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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

ACTS OF EMPATHIC IMAGINATION:

CONTEMPORARY NATIVE AMERICAN ARTISTS AND WRITERS

AS HEALERS

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

BARBARA KIMBERLY ROBINS

Norman, Oklahoma

2001

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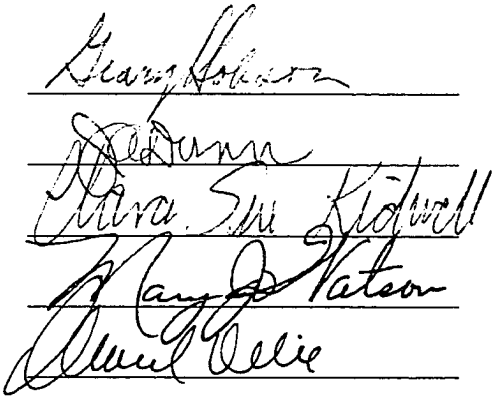
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CONTEMPORARY NATIVE AMERICAN ARTISTS AND WRITERS
AS HEALERS

A dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
GRADUATE COLLEGE

BY



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Prayer Begins	21
Chapter Two: Giving Birth to Loss	82
Chapter Three: Embracing Nothingness	148
Chapter Four: Entering Dangerous Worlds	212
Chapter Five: *Uwoduhi:* The Balance of Healing	271
Works Cited	283

List of Illustrations

Chapter One:		
Fig. 1. Ric Glazer Danay	*Missionary Headrest*	71
Fig. 2. Ric Glazer Danay	*Coast to Coast and See to Sea*	74
Fig. 3. Ric Glazer Danay	*Coast to Coast and See to Sea*	75
Chapter Two:		
Fig. 4. Dorthea Lange	*Migrant Mother*	112
Fig. 5. Robert Colescott	*Choctaw Nickel*	117
Fig. 6. Dorothy Sullivan	*She Speaks For Her Clan*	138
Fig. 7. Dorothy Sullivan	*Selu and White Eagle Corn*	139
Fig. 8. Dorothy Sullivan	*Legend of the Cherokee Rose*	142
Chapter Three:		
Fig. 9. Gerald L. Clarke	*Monumental Series: Tradition Addiction/ Addiction Tradition*	156
Fig. 10. Mateo Romero	*Broken Circle*	176
Fig. 11. Diego Romero	*The Drinker*	177
Fig. 12. Kukuli Velarde	*We, The Colonized Ones*	180
Fig. 13. Kukuli Velarde	"Malinche's Curse"	197
Fig. 14. Diego Romero	Untitled bowl	198
Chapter Four:		
Fig. 15. Josh Miller	*Narin*	250
Fig. 16. John Hoover	*Winter Loon Dance*	260
Fig. 17. John Hoover	*Shaman In Form Of An Eagle*	261
Fig. 18. Pre-Inuit	Miniature Ivory Carving	262
Fig. 19. Rick Bartow	*The Crow*	265
Fig. 20. Rick Bartow	*Old Crow at Sunset*	266
Fig. 21. Faith Presbyterian Church advertisement		297
Chapter Five:		
Fig. 22. Edgar Heap of Birds	"Poem Posters"	278
Fig. 23. Edgar Heap of Birds	*Native Hosts*	279

Introduction

Anger and no one can heal it
Slides through the metal detector
Lives like a mole in a motel
A slide in a slide projector
The cool, cool river
Sweeps the wild, white ocean
The rage of love turns inward
To prayers of devotion
And these prayers are
The constant road across the wilderness
These prayers are
These prayers are the memory of God
The memory of God

from *Cool, Cool River*
Paul Simon

An interdisciplinary approach faces two primary challenges. On the one hand, it can become too superficial, only glancing at what is already known from a variety of disciplines. On the other hand, it can become lost or overwhelmed by one discipline so that the reader is left to wonder why the other disciplinary approaches were mentioned at all. It is my goal in this study to balance the approaches and concerns of several disciplines --- namely, literature, art history and the sociological aspects of psychology and anthropology --- all for the purposes of exploring creative works by contemporary Native American writers and visual artists. There is one immediate explanation for this

endeavor, and that is to bring together discourses not usually combined in complete or useful ways. For instance, many authorities note the high rates of alcoholism among Native Americans, and still others may believe they are well-informed on the causes of alcohol addiction in general. However, it is likely that few from outside Native communities have an understanding of those causes from a Native American point of view. Therefore, I hope to further the cause of understanding by bringing together Native American artists, scholars and health care professionals to comment on social issues made real and visible by the artistic works of contemporary Indians.

