it was their time, and they came out into the light, one after another, until the way out was lost to them. Loss was in the order of things, then, from the beginning. Their emergence was a small thing in itself, and unfinished. But it gave them to know that they were and who they were. They could at last say to themselves, “We are, and our name is *Kwuda*” (1) (emphases in original).

Then, in the Prologue, Momaday first presents his readers with the full text of the Kiowa creation myth, and then offers his own insight to the myth. Accordingly, the Kiowas experience loss at the very moment of their emergence, and their journey into life thus proceeds from loss. Yet, the active act of emergence is what defines them as a people, and they name themselves “Kwuda” that is “coming out”. Consequently, the name of the people encompasses the story of their creation/ their history/ their mythology as a people. This fact alone is a clear illustration of the author's take on the relationship between naming and identity formation. As his ancestor the storyteller Pohd-lohk had said, “The names are the source of the river that life is”. Then, identity follows from the name, be it a person, or a people as a whole, while the name describes the person and shapes and shifts what is to become his/her life, and identity.

The naming process is also formative in that the connection between the lived experience of the past –as in the case of the Kiowa-, or between the land and selfhood –as in Momaday's case- is forged through the power of words. Consequently, when Pohd-lohk had named Momaday Tsoai-talee, the act of naming, through the creative force of the words had formed inseparable bonds between the person that was being named, and the land from which the name derives. Thus, through the act of naming, Pohd-lohk had established Momaday as part of not only the Kiowa people, but also located him as part of the land/ landscape of his people, the Kiowa.

As a result of the link that been etched by his naming, Momaday's subjectivity essays directly from the land, a fact which confirms Arnold Krupat's contention that the American Indians have "...a place-determined sense of self" (*Native American Auto* 399). Then, it can be argued that in terms of the selfhood that will be constructed, Momaday's subjectivity resides at the epicenter of centripetal forces. These forces are namely the land, the ancestors, and the family. In apt fashion, Momaday's text operates from the outside/ the vast world towards the inside, and as readers we are first introduced to the landscape as the major formative element. Gradually, having started from the outside world within which the subject functions, the narrative moves towards the inside, where the core of the subjectivity resides. This core in Momaday's case will prove to be the ultimate culmination of these formative elements; that of the land, the ancestors, and the family, which eventually embody Momaday's own subjectivity.

In other words, in opening his text, Momaday presents us with word-pictures of the forces that ultimately forge his identity. Starting with the land, he proceeds with the elements' play upon the land. When we finally reach his very first memories, they are again of the forces at work in the surrounding macrocosm, the storms, the sounds and the colors. Only after Momaday completes these word-pictures of the land/ landscape that lay at the crux of his identity, does he move on to his parents and their genealogy, which he gives in great detail, allowing us a glimpse of his ancestors' stories enriched by their photographs. Thus, the order Momaday follows in situating his selfhood, proceeds from the land, and then moves on to his ancestors, whose histories and memories had been merged with his own in blood, to reach their culmination in his own subjectivity, as part of the macrocosmic whole.

Consequently, as soon as Momaday records his birth, he informs us of the fact that the hospital where he was born, the Kiowa and Comanche Indian Hospital at Lawton Oklahoma was near Fort Sill, where the Kiowa were imprisoned in 1873. This can be read a clear indication that for Momaday the connection between lives and land start at the very moment of birth, an all-encompassing connection that will be built on

through one's lifespan. Furthermore, according to Momaday, the first notable event of his life is again one that strengthens his bonds with the land. We read: "The first notable event in my life was a journey to the Black Hills. When I was six months old my parents took me to Devil's Tower, Wyoming, which is called in Kiowa Tsoai, "rock tree". Here are stories within stories; I want to imagine a day in the life of a man, Pohd-lohk, who gave me a name" (*The Names* 42).

Momaday after reconstructing a day in his step great-grandfather's life, again, panning in from the general to the particular, drawing word pictures of the outside world before he moves on to the people that inhabit that world, recounts Pohd-lohk's wife's, Keahdinekeah's thoughts:

Keahdinekeah... thought of Tsoai and of her great-grandson. Neither had she ever seen, but of Tsoai she knew an old story.

Eight children were there at play, seven sisters and their brother. Suddenly the boy was struck dumb; he trembled and began to run upon his hands and feet. His fingers became claws, and his body was covered with fur. There was a bear where the boy had been. The sisters were terrified; they ran, and the bear after them. They came to the stump of a great tree, and the tree spoke to them. It bade them climb upon it, and as they did so it began to rise into the air. The bear came to kill them, but they were just beyond its reach. It reared against the tree and scored the bark all around with its claws. The seven sisters were borne into the sky, and they became the stars of the Big Dipper (*The Names* 55) (emphasis in original).

For a better understanding of the story related above, from the viewpoint of the old woman Keahdinekeah, we may look at Arnold's take on the significance of mythical stories and their traditional employment by Native American authors:

Native autobiographers will typically cast their personal experience into the form of a story (i.e., they won't offer abstract interpretations or evaluations but present a continuous narrative), and, on the other, it means that they may tell a traditional story – about a bear or humming bird or a set of twins – as a way of conveying an experience of their own. The story may not seem to be *about* them – in fact, it is actually about someone else – but it nonetheless speaks *of* them (*Native American Auto* 20) (emphasis in the original).

Therefore it can be argued that the story of the seven sisters and their brother is not about Tsoai the mountain, but it speaks of the mountain, of how Tsoai came to be what it is. Then, through stories the Native American psyche is not only able to forge bonds with his/ her immediate surroundings, but as is the case, connect with a particular piece of earth without even actually seeing it. Consequently, Keahdinekeah is able to visualize Tsoai the mountain she had never seen, through her mind's eye, as a direct outcome of the relationship established by way of the mythical story. We read:

Tsoai loomed in her mind; nor could she have imagined it more awesome than it is, the great black igneous monolith that rises out of the Black Hills of Wyoming to a height of twelve hundred feet above the Belle Fourche River. Many generations before, the Kiowas had come upon Tsoai, had been obliged in their soul to explain it to themselves. And they imagined that it stood in some strange and meaningful relation to them and to the stars. It was therefore a sacred thing, Keahdinekeah knew. And her grandson Huan-toa had taken his child to be in Tsoai's presence even before the child could understand what it was, so that by means of the child, the memory of Tsoai should be renewed in the blood of the coming-out people. Of this she thought, and she said to herself: Yes, old man, I see; I see now what your errand is (*The Names* 55).

Furthermore, Tsoai is not only known, but also configured by Keahdinekeah through the tribal story that appertains to it. The Kiowas had felt the necessity to make sense of the great monolith, and their understanding of the mountain is achieved again by way of a story. This particular story Keahdinekeah knows and remembers establishes a relationship between the mountain and the people, enabling an understanding that transcends the mundane and makes that particular piece of rock a solid part of the sacred for the Kiowa. Because such a sacred bond exists between the Kiowas as a people and the Tsoai, it is important that the connection and the knowledge of such should be perpetuated in the blood of the upcoming generations. That is why, Keahdinekeah's grandson Huan-toa – Momaday's father – had taken him to Tsoai at a very early age, to form the spiritual connection between the land and the young child, establishing the bond between the generations of the Kiowa, and linking the child to the spiritual landscape of the Kiowas. And thus Keahdinekeah also

understands that her husband is off to complete the sacred circle, and seal the spiritual connection by naming the child Tsoai-talee.

Finally the narrative turns to Pohd-lohk, as he crosses Rainy Mountain Creek on a log he himself had felled the previous year, and enters "... among the members of his dead stepson's family..."(56). Then we learn that Pohd-lohk "... took up the child in his hands and held it high, and he cradled it in his arms, singing to it and rocking it to and fro" (56). Momaday re-creates the details of his naming by his ancestor the storyteller Pohd-lohk in the following words:

But with the child he was deliberate, intent. And after a time all the other voices fell away, and his own grew up in the wake. It became monotonous and incessant, like a long running of the wind. The whole of the afternoon was caught up in it and carried along. Pohd-lohk spoke, as if telling a story, of the coming-out people, of their long journey. He spoke of how it was that everything began, of Tsoai, and of the stars falling or holding fast in strange patterns on the sky. And in this, at last Pohd-lohk affirmed the whole life of the child in a name, saying: Now you are, Tsoai-talee.

I am. It is when I am most conscious of being that wonder comes upon my blood, and I want to live forever, and it is no matter that I must die (56-57).

Just as his father had taken Momaday to Tsoai to initiate his spiritual connection with the earth, and the Kiowa tribe, Pohd-lohk starts telling the baby the stories/ histories/ myths of the Kiowa, and the sacred significance of their beginnings, and thus integrating the baby within the journey of the Kiowa, a journey that will become his journey, too. After relating the particular story about Tsoai the mountain, Pohd-lohk names the child Tsoai-talee, finalizing the connection of the baby with the earth, and in this act defining the direction the life of the baby will take. The baby then, through this act of naming becomes firmly rooted into the sacred landscape of the tribe of Kiowa, since existence and identity follow from the name. Thus, connections with the land and the sacred run deep in the blood of the author, creating a heightened consciousness of life, and enabling him to partake the sacred spring that life is with joy. Momaday knows where he belongs, and with whom he belongs. He has always known he is part of the whole, in life and in death, and there is rapture in this knowledge of belonging.

Aside from the ever-looming presence of Tsoai in Momaday's life, other locales also hold significance in his psychic orientation, and the shaping of his writing. If through Tsoai Momaday bonds with the earth and the Kiowa tribe, through the Rainy Mountain he bonds with his direct ancestors and through Jemez pueblo and the Navajo reservation, he strengthens his filial bonds with his parents and connects with the Jemez and Navajo ways of life. The import accorded by the author to these locales becomes visible when we look at the names and the contents of Momaday's other works. As mentioned earlier, his most acclaimed autobiographical work is named *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, a text in which he adjoins Kiowa myths with his father's stories and his own reminiscences. As for the impact of the Jemez pueblo, and the Navajo culture on Momaday's works, one has only to look at Momaday's award winning fiction, since the Jemez pueblo provides the background for the traditional lifestyle that is celebrated in *The House Made of Dawn*, while the Navajo culture again remains clearly visible in this work.

Moreover, Jemez is important in that Momaday experiences many a formative moment of his personal history at Jemez and it is fitting that such a locale should hold considerable space in his memoir *The Names*. Accordingly, Momaday contends one experiences the constant flux of creation at work in the Jemez landscape, and remarks: "The character of the landscape changed from hour to hour in the day, and from day to day, season to season. Nothing there of the earth could be taken for granted; you felt that Creation was going on in your sight" (122). Thus, at Jemez Momaday comes to acknowledge the creative flux of the universe. Similarly at Jemez he reaches the realization of the immanent relationship between the person and the landscape. We read:

The events of one's life take place, *take place*. How often have I used this expression, and how often have I stopped to think what it means? Events do indeed take place; they have meaning in relation to the things around them. And a part of my life happened to take place at Jemez. I existed in that landscape, and then my existence was indivisible with it. I placed my shadow there in the hills, my voice in the wind that ran there, in those old mornings and afternoons and evenings (emphasis in the original) (142).

American Indian understanding of the universe fully acknowledges relationality, and meaning is only attained in relation to the forces at work in the world at large. Identity results from a culmination of formative elements, and as such the land/ the landscape becomes the prime mover. And Jemez is the locale where Momaday's sense of being and identity starts forming. Momaday exists in Jemez and acknowledges his existence in Jemez. Then Jemez first enables him a sense of his existence, and as a result Jemez becomes indivisible to that existence. Moreover, Jemez allows Momaday a voice, and thus an identity. The fact that Momaday acquires his voice at Jemez is highly significant, since muteness is a state of non-being and non-identity, and Jemez helps him formulate and consolidate that voice which is a clear marker of his Indian subjectivity.

Finally, Momaday's true bonding with his parents happens at Jemez, alongside his own development as an artist. The place and their mutual relationship shape Momaday and his parents both as individuals and also help fashion them artistically. This Momaday elaborates on by the following words:

There was at Jemez a climate of the mind in which we, my parents and I, realized ourselves, understood who we were, not perfectly, it may be, but well enough. It was not our native world, but we appropriated it, as it were, to ourselves; we invested much of our lives in it, and in the end it was the remembered place of our hopes, our dreams, our deep love (152).

Jemez then is the place where Momaday and his parents come to realize their artistic potentials, and their selfhoods. Although Momaday acknowledges the fact that neither him, nor his parents truly belonged to the Jemez pueblo, they were able to learn it, and learn from it, appropriating the land and its culture, and thus make it their own, a repository of their love that enabled their mutual growth, both as artists and as parts of a sustaining family unit.

Yet Tsoai proves and remains to be the foundation of Momaday's communally fashioned selfhood, and accordingly, although Momaday starts the second chapter of his memoir discussing his affiliation with these other formative and affirmative

locales, he does not fail to emphasize the true landscape with which his consciousness and sense of belonging are tied up. We read:

In my earliest years I traveled a number of times from Oklahoma to the Navajo reservation in New Mexico and Arizona and back again. The two landscapes are fixed in my mind. They are separate realities, but they are sometimes confused in my memory. I place my feet in the plain, but my prints are made on the mountain (59).

Therefore, Momaday is clarifying the fact that although his early life had been spent in, and shaped by these other locales in the plains –as both his fiction and autobiographical works testify- his psychic orientation had always been towards Tsoai, the mountain from which his consciousness and later life as a Kiowa had issued.

Suzanne Lundquist in discussing *The Names* contends that both the land and family hold great significance for Momaday, and argues: “... when Momaday tells his readers about his grandparents, parents, and their role in his life, he is shaping his own idea of himself in the process. And Momaday's ideas about place are equally significant – geography and genealogy are inseparably connected” (70). Geography and genealogy as Lundquist puts it are inseparable in that through the land Momaday connects with generation upon generation of his ancestors. Furthermore, while it is the presence and the stories/ histories of his predecessors that Momaday is able to form an idea of himself, he is also able to bond with the earth through his ancestors' myths and actions. In a similar vein, Louis Owens points out the connectedness between generations that is brought about by stories in *Mixedblood Messages* by the following words:

...the “present I” cannot exist without the “past They,” and the past “They” can exist only in the memory of the present “I.” The “pastness of We” for many people may be an unavoidable fact of five hundred years of determined cultural destruction and displacement, but the whole point of contemporary American Indian writing is to demonstrate that the long five-hundred-year project of erasure has failed: “We” are not past, and “I” can exist only within the knowledge of “They” who are “We”.... If so, it becomes our responsibility to continue the stories of those communities, to write, therefore, of what we know.... For stories are what we carry with us through time and across distance (165-166).

According to Owens, identity follows from the knowledge of the past, which is passed on through the stories of the ancestors. Then, American Indian subjectivities that exhibit themselves in textuality are a visible proof that the attempted erasure of Native American cultures and presences is a failed project. As a vivid testimony to the aborted attempts on the part of the coloniser, the American Indian peoples survive, and survival results from knowledge of who they are. This knowledge in turn is derived from the ancestors and is perpetuated in the stories.

In elaborating on the impact of the ancestors on his own identity formation, Momaday also brings to fore the imminent relationship between the acts of imagination, remembrance and identity formation. We read: "Some of my mother's memories have become my own. This is the real burden of the blood: this is immortality. I remember:..." (*The Names* 22). In describing his mother, Momaday posits that she had defined herself as an Indian by a willful act, since Natachee only had a paternal great grandmother who was a Cherokee, with whom she shared her name. In her self-definition, Natachee imagines and then constructs a self from the memories of distant ancestors. As Momaday puts it:

... she began to see herself as an Indian. That dim native heritage became a fascination and a cause for her.... She imagined who she was. This act of the imagination was, I believe, among the most important events of my mother's early life, as later the same essential act was to be among the most important of my own. But she was ... "Little Moon"... and she drew a blanket about her and placed a feather in her hair. And she went off to Haskell Institute, the Indian school at Lawrence, Kansas. Her roommate there was a Kiowa girl, Lela Ware. Destinies began to converge then, in 1929 (*The Names* 25).

Then, just as a storyteller shall start his story with imagining, the storyteller that he is, Momaday is very much aware of the import of imagination in identity construction. Thus, just as Natachee had chosen for herself an Indian identity, which had eventually led to her meeting and marrying a Kiowa, Momaday fashions himself a Kiowa identity, and in his autobiographical works he is situating himself firmly in the Kiowa culture, by imagining who he is. Consequently, Momaday by imagining

and choosing a Kiowa subjectivity, is able to immerse himself in the Kiowa culture and spirituality. One outcome of this act of self-creation is the possibility of a racial memory. We read:

Mammedaty was my grandfather, whom I never knew. Yet he came to be imagined posthumously in the going on of the blood, having invested the shadow of his presence in an object or a word, in his name above all. He enters into my dreams; he persists in his name (*The Names* 26).

Although Al Momaday had changed his family name from Mammedaty to Momaday, Mammedaty's is a presence that remains in his name, and in his blood both of which Momaday had inherited. Consequently, presences that issue from their names are perpetuated in the blood and the accompanying "memory in the blood". Ancestors thus attain immortality, in their stories/ histories that are carried on in the names, in the blood and in the memory.

On the relationship between memory and imagination Momaday elaborates further, positing that remembering makes us who we are, since "[m]emory begins to qualify the imagination, to give it another formation, one that is peculiar to the self" (61). Then what is remembered and imagined constitute the selfhood of the subject. Thus Momaday contends: "If I were to remember other things, I should be someone else" (63), since other memories would weave through imagination another subjectivity that would appertain to another selfhood.

In terms of the subjectivity Momaday constructs in his autobiographical works in general, and in *The Names* in particular, lived experience only provides the background to a communally and mythically formulated selfhood, since Momaday relates the shaping of the self through myth, ancestry and posterity. The idea of self cannot, does not exist without the land, ancestors and family. Therefore self is mediated through memory and imagination, and formulated through myths/ stories/ histories of the land and ancestors. Momaday gives a very clear definition of self-formation in the following words:

I invented history. In April's thin white light, in the white landscape of the Staked Plains, I looked for tracks among the tufts of hedges. When I look back upon those days – days of infinite promise and steady adventure and the certain sanctity of childhood – I see how much was there in the balance. The past and the future were simply the large contingencies of a given moment; they bore upon the present and gave it shape. One does not pass through time, but time enters upon him, in this place. As a child, I knew this surely, as a matter of fact; I am not wise to doubt it now. Notions of the past and future are essentially notions of the present. In the same way an idea of one's ancestry and posterity is really an idea of the self. About this time I was formulating an idea of myself (97).

Momaday fully acknowledges the import of invention in his own story/ history. His story is the continuation of the history of the Kiowa, for whose material and spiritual traces he searches in the Staked Plains, which constitutes part of the Great Plains that stretched from New Mexico through Texas, a region which became by the end of the nineteenth century a refuge for the Kiowa who would not go into the designated reservations in Oklahoma. Consequently, the former land of the Kiowa even as a child gives Momaday not only the possibility for self-realization, but in providing him with a past, gives him balance, which is the foremost requirement of wholeness.

It is in the Plains that Momaday is able to come to the realization of the connectedness of the past and the future, not only as shapers of the present, but as enablers of a circular existence, one which also encompasses the earth and all that exists upon it. Then the past and the future do not only exist as parts of the whole, but also vividly bear upon the present in forming a continuity. This totality of the past, present and the future is just another illustration of the fact that the individual can only exist in unison with his ancestors and descendants, since one's ancestry and posterity are merely images of the self.

Louis Owens in *Mixedblood Messages* dwells at length on the significance of land for the Native American understanding of both the universe at large, and the individual identity configuration in particular. Owens also emphasizes the fact that this significance accorded by the tribes to land extends well into the responsibility for the well being of the world at large. In shouldering the responsibility for the earth, again it is words that carry supreme import. We read:

...the continued existence of this earth as a habitation for our children and their children depends upon the stories we tell and the words we use. Traditional Native American stories tell us that words are powerful and sacred, that words bring into being and compel and order the world. Words are powerful creators, and they can be powerful destroyers. (213).

It is Owen's contention that this obligation towards the world and words shall also be carried down to the new generations by way of the stories/ histories, and the awareness for the profound power of words should also be handed to the future generations. Owens also comments on Momaday's take on the informative relationship between the land and the people by the following words:

Momaday has defined the Native American "ethic with respect to the physical world" as "a matter of reciprocal appropriation: appropriations in which man invests himself in the landscape, and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his own most fundamental experience.... this appropriation is primarily a matter of imagination.... And it is that act of the imagination, that moral act of the imagination, which I think constitutes his understanding of the world." Momaday adds, "I think his attitude toward the landscape has been formulated over a long period of time, and the length of time itself suggests an evolutionary process perhaps instead of a purely rational and decisive experience" (qtd *Mixedblood Messages* 226).

For Momaday, the existent relationship between humanity and the landscape is not only sacred, but also one of mutual appropriation. While humanity had invested in the land, the land had provided humanity with his/her most rewarding experience, because this reciprocal relationship requires imagination, yet offers an understanding of the world. According to Momaday, the intimate relationship between humanity and the land is one, which has taken innumerable generations to evolve, therefore the respect that binds humans to the landscape, is also one that unites humanity with his distant or not that distant ancestors.

Thus, it can be argued that *The Names* by Scott Momaday is an autobiographical work in which the layers of the fabric that constitute the individual, -that is the family, and the Kiowa people-, overlap with the formative element of the land/ landscape, and in this endeavor, Momaday is enabled by the creativity that resides in

language. Momaday in forging his subjectivity takes a spiritual journey to the past, - which is an illustration of flux in the making, and another marker of the oral tradition-, and the result of the journey is that, the past, the future and the present are conjoined within the timeless hoop of the universe. To put it in another way, Momaday's subjectivity is located at the crux of centripetal forces, and these formative forces are namely the land, the ancestors, and the family. Thus, the order Momaday follows in situating his selfhood, proceeds from the land, and then moves on to his ancestors, whose histories and memories had been merged with his own in blood, to reach their culmination in his own subjectivity, as part of the macrocosmic whole.

3.4. Native American Autobiographical Practices: Louis Owens - A Spatially and Temporally Constructed Subjectivity

'[T]he *quotidian* as series and structure ... time as measured but blank ... a field open for self-creation by self-inscription' (emphasis in the original) (Sherman qtd. in Spacks 176).

That is how Stuart Sherman summarizes the characteristics of secular diaries in the Western tradition. Although it would be ill advised to compare the commonplace in Western diaries with the creative importance of the word in Indian American tradition, in terms of function, the blankness of time has an affinity with fragmental time, since both employments of temporality resist the restrictions of emplotment common to linearity. The phrase "open for self-creation by self-inscription" on the other hand invites an even more favorable comparison, since Native American autobiographies are texts through which subjectivities are created by way of textuality. Then, the aim in Native American autobiographical writing becomes not self-exposure or self-narration or even self-fashioning in the Western sense, but the true creation of a subjectivity enabled by the power of the word. This subjectivity created anew by means of the text is one that resists separation and is construed by connectedness of the person and the community that sustains the well being of the person in question.

Then, unison and inclusion that characterize Native American traditions have their reflection in the autobiographical practices by American Indian authors. Hence it can be argued that Indian American autobiographical writing, through stylistic hybridization and the inclusion of visual, textual and critical materials creates its own form alongside an inclusive and enriched content. One of the very final works of Louis Owens, *I Hear the Train* provides us with a striking example of such a multifaceted autobiographical text. Uninhibited by Western constraints of linear temporality, the fragmental time provides the author with the freedom to construct the self as part of the larger whole that is the family, the community, and the land. In the process, what is created is a multi-textured text, which is all-inclusive, and one that resists separation, since to quote Allen again and to complete the circle, "... separation of parts into this or that category is not agreeable to American Indians, and the attempt to separate essentially unified phenomena results in distortion" (Allen 62).

Louis Owens' *I Hear the Train* comprises of three sections and is further enriched by photographs, which according to Suzanne Lundquist are "... images of absence rather than presence" (136). The three sections of the work are named "Reflections", "Inventions", and "Refractions" respectively. The first section, "Reflections" is made up of autobiographical musings, whereas the second section, "Inventions" covers Owens' fictional texts. The final part, "Refractions" constitutes critical works by Owens. Thus, in this autobiographical work, Owens' self-writing, fiction and critical writing, with the additional component of his and his family's photographs "[of] Native ancestors whose stories are primarily like negatives" (136) form parts of the subjectivity that constitutes who Owens is. Consequently, we have a merging of not only genres but of texts and images. The three partite structure then, with this triple focus adds up to form the multifaceted self, and ties together diverse parts of the fabric that constitute Owens the person, Owens the author and Owens the literary critic. With the addition of the photographs, these four parts create the selfhood of the writing subject. Hence, Owens starts the preface to *I Hear the Train* by the following words:

This is a collection of stories, mostly true. Some are stories that arise from memory.... of things that simply happened. Some are stories I've told myself in an attempt to fill in the empty places in memory and received history. Some are just stories, inventions, the kinds of fictions we create to make sense of the otherwise uninhabitable world we must, of necessity, inhabit... Some are stories about others' stories, the sort of speculations we like to call criticism... (xi).

In this merging of the autobiographical with the fictional and the critical in textuality, which is further enriched by the visual data, I would argue is a subjectivity altered by syncretism, being expressed in a hybrid genre. Furthermore, since Native American stories attain formative qualities, the stories are always active in shaping the reality the subject lives in. Therefore, be them autobiographical or fictional or as in Owens' case critical, the formative element employed in any act of narrativity is the key in creating the ontological domain of the subjectivity in question. The resultant blurring of the epistemological distinctions and boundaries between the factual and fictive are imminent to Indian American writing. Consequently, the fluidity as exemplified by the merging of the autobiographical and fictional and even critical becomes an imperative in Native American autobiographical practices, since although these texts belong to different epistemological domains; they comprise only the separate parts of the subjectivity being forged. These separate parts should then necessarily be merged to create anew the composite/ syncretic selfhood in the act of re-inscribing the self into the text.

As discussed earlier, in terms of the Euromerican/ Western autobiographies, individuality is construed as the very first premise of self-writing. Then, selfhood is depicted as different from the masses, while the uniqueness of experience is underlined. Finally the constructed self on the page is offered to the public for consumption. Yet, the Native American self is one that is not in search of separateness and uniqueness, but will attain wholeness as part of the community/ family/ tribe and the land. As a result, in constructing the self as part of the whole, bonds need to be forged or strengthened with the community/ family/ tribe and the very fabric of the land, and in Owens' autobiographical works as readers we are

taken along Owens' path of meticulous search for selfhood and witness the weaving of his subjectivity from threads of memory, fiction, family ties, and the land itself.

Owens' quest for wholeness is informed by his sense of urgency to connect the past with the present and the future, and as such the past has to be dealt with. The necessity to come to terms with the past stems from the importance accorded by the Native American tribes to the cyclical understanding of time. As a case in point, Christina Hebebrand argues that one repercussion of the cyclical nature of time is that "... historical events not only provide valuable lessons for the present and future, but may also be expected to repeat themselves" (25). Similarly, in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* we read:

'The idea of time's being cyclical, so that the old-time people had believed the same thing: they must reckon with the past because within it lay seeds of the present and future. They must reckon with the past because within it lay this present moment and also the future moment' (qtd in Hebebrand 25).

Hence, apart from the epistemic/ informative nature of the past experience, the real necessity to forge connections between the past, present and the future is a direct result of the cyclical understanding of time, in which the past, present and the future are imminently connected in that they are not only co-existent, but co-creative/ co-constructive entities. Consequently in *Mixedblood Messages* Owens argues that the urgency by which the connectedness of the past, present and the future is emphasized is a key aspect of Native American literary traditions. Owens writes: "What sets Native American fiction apart, however, is among other qualities, an insistence upon the informing role of the past within the present, a role signified by the presence of Native American myth and history reflected in both form and content" (*Mixedblood Messages* 22).

In a similar vein, Paula Gunn Allen in elaborating on the vital importance of myth to the tribal existence posits that mythopoeic vision teaches us that "...past, present, and future are one, and the human counterparts of these – ancestors, contemporaries, and

descendants – are also one” (117). Allen further refers to the healing aspect of such a sense of connectedness. We read:

For in relating our separate experiences to one another, in weaving them into coherence and therefore significance, a sense of wholeness arises, a totality which, by virtue of our active participation, constitutes direct and immediate comprehension of ourselves and the universe of which we are integral parts (117).

Then, since the past, the present and the future are inseparable, so are the ancestors, contemporaries and descendants, and experiences of one generation are critical to the other generations to follow. The resultant is the necessity of carrying forward the experiences and stories of the past generations to the future in order to reach an understanding of not only the self, but also the world at large.

Moreover to quote Silko again: ““The stories of the people or their “history” had always been sacred, the source of their entire existence. If the people had not retold the stories, or if the stories had somehow been lost, then the people were lost; the ancestors’ spirits were summoned by the stories”” (qtd in Hebebrand 25). Therefore, as a result of the connectedness of time, stories become imminent to identity reclamation, not only as parts of the collective history of the people, but also as crucial components in self-formation. Hebebrand further posits: “Retell[ing] the stories ... will help the people to recreate their own history and thus envision ways to create a future for themselves...” (25). Hence, without stories of the past and the ancestors, there would be no identity, and the telling of stories are crucial in the formation of consistent and coherent subjectivities that would muster the strength to project a future for themselves.

I would argue that this imminence of the connectedness of the past, present and future in identity formation and reclamation attains a personal urgency when we take into consideration Owens’ own personal history, since instead of experiences, Owens has holes and gaps in his ancestral past. His memories appertaining to that yet unknown/ unformed past are fragmental at best. However, these lacks and breaches

need to be gapped, bridged, and if not, then created anew retrospectively. Thus Owens in his self-writing takes on the difficult but crucial task of creating his own stories/ histories in an act of self-inscription in textuality.

““I go backward, look forward,” a Swampy Cree storyteller says, “as the porcupine does”” (Lincoln 13). It is possible to argue that this is exactly what Owens does with historical time, going back in order to be able to look forward. Owens did not inherit stories of his ancestors to help formulate his own subjectivity, and in this respect was denied the opportunity for fashioning a self, marked by connectedness. Thus, personal lacks in terms of ancestral stories/ memories/ histories are accounted for through the creative power of words, and Owens re-creates or rather creates for the first time stories that would help comprise his selfhood, and this subjectivity will be construed in textuality.

On the cover of the volume of *I Hear the Train* is an image of Owens’ great-great uncle August Edward Bailey, taken between railway tracks. In Owens’ words, this is a “photo-turned-postcard”. Owens tells us that it was one of the photos he had inherited from her elder sister, who had in her turn inherited them from their mother, remarking both women had had untimely deaths. We read:

I know next to nothing about Uncle August Edward Bailey, my mother’s grandfather’s brother.... My grandmother, orphaned at age six through means neither she nor we ever understood, could not tell us about this uncle. My mother, product of the worst margins of Uncle August’s world and tumbled into a motherless world herself as a child, *imbibed* no stories that would answer such questions. Irish-American with Cherokee blood, American Indian with Irish blood, transient, infinitely motion-bent, poised within the tracks on an America determined to hurl all lies and stories toward a receding horizon, Uncle August and all the rest are particles scattered, the chaos of invasion, coloniality, deracination, and removal embedded in their blood and photographs (xii-xiii).

The solitary man in the photograph is an illustration of absence, a testimony to the filial bonds broken. Owens has no stories passed on to him about the uncle in the photo or his other predecessors, since both her mother and grandmother had been orphaned. Paula Gunn Allen on the other hand in elaborating on the importance

placed on family in matriarchal Native American tribes give the Keres as a case in point. Allen writes:

Failure to know your mother, that is, your position and its attendant traditions, history, and place in the scheme of things, is failure to remember your significance, your reality, your right relationship to earth and society. It is the same as being lost – isolated, abandoned, self-estranged, and alienated from your own life (209-210).

The family bonds are as sustaining and life giving as the umbilical cord. However in Owens' family the umbilical cords had been severed too soon and this lack had informed generation upon generation in Owens' family. With no mothers, there had been no stories, and no connections with the ancestors or the past. Thus Owens compares his ancestors to scattered particles, unable to form a whole and stand against the outward forces of invasion, coloniality, and removal that had become the constant in their lives.

Consequently, from mere traces Owens needs to construct his past, out of which will arise his present and future. He writes of his uncle's photograph: "My inheritance, it leaves in the air a trace out of which I will construct history, mirroring consciousness... Like that dollop of sourdough left behind in the bowl to double infinitely into another loaf, it becomes stories that birth others" (xiii). For Owens the photograph will become the metaphoric piece of sourdough, the creative principle that will initiate stories ad infinitum, and forge the non-existent connections with the past. Accordingly, Owens writes:

... [We] make stories in order to find ourselves at home in a chaos made familiar and comforting through the stories we make, searching frantically for patterns in the flux of randomly recorded events, a world in which endings stalk us and we can only keep inventing ways to both explain and forestall closure. Language must be the surest way, as we remain here telling ourselves stories in the dark, spinning webs of language... (xiii).

Coherence Owens will create by way of stories in the face of the chaos that life is, and in that he needs the power of the words. This retrospectively constructive act

then becomes an act of survival, and in his endeavors to fight against segmentation; Owens harnesses the creative force of language.

In the preface To *I Hear the Train*, Owens elaborates on another family photograph. Owens had found it in the same box he had inherited from his sister. We learn that it shows “a strange, shanty-like ‘houseboat’” (xiv) her maternal grandmother had lived in when she was six or eight years old. Owens asks: “What story can that picture tell me and my eight brothers and sisters about the labyrinth of memory that should and must be our own. How may we... fill in the empty pages of oral tradition that is all we have from our mother’s world?” (xiv). Allen on the other hand readily admits to the formative influence of the oral tradition in the following words:

My mother told me stories all the time, though I often did not recognize them as that.... And in all of those stories she told me who I was, who I was supposed to be, whom I came from, and who would follow me. In this way she taught me the meaning of the words she said, that all life is a circle and everything has a place within it (46).

Owens’ way of engagement with the void where there ought to have been stories, is the sheer act of writing. The bonds have been long broken between the self and the world of the ancestors, and as such, memory proves to be not illusive but redundant at best, since Owens is dealing with empty pages, and not ones filled with stories from the oral tradition. However, Owens is writing to reach back and claim the lost world of his ancestors as his own, while supplementing fiction and fabrication to fill in the void that has been his lot, his inheritance. Owens continues:

Conscious of my own temerity in such an endeavor, I wrote that story and include it here: “Blessed Sunshine”, the name of the shanty-boat. Similarly, I have gone back in fiction I call “Yazoo Dusk”, to reconstruct, or construct for the first time, a story of the Mississippi my father’s Choctaw-Irish-French family knew (xiv).

Therefore, it can be argued that Owens is supplementing fact with fiction, or rather, the absence of the factual with the fictive, and thus locating himself into a matrix of stories and reminiscences, where there used to be nothing but the void of memory. Owens’ efforts to fictionalize the past, and construct auto/ biography out of fiction is

informed by the desire of a reunion with his family and ancestry, that would result in enhancing or rather creating a patchwork of ties in place of the gaps that constitute memory and concomitantly add up to form a sense of community and continuity.

Hence in the section from *I Hear the Train* entitled “The Syllogistic Mixedblood” we read; “I lay the photograph before me and search for absent origins” (91), since “[t]he[y] are fibers out of which a tread might be woven, bits of family story, old photographs with scribbling on the backs, but no coherent narrative” (97). Then, Owens’ creative endeavors do stem from an inner necessity, since the sum total of his writing is constitutive of the self, and to reach the self that is not hidden but in flux and thus in need of constant recreation, he has to forge bonds and bridge the gaps with the past without which can be no present or the future. Owens continues:

Because I cannot do less, I have made these various stories, call them essay, fiction, or criticism. Together, I believe they form a pattern, one turn and twist of the labyrinth leading to another. At the center, of course, is the hybrid monster of self, the ultimate cannibal to which all stories lead (xiv).

Consequently, in this act of self-creation in textuality, Owens is reaching out not only to the self now constructed through the stories but is also enabled to reach back and start to hear the voices of his ancestors. Or as the title of his autobiography clearly indicates, he now hears the train, same as his uncle had heard it. Hence, the title of Owens’ autobiography echoes the very words of his Uncle August when he in 1913 wrote to his own mother on the back of another photograph “I her (sic) the train so Bee (sic) good tell (sic) I see you” (xiii).

Not surprisingly, the first episode in Owens’ search for wholeness and self is entitled “Finding Gene”, which is the account of his search for his lost brother. Thus, Owens starts his mixed genre autobiographical work with the narration of a loss recovered, that is his brother Gene whom he hadn’t seen for twenty-nine years. We learn that Gene, a Vietnam veteran “had come back only to vanish”, after “he’d discarded the medals and [their mother] had collected them for the future”. Then the medals had become “tangled in the tin trunk with the residue of [their] mother’s short life” (11).

Therefore Gene's medals had become visual reminders of his absence, taking their place amongst the photographs of ancestors, other mementos of loss Owens had inherited.

Contemplating on their shared past with Gene, Owens writes that since deer hunting was an activity they cherished, pistols and guns “had become... the *petites madeleines* of [their] own remembrance of things past” (emphasis in original) (8). However, Owens also muses on the fine line between fact and fiction and the need for the corrective of memory:

... I'd begun to wonder what had actually happened and what my imagination had simply formed into history and truth. Without Gene I had no touchstone to truth, no way of verifying memories. I know that we invent what we need to be true, imagining and rewriting until there is some kind of text that gives us back a self (4).

Thus, the fallible nature of memory needs to be implemented with the memories of others, the family and the community, and in Owens' case the touchstone is his brother Gene. Although invention and creation are the tools by which he would ultimately attain his own selfhood, in his endeavors Owens feels the necessity to reestablish his connection with Gene, a lost and important piece of the puzzle.

Not surprisingly, Owens' reunion with his brother is brought about by another act of textuality. Or it might be posited that the power of words become explicit and concrete, confirming the Native American faith in the import of words. Owens' fiction changes the course of his life, since an act of creativity that takes the form of fiction brings about his union with his brother Gene in the real world. We read:

I'd written a novel about my brother. My second novel, *The Sharpest Sight*, was born out of Gene's disappearance, out of the paradox of his nonreturn from that war.... It was a book about Mississippi, about my father's Choctaw ancestors, about the mysteries of identity and story, but most of all it was a book about a lost brother and a long pattern of loss into which that one seemed to fit....

And then one day, after a quarter of a century of silence, my brother called. He had found a copy of *The Sharpest Sight*, had seen my name and read the book. This was extraordinary, because Gene does not go into bookstores and does not usually read books. But he had read it and had known at once that it was about him, had read past

layers of metaphor and myth, through a complex “mystery” plot, to see that I’d written a novel about the loss of my own brother (12).

Thus, the gaping hole left empty by lack and loss had been supplemented and filled in by fiction, and the fabricated story had actually created history. Rewriting of a story -that of Gene in the *The Sharpest Sight*- had resulted in Owens and his brother Gene’s history being rewritten and recreated. Consequently, the act of re-imagining a past had literally and physically created a present for Owens and his brother Gene.

Yet, the reunion between the brothers is not only a static event that has repercussions for a short duration, but will prove to be a life-changing event, with clear implications for the future. Through his get-together with Gene, Owens starts remembering and re-membering the past and the changes to memory will actually contribute to a future that will be re-shaped, since to quote Owens “old memories had become both more real and changed in the same moment” (14). This creative and re-creative aspect of the past on the present and the future also brings to mind Freud’s take on memory. Accordingly, to remember is not to find something that already exists but to discover something that was lost to us. Therefore the past can only be restructured in the present through remembering. As such, the past which is not part of the conscious experiences, surfaces as a shock and causes the subjects to reconsider their sense of themselves and their life in retrospect. Hence a person’s history is not definite because it is always open to alteration as more is remembered or more surfaces into consciousness, and the subject is able to judge both the present and the past in a different light. Thus, events of the past cause the re-forming of events in present and this way factuality can be authenticated only after the walls of memory are brought down (Anderson, 60-70).

In Owens’ case, through memory jolted by the recovery of Gene, Owens reaches a better understanding of both himself and his past, and he muses on his chances of actualizing a similarly enhanced understanding for his daughters when he says “...I’d like my daughters to meet their uncle. Maybe then they’d know their father better. Perhaps their memories would become more real” (15). Hence, because re-forging of

connections, and learning from the family members and ancestors enables a better understanding, and shared experience adds to memory, enhancing it, making it more real, Owens would like his daughters to learn more about him by getting to know their uncle Gene.

Owens concludes this episode by quoting his brother Gene, who had told him that at Vietnam, the troops would refer to the enemy territory as “Indian Country”, a clear reminder of the fact that the Indian remained the trope, the epitome, and the embodiment of *the* enemy in the Anglomean consciousness. Owens’ final words read: “Out there, in Indian country, anything could happen. A person might never get home” (15). Owens’ comment illustrates that in the real Indian country, the enemy cannot be clearly defined, and getting home is not an act of spatial movement but is the recovery of wholeness, and at that not everyone is able to attain this healing balance. Owens knows that not only the past/ memories/ ancestors/ family might be lost, but through their loss, selfhood might also get dissolved. As a case in point Gene had lost his selfhood, and although he had been able to come back from the war alive, he had not been able to go back home, since he had not been able to forge connections with his family or the community, and the result for Gene had been utter isolation, alienation and fragmentation. Owens, on the other hand, had not inherited a past of stories or histories but implements his own recovery through textuality, through the creative power of words, supplementing the losses with fiction and thus reaching coherence and cohesion.

Whereas one obstacle in Owens’ search for wholeness was the lost stories, histories, memories and family members, another but related difficulty is caused by displacement, and the resultant disconnection with the land of his ancestors. The loss of connection with the land stems from the fact that Owens’ family had kept moving from one location to another, so much so that moving had become a constant in Owens’ life. According to Owens this is the result of “... a complicated family life that had taken [them] from Mississippi to California and back, and back again” (6).

Being uprooted time and again, Owens needs to contest the possibility of a dissolution of selfhood, since the repeated pattern of dislocation induces liminality. Owens' state is further complicated by his experience of interstitiality, a result of his mixedblood heritage. Yet, I would argue that through forest ranging and fighting forest fires, Owens is able to forge a bond with the land on an even greater scale than he would have through bonding with one locality only. As a ranger and forest fire fighter, Owens spans the whole continent, from Tucson, to the Glacier Peak Wilderness just south of the Canadian border, and to Arizona. These very physical acts of living and working with the land serve the function of locating Owens firmly within the natural world. Then, through this constant interaction with the land and nature, while he farms, and hunts, works as a forest ranger and forest fire fighter, Owens bonds with the earth and the whole continent, while the earth becomes an anchor of his subjectivity in his refusal to surrender to liminality.

For Owens, interacting with the land and the nature is the panacea for a life of dispossession. Risking isolation and interstitiality, the healing powers of the land and the nature provide Owens with a safe haven. In relating his youthful indiscretions in the section entitled "My Criminal Youth", Owens tells about how, urged on by a cousin, they start a gang. Then at eight years old, Owens is stealing bikes. However, sneaking on a house one night, he discovers something he did not know existed. We read:

...through the window, I saw Mom and dad and Sis sitting on a light-colored couch and a boy about my brother's age in a comfortable-looking chair. They were laughing together at something on the big television.

I remember standing on the porch, plainly illuminated by the porch light, watching the family watch television. We did not yet have a TV in our house, and the eight of us could never have watched at the same time if we had owned one. There was a wholeness about the scene, a kind of completeness that I had never imagined in a family before. In my experience families were in constant flux, coming and going, messy and uncontained. Strange cousins could appear one day and stay for several years with no evident disruption even as additional cousins showed up and vanished. Never had I imagined a family holding a single image in mind or sight even for a moment. The scene inside the picture window opened onto a world I had never considered, one I knew instinctively did not desire my company (81).

Owens is confronted with the image of a nuclear family watching television. They are not only surrounded by material comforts but seem to very cozy. However, most important of all, the family seems to be enjoying the company of each other. For Owens the scene exhumes a wholeness and completeness he never knew existed. For him family life is marked by instability and change. Then, it is the togetherness and cohesion of the family that is most striking and desirable for Owens. Feeling himself a stranger to a world perfect in its unity, he leaves but with difficulty:

I tore myself away with great difficulty and stole the bicycle... In the driveway I paused and looked back, and no one had moved. To this very day that family lives in perfect time, balanced in the flickering gray light of a black-and-white television set, forever, as I steal their bicycle. And I still feel the awfulness of the moment in which I broke into that perfect order, violated whatever it was inside the house that I could not understand, and bore an objective portion away into the night (81-82).

Owens feels a keen sense of alienation while watching the perfect family, yet is drawn to it. He knows he has intruded upon the unity of the family, and thinks he has violated and even stolen the precious communality shared by the family members. For that very reason, while his conscience is perfectly at ease with stealing the bike, a mere material possession, he thinks he has harmed the wholeness of the family, and disturbed their peace by his brief presence.

Owens explains that he stops stealing shortly afterward, since his cousin, who had initiated the gang is taken away by his parents, and Owens' family moves away. Yet, according to Owens, interaction with nature replaces the thrill he used to get from stealing. We read:

From that time onward, sometimes with Gene but more often alone, I broke and entered upon nature herself, burgled her hills and oaks, ransacked her solitude for days and weeks and months and years on end, feeling my way toward a door that must exist somewhere. And just as it was during my brief burglary days, I have tried my best to take nothing, exulting instead in the thrill of stealth, the craft of cunning, the successful escape, the knowledge that all is never lost (89).

Thus the people in Owens' life and the landscape that surrounds him would keep changing. Yet, nature not only remains Owens' safe haven, but also provides him with an endless source of adventure and experience. The sense of wholeness and

communality he lacks will be supplemented by his escapades in the nature. Nature will provide him with hope and comfort, in the constant flux of his life.

“We know at some profound level that we inhabit the future while piecing together the past” writes Owens in *Mixedblood Messages* (201). Approached from this perspective, nature and land acquire sacredness and importance the same way the ancestors do, since by holding the memories of past, the land has an informing role on the present and the future. Then, land becomes imminent to the survival of tribal peoples. To quote Hebebrand “...land [is] intrinsic to the tribes’ spiritual identity and their cultural survival” (29). In a similar vein, Marcia Pablo (Flathead) in her essay “Preservation as Perpetuation” writes:

‘First Nations of this continent did not have a written history in book form as did the non-Indian peoples who came here. Our history is written in our unique and specific cultural landscapes. These places hold the memories of our ancestors, speak to us in the present, and are crucial to our survival, as Indian people into the future’ (qtd in Hebebrand 29).