There is a great deal of pain in Indian Country. This is not to say there is not pain elsewhere, nor is it to make comparative studies of whose pain in greater or deeper or older or more serious or any other distracting and unnecessary determination. The fact is, quite simply, there is pain, and where there is pain, there exists the need for steps to be taken to understand it and eliminate it. To refuse or even to ignore the steps which could lead to healing is to deny basic human rights.

There is pain, but what are suitable strategies for overcoming it, or preventing it? Certainly, every life is filled with varying degrees of physical and emotional pain, and therefore it is difficult, if not impossible, to suggest that a quantifiable percentage of one's life should be composed of pain and amounts over that are unacceptable. It sounds ludicrous to present it in this manner, but how many times do we unconsciously react to the news of someone else's pain, as if to remark, "I'm glad its them and not me," or "Maybe they deserved it." Recent events make for an interesting study into the reactions of Americans. When serious pain is felt by others, whether caused by natural

disaster or human activity, the American response differs widely. For example, the 1995 deaths by bombing of 168 people in the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, or the April, 1999, shooting deaths of 13 people in Columbine High School in Colorado are profound examples of Americans entering a state of national mourning. These two events received deserved attention in the media and will continue to do so in scholarly discussions for many years to come. More significant to my research is the process of healing that occurs when pain is recognized and the mourning process allows, and especially encourages, people to reflect upon their needs and to take action in setting their own lives, or the lives of their community, at right once again.

Similarly, in Oklahoma City, the May 3, 1999 category F5 tornado[1] which caused tremendous damage to homes and businesses, as well as 43 deaths, also occasioned a public response to pain. There was a national response in terms of volunteerism, donated goods, and money to assist in the recovery effort. There was probably only a regional mourning process, but the recognition of others' pain made it possible for those who were bereft to recover, rebuild, and continue on with hope for their futures. By contrast, Hurricane Mitch killed more than 9,000 people in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, and Costa Rica. Another 9,191 were listed as missing and the entire economy of Honduras was devastated (National Hurricane Center). Or we can consider the "ethnic cleansing" of Albanians, a process by which more than a million people were forced out of their homes in Kosovo by the Serbian military under President Milosevic in 1998 -1999. We could also consider the 1994 brutal slayings of Tutsis by Hutus in Rwanda, now acknowledged by United Nation's

Secretary-General Kofi Annan and others as genocide, and which might have been averted had warnings been heeded. During these foreign crises, Americans responded with goods and assistance. However, the American response is also a questioning process concerning the appropriateness of involvement by the United States. Many Americans complain, "We have so many people right here in the US who are suffering. Why should we send our tax dollars to fix someone else's problem?" Indeed, there are many in the United States who need assistance. So why then do Native Americans receive so little of this "in-house" assistance when Americans do seem aware of such reservation problems as unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, and threats to tribal sovereignty? President Clinton's visit to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota in 1999 highlighted these problems, but so far there has been no national outpouring of assistance. Instead, the relationship between Native Americans and Americans is becoming increasingly litigious. In June 1999, a three-year-old court case against the federal government came to its first-phase trial. The class action suit filed on behalf of over 500,000 Native Americans alleges that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has been mismanaging tribal money for decades and that billions of dollars earned on behalf of tribes under various land leases for oil, gas, timber, ranching, and farming has been squandered, lost, or otherwise kept from the proper recipients. In February of 1999, Federal Judge Royce Lamberth held Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin in contempt of court for failing to produce court-ordered documents in this, the largest lawsuit in history ever brought by Native Americans against the federal government. In fact, as reported by the Native American

Rights Fund (NARF),[2] the federal government has had to concede that it has no accounts receivable system for the funds its manages for tribes, has lost track of thousands of account holders, and that few of the employees handling the funds have any financial background. There are many intelligent people who continue to question the motives which lead Americans to act on behalf of some and not for others.[3] Given that pain results from a wide variety of stressors, of physical, emotional, and economic varieties, questions persist whether there is a form of racism at work that blinds many Americans to the pain of people who happen to be of color or ethnicity or cultural tradition that is not Western European in origin.

If so, a selective blindness to the pain experienced by some ethnic groups also raises questions about the nature of health in general. What is health? More specifically, what is mental health? For Western science, these are indeed two questions representing two areas of causality and treatment with a small area of overlap where certain physical conditions cause mental impairment. That is to say, chemical conditions in the brain can lead to confusion or other, more dramatic changes. For Native Americans, these questions are not so easily separated either at the theoretical or the treatment stage. In fact, they are typically seen as one and the same condition, the symptom of an even greater problem. That greater problem is one of imbalance. While many Native American peoples share an understanding of what it means to be "balanced," or the dangers of being "unbalanced," the actual metaphors used to describe the nature, character, or treatment of such imbalances are regionally unique. A tribe's entire way of life, from the ways in which food is gathered to the stories told at

times of leisure and even including what we so easily refer to as religion, is all encompassed not only in the understanding of what is "out of balance," but what must be done to coax the afflicted person to a new sense of balance, both as an individual and as a member of society. This process raises many questions which I will try to explore to some satisfaction in this research.

One question concerns the need to recognize causes of imbalance and thus ill health. Another series of questions concerns the relationship of imbalance and pain, either physical or emotional. There are also the processes by which balance is regained. How is good health and balance achieved? Is it a singular act or a process? What is the relationship between mind and body and the experience of pain? More to the point, how does pain that originates in one realm, manifest in the other? One recognition of that relationship can be found in the Subjective Units of Distress (SUD) Scale in which levels of stress can be communicated using a numerical scale. The lowest number, Zero, is complete relaxation and the highest, Ten, is extreme distress. Beginning with level Six, the symptoms of stress are described in both emotional and physical terms (Smyth 7). Finally, there are the people who are invested in seeing that balance is possible and who work towards that goal.

For this text, I will explore several works by Native American writers and visual artists. Given the range of questions above, it should not be expected that every work will encompass all concerns and all aspects of healing. Some works appear devoted to an understanding of a condition in a diagnostic fashion while others attempt a "treatment" plan. It is also possible that other reader/viewers and I are seeing healing

processes within a work that the artist or writer was not fully conscious of including. However, I do not see that as a flaw. Who among us knows when the one gesture out of so many similar gestures we perform has healing properties for another person we encounter? I also believe the writers and artists I have chosen understand pain and are aware of the healing impulse, and have an intentional desire to assist others, to alleviate pain, to make whole. As professionals, they have not limited themselves artistically to capitalize on their cultural and ethnic backgrounds as might be said of much nostalgia art with Indian themes that is still widely popular today. In contrast to such nostalgic images, "literature offers one of the most important ways in which these new perceptions (of colonizing) are expressed and it is in their writing, and through other arts such as painting, sculpture, music, and dance, that the day-to-day realties experienced by colonized peoples have been most powerfully encoded and so profoundly influential" (qtd. in Weaver 12). The selection of works presented here are a few examples of the human imagination providing visual and narrative possibilities for all of us to engage in as acts of healing.

I will begin my study with an examination of two sociological works, one of which is entirely devoted to the Native American experience. Eduardo and Bonnie Duran's highly readable text *Native American Postcolonial Psychology* is a discussion of several primary areas of social concern and some of the treatment practices used by the Durans and others in Native American communities or with Native American individuals. Duran and Duran explain many of the profound differences in worldview between a Western thinker and a Native American thinker. These worldview

differences are foundational to the consideration of the causes and treatment of alcohol abuse and addiction, domestic violence, and suicide in Native American individuals and communities. Throughout their text, the Durans emphasize a fundamental theory: the dysfunction of many Native American communities, families, and individuals is in large part caused by the violence of colonialism.