Paula Gunn Allen on the other hand posits: “We are the land, and the land is mother to us all”, a statement which attests to the function of land as the primal life-giving source (119). Allen resumes:

We are the land. To the best of my understanding, that is the fundamental idea that permeates American Indian life; the land (Mother) and the people (mothers) are the same. As Luther Standing Bear has said of his Lakota people, “We are of the soil and the soil is of us”. The earth is the source and the being of the people, and we are equally the being of the earth. The land is not really a place, separate from ourselves, where we act out the drama of our isolate destinies... (119).

Then, according to Allen the main tenet of Native American existence is oneness with earth, since as Luther Standing Bear has also suggested humanity is the offspring of the earth and the earth is where he/she returns. Thus equating the land and the people, Allen further argues:

The earth is not a mere source of survival, distant from the creatures it nurtures and from the spirit that breathes in us, nor is it to be considered an inert resource on

which we draw in order to keep our ideological self functioning, whether we perceive that self in sociological or personal terms. We must not conceive of earth as an ever-dead other that supplies us with a sense of ego identity by virtue of our contrast to its perceived nonbeing. Rather, for American Indians ... the earth *is* being, as all creatures are also being: aware, palpable, intelligent, alive (emphasis in original) (119).

Therefore there can be no separation between the Native American and the land, since the land is not a source of life that lies inanimate at the disposal of humanity, but on the contrary, land is as alive as any other being, and in the great scheme of things, the destinies of the land and the people cannot be separated either.

In *Mixedblood Messages* Owens asks, remarking on the ultimate importance of earth to self-definition and identity construction; "...how do we preserve the earth that is so integral to self-definition?"(22). Owens' question is another reminder of the all-permeating importance of land in self-formation. Similarly, in the story entitled "Yazoo Dusk", which is a part of the section "*Inventions*" in *I Hear the Train*, Owens re-creates the story/ history of his father's mixedblood Choctaw family, and equates identity to land, writing:

If they were Choctaw, as if white men from somewhere north could just come and tell people who they were.... Those other Choctaws had been taken away seventy and eighty years before by the government, leaving a handful who wouldn't or couldn't. Torn away, like a piece of flesh caught on a briar and just ripped from the body, except this time it was the body itself ripped away, leaving that bloody piece behind (174).

Thus, even after the Removal Act, the American Indians are conned into losing their communal land, in return for individual allotments. Furthermore, identity stemming from the land and connections to the land is at still at stake, since Choctaw identity that cannot and will not be determined by the whites from the north is replaced by a constructed "Indianness", infantilizing the Native Americans in the process. Owens uses the metaphor of torn flesh in telling us what happens when the bond between the people and the land is severed. Man torn from land is "flesh caught on a briar and just ripped from the body" and land separated in allotments is "the body itself ripped away, leaving that bloody piece behind". The imagery herewith employed is a

striking testimony to the power of alienation that results from the fissure between the Native American and the land.

Accordingly, land and connections with the earth become prime sites in the creation of Owens' locus of selfhood, as he relates his memories of working in a summer camp, and a mushroom farm, and later as a forest ranger and forest fire fighter, which he dubs "the best time of [his] life" (57). On one occasion Owens travels to the Grand Canyon, and relates its spiritual dimension that makes it incomprehensible to all except to the American Indian. Although the Anglomericans had tried to represent the Grand Canyon in words time and again they have had to surrender since inside the Canyon "[s]ignification fails; language did not come into being in the presence of such phenomena and remains utterly insufficient before it" (67).

Owens describes the experience of the Grand Canyon in the following manner: "To enter the air of the Grand Canyon is to breathe differently, measure one's world by new degrees, see past the earth's skin to neither flesh nor bone but something other, an inner form or spirit that requires radical adjustments. To describe the canyon requires the impossible..." (67). Then the Canyon is to Owens where the earth's spirit lies bare for those who can perceive it. Owens continues:

The center does not hold, the blood-dimmed tide floods at sunset, and all ceremonies of innocence are reimagined and revived. Any falcon swooping those endless and endlessly changing shadows could not possibly hear a falconer. An anarchy of impressions is loosed upon every perception. Only the Native holds the measure of the place, because the Native, the Indian, has had many, many generations in which to learn resistance to the jealousy of measure and voice, the futile desire for words to reach up and over (68).

Quoting Yeats, Owens draws our attention to the fact that the Enlightenment concepts of causality and the Western ideas of order are upset in the face of the Grand Canyon. For the intruder, chaos and confusion reign supreme in this particular landscape, whereas the innate connection between the land and humanity is felt by the adept more clearly here than in any other geographical location. Then, it is only the Native American who can understand the landscape, since they have had

millennia to come to terms with the land and its significance. The Grand Canyon is imbued with much spirituality, and it is the American Indian who through his/her connections to the land can appraise the primal qualities of this amazing landscape.

Thus, the Grand Canyon reverses the epistemically violating relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, described by Edward Said and later Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Inside the Grand Canyon the colonizer loses his hold on the land, since he does not have the adequate tools to understand, describe, verbalize, and thus possess the land. Then the Grand Canyon, in Owens' words "where the world speaks to us in its real form, undisguised, sincere, forever" (76) resists the colonialist in its sheer majesty and grandeur.

It is possible to argue that aside from Owens' own particular uprooting caused by his family's economic and social circumstances and his complex mixedblood heritage that induces liminality, the failure in truly connecting with the land is the fate of all colonized peoples, since the loss of land endangers the colonized people's sense of identity. Hence Owens quotes Frantz Fanon on the all-permeating relationship between land and identity:

Fanon writes "For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity". Above all, Native Americans have been deprived of land, and of the dignity that derives from the profound and enduring relationship with homeland (qtd in Owens *I Hear* 219).

Fanon, like Allen emphasizes the importance of land, not limiting it to the supplying of basic material needs. Land imbues the individual and the people with a sense of identity and well being that is lost when the land is lost. Therefore, Owens connects his own plight with that of not only the Native American peoples, but also all of the colonized peoples, and in the process bonds with the survivors of colonialism on the nexus of the earth, lost and regained.

Consequently, *I Hear the Train* can be read as a testimony to subjectivity formation through textuality. A mixed genre autobiographical piece, which at first glance appears to be the non-sequential experiences of the single individual, it becomes the tool through which Owens constructs not only his own selfhood, but also a communal selfhood through relationality with his ancestors, and finally the land itself enabled by the cyclical nature of Native American temporality. The text, structurally and temporally fragmented, enables Owens to retrieve/ recreate/ fictionalize and narrate the family ties and the past, and forge connections with the land/ landscape, in an effort to reach wholeness and communality. In conclusion, as the title of this autobiographical work suggests, through the creation of this text, Owens comes to hear the voices of his ancestors, and the voice of the train, just as his great-great granduncle had as he posed for a photo on the railroad tracks in the year 1911.

4. Self - Representations of the Native Americans: The dismantling of the construct

4.1. What is the Construct? And Who Could or Would Break It?

The unique position of the Indian in this society is anomalously fixed and mutable, here and there, truth and fiction (Momaday, *The Man Made of Words* 57).

It is imperative that the Indian defines himself, that he finds the strength to do so, that he refuses to let others define him (Momaday, *The Man* 76).

It can be argued that Scott Momaday's memoir *The Names* is a testimony to the continuing significance and power of words at work in the Native American universe. *The Names* is a text in which the author actively constructs a communal subjectivity based on traditional Native American models in that he firmly locates his selfhood within the familiar sites of the landscape and ancestry. Thus Momaday's subjectivity is created through the power of words, the employment of which is an active process in itself, and a clear illustration of the fact that from the oral tradition to the textual, the word retains its creative power in the Native American universe.

However, halfway through this positively constructive process, Momaday narrates a quite painful phase in his past, during which he was made to answer questions appertaining to his identity. From what we gather from Momaday's answers, we understand that Momaday is asked questions on his own Indian identity that eventually tie up with definition(s) of Indianness. Upon being inquired if he is an Indian, a question that leads up to questions of who is an Indian, or how to be an Indian, or how to define an Indian, we read Momaday midway through the interrogation, renarrating his side of the dialogue. Evidently, Momaday is trying to think his way out of a series of questions Native Americans are constantly asked by others, and consequently coerced to ask themselves. Momaday writes:

... well yes ma'am I'm a Kiowa yes ma'am I'm sure it's not Keeowa no ma'am I can't say the Lord's Prayer in Kiowa I can't say much of anything really my dad can yes ma'am I *am* proud to be so American I know it ma'am Lay that pistol down babe (emphasis in original) (*The Names* 101).

It is post-WWII America and from the answers Momaday gives it can be inferred that the interrogator is trying to establish if the categories of American/ or Christian and American Indian/ or Kiowa are mutually exclusive or not. Living in a world in which the public had shortly before been excited into a fervor of patriotism, having to answer question on the nature of one's ethnicity and identity clearly cause problems for a young American Indian who is yet to define for himself his own selfhood. Momaday writes on the impact of these questions and the ensuing confusion in the following words:

Oh I feel so dumb I can't answer all those questions I don't know how to be a Kiowa Indian my grandmother lives in a house it's like your house Miss Marshall of Billy Don's house only it doesn't have light switches and the toilet is out side (sic) and you have to carry wood in from the woodpile and water from the well but that isn't what makes it Indian it is my grandma the way she looks her hair in braids the clothes somehow yes the way she talks she doesn't speak English so well Scotty you goot (sic) boy she says wait I know why it's an Indian house because there are pictures of Indians on the walls photographs of people with long braids ad buckskin clothes dresses and shirts and moccasins and necklaces and beadwork yes that's it and there is Indian stuff all around blankets and shawls bows and arrows everyone there acts like an Indian everyone even me and my dad when we're there we eat meat and everyone talks Kiowa and the old people wear Indian clothes well those dresses dark blue and braids and hats and there is laughing Indians laugh a lot and they sing oh yes they love to sing.... pretty often a lot of people and lots to eat and everyone sings and sometimes there are drums too and it goes on through the night *that's* Indian my dad sets out poles on the river and we eat catfish *that's* Indian and my grandma goes to Rainy Mountain Baptist Church *that's* Indian and my granddad Mammedaty is buried at Rainy Mountain and some of the stones there have peyote pictures on them and you can hear bobwhites there and see terrapins and scissortails and that's Indian too (emphasis in original) (101-102).

In this section of the text we see that as a young boy Momaday feels no inner necessity to question or problematize Indianness, but rather he is forced to do so through the agency of others. Hence Momaday does not start questioning Indianness -his own or as a category- per se, but relates the great difficulty of having had to try and come up with answers as a result of being persistently pestered by strangers. Hence, Momaday shares with his readers the process by which he had initially

attempted at formulating answers to the question of Indianness as a young boy. However we know that the full answer to the location of Indian identity will come later, in the form of Momaday's literary works that draw on tradition, as well as his autobiographical texts that reveal the flux in action in the construction of this communal selfhood.

Yet in *The Names*, while trying to provide answers as to the site of an Indian identity, the young Momaday does not take the easy way out of his dilemma, and consequently refuses to locate Indianness within the physical circumstances of Indians, or the visible traits of an older, more traditional way of life. This fact can be read as a refutation on Momaday's part of the stereotypical rendition of Indianness current with the white community. Then it can be inferred that the physical attributes and details appertaining to outer appearance, such as the braids and handmade clothes have long become physical manifestations of an "Indian" identity. And we understand that the child Momaday recreates in his memoir is familiar with the attempts at identifying the Indian by proxy via visual attributes, and therefore refuses to take them as the traits of Indianness. Evidently, for Momaday the core to one's identity resides not with these material markers, but with the land the ancestors live and die on, and the language they speak. Thus the essence of identity is the land, the ancestors, and their words, that collectively construct an Indian selfhood.

It can be argued that through the refutation of Indian artifacts as cruxes of Indian identity, Momaday is criticizing the collapsing of the boundaries between material objects and identities. Markers of Indianness such as houses, clothes, photographs, tend to get frozen in time, and become static signifiers denying Indians contemporaneity and real presences, but instead creating the images of a defunct culture. Yet Momaday's location of Indianness is the family and ancestry, who are still together and thriving, alive in their communality. Consequently, Indian identity resides with the attainment of wholeness, and the placing of oneself amongst the other living beings and forces of nature. Connections need to be forged with the land while alive, since these bonds will not be severed with passing, but will extend into

death. Such a state of connectedness, according to Momaday is the true site of Indianness.

In a similar vein, in discussing the core of a mixedblood Indian selfhood, Louis Owens dwells at length on photography as a medium of questionable efficacy in trying to locate Indianness. While searching his own family photographs for traces of Indianness, Owens in *I Hear the Train* quotes Susan Sontag's contention that "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed" (qtd 98). Owens continues; "Sontag declares furthermore that 'in America, the photographer is not simply a person who records the past but the one who invents it'" (*I Hear* 99).

It is a frequently voiced contention that photography is a medium that fixes what the photographer wants to/ prefers to/ chooses to see, or seeks to represent. Therefore it is a medium that makes it possible for the photographer to ignore those details he/she deems superfluous, or ill fitting for the project at hand, while still extending the privilege to posit that photography reveals the truth of the subject. As a result, the truth-value accorded to photography enables it an objective status and creates the possibility of delineating pre-conceived categories of subjectivities. Then, pre-existing notions of Indianness can be captured/ created by way of particularly images. Hence the input of the America photographer in terms of historical representation becomes not to record the past, but to invent a past in the first place. Owens resumes:

... I realize that the photographer who supposedly invents the past, like an Edward Curtis photographing "real" Indians, actually invents nothing but rather goes in search of what already exists prior to his subjects, has already been invented by the myth-making consciousness of America, to find, to recognize, and verify that prior invention (how otherwise could he bear the signifiers of authenticity with him as props?). "Indians" are thus invented... (99)

Owens draws our attention to the fact that the photographer who goes in search of the "real" Indian can do nothing more than try and authenticate his Indians by using fixed and definitive signifiers of Indianness, since the Indian the photographer seeks

is itself an elaborate construct of the colonial fantasy. And when these fake presences are photographed, a non-existent category of real is established. This construct is in turn essentialized and sold to the masses, and hitherto assumed by the public to be the real.

Owens continues on the plight of those who refuse to be confined and contained by this constructed real by the following words: "... Native Americans who shunned the static props desired and proffered by cultural artificers, and insisted on living and surviving in the dynamic moment, were erased by those who manufacture kitschy history for acquisitive colonial power" (99). Evidently Owens repudiates the fact that the Native presence is reduced to the level of a cultural artifact and a commodity by the mainstream, commercialized and constructed in such a way that it belongs to a past etched in memory, with no impact or visibility in the present.

Consequently, because they are presented as belonging to a bygone past, Indians become absences, since the iconic "Indian" image constructed by the Euromerican imagination obstructs the visibility of the surviving Indians. When and if the Native American fails in playing his assigned role and refuses to become part of the charade and attempts to make an appearance contrary to the desire of the colonial machine, such an act results in the complete erasure of the Native American from history. Then the surviving American Indian who inhabits the dynamic moment is denied visibility and thus presence, as he/ she is deemed insubstantial because by not allowing himself/herself to be cast in a particular role, he/she no longer fits in with the existing category of the "real" Indian. And since these dissenting Indians cannot be contained by the familiar images signifying cultural artifacts, they according to Owens become "...records of invisibility" (102).

It will be an understatement to argue that the relationship between the Native American peoples and the medium of photography has historically proven to be complex, and even problematic. The tribes' distrust of photography sometimes stemmed from actual events such as the spreading of diseases after the introduction

of a photographer to the tribe, and at other times as a result of abstract reasoning. Fleming and Luskey argue that many Plains Indians called photographers “Shadow Catchers”, “... thinking that somehow a photograph captured an element of their being which might be translated into power over them” (16), which resulted in a reluctance of the Indian people in allowing their photographs to be taken. However, it can be argued that such reasoning was in fact precise, in that the medium of photography establishes the categories of the object and subject very clearly, and gives a vast advantage to the photographer over the photographed to define and fix and represent him/her, denying the photographed agency in the process.

Nevertheless, as opposed to the initial negative reaction towards photography, it should also be remembered that today American Indian authors use photographs widely in their works, especially in their autobiographical texts. Yet, the usage and problematization on the part of the American Indian authors of their own family photographs in the medium of print is a clear illustration that just like the signifier “Indian”, they have appropriated the medium of photography and are now using it to contest and deconstruct categories of fixed identities.

On the other hand, the impact of photography in creating fixed and essentialized images of Indianness is another fact that cannot be overemphasized. In the second chapter of this study, it has been brought to attention that at Carlisle, where Pratt opted for a total transformation and assimilation of the Native American students, the before and after photographs of the students were taken to be the visible proof of the transformation, and hence a tangible evidence of Pratt’s success in erasing identities. However, Pratt was no exception to the rule in the exploitation of the power of image making. Paula Richardson Fleming and Judith Luskey’s work *The North American Indians in Early Photographs* reveals how all government activities and military operations were historically constantly coupled by the activities of photographers. Fleming and Luskey’s work is a detailed study of the photographs that belonged to the Bureau of American Ethnology collection, now part of the Smithsonian Institute,

and appertain to a crucial period of Native – Anglomerican relations, covering the period between 1852 and 1913. Fleming and Luskey write:

... most early Indian photographs document the US government's many Indian-related activities. Peaceful delegations, tense treaty negotiations, reservation life and battles, were each covered in their own way, as were the efforts of government surveyors and anthropologists (16).

Therefore, it can be posited that the conquest of both the Indian land and the American Indian peoples have gone hand in hand with an effort to photograph these activities. Then, the subjectifying gaze of the Anglomerican was upon the American Indians, reducing them to the status of curiosities even while conducting land deals with them on the administrative level. The gaze of the white man was thus establishing an unequal relation that is substantiated by the photographs. Possession of the land, followed by attempts at assimilation and physical and cultural genocide were documented alongside the scientific and pseudo-scientific efforts to collect data on the land and the peoples. Photography was furthermore to be used for containment purposes, since photographic expeditions that accompanied land surveys sometimes aimed at providing intelligence reports on the Native tribes, to be used by the military for punitive action (105-106).

This hectic photographic activity was fuelled and furthered by the contention that the Indians were disappearing as their way of life was wiped out by the white intrusions and institutions. Moreover, the images of their demise were a profitable venture, since the white public's curiosity of the Indian was insatiable. Accordingly McClees, a Philadelphia photographer writes in 1857, advertising his photographs by the following words:

'The gallery of portraits includes those of some of the principle Chiefs, Braves, and Councilors... Some of them are since dead – killed in battle. To the student of our history, as addition to libraries and historical collections, and as mementoes (sic) of the race of red men, now rapidly fading away, this series is of great value and interest' (qtd. in Fleming and Luskey 22).

As a result of the unceasing activity of the government and the military, the Indian was physically cornered, and the photographer in promoting his photographs of the Indians is advising the white public to purchase the mementoes (sic) of the race of red men, before they become extinct, and thus partake this historical moment. In a very similar vein Joseph Henry, the Smithsonian's first secretary in 1859 laments the present state of Indian affairs by the following words: "The Indians are passing away so rapidly that but few years remain within which this can be done and the loss will be irretrievable and so felt when they are gone" (qtd. in Fleming and Luskey 22). Therefore, what is to be done, before it is too late, is to document the Indian in these few decades before his complete extinction.

Thus, photography was used as a tool by the government, to illustrate to the public and the historical record that the Indian was no longer the dreaded foe, but a thing of the past, and fast heading for extinction. By the beginning of the twentieth century, we see that the images of Indians that pandered to the purposes of propaganda in substantiating the might of manifest destiny are replaced by a more romanticized version of the Indian. Approached from that perspective, early twentieth century photography becomes an act of salvage, an attempt to fix the Indian as an image to be committed to collective memory, since very shortly he/she will be no more present to be gazed at by a curious public. Consequently, such an atmosphere has created images of the romanticized demise of the Indian. Two photographs from the Smithsonian collection, 'The Last Outpost' (9.24) and 'Sunset of a Dying Race' (9.25) both by Joseph Kossuth Dixon taken on a Wanamaker expedition (Fleming & Luskey 229), dated between 1908 and 17, deserve some attention both in terms of the names given them –that require no further elaboration–, but also in terms of the images they construct.

Momaday in elaborating on the "moral and ideological ambiguity in which the white man prevails" contends: "Implicit in these characteristics is the inclination to impose the most convenient identities upon friends and acquaintances, strangers and enemies. The Indian has been compelled to make his way under an imposed identity

of defeat” (*The Man* 59). It can be argued that these two photographs exemplify such images of defeat, as experienced by the Indian, and as etched in collective memory by the white. The sense of defeat in both photographs are final since in both, the Indian man stands alone, deprived of his communal ties that impart him strength and a meaningful existence. ‘The Last Outpost’ depicts one last Indian man upon a high precipice, namely on the last outpost. The photograph is taken from a distance and shows him in full length, from profile. The Indian has now evidently been cornered on a craggy mountaintop, looking towards the vast land that used to belong to him, awaiting perhaps his fate or an attack that might put a premature end to his life.

Alternately in ‘Sunset of a Dying Race’ we see another Native American man, this time in full Northern Plains regalia. This lone figure is moving on his horse towards the skyline, ready to meet his maker among the dark clouds parting to allow him a passage into the mists of history. Since he is a member of a dying race, we do not see his face. It is the sunset of the race, and it is sufficient that we see his back and the rump of his horse, as both the horse and the man make their exit from historical record. It is a tragedy and the death of the faceless antagonist will take place behind the scenes, as soon as the photographer leaves.

Alongside the photographer, the anthropologist has proven to be another major force in shaping and defining the perception of Indians for not only the mainstream public, but also for the Indian peoples. Alongside the open collaboration between the anthropologist and the photographer, the figure of the anthropologist, empowered by epistemic truth claim, and shielded by scientific discourse has acted in the best interest of the government. Thus, in substantiating the ideological goals of Anglomericans, the anthropologist according to Vine Deloria Jr. has proven to be another culprit in cultural loss and degeneration experienced by the tribes.

While Momaday reflects the difficulty of trying to answer the question of identity and thus to locate Indianness in his memoir *The Names*, and Louis Owens in his autobiographical text *I Hear the Train* searches in vain for physical markers of a

mixedblood Indian selfhood in old family photographs, Vine Deloria, Jr. in *Custer Died for Your Sins* discusses the ironic attribution of a white-defined Indianness onto the Indian people, and the culpability of the anthropologist in this act. Sometimes with sarcasm, at other times with wry humor Deloria relates the “plight” of the Indian in contemporary America by the following words:

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. Indian life, as it relates to the real world, is a continuous attempt not to disappoint people who know us. Unfulfilled expectations cause grief and we have already had our share.

Because people can see right through us, it becomes impossible to tell truth from fiction or fact from mythology. 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 who were always THERE. These Indians are fierce, they wear feathers and grunt. Most of us don’t fit this idealized figure since we grunt only when overeating, which is seldom.

To be an Indian in modern American society is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical (capitalization in the original) (1-2).

In place of Momaday’s distraught attitude at being interrogated on his own identity, as well as the true location of Indianness, in Deloria’s text we see anger being shrouded by humor, a survival strategy employed by various Native American authors. Deloria’s rightful anger stems from the essentialist attitude of the mainstream public that denies the Indian the right to define himself/herself. Self-representation according to Deloria, inevitably escapes the Indian because the Indian is a fixed category, already defined by the whites, and the only thing left to the Native American is to try and not to disappoint the masses in failing to act according to the norms of Indianness prescribed by the whites. Hence the privileged whites fabricate Indianness and the construct of Indianness fulfills its function in the form of many recognizable stereotypes that are in turn taken to be factual. In this process of defining the other, the stereotype reaches such a widespread currency that the “real” becomes the “absolute fake” to use Gerald Vizenor’s phrase. Furthermore, Deloria firmly establishes the complicity of the scientist in general and the anthropologist in particular in this act of the creation of a prescriptive Indianness. We read:

But Indians have been cursed above all other people in history. Indians have anthropologists.

Every summer when school is out a veritable stream of immigrants heads into Indian country. Indeed the Oregon Trail was never so heavily populated as are Route 66 and Highway 18 in the summer time. From every rock and cranny in the East *they* emerge, as if responding to some primeval fertility rite, and flock to the reservations (emphasis in the original).

“They” are the anthropologists. Social anthropologists, historical anthropologists, political anthropologists, economic anthropologists, all brands of the species, embark on the great summer adventure.... They are the most prominent members of the scholarly community that infests the land of the free, and in the summer time, the homes of the braves.

The origin of the anthropologist is a mystery hidden in the historical mists. Indians are certain that all societies of the Near East had anthropologists at one time because all those societies are now defunct.

Indians are equally certain that Columbus brought anthropologists on his ships when he came to the New World. How else could he have made so many wrong deductions about where he was? (78-79).

According to Deloria what distinguishes the Native Americans from the rest of the dispossessed of the earth is the presence of the anthropologist, whose activities are the hardest burden to bear. While elaborating on how they leave their campuses for the reservations, Deloria builds up the imagery of locusts invading the land, and further replicates the stereotypical rendition of the Indian land by the phrase “the land of the free, the homes of the braves”. Offering a satirical rendition of the discourse employed by anthropologists, Deloria goes as far as to suggest that the present troubles of cultural and political nature experienced by the Near Eastern countries might have been caused by anthropologists, and finally attributes Columbus’ huge gaffe of mistaking North America for India, again to the arrogance of anthropologists.

It can be argued that in this respect, Deloria’s anthropologist figure is similar to Said’s Orientalist, not only in terms of the havoc wreaked in the Near East, but also in creating essentialist definitions, and insisting on locating identities within existing categories that are highly compromised by racial prejudice and racial profiling, as well as political and ideological motivations. Deloria further contends: “You may be curious as to why the anthropologist never carries a writing instrument. He never makes a mark because he ALREADY KNOWS what he is going to find”

(capitalization in the original) (80). What Deloria is implying is that in anthropology, the conclusions are reached prior to the research, and by “studying the Indian” -an act which becomes a synonym for subjectifying- the white is only trying to confirm his pre-existing notions of the Indian. Edward Said on the other hand, in *Orientalism* while elaborating on the complicity of the Orientalist with the politician in the twentieth century writes:

... the Orient needed first to be known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created by scholars, soldiers, and judges who disinterred forgotten languages, histories, races, and cultures in order to posit them –beyond the modern Orient’s ken- as the true classical Orient that could be used to judge and rule the modern Orient (92).

Conversely, for the Native Americans the loss of the land and epistemic violations has long ago taken place. Yet the knowledge-power equation needs to be perpetuated to continue the colonization of both the land and the peoples, since knowledge confirms the power of the colonizer, and gives him authority over the subjected peoples. Consequently Deloria further argues, “The legend of the Indian was embellished or tarnished according to the need...” (10), which is a clear illustration of the significance of the authority of the colonized. This authority on the part of the scientist exhibits itself in the flexibility and scope of the construct, thus manifesting itself in the possibility of shaping and reshaping the construct according to need. Then Spivak’s question on the identity of the speaker becomes relevant in that if and when the colonized is not able to represent him/her self, the representation will be done exactly by the very people who are complicit in burying the colonized inside false/ fake representations. On the relationship between representation and absence of the represented in these false representations, Said writes:

... in discussions of the Orient, the Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence; yet we must not forget that the Orientalist’s presence is enabled by the Orient’s effective absence. This fact of substitution and displacement, as we must call it, clearly places on the Orientalist himself a certain pressure to reduce the Orient in his work, even after he has devoted a good deal of time to elucidating and exposing it (208-9).

In a very similar vein Deloria argues; “The massive volume of useless knowledge produced by anthropologists attempting to capture real Indians in a network of theories has contributed substantially to the invisibility of Indian people today” (81). When the possibility of self-representation is wrenched from the Native as a result of the scientifically established authority of the white, then the Indian becomes truly non-existent. Genocide evolving into practices of assimilation, aided by pseudo-scientific facts had resulted in the denial of the American Indian existence, reducing the Indian to a mere absence.

The epistemic authority of the academia on Native American presences becomes a danger in itself, since it is not only the representation of the Indian for the white consumption that is tainted, but also the self-identification of the Native Americans are also at stake. We read:

Over the years anthropologists have succeeded in burying Indian communities so completely beneath the mass of irrelevant information that the total impact of the scholarly community on Indian people has become one of simple authority”. May Indians have come to parrot the ideas of anthropologists because it appears that the anthropologists know everything about Indian communities (82).

Thus, epistemic violence becomes an epistemic burial of the real peoples so much so that the whites succeed in changing the self-perceptions of the Native people. Then, the inner gaze of the colonized becomes tainted by the subjectifying representations of the colonizer and the result is inner colonization, a fact that further makes it necessary to disrupt these false representations. To quote Momaday again, “[i]t is imperative that the Indian defines himself, that he finds the strength to do so, that he refuses to let others define him” (*The Man* 76). Then, self-definition means survival, or “survivance” as Gerald Vizenor puts it, and an imperative for the Native Americans to survive the impact of ongoing colonialism. Consequently in terms of the discussion of both the creation and the deconstruction of these false representations, the location of the real becomes the ultimately contested territory.

Deloria furthermore provides a humorous anecdote on the nature of the real as expected to play itself out by an anthropologist, and as experienced by the Native peoples on a reservation. The anthropologist is there to confirm or rather impose upon the people his pre-conceived notion of the real Indian, when; "...suddenly the Sioux were presented with an authority figure who bemoaned the fact that whenever he visited the reservations the Sioux were not out dancing in the manner of their ancestors. In a real sense, they were not real" (87). The real, defined by the authoritative figure of the anthropologist previously, fails to fit the actual lived experience of the Sioux community, a fact which for the anthropologist contests the reality of not the construct but the actuality of the peoples involved. The construct has been wrought as a result of a painstaking scientific process, and therefore cannot be wrong, so it ought to be the people who by not acting in the expected manner, are failing in representing the real. Deloria further elaborates on the nature of the "real" Indian, and how that "reality" makes the real-time Indians feel by the following words:

Not even Indians can relate themselves to this type of creature who, to anthropologists, is the "real" Indian. Indian people begin to feel that they are merely shadows of a mythical super-Indian. Many anthros spare no expense to reinforce this sense of inadequacy in order to further support their influence over Indian people (82).

As discussed earlier, just as Indian feels unable to validate the stereotypical Indian and falls short of it, the real Indian constructed by the white scientist, in itself a violation of epistemic possibility, again acts as an iconic confirmation of the authority of the colonizer over the colonized. Then since it is in the best interest of the colonizer to taint the self-image of the subjugated peoples this constructed "real" enables the anthropologist to further assert their influence over the Native peoples.

Jana Sequoya in her article "How (!) Is An Indian? -A Contest of Stories" approaches the problems of authenticity and Indianness, as much contested territories when she writes:

Who, what, where, and when can that Indian be, which the founding narratives of the North American nation construed as either absent – the empty land scenario- or inauthentic. Inauthentic, that is by comparison with the imagined “original” Indian, whether of the Golden Age or demonic variety; inauthentic because rather than vanishing, American Indians in all our diversity are still here, alive and kicking against the odds.

Although the figure of the “authentic” Indian is a figment of the imagination –a symbolic identity invested with meanings of temporal inequality vis-à-vis the colonizing real(m)- it has real consequences for contemporary American Indian people. Among the most obvious of these is that we must respond to the question of Indian identity in terms of that figure. And because Native Americans must understand themselves in relation to conventional images of “Indianness”, and therefore, in relation to the false question of authenticity -a “red-herring” discourse, one might say – even our own version of who and how is an Indian are not so much the antithesis of the imaginary Indian, as its echo (453).

According to Sequoya the mainstream representations offer only two options of Indian identity. While one is a virtual absence, the other -either in its romanticized or condemned sub-categories- is the white construct of a “real” that is imposed upon diverse peoples, juxtaposed to which the living and breathing Indians become insubstantial and inauthentic. And it is also Sequoya’s contention that it is imperative for the Native American peoples to first come to recognize these false representations as such, since only with that knowledge the possibility of refuting them shall arise. In a very similar vein, Owens in *Mixedblood Messages* contends:

For Native Americans, the term “Indian” is a deeply contested space, where authenticity must somehow be forged out of resistance to the “authentic” representation. Chippewa/ Anishinaabe author Gerald Vizenor astutely declares that the real “Indian” is the “absolute fake”, that which in *Travels in Hyperreality* Umberto Eco calls the “hyperreal”. Such simulations, says Vizenor in *Manifest Manners*, “are the absence of the tribal real” (4), since the simulated Native “Indian” is a Euramerican invention. It is the hyperreal simulation that the Native must confront and contest while simultaneously recognizing that only the simulation will be seen by most who look for Indianness. This is a dilemma made more difficult because the simulacrum, or “absolute fake”, is constructed out of the veneer of the “tribal real” (13).

Then, according to Owens, authenticity needs to be forged out of resistance to the white stereotypical representations, since the simulated Indian is itself a white invention. Owens quotes Vizenor to the effect that the real “Indian” has become the “absolute fake”, a “hyperreal” simulation, and that this hyperreal simulation, this

absolute fake has replaced the much contested essence of Indianness. Owens further posits "... the "real" Indian is the one created by the Euramerican culture that defined the authoritative utterance "Indian" and the construction thus signified" (80). Thus, similar to the way the "Indian" was initially delineated and imagined by the Europeans, today, it is replaced by another fictive category, that of the "real" Indian, against which actual peoples are compared. Owens finally argues that all these authoritative fake representations are holding back the living, breathing peoples from adapting to the new circumstances while preserving their own cultures and traditions. As Owens comments:

It is the artifactualization, the stereotyping, the damningly *hyperreal* "Indian" that makes it so difficult for actual living Indian people to comprehend survival, and to adapt and change while holding to cultural identities, amidst the still-colonialist, dominant Euramerican societies of the Americas (18).

Then, be them drawings, photographic images, the moving images, or texts, representations of the tribal peoples by the mainstream in all their constructedness underscore the necessity for the American Indians to reconfigure and to create afresh subjectivity positions through their own agency. Since these fictive positions are posited as the essence of Indianness by the Euromerican public, then the basic premise of survival or Vizenor's term "survivance" becomes the dismantling of these simulations, and the main objective of self-writing by Native American authors to contest the hyperreal while formulating their own selfhoods in textuality.

Therefore, it can be argued that the journey and the search undertaken by Scott Momaday and Louis Owens respectively for their communal selfhoods in their autobiographical texts fulfill this objective of disrupting the "absolute fake". In *The Names* as well as in *I Hear the Train* the authors succeed in weaving their subjectivities as parts of the communal whole, while refusing static markers, and revealing to full the creative potential of the oral literature.

However, Black Elk's autobiography, *Black Elk Speaks*, written by John Neihardt, while being a seminal text, is suspect in inadvertently helping to create and perpetuate false, inauthentic representations of Indianness. Black Elk's autobiography is mediated through not only one but three other voices/ view points, and consequently triply removed from its own source. Thus, the possibility of pinpointing Black Elk's own subject position becomes another fiction, while the possibility of his having become an agent of the constructed Indianness dominates the take of the text today. Then the main problem in terms of Black Elk's autobiography becomes if Neihardt helps Black Elk construct an Indian identity or if Neihardt mediates a constructed Indianness for the white community.

Gerald Vizenor and Sherman Alexie on the other hand, use the construct of the stereotypical Indian to undermine and to contest its currency, since as Momaday, Owens and others have argued repeatedly, the native self is further burdened by the necessity to try and counter the damaging false representations of Indianness. Thus Sherman Alexie in his autobiographical fiction and Gerald Vizenor in both his fiction and criticism are creating textually constructed subjectivities that dismantle the "real" or "authentic" Indian. Long have the Native Americans existed only in false representations of others, and these contemporary authors are using postmodern techniques to subvert and deconstruct such images of simulated Indianness. Then it can argued that what Vizenor and Alexie are doing in their texts is a politically motivated act of countering and correcting in the subsuming of the authority of the white world in the reformulation of their textually created subjectivities.

4.2. Could Black Elk Speak?

The Native American tradition, however, has been oral, presenting not objects but acts, not pages but performances (Swann & Krupat xiii).

It can be argued that Swann & Krupat's assessment of Native American oral tradition provides an apt definition of the seminal text we now know as *Black Elk Speaks*, since it is an oral performance by Black Elk that encompasses acts natural and

supernatural appertaining to the Oglala Sioux in late nineteenth century, taken down by the Anglomerican poet John Neihardt. Although Vine Deloria Jr. in his "Foreword" to the text defines *Black Elk Speaks* as "...a religious classic, perhaps the only religious classic of this century..." (xiii), it is a frequently voiced contention that *Black Elk Speaks* is a text which poses certain difficulties in defining/ describing or assigning it a definitive literary niche, either in terms of Western or Native American traditions.

Black Elk Speaks is a text of tribal history, autobiography, or ethnography, or it can be considered an interview, a documentary project, and a work of spirituality. It should also be pointed out that Black Elk's narration is mediated through a plurality of voices. An Anglomerican poet textually constructs *Black Elk Speaks*, but it is the life story of an Indian American holy man. It is Black Elk's reminiscences told by him in his native tongue, translated into English by his son Ben Black Elk, transcribed by John Neihardt's daughter Enid Neihardt, and finally written by John G. Neihardt. Thus the extent to which the narration is corrupted by this mediation process cannot be verified. Nor could it be clarified how much of the telling or the narration have come to be dominated by Neihardt. Furthermore, because of the multiple levels of mediations/ mediators, the focality of the narrative is disrupted. Finally, since the teller is triply distanced and removed from the text itself, the narrative voice and the subjectivity represented in the text can hardly be located at the same site, and we can only speculate the extent to which they overlap. Consequently, it is not possible to insulate Neihardt's and Black Elk's voices, since the two almost always completely merge.

On the complicated relationship between Black Elk and John Neihardt, and its reflection on the text, we may look at a sentence, which is clearly part of a dialogue that takes place, interrupting the narrative. Black Elk is describing a healing ceremony he has performed, and continues: "You want to know why we always go from left to right like this" (153). Apparently, during Black Elk's narration, Neihardt keeps asking questions, and directs the telling. Thus it is possible that directions/

directives provided by Neihardt are prompting the text, although the sum total is the narration of Black Elk's life as part of the Oglala Sioux community. Therefore it can be argued that the text is not only shaped, but also the telling manipulated by Neihardt. Then, the book discloses an act of mediation not limited to language, but a mediation in terms of the consciousness that creates the text, which is one of Western sensibility. Consequently, what *Black Elk Speaks* exemplifies is the removal/relocation of the creative center of a text. The creative center is not the narrator Black Elk, but Black Elk and his tribe are located at the core of a text whose creative center is Neihardt and his Western consciousness.

Black Elk on the other hand, as the receiver of sacred visions has to mediate between the spiritual forces that grant him the vision and his people, who are the recipients of the vision, and in turn his text is mediated through four separate voices. Therefore tracing an individual subjectivity not only becomes a mere impossibility, but also redundant because it is Black Elk's communal focus that constructs his subjectivity. The visions make him who he is, a holy man, and as such his power derives from the two equally powerful forces he mediates between, the spiritual forces as represented by the Grandfathers that give him his visions and his people the Ogalala, the receivers of the wisdom of the Grandfathers.

As a result, the criticism of *Black Elk Speaks* is dominated by the discussions of Black Elk's own agency in the construction of this text. Hence, there are opposing views on Black Elk's own authority on his narration, so much so that it is suggested that his voice is subjugated by Neihardt, and consequently, Black Elk's overall authority on the subjectivity represented in the text is contested. Yet, what cannot be opposed or disputed is the fact that it is a seminal text in terms of Native American letters because of its collective focus, and in the translation from Oglala to English and from orality to textuality, the text is mediated time and again.

Neihardt's intervention to the text and the problem of his mediation however is even further complicated by the contents of a letter addressed to Black Elk, which appears

in Appendix 1 (211-213). In this letter, Neihardt broaches the idea of Black Elk narrating his life to him. Black Elk is to start the narration of his life from the beginning, and continue, finishing off with Wounded Knee. Thus from Neihardt's letter we learn that the thematic essence of the work is shaped not by Black Elk, but by Neihardt. However, Neihardt is apparently well-read in terms of oral literature, since he suggests that Black Elk gets "three or four of the fine old men" to meet him "and talk about old times" while Black Elk did the telling (212). Also Neihardt promises it is "not a money-making scheme" and he would pay Black Elk by the hour for his efforts. But, in the "Author's Postscript", the way Neihardt describes Black Elk's prayers is reeking with romanticized pity when he writes: "Then he sent forth a voice; and a thin, pathetic voice it seemed in that vast space around us" (209). Or we cannot help but describe Neihardt as patronizing when he writes of Black Elk's prayer in the following manner: "With tears running down his cheeks, the old man raised his voice to a thin high wail..." (210).

Consequently, it is because of such instances that Neihardt's motives become suspect and the text becomes the locus of contention. Then the question becomes, if Neihardt is enabling Black Elk to construct a communally fashioned Indian identity or if Neihardt is using Black Elk's narration to mediate a constructed Indianness for the white community. Thus, we have two contending views on the text of *Black Elk Speaks*; one seeing it as the archetypal, traditional, definitive spiritual text in which through self-narration the collective history of the peoples is retold, while Black Elk's identity is constructed as part of the community. On the other hand, it is a narration mediated through not one or two but three intermediaries, which raise questions on the issue of authenticity, and the possibility/ impossibility of translation. Accordingly, Black Elk can also be seen as emasculated, castrated, with the end result that the Euromerican culture is re-inscribing him as the icon of constructed Indianness. Then this representation will have no real bearing on reality, and the outcome will be a perfect simulation of Indianness. Approached from this perspective Black Elk has no authority over this text, because it is not only Black Elk's narration, but also the subjectivity disclosed in the text that is shaped/

constructed by a white male, similar to the victimized women of the captivity narratives.

As a result, the critical assessment of *Black Elk Speaks* reflects this polarity. Arnold Krupat for instance, summarizes several views on the material presented as *Black Elk Speaks*. Firstly, in line with William Powers' contention, Krupat posits, "Black Elk was probably tailoring his account of his experiences and of Lakota religion to what he thought whites could understand or appreciate" (*Native American Autos* 219). According to Krupat it can also be that "...to a degree somewhat greater than what we find in other composite Indian autobiographies, *Black Elk Speaks* is Neihardt's creation" (219). Krupat finally voices Clyde Holler's observation that Black Elk might have been "using this opportunity to speak of his life experience ritually, as a means to renew the Lakota way" (219).

Rebecca Tillet respectively suggests another take on *Black Elk Speaks*. Tillet's position is more of a middle ground, warning that the persistent questioning of Black Elk's autobiography in terms of its 'authenticity' "...due to its collaborative nature", would result in focusing too much on Neihardt, and cause a "negat[ion] [of] Black Elk's own agency within the project" (19). Tillet further reiterates Murray's assertion that one should avoid both "'the nostalgia of Neihardt' and 'any tendency to see Black Elk as... an object of someone else's textual production'" (Murray qtd. in Tillet 19).

Native American authors on the other hand, focus on the spiritual/ religious strength of the work. Vine Deloria Jr. writes of the relationship between the two main authoritative voices and their impact on the text in the following words:

Present debates center on the question of Neihardt's literary intrusions into Black Elk's system of beliefs and some scholars have said that the book reflects more of Neihardt than it does of Black Elk. It is, admittedly, difficult to discover if we are talking with Black Elk or John Neihardt, whether the vision is to be interpreted differently, and whether or not the positive emphasis which the book projects is not the optimism of two poets lost in the modern world and transforming drabness into

an idealized world. Can it matter? The very nature of great religious teachings is that they encompass everyone who understands them and personalities become indistinguishable from the transcendent truth that is expressed (xvi).

Thus, for Deloria the text accomplishes the expression of transcendent truth, and this is the main strength of *Black Elk Speaks*. Deloria in his “Foreword” to the text further dubs it “...a testimony to the continuing strength of our species...” (xiii), acknowledging its positive impact on the Indian population as a source of spiritual succor:

The most important aspect of this book, however, is not its effect on the non-Indian populace who wished to learn something of the beliefs of the Plains Indians but upon the contemporary generation of young Indians who have been aggressively searching for roots of their own in the structure of universal reality. To them the book has become a North American bible of all tribes. They look to it for spiritual guidance, for sociological identity, for political insight, and for affirmation of the continuing substance of Indian tribal life, now being badly eroded by the same electronic media which are dissolving other American communities (xv).

In a similar vein, Paula Gunn Allen, in discussing Black Elk as a holy man underscores the “enormity of his gift”, remarking that people sought visions through quests, since visions marked maturity and they presented rites of passage. However, this was not the case with Black Elk, because “[h]e was called by the powers that are usually sought, and his vision was bestowed on him without his asking” (108). As for the content of Black Elk’s narration, Allen argues it is an excellent example of myth “at its most sacred and abstract” (108). We read:

Certainly, with the exception of the narrator’s presence, the story is in the most proper sense a myth. Consisting of a logical progression of symbols, it is in truth a metaphysical statement that is significant in its cosmological implications, its prophetic content, its narrative sequence, its sense of timelessness, its characters, and, ultimately, its meaning for people all over this country. Seen that way, it is an example of myth at its most sacred and abstract (108).

Scott Momaday in *The Man Made of Words* also emphasizes the fact that questions of labels, authorship, translation and transcription are redundant in discussing the text

of *Black Elk Speaks*, which he calls a “fortunate collaboration” (22). For Momaday, Black Elk is ultimately a storyteller, or perhaps the “ultimate” storyteller. We read:

His function is essentially creative, inasmuch as language is essentially creative. He creates himself, and his listeners, through the power of his perception, his imagination, his expression. He realizes the power and beauty of language; he believes in the efficacy of words. He is a holy man; his function is sacred (23).

....

To the extent that Black Elk re-creates his vision in words, he re-creates himself. He affirms that he has existence in the element of language, and this affirmation is preeminently creative. He declares in effect: *Behold, I give you my vision in these terms, and in the process I give you myself*. In the ultimate achievement of the storyteller’s purpose, he projects his spirit into language and therefore beyond the limits of his time and place. It is an act of sheer transcendence. Spiritually he will survive as long as his words survive. He inhabits his vision, and in the telling his vision becomes timeless. The storyteller and the story are one (emphasis in original) (27).

According to Momaday, the sacred vision itself constitutes Black Elk’s subjectivity and the creation of the vision in language, is the creation of the subjectivity of the narrator. Story and storyteller are not functions of one or the other, but the two merge and become one and timeless, since the storyteller imbues language with his own spirit, and thus both reach transcendence.