The second theoretical text is Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*. Scarry's work is a broad examination of pain, which functions universally to eliminate the sufferer's culture, history, and language. Whether pain results from disease or bodily harm, including war and torture, pain, in effect, abolishes a person's world. This subsequent loss of awareness and control for the individual in pain can create vulnerability, an opportunity for exploitation. For those who perceive some goal, such as political status or control, can be attained as a result of these vulnerabilities, the pain of another is frequently denied. In the worst of this type of exploitation, pain is caused, denied and re-imagined as power for the exploiter.

There are two other texts which guide me. David Richards's *Masks of Difference: Cultural Representations in Literature, Anthropology and Art* is inspirational to me in its sense of organization. Richards re-examines the colonial experience via its metaphors and images which resonate within and influence the sciences and social sciences. The overall effect of these artistic and scientific "crossovers" is one of a greater sense of insight for the audience. Richards displays for us the Western worldview as it was in its colonial stages of making by re-combining

areas of discourse so often isolated from one another for purposes of specialization in academia.

Greg Sarris' *Keeping Slug Woman Alive* serves as a touchstone for my research, especially when I suffer the inevitable doubts associated with identity issues while writing in this field of Native American studies. Sarris closely examines the process of scholarship itself in order to raise very important questions concerning biases that should challenge our assumptions about how to conduct cross-cultural research. Sarris wants us to identify our own unique biases and consider how those biases shape our scholarship. However, as he challenges the process, Sarris finds room within the expanding disciplines of Native American-related research for a wide variety of people (and their ethnicities) to conduct this work. While personally reassuring, Sarris also provides a more holistic theoretical approach for discussing Native American literature, whether oral or written, formal or informal. His approach insists on the inclusion of conflicting cultural forces and influences in the interpretation of narrative events that are themselves the products of such forces.

With these works in hand, we can set the stage for understanding what is perhaps a fundamental reason why Native American healing is focused on story, history and place. This focus replaces the world the sufferer has lost, making it possible to once again integrate the isolated individual into a society. However, this is not an endeavor without dangers. A definition or expectation of "society" may play a positive or negative role ---positive if the imagined society is open to the isolated individual and accepts that person "with open arms," and negative if the society places a limited role

of engagement upon the individual or understands and maintains an engagement that is dysfunctional. Based on years of bias, America operates with a deeply ingrained and habitual thought process concerning the role of Native Americans that frequently serves to limit those roles to ones of symbolic meaning for Amer-Europeans. Therefore, it must also be understood that healing for a Native American individual may be a problematic situation in and of itself since so many American social structures benefit from continued dysfunction in Native American communities. Whether intentional or habitual, the relationship between Native Americans and Amer-Europeans can be characterized as one where stereotypes dominate. Bruce Johansen and Roberto Maestas describe stereotypes as :

> part of the mental superstructure of a subjugation system. They justify inhumane treatment, including violence, against those whose lands and lives are needed by, but not voluntarily offered to, the *Wasi'chu*[4] class. The violence of thought and language of a stereotype is meant to justify the imposition of the subjugation necessary to a class society. For Indian people the subjugation system is disguised as a welfare state, one designed, since the slaughter of the buffalo, to prevent self-assertion --- economically, politically, or culturally. The system allows some non-Indians to see Indian people as subhuman and thus to inflict violence upon them. (Johansen, Maestas 55)

Despite the narrow American perception of Indians, Native Americans have their own history of constant adjustment. Every tribe has its own story of first contact, of how the rumors of impending contact and the actual meeting with European explorers, soldiers, missionaries, colonists, and others led to changes at every level of existence. At first, it may have been how two or more tribes acknowledge each other's traditional hunting territories while making room for European newcomers. Soon, it was adjusting to warfare over land issues and land cessions in which old alliances became

new divisions. For all the deprivations suffered physically, it is perhaps the emotional damage that is among the longest-lived of the hardships. It makes sense then, that it is the writers and artists who choose to address the causes of mental distress in their works for they have the greatest freedom to take an audience through historical time and character-based perspective. Through creative works, ideas cross disciplinary boundaries, offering insights and inspiring pathos. These moments become possible when Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* is introduced to a clinical psychology setting or Picasso's *Guernica* informs the social sciences. First comes greater awareness. Second comes the realization the situation is true and in need of response. Third, the struggle to envision positive changes. The steps from this point vary depending on the particular nature of the situation needing to be changed, but the hope has already been identified: Healing.