William Powers on the other hand in his article “When Black Elk Speaks, Everybody Listens” provides a thorough study of the details of Black Elk’s life, and the focus of Powers’ article is the period in Black’s life that is not narrated in *Black Elk Speaks*, that is the rest of his long life after the Massacre of the Wounded Knee. From Powers we learn that Black Elk gets married, has children, and converts into Catholicism, taking on a wide range of duties in the Catholic church. Powers’ text also includes a letter written by Black Elk in 1934, two years after the publication of *Black Elk Speaks*. In the letter Black Elk repudiates *Black Elk Speaks* as his autobiography by the following words:

I told about the people's ways of long ago and some of this a white man put in a book but he did not tell about current ways. Therefore I will speak again, a final speech. For the last thirty years I have lived very differently from what the white man told about me. I am a believer. The Catholic priest Short Father baptized me thirty years

ago. From then on they have called me Nick Black Elk. Very many of the Indians know me. Now I have converted and live in the true faith of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, I say in my own Sioux Indian language, "Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be thy name," as Christ taught us and instructed us to say. I say the Apostles' Creed and I believe it all (Black Elk qtd. in Powers 50).

Thus, whereas *Black Elk Speaks* comprises of an as-told-to narrative by an Oglala medicine man, which discloses the visions of the holy man alongside the major historical events of the last stand of the Sioux, the letter by the same narrator discloses a subjectivity far removed from the one created and represented in the text. Black Elk's letter is a testimony to a selfhood altered radically by Christianity, and a subject position that defines self through Catholic faith. The letter's author defines his self as that of an exemplary Christian, and therefore in the letter we read of a selfhood that is incompatible with the selfhood depicted in *Black Elk Speaks*, and this Catholic subjectivity disavows *Black Elk Speaks* as his autobiography.

It can be argued that this discrepancy, while underpinning the problem of mediation on the one hand, on the other points at the multiplicity of subject positionings available in self-writing. The author of an autobiographical text chooses to represent a certain selfhood/or several selfhoods, and discards others to fit his/her aims and motivations in writing, and the expectations of his/her public. Similarly, in oral literature the story/ history changes in every telling. Then, what possibly causes the disconcert in terms of Black Elk's subjectivity is the fact that both the self-validated and discarded subject positions of the same narrator/ teller is extant in print, told/ written/ published during the very brief span of a few years. However, this study will limit itself to focusing on the storyteller Black Elk's communally constructed subjectivity represented by Neihardt in the text of *Black Elk Speaks* and discuss the relevance of the choice of the exact historical moment, and the repercussions of this historical period on the communally constructed subjectivity.

Consequently, it can be argued that the difficulty arises not only from the fact that the text is disavowed by Black Elk himself as his autobiography, or from the disparity between Western and Native American epistemes and genre definitions,

since the status of this text remains somewhat precarious also in terms of oral literature. The apparent hybridity of the narrative stems from the fact that it is a text shaped by a Western consciousness, yet created and voiced by a Native American. Perhaps the subtitle “as told through John G. Neihardt (Flaming Rainbow)”, clarifies to some extent the complicated nature of the collaboration that went into the creation of the text. Nevertheless, since the collectivist nature of the text is beyond contention, this fact marks this text as a narrative that reflects a Native American consciousness. Black Elk’s story is the history of his people. Consequently, Kenneth Lincoln remarks on the text’s communal nature by the following words: “Personal concerns lead into communal matters. Black Elk[‘s]... life story, [is] a remembered history that is carried on not as autobiography but tribal history...” (Lincoln 16).

In terms of its subject matter, *Black Elk Speaks* is a text that encompasses a wide spectrum of actions that cover fights, hunts, travels, and massacres. The narrative is informed by a deep sense of spirituality that has its reflection in the visions, the songs, and detailed narrations of religious ceremonies. The narrative further reveals the interiority of not only an individual, but also provides glimpses of the communal selfhoods of the people. Then, the thoughts and feelings, and finally the fears and hopes of an entire nation are depicted in the text. Moreover, *Black Elk Speaks* is interspersed with other Native voices that narrate momentous historical events they have actively taken part in. Then, it is possible to argue that *Black Elk Speaks* is a people’s history, and reveals the attempts on the part of Black Elk to save his nation through his visions that were intended by the Powers to be shared by the whole people. The resultant is a life spent in attempts to heal an entire tribe, and a consciousness shaped by an all-encompassing sense of responsibility towards the community.

The text of *Black Elk Speaks* also speaks to us visually. There are photographs taken during the time of the interview with John Neihardt, documenting the telling. There are also those taken later, of the meetings between Black Elk and John Neihardt. In the photographs, we see Black Elk either in white man’s garb –in telling- or in

traditional Indian garb –posing. An old photograph, of Black Elk in “Indian” costume during the European tour is also included. Furthermore, we can see the photographs of the drawings of Black Elk’s visions and ceremonies, executed by Standing Bear. Finally, there are the photographs of Neihardt’s original draft and his handwritten papers that aim at confirming the objectivity of the process by removing any doubts as to the positivist/ documentary approach of the poet. All in all, these photographs -of the narrators and of the paper trail- can be summed up as attempts at establishing the as-told-to truth value of the book, and marking Black Elk as the ultimately real Indian, in performing, narrating, and posing in Indian costume, in the traditional manner.

One question that comes to mind is Black Elk’s motivation in allowing his sacred visions to be recorded by a white poet. Then the query will become why impart the sacred visions or disclose so much detail appertaining to them, since it was not and still is not customary for traditional American Indians to speak of their interiority as apart from the tribe or to share the details of their spiritual practices with strangers. It has been brought to attention in the introductory chapter that when asked to write autobiographies, even contemporary American Indian authors might pause, reflect, inquire on the nature of the text, or as with many women, refuse to go along with the project, as the act would require a bifurcation between the “I” and “them”, which is not at all desirable for the American Indian consciousness.

Similarly, it is a well-known fact that Leslie Marmon Silko is criticized by certain Native American audiences and critics for disclosing too much of the sacred material in the Grandmother Spider stories Silko has woven into the text of *Ceremony*. Then the question that comes to mind is if the disclosing of the essence of the ceremonies is a sacrilege, or if Black Elk is motivated by an urge to leave behind his spiritual heritage to the next generations. Furthermore, it ought to be remembered that for practical purposes Neihardt’s agency means the convergence of the text into writing and thus the possibility of a permanent record. In telling, only a few initiates will learn whereas writing opens up the possibility of the initiation of the masses into the

sacred vision. Accordingly, it can be argued that in telling, of his life –as the sum total of his sacred visions- and of the history of the people, Black Elk mythologizes and sanctifies the final stand of the Oglala.

On the issue of Black Elk's aim in telling, Vine Deloria Jr. in his "Foreword" to the text argues that "Black Elk shared his visions with John Neihardt because he wished to pass along to future generations some of the reality of Oglala life and, one suspects, to share the burden of visions that remained unfulfilled with a compatible spirit" (xv). Kathleen A. Danker on the other hand in her article "Because of This I am Called the Foolish One –Felix White Sr.'s, Interpretations of the Winnebago Trickster" contends that "[w]hen Native American storytellers agree to being recorded, they often do so from a desire to pass on to their own communities traditions which otherwise might die out" (Danker 508). In a similar vein, in *Black Elk Speaks*, Black Elk clearly iterates the intention in his narration. We read:

I had never told any one (sic) all of it, and even until now nobody ever heard it all. Even my old friend, Standing Bear, and my son here have heard it now for the first time when I have told it to you. Of course there was very much in the vision that even I can not (sic) tell when I try hard, because very much of it was not for words. But I have told what can be told.

It has made me very sad to do this at last, and I have lain awake at night worrying and wondering if I was doing right; for I know I have given away my power when I have given away my vision, and maybe I cannot live very long now. But I think I have done right to save the vision in this way, even though I may die sooner because I did it; for I know the meaning of the vision is wise and beautiful and good; and you can see that I am only a pitiful old man after all (158).

Thus Black Elk posits that he is relating the entire vision for the first time, and undertaking it so that it shall be saved. Black Elk's reason in telling is to save the great vision and he is determined to let the vision survive even if its sharing were to kill him. We further learn from Neihardt's "Preface" to the 1932 Edition that Black Elk had been approached by others, but apparently chooses Neihardt as a confidant who in Deloria's words was "...in search of materials for his classis epic work on the history of the West" (Foreword xiii). Neihardt in his turn argues that he had learned from his interpreter that the same morning, the interpreter had taken another writer to

Black Elk, but without success, since Black Elk's reply to this other writer was: "I can feel that you are good; but I do not want to talk about such things" (xix).

Neihardt in the same preface writes of Black Elk's initial conversations with him in the following words: "It was not of worldly matters that he spoke most, but of things that he deemed holy and of "the darkness of men's eyes".... the inner world of Black Elk, imperfectly revealed as by flashes that day, was both strange and wonderful to me" (xix). In spite of Neihardt's inspired and mystifying words, the text replicates no such brooding thoughts or imperfection in telling. On the contrary, in terms of the timeline, the text is very neatly ordered, starting with Black Elk's childhood, and moving on in a clearly progressive and linear order. However, it should also be remarked that Black Elk's narration remains cyclical, starting and ending with the plight of his people, whose dreams are terminated, while their existence remains precarious.

Chronology and linear movement of the text are facts that bring to mind the possibility that Black Elk's narrative is prompted by questions asked by Neihardt, since when asked to narrate lives, Native Americans might simply admit to no recourse to such a practice because in traditional terms, the native American psyche is not practiced in thinking/ imagining self as a separate entity, but only in terms of the identity entitled by the community. On the other hand, it is quite a common practice for Native Americans to describe self through myths/ stories of their people. Clifford E. Trafzer's article "Grandmother, Grandfather, and the First History of the Americas" offers such examples. We read:

Tribal historians and storytellers offer a presentation of the past that does not fit the model commonly found in historical texts. When Emily Peone, an elder from the Colville Reservation, was asked to discuss her family's history she told of her origin story of her family from a Star Man (Trafzer 482).

....

Descendants of this family.... believe that they originated from the relationship between Tahpahlouh and the Star Man. This is the family's history and a factual representation of their past. It is also part of the history of the Yakima and Palouse tribes, a story known to many Indian in the Northwest (483).

Then, the creation myth is placing the person into the past of his people, and consequently, the creation story of the people instead of the life story of the individual is offered as that person's history, past, autobiography. This fact stands as a clear example of the conflation of the categories of individual and the tribe, of near past and distant past, of myth and history, and finally of autobiography and story in Native American episteme. Trafzer offers another example of such traditional/mythical story telling replacing the autobiographical facts appertaining to the individual in question:

One afternoon Andrew George discussed his life in the Palouse country at the beginning of the twentieth century. The old man... took a moment to reflect before explaining how turtle created the Palouse Hills. Rather than beginning the discussing with an account of his birth, parents, lineage, and childhood, George offered a discussion that tied his past with that of his people. His history began with a geographical overview of the Palouse country that tied the ancient and recent dead of his people -buried within the bosom of the earth and near the Snake and Palouse rivers- with the canyons, rivers, and hills of his home. George offered a unique creation story of the Palouse Hills that placed his life into a relationship with the earth and animals of the region. His perspective on history offers an understanding of his people and the world around him (477).

Therefore, approached from this traditional perspective, it becomes relevant that visions and history are naturally drawn together in Black Elk's text, although not in the sense that Black Elk offers a creation story in place of his own autobiographical details –as perhaps might have been the case if the text was not shaped by a Western consciousness. However, since Black Elk is not bound with the western constructs of ontological and epistemological distinctions, the history of the people is told in tandem with the sacred visions. The visions on the other hand, although experienced individually, are intended for the entire community. Furthermore, according to the Native American ontology, the reality of the visions surpasses the reality of the acts in the mundane world. Hence, the visions themselves could be defined as another history of the same people, one that Black Elk tries to realize, but which unfortunately escapes him during his lifetime and thus remains unfulfilled. Then Black Elk is an interested party in relating what befell his people, alongside what

could have happened to the same people. Black Elk is speaking of the people, for the people, for it all to be remembered.

Yet the text of *Black Elk Speaks* is not one in which traditional aspects of the oral literature or Oglala language is erased. The same is true for the subject matter, which clearly reflects a Native American consciousness. Then it can be argued that inclusion of the traditional aspects of the telling, such as the initial pipe ceremony, or the cyclical form of the overall narration – its starting and ending with the plight of the Oglala- is integrated to the text as markers of authenticity. Similarly the traditional ways of naming the months and years –descriptive, metonymic way of singling them out by what is important in that given time period- is also replicated in the text.

Another illustration of the traditional aspect of the text is the multiplicity of voices that engage in the telling. Apart from the three tiered mediation –that is Black Elk’s son’s translations, Enid Neihardt’s transcriptions and Neihardt’s questions and directives- we have the inclusion of other narrative voices, which stands out as another marker of the collective aspect of oral literature. The historical events important in terms of the Oglala that have taken place when Black Elk was too young to have participated in them are told by the eyewitness accounts of the actual participants.

One such even is “The Battle of the Hundred Slain”, which is narrated twice, first by Fire Thunder and then by Standing Bear. The two narrators do not collaborate, but tell their own versions of this particular battle based on their own lived experience. Similarly, the bison hunt that takes place when Black Elk was ill is related by Standing Bear. “The Fight with Three Stars” -that is the 1876 attack of General Crook- is told by Standing Bear and Iron Hawk and the two versions are likewise offered consecutively. Finally, the “Rubbing Out of Long Hair”- the defeat of Custer- is again told by Standing Bear and Iron Hawk. Thus we read the same historical events from different vantage points of the actual participants of the events,

and the Oglala history is told and retold, molded and remolded by the multiplicity enabled by oral literature. Then the text of *Black Elk Speaks* is suffused with a plurality of voices that engage in narrating the historical events relevant to the Oglala community in late nineteenth century.

Hence, it can be argued that the text while prompted to continue in a linear movement by Neihardt, is yet narrated by Black Elk in such a manner that it retains its cyclical focus and remains stylistically incoherent. To illustrate, the history of the people, told by a multiplicity of voices is disrupted by Black Elk's great vision, although another take on the vision is that it represents another history of the people, one that will come to pass –or not- in the future of the tribe. Then this particular probable history would add up to the collective history, instead of fracturing it.

Furthermore, since the history of the people and the individual may not be separated, in the true oral history fashion we have Black Elk relating a story on courting that emphasizes the import of courage and manliness. Hence a story Black Elk was told as a child is integrated into the text in his retelling. Consequently, a story that might seem like a diversion in a text that focuses on the collective history of the Oglala, -to the extent it is conflated with the lived experience of Black Elk, and in part the other narrators- becomes part of the overall narrative. Yet the inclusion of disparate-looking stories to a narration is in line with oral literature tradition. In this instance, the story is of a young Lakota named High Horse and focuses on his wooing of his wife to be, and from this story, the audience or in this case the reader is by contemplation and revision to reach his own conclusions, and learn important lessons.

Nevertheless, collectivity inherent in the plurality of voices telling the history of a whole people reaches a new level in the depiction of and the action taken in terms of Black Elk's visions. We know that in the Native American episteme, visions are integral to identity configuration, so much so that the individuals will actively seek visions, through which they will define not only their selfhoods, but also their place

in their community, and their part in the future of the tribe. The visions that speak directly to the individual are more real than the day-to-day reality, and will impart meaning and motivation to the present and to the future of the individual and the people.

In Black Elk's case, the great vision marks him out as one with great spiritual power and responsibility, as a holy man. Yet the great vision comes before Black Elk is old enough to seek one, or able to understand its consequences. The understanding will come gradually, as more and more visions will crowd his lived experience, almost overwhelming him. Therefore, the great vision starts changing Black Elk even before he is able to make sense of it, causing him to configure his links to the collectivity of the tribe anew, but not before disrupting his sense of connectedness. Yet, his bonds with his tribe will be forged anew, with greater urgency, again through the agency of the great vision.

Consequently, the very first sentences of *Black Elk Speaks* are a testimony to the collective nature of the consciousness reflected in the text. We read:

My friend, I am going to tell you the story of my life, as you wish; and if it were only the story of my life I think I would not tell it; for what is one man that he should make much of his winters, even when they bend him like a heavy snow? So many other men have lived and shall live that story, to be grass upon the hills. It is the story of all life that is holy and is good to tell, and of us two-leggeds (sic) sharing in it with the four-leggeds (sic) and the wings of the air and all green things; for these are children of one mother and their father is one Spirit. This, then, is not the tale of a great hunter or of a great warrior, or of a great traveler.... I can see it all as from a lonely hilltop, I know it was the story of a mighty vision given to a man too weak to use it; of a holy tree that should have flourished in a people's heart with flowers and singing birds, and now it is withered; and of a people's dream that died in bloody snow (1).

Thus, Black Elk is making it very clear that he is engaging in this act of narration only because he is asked to do so. He would not do it on his own accord, since his is just one more life that will pass from this world soon. Black Elk's is no fake modesty because what is worthy of record is the need for the connectedness that ought to exist between all creatures of nature. These creatures, be them two or four legged or

winged are of the same essence because their creator/creatix are the same; mother Earth and the Great Spirit. At his old age Black Elk is able to conceive of his own life as the story of a mighty vision, one he was too weak to realize, with the consequence that his people who were to be recipients of the wisdom of the vision lie dead and desolate in its aftermath. Then, the vision has been Black Elk's path to life and his objective the betterment of the lives of his people. However, in his old age, Black Elk seems crushed by failure on a many levels: He has failed and his failure has resulted in the failure of his entire people to survive and to flourish. It is only the vision that remains intact, and the hope that it could still be passed on.

Consequently, the vision not only shapes Black Elk's life in its entirety, but it is the vision that makes him who he is. Black Elk spends his whole life in trying to understand the nature of the vision and to enact its dictates, and the vision brings him closer to his people, enabling the creation of the hoop of the nation and thus extending him the possibility of healing them physically and spiritually, at least for a brief period of time. Yet at other times, the great vision separates him from the whole that is his nation.

Although Black Elk is unable to make sense of the visions, as soon as he receives them –at the age of nine- he is definitely changed and affected by them. Black Elk's initial acquisition of the great vision causes a fissure between the collectivity of the tribe and the holy man to be temporarily. We read that the vision separates him from the community, changing him in that he seeks solace in solitude. The visions are singling him out as the receiver of their wisdom, and also as the person to whom is entrusted the future of his people, the whole Oglala nation. Then the responsibility and the welfare of his people rest on his very young shoulders, and his first responses are fear and self-doubt. However, we read that his uneasiness with people wears off soon, but his respect for the four leggeds increases immediately after he experiences the great vision. To illustrate, when he is off deer hunting with his father, Black Elk waits instead of attacking, and the deer come to them, and Black Elk asks his father to offer one of the kill "to the wild things" (49). Similarly, he will not try to hit

swallows with stones with other boys of his band, since to him they “seemed holy” (59). Thus, although his initial response to the visions is fear and a sense of isolation from his own family and tribe, a deeper understanding of the connectedness of all things natural is seen to be taking effect immediately. This new understanding exhibits itself in Black Elk’s life in terms of the ability to understand and respect the holiness of all that is created, the four-leggeds and the wings of the air.

Yet, it is only when he is 17 years old that Black Elk makes full sense of the visions, and this happens not alone, but with the help of another medicine man. When 16, he is warned of approaching dangers more and more often, as is the case with the Blackfeet who were about to attack Black Elk and his band. Yet, after he prays to the spirits, they send thunderclouds to protect them, which for him is a confirmation of his increasing spiritual power. We read: “I knew better than ever now that I really had power, for I had prayed for help from the Grandfathers and they had heard me, and sent the thunder beings to hide us and watch over us while we fled” (121). As a result, he comes to the realization that his power is real. However we learn that Black Elk still does not know what to do with his power or which path to take to fulfill the mission entrusted him by the great vision.

Things come to a head after a sun dance when he “... could think of nothing but [his] vision” (121). This period Black Elk describes as a “terrible time”, when he can hear the whole nature, the four-leggeds and the winged ones crying out to him “It is time!” (121), yet he has no concrete plan to act upon. This difficult time is followed by another episode of self-willed isolation in which the young Black Elk draws away from his people, trying to make sense of it all on his own, doubting his senses and his sanity. However, the answer Black Elk is seeking is to be found in embracing communality. His worried parents send for the medicine man Black Road, and under much strain because of the fears he had been experiencing, Black Elk finally tells Black Road about his visions. Black Road’s solution to both Black Elk’s present plight and as to what needs to be done in terms of the vision is the same, and one that requires the inclusion of the entire people. Black Road speaks: “You must do your

duty and perform this vision for your people upon earth. You must have the horse dance first for the people to see. Then the fear will leave you..." (123).

Thus, fear and loneliness feed upon the other in Black Elk's confusion and solitude, and the solution to Black Elk's dilemma comes from sharing his vision with and seeking advice from another medicine man. And Black Road's advice as to the course of action to be taken in terms of the fulfillment of the requirements of the visions is to re-enact them in a dance. The performing of the vision will mean sharing the vision with the people, and in apt fashion, in the ritualistic performance of the dance, the whole tribe will become active participants. Horses, riders, old men and virgins will perform the role of the supernatural beings and in the process the vision will become a reality for the entire tribe. We learn that the re-enactment of the vision provides Black Elk with another glimpse of his original vision, and alters his understanding of what is real and what is a mere shadow: "I knew the real was yonder and the darkened dream of it was here" (130). Hence, Black Elk reaches the conclusion that his vision provided him a pathway into the real, whereas the lived experience was but a dream of the ultimate reality that was revealed in the vision.

Therefore, the participation of the tribe in the ceremony he performs enables Black Elk not only to experience his original vision once again but further helps him to comprehend the true nature of reality. The initial reason why Black Elk was given the vision also has to do with the tribe, because he was supposed to share it with the people, and this he does with the ceremony of the horse dance. Black Elk's foremost duty to himself and to his people is to make sure that they partake of the vision. We read: "I sent a voice again and said: 'Grandfather, behold me! What you gave me I have given to the people – the power of the healing herb and the cleansing wind. Thus my nation is made over. Hear and help me!'" (131). The great vision was intended for the people and in its fulfillment the initial step is to enable the people to take part in its enactment. Then Black Elk prays for his people: "Grandfather, behold me! My people with difficulty they walk. Give them wisdom and guide them. Hear and help me!" (132). Black Elk continues:

Grandfather, the flowering stick you gave me and the nation's sacred hoop I have given to the people. Hear me, you who have the power to make grow! Guide the people that they may be as blossoms on your holy tree, and make it flourish deep in Mother Earth and make it full of leaves and singing birds" (132).

Thus, the vision given to Black Elk for the sake of the people reaches the people through the ceremony and dance, and Black Elk again prays for the well being of the people, for whom the vision is intended in the first place. Eventually, as a result of the horse dance, the tribe starts feeling strong, healthy and happy. Now that he knows what to do with the vision, Black Elk visits other Oglala to impart to them his vision, and thus to "perform [his] duty" (136).

The great vision, intended for the people, taking the form of the horse dance, heal the people, and the same is true for the dog vision, which Black Elk acquires as a result of the vision quest that he achieves through "going out to lament" (139). Now that he "knew what [the Grandfathers] wanted [him] to do on earth" (142), he performs the dog vision as a heyoka ceremony, with the help of the sacred fools. Black Elk's reasoning is that since his people are "discouraged and sad" (144), disheartened, the heyokas will make them laugh, and build up the collective morale. We read: "When the ceremony was over, everybody felt a great deal better, for it had been a day of fun. They were better able now to see the greenness of the world, the wideness of the sacred day, the colors of the earth, and to set these in their minds" (149). Accordingly, the ceremony imparts to the people the ability not only to see and appreciate the beauty of the nature, but re-connects them with the sacredness of all being, and imprints in their minds their connection to the universe at large. It is again as a result of the dog vision that he sees the "four-rayed herb" (151) of his original vision a second time, and decides to find it. Black Elk will use it as soon as he discovers it, to cure Cuts-to-Pieces' boy, performing a healing ceremony.

On the collective nature of the visions Black Elk argues that only its sharing with the people will impart power to the receiver of the vision, or else the person would

perish under the burden, unable to survive, let alone help the others. Black Elk speaks:

... a man who has a vision is not able to use the power of it until after he has performed the vision on earth for the people to see... my great vision came to me when I was only nine years old, and... I was not much good for anything until after I had performed the horse dance... during my eighteenth summer. And if the great fear had not come upon me, as it did, and forced me to do my duty, I might have been less good to the people than some man who had never dreamed at all... But the fear came, and if I had not obeyed it, I am sure it would have killed me in a little while.

It was even then only after the heyoka ceremony, in which I performed by dog vision, that I had the power to practice as a medicine man, curing sick people... (157).

Thus, the vision is sent to Black Elk so that the entire people would benefit from it, and only after sharing it with the people would the power invested in the dreamer/visionary will take effect, and consequently enable the dreamer to continue helping, healing his people physically and spiritually, by way of connecting them with the forces of nature. Then sharing the power given him for the sake of the people is not only the duty of the dreamer, but also his sole measure of survival. Furthermore, Black Elk fully acknowledges the fact that the power is not his, since he is merely a conduit, a vessel through which the powers of the spiritual world take effect in the realm of the two-leggeds. We read:

Of course it was not I who cured. It was the power from the outer world, and the visions and the ceremonies had only made me like a hole through which the power could come to the two-leggeds. If I thought that I was doing it myself, the hole would close up and no power could come through (157).

Therefore, Black Elk continues with re-enacting the remaining parts of his vision in the form of the bison and elk ceremonies, “for the people to see” (158), since it was him “who stood between the Power of the World and the nation’s hoop” (160), and his “duty was to the life of the hoop on earth” (161).

Although Black Elk keeps on curing the sick, he gradually starts losing hope like the rest of his people, because he insists his task is to save the entire nation and not

merely the individuals that constitute it. The design of the vision ought to be greater according to Black Elk:

... but when I thought of my great vision, which was to save the nation's hoop and make the holy tree bloom in the center of it, I felt like crying, for the sacred hoop was broken and scattered. The life of the people was in the hoop, and what are many little lives if the life of those lives be gone? (165).

Thus he takes the decision to join "the other Pahuska" e.i. "Long Hair", that is Buffalo Bill on his show. We read: "they told us this show would go across the big water to strange lands, and I thought I ought to go, because I might learn some secret of the Wasichu that would help my people somehow" (165). This could be read on the part of Black Elk that he had lost hope in both himself and his own people. By joining the whites on the show, Black Elk hopes to get privy to their secrets, which is a clear illustration of his increasing sense of failure, since his hope is no longer resting with his own people and their ways, but with the Wasichus. Black Elk speaks: "Maybe if I could see the great world of the Wasichu, I could understand how to bring the sacred hoop together and make the tree to bloom again at the center of it" (165).

Yet, although he had lost hope, Black Elk has a very clear understanding of the reason for the dispersal of his peoples. It is the breaking of the communal ties that has resulted in the disaster of the broken hoop. We read:

I looked back on the past and recalled my people's old ways, but they were not living that way any more (sic). They were traveling the black road, everybody for himself and with little rules of his own, as in my vision. I was in despair and I even thought that if the Wasichus had a better way, then maybe my people should live that way. I know now that this was foolish, but I was young and in despair. My relatives told me I should stay at home and go on curing people, but I would not listen to them (165-166).

Therefore, although he knows what is wrong with own people, that they were drifting away from tradition, and apart from each other, becoming individualistic, losing their communality, and that this was the root of all trouble, Black Elk still leaves since he

is also in despair and expecting deliverance from the ways of the Wasichus. However, the trip proves to be another blow, and his hopes are crushed as soon as he sees Chicago: "... I could compare my people's ways with the Wasichu ways, and this made me sadder than before. I wished and wished that I had not gone away from home" (166). Black Elk's main objective was to learn from the Wasichus, hoping that by understanding them, and perhaps adopting their ways, he could help his people. Yet, he realizes that their individualism bordering on a lack of responsibility for the rest of the creation, and fellow humans cannot be a viable option for him or his people:

... I was like a man who had never had a vision. I felt dead and my people seemed lost and I thought I might never find them again. I did not see anything to help my people. I could see that the Wasichus did not care for each other the way our people did before the nation's hoop was broken. They would take everything from each other if they could, and so there were some who had more of everything than they could use, while crowds of people had nothing at all and maybe were starving. They had forgotten that earth was their mother. This could not be better than the old ways of my people. There was a prisoner's house on an island where the big water came up to the town, and we saw that one day. Men pointed guns at the prisoners and made them move around like animals in a cage. This made me feel very sad, because my people too were penned up in islands, and maybe that was the way the Wasichus were going to treat them (167).

Thus, in the city, his spirituality that was an imprint of his visions leaves Black Elk. Without connections to his vision, land, nature and tribe, Black Elk loses his sense of selfhood and consequently the despair engulfing his people become ultimately his own. As Black Elk learns and experiences the ways of the whites, he realizes that while theirs was a culture of giving, the whites' was a culture of taking. The social inequality he witnesses in the cities is too much, and too incomprehensible for Black Elk. He further understands that the whites' severing of bonds with the earth cannot be good for the Oglala. Finally the parallel between the ill treatment of white prisoners and the Natives does not escape Black Elk, and he is hit by the realization that they were being treated the same way as the white prisoners, held at gunpoint, confined in reservations like animals in cages.

Consequently, while Black Elk gets to understand the white world better, at the same time he is also confirmed in the fallacy of the white ways. Then, their adoption is neither a possibility, nor desirable, as such a course of action would provide his people with no benefit. Because Black Elk's evaluation of the white ways is informed by the praxis of communality, the dialectic relation he observes in the white world between the individual and the communal good clearly persuade Black Elk that the ways of the Oglala are by far the better. The white world on the other hand, presents itself as a compilation of the ills lately besetting the Oglala community and in that respects no solution to Black Elk's dilemma.

Having taken active part in a show that physically and visually promoted the subjectification and artifactualization of the Indian, reducing the former foe to a caged animal only allowed to perform in a circus act, Black Elk is not only disillusioned, but also homesick. Yet, apart from the overall dissatisfaction with the Wasichu way of life, he voices no complaints on any particulars, apart from the seasickness they all fall prey to on the crossing. He also talks highly of Pahuska e.i. Buffalo Bill, arguing he "had a strong heart" (175), since after their reunion, he gives Black Elk a ticket for the passage back home and some cash, and throws a dinner party of farewell for Black Elk's honor. As to the details of the Wild West show, he gives no particulars, only argues he was happy with their part of the show, "...but not the part the Wasichus made" (167). Black Elk however dwells at length on their respectful treatment by the Queen, quoting her words; "If you belonged to me, I would not let them take you around in a show like this" (170).

After visiting England, France, and Germany his longing for home starts physically ailing Black Elk. Finally he experiences a vision in which he returns home on a white cloud, and soon afterwards he actually returns. At home, Black Elk finds his people in a worse state still, with the remaining half of their ancestral land taken away, and the people on the verge of starvation. It is then that he hears about Wovoka and his prophecies. At first Black Elk is skeptical, having met people who had heard Wovoka preach, since Wovoka's teachings are dissimilar to his great vision. On the

issue of the Ghost Dance Black Elk speaks: “I was puzzled and did not know what to think” (182). But, after he sees the Ghost Dance performed, his take on this new religion is changed. We read: “I was surprised, and could hardly believe what I saw; because so much of my vision seemed to be in it” (182). It is Black Elk’s contention that the tree painted red and placed in the center of the circle, the pipe and eagle feathers, and the people holding hands remind him of his own vision, and reawaken the urgency to try and make the sacred tree bloom and bring the people back into the sacred hoop. Black Elk speaks: “I believed my vision was coming true at last, and happiness overcame me” (183).

Momaday in *The Man Made of Words* calls the Ghost Dance a “mirage” with “the concepts of a messiah and immortality, both foreign, European imports... and the cause of frightful suffering and death” (91). Yet, Black Elk starts dancing with the rest, his hopes renewed, praying to the Great Spirit for his people: “The nation that I have is in despair. The new earth you promised you have shown me. Let my nation also behold it” (187), and experiences two more visions of the Other World, and based on his visions, starts making Ghost Shirts. In the meantime we learn that the religion was spreading like wildfire, “...that the Indians were beginning to dance everywhere” (191). Black Elk experiences a new vision, and in narration declares that it was a warning given him, and the cause of his fall. We read:

I have thought much about this since, and I have thought that this was where I made my great mistake. I had had a very great vision, and I should have depended only upon that to guide me to the good. But I followed the lesser visions that had come to me while dancing on Wounded Knee Creek. The vision of the Flaming Rainbow was to warn me, maybe; and I did not understand. I did not depend upon the great vision as I should have done; I depended upon the two sticks that I had seen in the lesser vision. It is hard to follow one great vision in this world of darkness and of many changing shadows. Among those shadows men get lost (192).

According to Black Elk his ultimate failure is to trust not his own great vision, but of Wovoka’s, which was the lesser of the two. However, he also acknowledges the difficulty of keeping to one’s true path among the shadows of this dark world. In the meantime, the whites are taking action to delimit the practice of the Ghost Dance to

three times a month, but Black Elk is not convinced: "...could we believe anything the Wasichus ever said to us? They spoke with forked tongues" (193). A policeman warns Black Elk that he will be arrested soon. Consequently, he calls for a meeting and declares his intention of continuance and resistance:

"My relatives, there is a certain thing that we have done. From that certain sacred thing, we have had visions. In those visions we have seen, and also we have heard, that our relatives who have gone before us are in the Other World that has been revealed to us, and that we too shall go there.... If the Wasichus want to fight us, let them do it. Have in your mind a strong desire, and take courage. We must depend upon the departed ones who are in the new world that is coming." (193-194)

Black Elk's speech to his people can be said to reflect a nonchalant attitude towards the white man's world of violence and death. As discussed previously, to Black Elk the world of the visions are more corporeal than the mundane world, and the promised world is incomparably better than the miserable conditions the people are reduced to. Therefore Black Elk is adamant to fight and die for this new religion that represents to his people in this historical junction the only hope of a life renewed.

The threats of the whites are to materialize very soon. American Horse and Fast Thunder come to the Brules Black Elk was staying with, to take them to Pine Ridge. After a skirmish, Black Elk leaves with American Horse and Fast Thunder for the reservation. In the meantime, they hear of the killing of Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull's people in fear run and join Big Foot's band, who at that time is very sick. The runaways soon surrender to the soldiers "...because they were starving and freezing" (195). They pitch camp, and Black Elk speaks; "It was the next morning (December 29, 1890) that something terrible happened" (195).

The annihilation of the people Black Elk relates in the chapter entitled "The Butchering at Wounded Knee". The night before the massacre, he has a premonition of approaching catastrophe, and wakes up to the sound of shooting and "wagon-guns (cannon) going off" (196). Armed only by his sacred shirt and the sacred bow from his great vision, he and twenty others intercept the cavalry chasing and shooting

women and children. Thanks to the sacred bow, charging the cavalry time and again, Black Elk remains unscratched by their bullets, and he and other Lakotas drive the soldiers back. In describing the aftermath, and speaking of the bodies of the women and children, the verbs Black Elk uses time and again are “huddled”, “scattered” and “heaped”. We read:

Dead and wounded women and children and little babies were scattered all along there where they had been trying to run away. The soldiers had followed along the gulch, as they ran, and murdered them in there. Sometimes they were in heaps because they had huddled together, and some were scattered all along. Sometimes bunches of them had been killed and torn to pieces where the wagon guns hit them. I saw a little baby trying to suck its mother, but she was bloody and dead (199).

Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa) who was another eye witness to the aftermath of the massacre as a surgeon describes it in a chapter entitled “The Ghost Dance War” in his second autobiography *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*. As a Native American with a white education and a white profession, functioning on the precarious border between the two cultures, Eastman comments on the rising tension that culminates in the massacre in these words: “... I felt sure that the arrival of the troops would be construed by the ghost dancers as a threat or a challenge, and would put them at once on the defensive.... but the officials evidently feared a general uprising...” (57-58). Eastman also argues that “[a] reckless and desperate young Indian fired the first shot when the search for weapons was well under way, and immediately the troops opened fire from all sides, killing not only unarmed men, women and children, but their own compares who stood opposite them...” (65). And finally, on the Indian bodies he found after the massacre Eastman writes: “... we found them scattered along as they had been relentlessly hunted down and slaughtered while fleeing for their lives” (65).

Black Elk, also narrating for a white audience, yet untouched by the inhibitions of having to mediate between two worlds -since his is not an interstitial existence like Eastman’s- is able to voice his emotions after the massacre with more clarity. Thus Black Elk speaks: “... I wished that I had died too, but I was not sorry for the women

and children. It was better for them to be happy in the other world, and I wanted to be there too. But before I went there I wanted to have revenge. I thought there might be a day, and we should have revenge.” (200). As for the spark that ends up in the eruption of the event Eastman dubs “war” and Black Elk “butchering”, Black Elk’s version is that of his friend Dog Chief, “who was right there... when it all happened” (200). Accordingly, a man called Yellow Bird was standing guard outside Big Foot’s tepee, during the search for firearms. Yet, he would not let go of his gun, and while wrestling with the officer, the gun goes off and the officer is killed. The whites retaliate by killing Big Foot, who was lying sick. We read: “then suddenly nobody knew what was happening, except that the soldiers were all shooting and the wagon-guns began going off right among the people” (201).

The final chapter of Black Elk’s reminiscences is aptly named “The End of the Dream”, and it should be remarked that his narration ends with the ending of the hopes and lives of his people. Then, it is only the first twenty-seven years of Black Elk’s life that was spent in trying to restore balance and wholeness to his nation, which is worthy of record. Accordingly, Black Elk relates the few more days after the massacre and the collective efforts on the part of the Lakota for revenge, and no more. Black Elk insists that the first day of the massacre, he goes out into the field with no intention of killing, but only to save his people, and accordingly, armed only with the sacred bow, “... which was not made to shoot with” (203). However, his intention changes after the carnage. Black Elk speaks: “After what I had seen over there, I wanted revenge, I wanted to kill” (203).

Then, it can be inferred that the Lakota who would fight only to protect their kin and their land, are willing to kill for revenge in the wake of the massacre at the Wounded Knee. Consequently, even after the serious wound he receives, Black Elk declares: “... I wanted a chance to kill soldiers.” (205). We learn that he and others resume the warpath, Black Elk arguing: “We wanted a much bigger war-party so that we could meet the soldiers and get revenge” (206). However, Red Cloud makes peace with the whites since “women and children [were] starving and freezing” (207). The peace

comes at a time when Black Elk's party "...wanted to go out and fight anyway" (207). Therefore, Black Elk and the remaining few fighters go down to Pine Ridge. Black Elk's narration ends abruptly by the following words:

And so it was all over.

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 as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. 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 (207).

Black Elk's words "[a]nd so it was all over", aside from marking the end of the narration, is open to a multiplicity of readings. One cannot help but ask and keep asking what was it that was over? Life as the Oglala knew it? The chance of ever taking revenge? The distant possibility of freedom? The traditional/ nomadic way of life as the Oglala knew it? The communal ways of the Oglala? Or was it the resistance to the whites that was over? Then Black Elk finishes off the narration when any hopes of resistance are terminated. But what is clear is that the part of Black Elk's life, which merits being narrated is over. And his belief in the possibility of a better life for his people that will come with the great vision is over. The hoop is scattered, and the center no longer holds. Hope is ended, since the nation and the nation's hoop is irreparably broken. Thus the narration ends in the ending of a lifestyle, and a culture. And as Black Elk makes clear, the dream is ended. What are terminated are not only the people's actual lives but it is a people's dream that is no more. Then, the narration ends in a finalized sense of defeat, and loss irrecoverable, and we can speculate that Black Elk's communally oriented subjectivity dies in the bloody mud, alongside his people and the dream of their recovery of wholeness.

It can be argued that Black Elk's narration construes a holy man's spiritual journey through life, and exemplifies a subjectivity constructed through connection with not an "other" but with others. Black Elk feels he is not entitled to a selfhood other than

what the communal bonds dictate. He professes no interiority other than the express purpose to live and die for his people. Thus, Black Elk's subjectivity might be dubbed the ultimate Native American communal subjectivity, for whom separation between the "I" and "them" does not exist on any conceivable level. On the other hand, Black Elk's selfhood is clearly shaped by the visions he experiences, and it is possible to posit that the visions impart him identity, and make him who he is, a holy man whose life is committed to service to his community.

Like the Medieval mystic, Black Elk as the receiver of the vision has nothing innate to him that marks him as holy but by becoming the receiver of the vision, his subjectivity is formed. At the same time, the receiver of the vision becomes an empty vessel, through whom the word of God -or in this instance the Grandfathers- issues. Yet, Black Elk's is a selfhood shaped by a great responsibility, both to the forces above, and to the people. His selfhood derives from his great vision, and he is precariously placed between the supernatural forces/ the Grandfathers that grant him the vision, and the beneficiaries of the vision – his people. Thus Black Elk becomes an intermediary between the spiritual forces and the people, and his narration has this double focus; the visions and the people's plight. Hence, at the end of his narration, we see that Black Elk has lost both the voices of the Grandfathers and his people who are to form the sacred hoop again. The visions have come to naught and the people are crushed. As a result, figuratively, Black Elk is no more, since the forces that have shaped his subjectivity, the visions and the people are gone.

As mentioned above, Neihardt in planning the interview that was to become the text, wants Black Elk "...to tell the story of [his] life beginning at the beginning and going straight to Wounded Knee" after which apparently either Black Elk's story, or the Oglalas' for that matter loses interest for a white audience. This fact can be read as exemplifying clearly and exactly what the white world wants to hear/ read of in textuality. In romanticizing the no longer dreaded Indian, it is his demise that is interesting, since then the Indian can be reduced to an object of pity. Approached from this perspective, the text becomes the history of the vanquished, related by the

vanquished, an accompaniment to the abundance of histories written by the victors. In the process, the Indian is fixed in his defeat and despair, and depicted at both the figurative and the actual moment of his demise.

In his comprehensive work on Native American Studies, Arnold Krupat calls *Black Elk Speaks* “a history of his Lakota people” (70) and quotes Raymond DeMallie’s contention: “‘Although from a white man’s perspective this history is really myth –a series of non-chronological anecdotes full of mystical happenings- from the Lakotas’ perspective it is the only true history because it explains the moral framework within which Lakota culture developed and flourished’” (qtd. in *Red Matters* 70). However, it can be argued that the particular historical moment depicted by Black Elk is significant in terms of both Anglomean and Native American understandings of history, since for one it is the end of the resistance to hegemony, whereas for the other it marks the time of ultimate defeat. Thus, the import of the text for the white audience should result from the historical period depicted in the narrative, as the text constitutes a comprehensive eye-witness account of a number of historical events, no other than the last stand of the Sioux, the Custer fight, the Ghost Dance phenomenon, and finally the massacre of the Wounded Knee. It is the historical period when the resistance of the Sioux mounts, to be crushed definitely.

Moreover, the time period in question, ironically starts with success on the part of the Indians -in parallel to the prophesy of the great vision, and Black Elk’s hopes- but ends in disaster, although the vision foretells the restoration of the sacred hoop. It is the time when the Native resistance was definitely crushed, but not before the seminal events that mark the short-lived success of the tribes, such as the Fight with Three Stars (General Crook) in 1876, and the Rubbing Out of Long Hear (Custer). However, these brief periods of hope were to be followed by Sitting Bull’s retreat into Grandmother’s land, the selling of the Black Hills (1876), Crazy Horse’s surrender and imminent death, migration to Canada (Grandmother’s land), confinement in reservations, Buffalo Bill’s Western Show, and finally, the preachings of Wovoka, The Ghost Dance and the ensuing Massacre of the Wounded

Knee. In order to fully appreciate the impact of the Wounded Knee on the American Indian peoples, we can look at Momaday, who in *The Man Made of Words* argues that Wounded Knee marked the end of a culture (99).

Thus it can be argued that the text not only documents the spiritual death of an individual, but of a community, and marks the death of a culture. The narration spans the period between the faint hope of revival –military resistance, Black Elk’s vision and the Ghost Dance, all to be concluded in catastrophes– and in the end the hope is replaced by loss and destruction. Then the text, which is detailing the ultimate defeat and the accompanying hopelessness of a people, ironically becomes the seminal work of Native American collective consciousness, underlining the exact point of loss of the communality in question. Consequently, this is the story/ history of the vanquished – marking the final victory of the whites over the Natives, and perhaps the attempt on the part of the victors having the vanquished write his history of the defeat. It follows that the victor, not content with writing his history of victory, is having the vanquished write his history of defeat, which must be a psychologically crushing blow. Furthermore, it can be posited that this is an act of abject subjugation and subjection of the Native peoples, one that allows them a voice only and if they narrate the history of their ultimate defeat and demise, and thus fixes them historically in the moment of agonizing despair.

From a critical perspective, the constructed subjectivity of the narratorial voice although acknowledging the double-dealings and faults of the Wasichus, eventually blames his own self above all others. Throughout the text the foul play and the unprovoked violence of the Wasichus are dwelt upon, such as the repeated breaking of the treaties that should have remained in effect until the grass stopped growing and the rivers stopped flowing, their grabbing of the native land for the useless metal that makes them crazy, killing of women and children for inhabiting the land that belonged to them by right, and the killing of the bison, the livelihood of the tribes. However, Black Elk is ready to shoulder the blame alone, when he speaks:

Men and women and children I have cured of sickness with the power the vision gave me; but my nation I could not help. If a man or a woman or child dies, it does not matter long, for the nation lives on. It was the nation that was dying, and the vision was for the nation; but I have done nothing with it” (138).

Thus, in the text Black Elk admits to failure and defeat time and again, since according to Black Elk the fault is his and his alone. Also, as mentioned above the narration starts and ends with the desperate plight of the Oglala, and the text reflects an ultimate sense of the ending of a people. In his old age, Black Elk is crushed by despair on a number of levels: He has failed in realizing the vision and his failure has resulted in the failure of his entire people to survive and to flourish. Hence, Black Elk’s all-encompassing sense of failure is projected on both communal and personal levels, since the two are inseparable, and fundamentally intertwined. In view of Momaday’s argument that “The Indian has been compelled to make his way under an imposed identity of defeat” (*The Man* 59), then it can be argued that the text not only marks but fixes and eternalizes the ultimate moment of defeat for the Native American peoples. They are lost and decimated, but most importantly, they have lost the hope and the will to resist, and to survive.

Consequently, Black Elk blames himself for failing to put his vision in effect, and his imminent inability to heal the entire nation. In effect, his people are also suspect in that they have traded their own ways for those of the Wasichus, an act that has ultimately resulted in their dispersal. Black Elk speaks:

All our people now were settling down in square gray houses, scattered here and there across this hungry land, and around them the Wasichus had drawn a line to keep them in. The nation’s hoop was broken, and there was no center any longer for the flowering tree. The people were in despair (164).

In elaborating on why the Native peoples live in a circle, Black Elk further explicates the results of breaching the existing link between the people and nature’s dictates. When the bonds between the people and nature are no more, loss of balance and disaster are inevitable. We read:

You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. In the old days when we were a strong and happy people, all our came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living center of the hoop, and the circle of the four quarters nourished it (150).