This discussion focuses on those Native American writers and artists who have chosen to explore the most painful of social and psychological issues for large numbers of Native American people. The issues were selected for me by Native people themselves. Eduardo Duran's experiences with Native American communities confirmed my reading of contemporary novels authored by Native Americans:

> By using the regular assessment techniques, (E. Duran) was able to obtain information on the needs in a Native American community; the needs were predictable. Most people in the community told E.D. that alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide, and family dysfunction were the main concerns of the community. (Duran and Duran 195)

The novels and visual art considered in this research depict the effects on native peoples of alcoholism and other addictive behaviors, violence in various forms,

especially domestic abuse, torture, murder, and suicide. For the artists and writers in question, the purpose is not simply to document that these behaviors exist within Native American communities. Rather, these works are often active attempts to promote healing, both for creator and audience. It is my contention that these works are filling a need for psychological healing in a cultural context and that the artists and writers creating such works are taking on some of the aspects of the role widely referred to as that of the shaman or the traditional healer. Like any healer, they must have an acute awareness and knowledge of the illnesses themselves in order to choose proper treatment. Hence, much of my work here will detail particular illnesses. There are cultural differences in how one approaches and understands "illness" that must be dealt with as well.

For instance, Western biomedicine divides illness into categories, dividing up areas of the body affected, in keeping with the tradition established by Descartes. The Mind/Body separation has been characterized by one medical researcher as a "turf deal" made with the Catholic Church[5] and places the physical body in the realm of medical science and tangibility. The mind and its range of intangible emotional and intellectual functions is associated with the soul and one's spiritual relationship with God. This way of thinking about the body and illness, or the experience of pain, remained unchallenged until Freud and while many medical researchers are opening to a more holistic approach, dualistic thinking persists.

For Native Americans, these same divisions are illogical because the mind and body all function as a whole. Traditional Native American thought allows for the

reality of the intangible as a presence of the spiritual on this physical plane. There is no need to separate the body from its spiritual, intellectual, and emotional experiences. The self is whole and a part of an even greater whole. Therefore, a disease manifesting itself with physical symptoms may be diagnosed and treated as an imbalance of spirituality requiring a treatment Westerners may understand better in terms of psychology.

The resulting conflicts and consequences vary widely in nature and are not always immediately apparent to be part of this fundamental perceptual difference. For example, "(r)educed utilization of services may be the result of cultural beliefs that sickness or illness comes from disharmony with oneself, one's community, and nature. Treatment entails resolving the disharmony and restoring a state of balance and integration" (Tolman and Reedy 381). While practicing on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, Tolman and Reedy observed that "many Native Americans may turn to Western medicine for assistance with their illnesses, physical or mental, they see this as a partial remedy of the symptoms rather than the cause of illness" (385). Louise Wasinger notes another consequence in which the Native American client and the non-Indian counselor fail to connect. "Native Americans believe 'they do not have to wait to be; they are right now. And so it is through life; one is what one is; one is continually in a state of being rather than becoming'" (Wasinger 97).

I envision this work as a cycle that moves through four geographic areas with selected literary and artistic works representing each area. These geographic divisions are inspired by my understanding of the four sacred divisions or directions frequently

employed by Native people. My divisions of Northeast, Southeast, Southwest and Northwest are liberal in their interpretation and application by necessity. For instance, as I begin with the Northeast, I focus on the works of Louise Erdrich, who is from a tribe and reservation usually referred to as Northern Plains, or as from the Great Lakes area. Many scholars reserve the term Northeast to refer almost exclusively to the New England coastal areas. However, the movement suggested by beginning in the Northeast, moving to the Southeast and then Southwest to Northwest is inspired by Native American prayer and in such a metaphorical context, my own movements are broad, inclusive. The resulting shape of this text thus satisfies my own need for creative expression within a scholarly document.