Thus, as Black Elk aptly puts it, the disaster comes when and if the circle is broken. Yet, this consistent repetition of the failed nature of his role as the receiver of the sacred vision, and his inability to realize the wholeness his great prophecy envisions, might be an illustration of a sense of internalized white rhetoric of failure, and an ensuing internalization of the gaze of the colonizer. Or else, this constant recourse to personal and communal failure could be read as instances of the narration's mediation by Neihardt. It could further be suggested that Black Elk, now wise in the ways of the Wasichus was himself engaging in self-censure. However, what is clear is that as Momaday has suggested in *The Man Made of Words*, in the *Black Elk Speaks* we get a clear sense of the Indian who is self-imposing an identity of defeat, or an Indian subjectivity that is being imposed an identity of defeat by the white consciousness shaping the text.

Approached from this perspective, the *Black Elk Speaks* becomes the par-excellence representation of the epitomic white-inscribed Indianness. What is most significant about this representation is the fact that the Indian is not only represented by the white man, but he is fixed at the time of his ultimate defeat. He is depicted in despair, when his hopes of resistance –spiritual and armed- are once and for all crushed under the political and military hegemony of the whites. The demise of even the survivors is near, and in their old age, they are narrating their tales of loss, and a bygone past of not glory but balance and harmony, in return for money. They are cast in the role of the humbled vanquished, and made to pose at the camera that would capture and sell their images not of defiance, but submission. They are not only victimized but also artifactualized in this imposed identity of defeat.

Therefore, apart from the fact of mediation, or the indistinguishable merging of the voices that merit this take on the text, it is the historical moment that is depicted in the text which is suspect, one that accounts for a negative representation of Indianness. It is the ultimate defeat and hopelessness of the American Indian peoples the text historically focuses on, and although the narration of Black Elk is subsumed with communality, it revolves around an inalterable sense of lost hope and the ensuing vulnerability. It is nostalgic, it is defeatist, it is hopeless, and it is this feeling of loss that dominates the text, which might account for the white acceptance of the text as a seminal work of Native American Literature, one in which the American Indian is frozen and fixed in defeat, romantically represented by a pitying white for a white audience.

4.3. No Longer Questioning But Breaking the Construct: Words That Deconstruct

‘No longer should the Indian be dehumanized in order to make material for lurid and cheap fiction to embellish street-stands...’ (Standing Bear qtd in Lyons 466).

The dire necessity for action resounds Standing Bear’s words, who by the end of the nineteenth century argues against the dehumanization and artifactualization of the Native American for the express purpose of satisfying mainstream fantasies. Then, it can be asserted that the representation of the Native American has always been an act of dominance, and the only politically correct action on the part of the Native Americans today is to disrupt these false signs and signifiers, and one “postindian warrior” adamant in procuring change in the fields of both politics and representation is Gerald Vizenor. According to Vizenor, the solution to the ongoing dilemma of politically loaded false representations is by means of trickster stories -which he renames as tricky stories- that is by way of corrective humor. However the stakes are very high, since the false representations are historically determined and the white noise of the Post-modern world and the politics of hegemony are deterrents in the

way of corrective action. On the necessity for the Native Americans to write, and to claim a voice and presence, Vizenor writes:

You know, we must write tricky stories too, because the names have been so abused in translation and the course of dominance. The tragic rights of discovery continue to be heard in common names and native stories. The reader has entered into the wages of dominance in most stories about natives. Most, but not in our stories. How is a reader to hear our tricky stories over the crush of advertisements, the curse of envy, the abuse of cultural representations, the history of revolutions, and over the misconstrued missions of a constitutional democracy? (Vizenor, *Hotline Healers*, 7)

Vizenor's insistence on the necessity of writing tricky stories underscores a history of dominance, which had perpetually produced misappropriations, misrepresentations and misconceptions of Native American cultures. Vizenor thus draws attention to the fact that the commodification and artifactualization of the tribal cultures starts with the processes of naming, and defining the Other. In case of the Native Americans, the initial naming, which suggested that the people being named were the inhabitants of an entirely different continent, clearly missed its referent. Accordingly, Vizenor writes: "*indian* ... insinuates the obvious simulation and ruse of colonial dominance. Manifestly, the *indian* is an occidental misnomer, an overseas enactment that has no referent to real native cultures or communities" (*Manifest Manners* vii). Then, it may be argued that the signifier "*indian*" has lost none of its falsity, since even today it signifies a complex of stereotypical presences, constructed by the white world at large and still with no bearing material or physical upon the reality of the Native American peoples, who have survived the white hegemony, and now are adamant in claiming their rightful place in the cultural rubric of the United States.

Vizenor furthermore underlines the relationship between identity politics and the power of creativity, particularly in the Native American universe. Subjectivities are created in words, just like the rest of the living and non-living things in the Native American episteme and presences are perpetuated again by way of stories. And Native American traditions and stories not only embrace creativity, but as Vizenor

points out, the stories are the ultimate means of identity construction and at that the stories become agents of survival/ survivance. We read:

Personal and historical names are the sources and manner of distinctive identities. Native traditions are created and endure in stories. Nature is a union, not a separation, and personal identities are visionary. Fiction, dreams, imitations, and the politics of names are at once partitioned and not separable. The name “Indian,” for instance, is a simulation with no actual reference. The American Indian, likewise, is the tricky trace of an absence. Natives are a presence, and the stories that arise in singular native languages are an absolute reference in time, place, and memory. Names are both burdens and literary sovereignty (Vizenor, *Word Arrows*, x-xi).

Vizenor then, like Momaday emphasizes the import of names in identity formation, and calls personal identities visionary – not illusory, utopian, unreal- but fluid, fully performative and open to revision and reconstruction. This kind of identity formation is in line with both the syncretic tradition in Indian lore, and the Post-modern theories of identity. On the other hand, historically “*indian*” has become an empty signifier; a simulation with no referent, and consequently, the American Indian is represented by his/her absence in the mainstream tradition. However, Natives who have survived domination and cultural decimation are now determined in proclaiming their presence, and through deconstruction, firstly names, and then presences should be re-claimed since such acts would subvert dominance and signify sovereignty.

Therefore, Vizenor’s words mark the necessity for self-definition, and self-representation, since through the corrective acts of re-naming and re-representing, the false representations and simulations will be disrupted and thus Native Americans will gain sovereignty over their representations and selfhoods. Hence, the domination and hegemony of the white world can be subverted only when the Native Americans craft their own representations, because only then the burden of simulated names, traces of absences and artifactualized presences will be lifted off the shoulders of the Native American. Vizenor argues that the sole path to disrupting these absolutely fake representations, and the way to self-representation is the trickster stories, which he names tricky stories. Thus for Vizenor, the ultimate

deconstruction of the simulated Indianness can be achieved through subversion made possible with another traditional Native American literary device, the trickster discourse.

On the import and function of the trickster, Louis Owens posits; "...the traditional trickster ... embodies contradictions, challenges authority, mocks and tricks us into self-knowledge" (*Other Destinies* 110). Kathleen Danker on the other hand, writing on Felix White Sr.'s interpretations of the Winnebago trickster tales, posits that for the traditional storyteller, the main value of the stories would lie in "...their humor, their moral and intellectual instruction, and their religious context" (507). Danker further elaborates on White's take on the Wakjankaga trickster tales by the following words:

... [Trickster] stories teach moral lessons about the proper behavior of individuals in society. These lessons are taught primarily through the negative example of the stories' main character, and their value lies not only in what listeners learn, but how they learn it. In the process of figuring out the significance of stories, listeners learn how to solve problems and reach conclusions through conscious thought. This is one reason traditional storytellers would not usually explain the deeper meanings of stories to children or to adults. It was only through working out the meanings of stories themselves, individually and in peer-group discussions, that listeners would learn how to think and to control their behavior (522).

Thus, through humor, it is the didactic function of the story that will be revealed. The narrator will not elaborate on the significance of the stories, but it is the audience who should through contemplation understands the meaning hidden in them, and learns to adapt their own behavior accordingly. Therefore, the function of the stories is to initiate a process of questioning, through which the individuals should derive the moral of the story, and affect change in themselves, and their actions. Hence, the trickster discourse brings about change not only in the realm of representation, but also it functions to help the listeners/ readers unlearn and relearn, and in this way initiate transformation within the community.

In like vein, Owens argues that Vizenor's trickster discourse embraces "an intense didacticism and insistence upon certain immutable values", a fact which encompasses the aim of the trickster discourse fully (*Other Destinies* 20). One imminent aspect of Native American literary practices is its concern with identity politics, and the traditional trickster stories not only bring about change, but are crucial in terms of identity construction as well. Since to quote Danker trickster stories "...revolve around always remembering who one is, one's powers, and one's responsibilities" (524). Also, as Owens comments, "... the traditional trickster's role is not only to upset and challenge us but also to remind us –obversely- of who we are and where we belong..." (*Other Destinies* 196). Similarly, to quote Owens again; "[i]t is trickster's role to challenge identities, to trick and probe and question, and above all, shatter stasis and stagnation" (144). Finally it is Owens' contention that the definition Bakhtin provides for the function of humor perfectly overlaps with that of the trickster discourse, and as a result; "[t]he liberation of language and consciousness is Vizenor/ trickster's aim, particularly the liberation of the signifier "Indian" from the entropic myth surrounding it" (226).

Then it can be argued that Vizenor's focus is communal in that his work and theories are deeply suffused with concerns about the endurance, survival, and finally the survivance of the Native peoples. Vizenor defines survivance as "... an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name" (*Manifest Manners* vii). Thus identities can be continuously created and re-created and the false representations disrupted and contested by the humor and creativity imminent to tricky stories. Then it follows that Vizenor is enraged by the assuming of identities built on a sense of victimhood, which he names victimry. Victimry not only perpetuates the domination and hegemony of the colonized through inner colonization, but the identity of the victim also becomes compromised, since the subjectivity of the victim is a fixed and static construct, and at that an artificial pose, again with no bearing on the "real"(ities). Therefore, the solution lays in creativity, because only through the creative force of words, survival/ survivance and sovereignty will prevail.

Accordingly, in *Wordarrows* Vizenor relates the story of a couple he had met some 40 years ago, whom he had come across while working at the American Indian Employment Center in Minneapolis. Both were drunk and disheveled, and Vizenor describes one by the following words: “The man blamed racialism and the dominant culture for his problems, and that included alcoholism, the moment, motive and mark of poverty. Adversely, he seemed to be secure in the tragic summons of victimry” (xi). The man appeared to be snug in the role of the victim, and to him Vizenor retorts: ““You need white people, more than they need you now to blame for your problems, your personal problems”” (xi). Surprisingly enough, it is the woman accompanying the man who answers, and does so by singing a native song. Vizenor argues: “That song was a survivance story. She had, by her visionary presence, turned the burdens of racialism and poverty into a moment of literary sovereignty” (xii). Thus, Vizenor’s story clearly elucidates the strength of creativity in the face of adversity, and the necessity to refuse and refute the role of the victim assigned by the mainstream society, since as Vizenor puts it; “Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (*Manifest Manners* vii).

In the previous chapters of this dissertation, some of the most recurrent stereotypical Indians such as the howling savage, helpful sidekick, and dying Indian have been covered in detail, and one take on Sherman Alexie and Gerald Vizenor’s work is that their texts intentionally play with more recent stereotypes of Native Americans, bringing them to the fore, only to subvert these false representations. Consequently, what Alexie exemplifies, and what Vizenor theorizes and illustrates textually is the deconstruction of the stereotypical Indians that are still current in contemporary literature, as well as films and various media. Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is a prime example of such deconstruction, which is also open to a reading in the light of Vizenor’s theories and his trickster discourse. Furthermore, in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by means of the depiction of extremes, the two dimensional nature of the stereotypes are clearly underlined, and Alexie through the re-employment and emplotment of the stereotypes with

subversive intent underscores the fixity of the constructs and thus contests their validity.

However, Alexie's representation of the Native Americans receive much criticism from other Native American writers and critics, who claim the stereotypes he forefronts in his fiction, like the "drunken Indian" panders to the white racist assumptions already strong in the mainstream media. Moreover as discussed briefly in the previous chapter, Louis Owens and Gloria Bird among others criticize Alexie's work for not opting for communality, and presenting no positive representations of Native Americans. In this respect, Alexie ironically becomes a figure of controversy in his attempts to disrupt the stereotypical mainstream representations, and the communal motive behind his work of deconstruction is commonly misread and misunderstood.

However, other critics think differently. For instance Joseph Coulombe comments on Alexie's work by the following words: "Always writing with a keen historical awareness, Alexie transforms ... traditions... to fit a new world reality. He states plainly that his fiction does not seek to resurrect a bygone heritage, but instead focuses on the truth that he sees in the present" (102). In discussing Alexie's usage of stereotypes, John Newton on the other hand suggests that the term autoethnography, Mary Louise Pratt's coinage, could be useful:

'If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations, ... [through which the] colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms' (qtd in Newton 416).

Then, according to Newton, Alexie forefronts stereotypes to counter racist assumptions, and consequently he is reclaiming "the Native American's own alienated image – the Indian viewed by the white Other" (Newton 427). Alexie is admittedly political in his writing and moreover fully aware of the ongoing colonization and exploitation of the American Indian communities and thus posits:

“‘I’m a colonized man.... The United States is a colony, and I’m always going to write like one who is colonized’” (Alexie qtd in Newton 414).

Since in the Native American cultures, the tribe or community to whom the self belongs to is fundamental in subject formation, although Alexie isn’t a traditionalist, he is concerned with the plight of the Native American community nonetheless, and this has its reflection in Alexie’s fiction. Situated between the Western episteme and the communal impulse, Alexie’s texts reveal a slippage between Post-modern techniques and the traditionally informed trickster concerns. According to Coulombe in Alexie’s works, we come to recognize “... complex individuals trying to cope with a racist society” (98). Consequently, what Alexie portrays in his fiction is not the solitary individuals or their interiorities, since in narrating the experiences of the individuals a larger picture of the communal emerges. In like vein, in the Juliette Torrez interview Alexie reflects on his communal vision by the following words:

‘I think most artists, whatever their color, practice the Western civilization idea of the artist: that the individual is responsible to his or her personal vision. Certainly, yeah. But you have to be a member of a tribe. You have to be a member of a family. You have to be responsible and held accountable’ (qtd in Torrez 3).

Hence, Alexie’s is another outcry against victimization, and consequently, it is up to the victimized to take the measures necessary to break the vicious circle. The method Alexie’s protagonist Junior takes up in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is action and creativity inherent in art, a path the author himself had also trod. Alexie is well aware of the fact that this is indeed a challenge, and his protagonist is pressured by both communities into an interstitial existence. Yet the protagonist Junior does not give up, but instead takes up the challenge literally and figuratively although he is extremely afraid and agitated. Thus the protagonist Junior fights on both fronts, counters the challenges posed by both communities, and evidently in the end succeeds, since he carves himself a niche in both societies, and survives. In Alexie’s work and world, survival means success by itself, since success undercuts

the counterfeited and simulated image of the defeated members of a defunct community, and contests the validity of the construct.

Therefore, it can be argued that Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is a text, which fully engages with Native American stereotypes and deconstructs them. In this work, the utilization of the Post-modern tools of cartoons and pulp fiction function to subvert and parody the stereotype further. Consequently, the text of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is enriched with art by Ellen Forney, and each chapter contains a number of cartoons that illustrate the most vivid images from the narrative that enrich the texture of the novel, as well as shocking the readers into empathy and understanding.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian relates the significant -and not that significant- events from the point of view of a young Indian living in the Spokane Indian reservation. It might be argued that it is a thinly veiled autobiographical work, since we know from the Juliette Torrez interview that Alexie was abused in the reservation school, picked on and beaten up, and was considered a geek, whereas in the Euro-American high school he later attended, he was a jock, a basketball star, an academically successful teen, and all these real-life experiences of the author have their counterpart in the life of the "fictional" protagonist Junior/ Arnold. In this respect, the text exhibits what Brian McHale would call "[a]n element of *roman-a-clef* or lightly camouflaged autobiography [that] characterizes much Modernist writing – Proust, D.H. Lawrence, Joyce's *A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man*, and *Ulysses*" (McHale 206). To quote McHale further:

There is, however, a form of autobiographical fiction which preserves much of the ontological force of transworld identity but *without* reproducing real-world proper names – namely *roman-a-clef*. Here, proper names have been suppressed or "changed to protect the innocent" (actually, of course, to protect the guilty, that is, the potentially libelous author) (206).

Yet, as McHale also remarks, this Modernist literary convention, that is "the ontological potential of *roman-a-clef*" (206) is frequently exploited by Post-

modernist authors. Likewise Alexie, thinly veiling his own subjectivity and autobiographical intentions, and by insisting on the absolute truth-value of diary become novel, subverts and blurs the distinctions between novel and autobiography further. Also, instead of the serious tone one is expected to find in autobiographical works; the sincerity, the baring of the soul, and the confession, Alexie gives this work a very Post-modern twist with the sardonic attitude, sarcastic tone, and black humor, all incompatible with the revealing of the secret recesses of the soul as one would expect in self-writing, but all in line with the traditional trickster discourse.

Yet this portrait of the American Indian artist as a young man is weighed down by the white inscribed definitions of Indianness. The first person narrator, whose reservation name is Junior, and white school name Arnold, is a kid who is picked on because of his physical appearance, who also happens to have had a serious brain surgery at a very early age, and consequently whose survival is no short of a miracle. Through the mundane events of his life we have an insight to the challenges met by a teenager, whose life is marked by poverty and inattentive/ incompetent parents. Junior/ Arnold is intelligent, and a kid with a dream, pouring his creative energy into the drawing of cartoons. In the novel, the time period covered is his freshman year at a white high school. Yet, the white school he attends and causes much consternation in the Indian community is called “Reardan”, a name that humorously suggests that it is only at the very rear end of the wide white world.

In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* Alexie uses the potential inherent to Post-modernist techniques to disrupt the expectations of the reader, and to underscore the redundancy of fixed categories. Playing with the fact that in Post-modern literature, all genres of writing are equidistant from claims at ontology, and have hence come to occupy the same ontological plane, Alexie names his text in such a way that the name of the text itself, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* comes to deserve attention. Since in Post-modern literature fiction and life-writing is equated, yet it is possible to posit that autobiographical writing is the utmost act of creativity, because it is not only a text that is in creation, but it is the

subjectivity of the writing self that is in the process of construction. However, the truth claim which used to be the main marker of self-writing no longer holds because the knowing self that narrates/ re-narrates has itself become a fiction. The self is no longer a knowable or fixed entity, and the result is the plethora of selves to choose from.

However, the name of Sherman Alexie's text clearly puts emphasis on the truth-value that used to be perceived as intrinsic to life-writing, and thus the title inevitably forces the reader to question the validity of the statement it makes. The adjective "true" and the adverb "absolutely", by way of a double emphasis make us doubt the truth-value, if we had assigned the sub-genre of diary any truth-value at all. Consequently the name of the text evidently subverts the truth claim it upholds, since as readers, we no longer believe in the possibility of the sub-genre of diary to give us the truth, absolute or any truth at all, but rather many partial un-truths to choose from. Then the true effect of the name of the text functions to efface the fictional quality of the text, which purports to be a diary, and marks it as an absolute fake. Thus, Alexie plays with the idea of the conventional truth-claim, fore fronting it, only to subvert it.

The fact of part-time Indianness is another statement that appears problematic. The title brings to mind the possibility of part-time identities, which would have been impossible in the Modernist sense, unless they were fractured subjectivities. Yet the Post-modern self can pick up or discard identities at will, since coherence of a fixed identity is just another myth, and thus the possibility of a part-time identity becomes more than a possibility. Furthermore, if this assumed identity is providing the persona with the flexibility of fitting in with the expectations of more than one society, then it might be the best identity option, not a binary opposition of either-or, but both, sometimes one, sometimes the other. Thus in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, on the issues of alienation, belonging, and the difficulty of identity configuration the narratorial voice posits:

Traveling between Reardan and Wellpinit, between the little white town and the reservation, I always felt like a stranger.
It was half Indian in one place and half white in the other.
It was like being Indian was my job, but it was only a part-time job. And it didn't pay well at all (118).

The protagonist in the text, which Alexie insistently names a novel, is made to inhabit an interstitial space, trying to exist on the fringes of a white world to which he does not belong. Because of this life choice, he is perceived and even persecuted as a liminal character by the Indian society. This requires on the part of the protagonist flexibility, adaptation, and the ability to flicker in and out of identities, neither of which are fully formed/ formulated. Yet, it should also be remembered that the trickster frequently performs and assumes various identities. The trickster is marked by his fluidity of subjectivities to the extent that he frequently engages in shape shifting, not only changing his identity configuration, but also his physical shape. Furthermore the trickster from time to time transforms into a completely different being, switches gender, or becomes one of the four-leggeds. Then it can be argued that the constantly flexibility and adaptation required by the narrator of the novel is in line with the traditional trickster, in that he is always in transition and translation. Moreover, the narrator in his attempts to strand two societies eventually brings about a change in both communities, the white and the Indian. Thus, the protagonist of the novel exhibits another quality imminent to the trickster, which is not only to resist staticity, and disrupt any fixed and normative construct, but also to actively transform the self, and affect change in the community.

Junior's decision to study at a white school means that he moves away from his own community, and the reservation. This move indeed does not only entitle the establishment of a purely physical distance, because he is perceived by his peers to be moving away mentally and spiritually from the Indian world. Yet, his decision is prompted by the bidding of a white teacher whom he physically challenges, a teacher whose consciousness is suffering from the unfair treatment of the Indian by the white society, to which he had been a party in his youth. Echoing Pratt's words, the teacher confesses to having tried to kill the Indian to save the man. We read:

“...When I first started teaching here, that’s what we did to the rowdy ones, you know? We beat them. That’s how we were taught to teach you. We were supposed to kill the Indian to save the child”.

“You *killed* Indians?”

“No, no, it’s just a saying. I didn’t literally kill Indians. We were supposed to make you give up being Indian. Your songs and stories and language and dancing. Everything. We weren’t trying to kill Indian people. We were trying to kill Indian culture” (35).

According to Mr. P the white teacher, the result of the cultural genocide was the defeat of both parties the Native and the white alike on the reservation. Yet, in Mr. P’s words, what separated the narrator from all the others was his refusal to give up. We read: ““If you stay on this rez,” Mr. P said, “they’re going to kill you. I’m going to kill you. We’re all going to kill you. You can’t fight us forever”” (43). Thus the teacher bids the narrator to leave for a place where he can find hope. Mr. P speaks: ““And now, you have to take your hope and go somewhere where other people have hope”” (43). Consequently, for the protagonist leaving the reservation is the only way to survive, the sole path for survivance.

One step further in stereotyping is the static preconceived notions of Indianness, the fixed stereotypical qualities attributed to Indians as markers and exhibitions of the essence of Indianness. Such definitions of Indianness the dominant society perceives to be the “real” are a great help in making summary statements, categorizing the peoples, and perpetuating white dominance. However, as Vizenor elaborates, and Alexie explicates, their currency is such that the Natives as well as the whites fall prey to these unreal mannerisms. Vizenor calls them as Manifest Manners, and these Alexie deconstructs in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, himself becoming a postindian warrior that detracts from Manifest Manners in his writing. In Vizenor’s words:

Manifest manners are the simulations of dominance; the notions and misnomers that are read as the authentic and sustained as representations of Native American Indians. The postindian warriors are new indications of a narrative recreation, the simulations that overcome the manifest manners of dominance (*Manifest Manners* 5-6)

Thus the pervasiveness of the stereotyping of the Indian exhibits itself in numerous instances, and very vividly in this text. To start with, the name calling at the white school Reardan is illustrated in the form of a cartoon. We see that the protagonist is small, scared, trembling, surrounded by gigantic white indefinite shapes, who are calling out the words “chief”, “sitting bull”, “tonto”, “red-skin”, “chief”, “chief”, “squaw boy”, and “chief” again (*The Absolutely True* 63), collectively calling out the misnomers the protagonist needs to operate against. We also learn that Junior is the only other Indian at the white school, save the school mascot, the unreal, the simulated Indian, the true artifact. The school mascot Indian is also depicted in a cartoon. His face is frozen in a menacing grimace, his hooked huge nose almost touching the big open mouth. The mascot further possesses the definitive markers of Indianness, the war paint and the feathers. The commentary on the cartoon reads “bright red” and “Reardan’s inspiring mascot” (56). The school mascot provides us with a clear picture of the Indian as perceived and represented by the white society, a very vivid insight to the Indian other as visualized and constructed by the mainstream society.

The narrator further voices the contention that the Native is actually feared, since the stereotypical Indian embedded in the white psyche is savage, mean and deadly. The result is that at the white school Junior is constantly stared at, because “a reservation Indian, and no matter how geeky and weak... was still a potential killer” from the point of view of the white world (63). Thus, after Junior punches a racist bully who had provoked him in the first place by the words “... Indians are living proof that niggers fuck buffalo” (64), the bully’s gang would stare at the narrator “like [he] was a serial killer” (65). This speaks of the fact that the perception of the Indian by the white community is still that of not only the Other, but of the deadly enemy, the epitomic wild and hostile savage.

On his first day at Reardan the narrator arrives early and while he is waiting for the school door to open, “feeling worthless and stupid”, he considers if he should drop out of school completely and “go live in the woods like a hermit. Like a real Indian”

(58). This speaks of the expectations of the public from the Native that it would be okay, even romantic if he were to achieve nothing, and then shun the society in favor of disappearing from the face of the earth. Such an act would befit the constructed image of the Indian and by absenting himself from the world at large the Native would then fulfill the expectations of the whites from him. By disappearing, the Indian would become physically absent, and hence pander to the image of the embodiment of defeat and non-existence itself.

Yet the same decision to try and interact with the whites by attending Reardan is perceived as “brave” and “warrior”-like, especially by the elderly folk on the reservation. On the first day of school, when his father drives him thither and says: “[y]ou’re so brave. You’re a warrior”, the narrator argues “[i]t was the best thing he could have said” (55). Thus, we may add the role of the warrior to the list of the whole set of preconceived notions of Indianness the narrator has to operate within, the result of one more manifest mannerism. It can be argued that these constructs of Indianness are weighing the narrator down, crippling him. However, it is also possible to posit that these fixed markers of subjectivity eventually end up strengthening him since Junior disrupts these categories. The ultimate subversion comes in the form of his creativity, which becomes his survival/ survivance, the key to resistance, and eventually personal success.

In the attempts of the protagonist towards survivance, first he must face and master the necessary art of mediation between the two cultures, the white and Indian. The decision of attending the white school confirms his status of the outsider in both societies, and consequently, he is at first victimized by both. Junior was initially targeted in the reservation because of his physical weakness and difference, however at Reardan he is discriminated against by the whites because of the constructed signifier Indian. His decision to mingle with the whites on the other hand gets mixed reactions from his own community. While he is dubbed brave by grandmothers, his peers call him a white-lover. Thus, the physical distance that is being established between Junior and the reservation marks him as a sell-out, and a red apple by his

own community, complicating things further. Now he is not only bullied, but also spit at by his peers in the reservation.

A conversation the narrator has with the new friend he makes in the white school, the genius Gordy, revolves around his ex-best friend from the reservation, Rowdy, who was shunning him ever since he has left the reservation school. In trying to explain the conflicting attitudes involved, Junior/ Arnold explains: “... some Indians think you have to act white to make your life better. Some Indians think you *become* white if you try to make your life better, if you become successful” (emphasis in original) (131). Then the narrator tells Gordy the meaning of an apple. We read: “They call me an apple because they think I’m red on the outside and white on the inside” (132). To which Gordy replies “Ah, so they think you’re a traitor” (132).

In explicating the interstitiality experienced by the narrator Junior, basketball provides the perfect metaphor. Basketball field becomes the battlefield in his fight for acceptance by the white world, while the Indians perceive him as joining the other team, because as the member of the white basketball team, he will have to play against the Indian team. On the extent of the difficulty he feels, Junior posits: “...I felt like one of those Indian scouts who led the U.S. Cavalry against other Indians” (182). When he is chosen to the basketball team of Reardan, as fate would have it, his first match will be against his former school, Wellpinit High, and the reaction of the Indian community gets truly harsh as he physically faces them as a member of the opposing white team. When approaching the gym, Junior/ Arnold hears the chanting:

The rez basketball fans were chanting, “Ar-nold sucks! Ar-nold sucks! Ar-nold sucks!”
They weren’t calling me by my rez name, Junior. Nope, they were calling me by my Reardan name (143).

And the moment he steps onto the basketball court, something unexpected happens:

My fellow tribal members saw me and they all stopped cheering, talking, and moving.
I think they stopped breathing.
And, then, as one, they all turned their backs on me.
It was a fricking awesome display of contempt (143-144).

Being hit on the forehead by a coin, accompanied with three stitches, follows his initial greeting of silent contempt by his tribe. Later on the court, his former best friend Rowdy knocks him unconscious. Yet, the anger that surfaces in such distressing episodes is undercut by Alexie's pervasive humor when Junior argues:

If these dang Indians had been this organized when I went to school here, maybe I would have more reasons to stay.
That thought made me laugh.
So I laughed (143).

Thus, humor allows the narrator to survive the physical and psychological pain of rejection by his own community. Trickster discourse and the using of humor are survival strategies, since humor is also corrective in that it provides the much needed relief in a world made difficult not only by cultural decimation, but by ongoing dominance brought about by white hegemony. Particularly in Junior's case, he tries to deal with his ousting from the Indian community through humor, too.

On the strength the narrator derives from laughter, we may look at the episode in which Junior loses his grandmother, the one person whom he admires most, and who was always supportive of him. According to the narrator, his grandmother's "greatest gift was tolerance" (155), and it is not the fact of her death, but its circumstances that enrages the narrator. We read:

Grandparents are supposed to die first, but they are supposed to die of old age. They are supposed to die of a heart attack, or a stroke, or of cancer, or of Alzheimer's.
THEY ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO GET RUN OVER AND KILLED BY A DRUNK DRIVER! (capitalization in the original) (158).

Yet, such pain is to be dealt with again with laughter. During his grandmother's wake, a white billionaire who is professedly an Indian lover appears. This white

billionaire, whose protestations of love and solidarity inadvertently promote the artifactualization of the Indian, yet provides the much-required humorous incident during the wake. Billionaire Ted who has and still does spend a fortune on “Indian artifacts” shows up, with a stolen powwow dress he had purchased. Ted had hired an anthropologist to determine the history of the dress, and the anthropologist after much field research had come up with the scientific conclusion that the dress belonged to the Spokanes. The said anthropologist we learn had “visited [their] reservation undercover and learned that this stolen outfit once belonged to a woman named Grandmother Spirit” (164).

Thus Ted returns the dress to the narrator’s mother with apologies, as the dress of her recently deceased mother, Grandmother Spirit. Yet the narrator’s mother admits to the fact that Grandmother Spirit never danced at powwows and consequently could not have owned a dance outfit, adding that the beadwork did not resemble Spokane anyway. We read: ““It looks more Sioux to me,” my mother said. “Maybe Oglala. Maybe. I’m not an expert. Your anthropologist wasn’t much of an expert, either. He got this way wrong”” (emphasis in original) (165). While Billionaire Ted leaves humiliated in what was supposed to be a grand gesture, Junior’s mother starts laughing, to be accompanied by the two thousand Indians attending the wake:

We kept laughing.
It was the most glorious noise I’d ever heard.
And I realized that, sure, Indians were drunk, and sad, and displaced and crazy and mean, but, dang, we knew how to laugh.
When it comes to death, we know that laughter and tears are pretty much the same thing.
And so, laughing and crying, we said good-bye to my grandmother. And when we said good-bye to one grandmother, we said good-bye to all of them.
Each funeral was a funeral for all of us.
We lived and died together (166).

In like vein, on the import and function of laughter in Indian society, Alexie in *Indian Killer* writes that the alienated protagonist John watches a basketball game, and is intrigued by the constant joking and laughing that was going on amongst the Indian audience. The narrator intercepts, arguing what John did not realize was that

“...their laughter was a ceremony used to drive away personal and collective demons” (21).

Thus in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* we have solidarity coming with death, in the form of humor, and laughter. In the face of death, the petty differences are left aside, and replaced by solidarity and communality in pain. Consequently, the solidarity of the Indian community makes itself explicit after Junior’s grandmother’s death. Although Junior “was still the kid who had betrayed the tribe.... they all waved the white flag” (159) and allow him to grieve in peace. The narrator explains that he was not suddenly popular or anything, but he “wasn’t a villain anymore”, since the people who had ignored him, called him names, or pushed him had stopped (180). Then, it can be argued that in the reservation, when the going gets really rough, the communal spirit is awakened, and the people would look out for each other, putting differences aside.

Shortly afterwards, the narrator’s life spins out of focus by another alcohol related death. His father’s best friend, Eugene “...was shot and killed by one of his good friends, Bobby, who was too drunk to even remember pulling the trigger” (169). In the aftermath of the murder, Bobby hangs himself in the jail. Reactions of the family members vary. While Junior’s father goes on a “legendary drinking binge”, his mother goes to the church every day (171). Grief stricken, Junior blames himself:

... I thought about dropping out of Reardan.
I thought about going back to Wellpinit.
I blamed myself for all of the deaths.
I had cursed my family. I had left the tribe, and had broken something inside all of us, and I was now being punished for that (173).

Yet, for the protagonist the answer comes in the form of creativity as he “...drew and drew and drew and drew cartoons” (171) during this desperate episode of his life. Creativity becomes not only his means of survival, but also helps him in dealing with his grief. We read: “I kept drawing cartoons of the things that made me angry. I keep writing and rewriting, drawing and redrawing, and rethinking and revising and

reediting. It became my grieving ceremony” (178). In like vein Vizenor elaborates on the nature of the relationship between creativity and survivance in the following words:

Natives are created in words, their sacred names are derived in nature, and their presence is forever related in stories. Natives create the earth, animals, birds, tricksters, shadows and seasons in their personal visions, memories, names and stories. Clearly, native traditions arise as a creative practice and are sustained by a crucial sense of presence and survivance in stories (Vizenor, *Word Arrows*, vii).

Then, according to Vizenor presence is equated to creativity, and the result is survivance. Thus, if creativity is one solution to the pain and path for survival, laughter is the main tool to deal with the pain of death and survive the losses. Laughter is at the heart of the strategy of parody, and Alexie’s protagonist resorts to laughter when he cannot cope with the realities of life. Hence, through humor Junior survives one tragedy after the other, while laughter is equated to survival.

The third tragedy in the text comes in the form of the death of her elder sister, and at that the third drunken death. On a snowy day, Junior receives the news at school, and is almost paralyzed by fear, knowing that his father must be driving drunk on the icy roads, coming to pick him up. In full expectation of the fourth drunken death –this time of his father-, when Junior sees his father safe and sound, he falls into a fit of unstoppable laughter. We read:

And just when I thought I’d start screaming, and run around like a crazy man, my father drove up.
I started laughing. I was so relieved, so happy, that I LAUGHED. And I couldn’t stop laughing.
I ran down the hill, jumped into the car, and hugged my dad. I laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed.
“Junior,” he said. “What’s wrong with you?”
“You’re alive!” I shouted. “You’re alive!”
“But your sister -,” he said.
“I know, I know,” I said. “She’s dead. But you’re alive. You’re still alive.”
I laughed and laughed. I couldn’t stop laughing. I felt like I might die of laughing (204).

Then the unstoppable laughter that takes over Junior after her sister's death is a reaction to both the explicit pain at her demise, and also the imminent relief at his father's survival. Thus aided by laughter Junior survives yet another impossible situation.

Going back to the term survivance, Vizenor's coinage, which according to Rebecca Tillet "...describes contemporary Indian existence as a complex combination of both survival and endurance/ resistance" (122), we can ask if Alexie's protagonist aims at or achieves survivance. On the one hand, although the biting and wry humor, the constant employment of irony and parody, and the satirical treatment of the subject matter are traits that stand out most in Alexie's fiction, yet on closer analysis we infer that the wit and humor that appear on the surface of the text is informed by anger. In the story entitled *Imagining the Reservation* in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, Alexie formulates his take on the relationship between survival, anger and imagination in the following manner: "Survival = Anger x Imagination" (150). Consequently, when asked by Ase Nygren in an interview if his formulation of survival has any affinities with Vizenor's "survivance", Alexie replies: "Survival is a low hope. I don't want just survival, or 'survivance'. I want triumph!" (6).

Therefore, whereas for Alexie survival = anger x imagination, for Vizenor the formula reads somewhat different but yet similar, since for Vizenor survivance = creativity + humor. Thus, for both authors, the contemporary Native American existence builds upon resisting and surviving the hardships through creativity inherent in literature, and in the process both are informed by the humor and laughter imminent to Native American cultures. Yet for Alexie, anger not only surfaces in his work, but also is acknowledged by him as one founding block of his path to success.

Then in the case of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, it can be argued that the protagonist Junior not only survives his first year at the white school, but is also able to patch things up with his own community eventually. At the white Reardan, he gets acceptance from his peers, gaining success as both a basketball

player and a student. Moreover, he becomes a member of the in-group, starts dating the pretty white girl of his dreams, and has a genius as his best friend. Back at the reservation, his peers come to accept him as who he is, and most importantly for him, he re-forges his relationship with his former best friend, Rowdy, whose shunning and abuse had hurt him to the core.

Then, in terms of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, hope that is represented by the white world brings first interstitiality, but then success in both societies. Therefore, the text depicts not a victimization but a success story, and in this respect it is in line with Vizenor's contention that it is possible to survive through creativity. Consequently, the survivance of the protagonist in the novel is enabled by personal success, which is achieved by creativity. As Vizenor argues, "[t]he postindian ousts the inventions with humor, new stories, and the simulations of survivance" (*Manifest Manners* 5). In this respect, both his protagonist Junior and Alexie do become "postindian warriors", creating stories full of humor that disrupt the static construct of manifest manners with the result of survival through creativity.

Therefore, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is not only about survival, but the narrator's is a story of survivance and success. Accordingly, Junior never falls prey to despair, or melancholy or nostalgia, nor allows himself be victimized by either society. Neither does Junior give in to inner colonization, accepting and assuming the artificial pose of the victim. The hardships and pain he maneuvers by way of drawing cartoons and laughter. Then this positive outcome can be attributed to creativity, humor, adaptation, and flexibility, all of which are the qualities of the traditional trickster. Hence the narrator Junior disrupts the manifest manners plaguing both the white and the Indian worlds, breaking the constructed notions of Indianness current in both communities, and never lets himself be confined by artificial categories in his path towards success and survivance, which he achieves through humor and creativity. As Vizenor puts it; "The shimmers of imagination are reason and the simulations are survivance, not dominance; an

aesthetic restoration of trickster hermeneutics, the stories of liberation and survivance without the dominance of closure” (*Manifest Manners* 14).

CONCLUSION

‘The process of literary annihilation would be checked only when Indian writers began representing their own culture’ (Ziff qtd in Vizenor, *Manifest Manners* 8).

Native American authors have taken up the call for action especially in the second half of the twentieth century, and the (self-)representations of the indigenous subjectivities by American Indian authors is a project of liberation that aims at having imminent results firstly within the literary and then the political spheres. These acts of literary endeavor would not only entail healing through identity reclamation, but also constitute a big step towards the attainment of political sovereignty. Then, literary texts by Native American authors are acts of proclamation, whereby the authors are “sending out a voice”, that is through textualities, the authors are claiming the presence of Native American communities and communalities in contemporary United States, a fact which tends to get commonly ignored or omitted.

One very clear illustration of the continued ousting of American Indian peoples, and thus the necessity for action exhibits itself in the context of Post-colonial studies. The fact remains that Native American literature is still commonly excluded from the critical work on Post-colonial literatures, albeit Post-colonial criticism embraces the literatures of white settler colonies, which are still members of the Commonwealth. However, this exclusion of the tribal peoples from the ranks of the post-colonial nations, the oppressed, or those fighting for the attainment of their sovereignty, is not the result of an acknowledgement that the colonization of the indigenous peoples is ongoing in the United States, and consequently there is no “post-” to the colonial situation. Nor does this ousting underline the fact that colonization is the everyday reality for the Native American peoples in contemporary America.

Nevertheless, this omission of Native American literature(s) speaks volumes on the visibility and presence of Native Americans in the global literary scene. Then in the

era of information technologies, notwithstanding the unrestrained flow of information at an unprecedented pace, the Native American is still marked by his/her invisibility, not only in the mainstream but also in the academia. Such an absence is the proof that the dominant ideology continues in sidelining and muting Native American presences in the act of their depiction. If the Native American is at all represented, the representation is still done in such a way that the essence is shrouded behind stereotypes, and thus hegemony is perpetuated, since what is represented is simulated presences and the fake images of the hyperreal. Consequently, these artifactualized false representations appear to have substance, as they comprise almost entirely the body of representations that have currency in the mainstream media. These fixed and static signifiers moreover, are anachronistic, as they assign Indianness to material markers, while collapsing the boundaries between artifacts and subjectivities, and hence, the Native Other is still posited as an archaic reminiscent of a distant past. Consequently, Gerald Vizenor in the “Preface” to *Manifest Manners* declares:

The simulation of the *indian* is the absence of real natives – the contrivance of the other in the course of dominance. Truly, natives are the stories of an imagic presence, and *Indians* are the actual absence – the simulations of the tragic primitive (vii).

Representation then, which has for centuries functioned as a major tool of domination, is taken over by the Native American authors, with the result of a profusion of literary texts that aim at disrupting the currency of the historically determined normative constructs. In this struggle for a voice and a presence, the Western genres of the novel and autobiography, and the language of the colonizer are nevertheless used by contemporary Native American authors. However, in writing back to mainstream representations of the Indian, unlike Post-colonial authors who utilize counter discursive practices or historiographic metafiction, Native American authors are still informed by their traditional literary models. Native American literary texts draw on oral literature, which is the indigenous literary tradition of the tribes, and oral literature is marked by a holistic view of the universe, which results

in an inherent epistemic difference when juxtaposed with Western literary models. As such, texts by Native American authors resist being read in terms of Western literary tools, and the resultant is a body of work that forces the readers to engage with the text on the cultural terms and rubric of the tribes, an act which in itself comprises a major site of resistance, and identity reclamation.

As in oral literature, in acknowledgement of the import of the word as the creative principle of not only subjectivities and presences, but also the universe at large, the word is approached with inherent respect in Native American textualities, never to be taken lightly or for granted. Louis Owens remarks on the "...the extraordinary power of words and [the] responsibility for using them with care" (*Mixedblood Messages* 209), and writes: "This is a fact of language that Native American people have always held close. According to Cherokee belief, for example, we can form and alter the world for good or for bad with language, even with thought" (209).

Hence, if language and thought do have the strength to move and shake the world into or out of existence, then creativity also deserves supreme respect, be it the creation of textualities, or other modes of representation or creation, from pictographs, to the production of functional objects such as baskets or pots, since it is through the creative endeavor that humanity shares in the basic principle of the universe, that is flux. Thus Owens posits:

I happen to be descended from a mix of Choctaw, Cherokee, Irish, and Cajun ancestors. Within all of these cultures, the oral tradition runs strong. Stories, I learned very early, make the world knowable and inhabitable. Stories make the world, period. Whether they tell of Raven or Coyote imagining the world into complex being or start by telling us that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, stories arise from that essential and most human of needs (210).

Stories then comprise the supreme act of creativity, out of which burgeons the contemporary Native American literary practices. Then, empowered by the creative power inherent to the word Native American textualities aim at disrupting the politically loaded false representations, to re-create and to re-claim Native American

selfhoods and presences. The selfhoods in question on the other hand are syncretic and communal, forged by adding up to the incomplete self, the truly formative elements of land and family, which lay at the very crux of Indian American identity configuration. Since stories are the ultimate means of creativity in the Native American universe, in line with the cyclical nature of time, achronological temporality allows the Native American literary texts to fall in step with the rhythms of the seasons and the world, and further allows the authors to operate outside the static limits of linear time. Thus the authors may suffuse fiction with fact, or fact with fiction as the Native American world does not function through oppositions but through a merging of the phenomenon and thus unity is fore fronted while the threads that represent different subject positions can be drawn together by hybridity of form.

If one model that is employed by Native American authors in countering the stereotypes is by way of forging culturally unique communal subjectivities that are informed by the tenets of oral literature, the other model is the tackling of stereotypes by deconstructing the mainstream representations. In this enterprise, the tool is the deployment of the traditional trickster discourse, with the aim of disrupting the Western representations of the Native American, which in itself is a simulation with no referent. Hence Owens acknowledges the hyperreal nature of the mainstream representations when he quotes Vizenor's contention: "...we are all invented indians" (qtd in *Other Destinies* 233). Accordingly, the Native American author, who engages with and upsets the stereotypes and manifest manners, Vizenor names the postindian warrior. Postindian warriors on the other hand are engaged in a battle for survival/ survivance, which takes place in the literary scene, and is in every aspect as important as the physical prowess of their ancestors on the actual battlefield. We read:

The postindian warriors encounter their enemies with the same courage in literature as their ancestors once evinced on horses, and they create their stories with a new sense of survivance. The warriors bear the simulations of their time and counter the manifest manners of domination (*Manifest Manners*⁴).

Thus, survival now depends on the creation of stories and subjectivities that will visibly undercut the damaging mainstream representations, and present to the tribal peoples the path for presence and sovereignty. Vizenor remarks on the importance and function of Native American literatures by the following words:

...postindian warriors create a new tribal presence in stories.... The postindian encounters with manifest manners and the simulations of the other are established in names and literature.... The simulations of survivance are heard and read stories that mediate and undermine the literature of dominance (12).

In conclusion, Native American literary practices comprise the ultimate efforts of tribal peoples to counter hegemony and to liberate their subjectivities in representing their selfhoods in textuality. It is a political act in that Native American presences are reclaimed in Native American voices, informed by their own diverse traditions, and this process intends to disrupt a historically determined chain of false signifiers. Hence, when Zitkala-Ša raises her voice against the cultural genocide of the late nineteenth century, she does so by claiming her subjectivity as that of an Indian American, whereas Black Elk's communal selfhood is obliterated by the white author's determination to depict the Indian in his demise and thus perpetuate another stereotype. While Scott Momaday and Louis Owens on the one hand construct communal selfhoods at whose foundations lay the land and the family, Gerald Vizenor and Sherman Alexie on the other hand engage with stereotypical representations of the Indian to upset and deconstruct them, in the process emphasizing the supreme importance of success and survivance. Hence, it can be argued that through self-representation, the damaging stereotypes will finally put to rest, as Native American authors counter these simulations in forging traditionally informed and communally constructed subjectivities in textuality.

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