Also, we must not forget the history that is at the root of both disease and the healing. Erdrich's Ojibwa people are now in the area of Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and south-central Canada because they moved there from the Northeast. They are in fact one of several sub-groups that historically lived in regions extending north from the Great Lakes into Canada and east towards the Atlantic Ocean. Like the other tribes of this vast region, they also experienced the pressures that moved them out of one homeland and into more western locations.

One should not get the impression that the issues I raise here are somehow limited to the one geographic region in which I discuss them. Depression, grief, alcoholism, drug addiction, violence, suicide, and other severe problems are national in their scope and many people other than Native Americans suffer from them. My approach is a device, a means to analyze social problems while using a regional

perspective in a manner similar to the artists themselves as they describe the painful results on individuals and small communities. The creations of these artists are unique, but in their uniqueness we see our shared humanity, our similarities and our vulnerabilities.

Chapter One uses the five interrelated novels of Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) and the art of Ric Glazer Danay (Mohawk) to explore the consequences of early contact and colonialism. Thus, these artists take a close look at the devastation that disease has caused. If this is where grief begins, it is also where a weakened people become susceptible to religious conversion, or coercion, as the case may be. These "events" do significant damage to tribal cultures, which in turn means long-lasting psychological problems for individuals. Issues of belonging and identity emerge, and with no cultural correctives available, these distorted ideas of self get passed along to the subsequent generations. We can speculate that if tribes had been able to stay in their homelands, healing might have been possible sooner because some aspects of life were stable. However, the influx of colonists to the Northeast created land pressures that led to huge land losses and an even more profound sense of continued grief. Both Erdrich and Danay portray how these losses are understood by native people. While Erdrich demonstrates the transference of grief and troubled identity from generation to generation, Danay plays with the story of contact and ironically exposes European motives and behaviors concerning Native Americans and their lands.

Chapter Two moves to the Southeast to consider a later period in American history when Indian removal was in full swing. Now that land losses and disease have already taken heavy tolls, tribal cultures are fully engaged in the struggle to retain their integrity. However, there are losses here as well. As tribes are relocated and fractured, individuals with specialized knowledge are lost, creating more "gaps" in a cultural fabric. Using the events of this region, I will explore the consequences of what I call ambiguous identity. For a growing number of Native, and now mixed-blood people, two or more cultural and political identities may be recognized and adopted. The pressures to keep these identities consistent and in their proper places is stressful, resulting in anger. For this chapter, I will refer to the novel *The Mercy Seat* by Rilla Askew, who is herself an Oklahoman of mixed white and Indian ancestry and who also struggles with presenting these identities in private and public spheres. For many readers, her novel is presumably about a white family, but in her technique of presenting this family's identity and by interpreting their actions, it may just as easily be presumed they are an ethnically mixed family, a family with Indian ancestry practicing cultural camouflage in order to move freely where recognizably Indian people would be restricted. The inclusion of Askew's work in this discussion resurrects many of the identity issues raised in current discussions of Native American literature.

The Mercy Seat presents a deeply troubled family and the role that violence plays within it. Duran and Duran have much to say on this issue of internalized rage that finds expression as domestic violence. In contrast, contemporary artists of this region focus more upon the acts of renewal, family contentment, and happiness than the

actual acts of violence. Particularly in the works of Cherokee painter Dorothy Sullivan, the images themselves have a surface tranquillity that is understood in depth when recalling the extreme acts of colonial violence that led directly to this depicted moment. This chapter will use these works by Askew and Sullivan, as well as an additional work by Richard Whitman (Yuchi/Pawnee) in order to examine the causes and symptoms of internalized rage and domestic violence.

Chapter Three explores the causes and behaviors of addiction as presented by writers and artists of the Southwest. The primary form of addiction discussed is alcoholism and several artists from this region are included for varying depictions of this issue. The Romero brothers, Diego and Mateo, (Cochiti Pueblo) potter and painter respectively, provide some of the most ironic images drawn from tribal history and aesthetics as well as contemporary reservation life. Alcoholism is by no means the only addictive behavior as is recognizable in Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Almanac of the Dead.* Silko (Laguna Pueblo) makes a determined point to reveal that nearly any behavior can be addictive and thus a cause of imbalance and pain. Of all the artists and writers included in this research, since I am interested in how they attempt to gain the attention of a mainstream audience, Silko is probably the most daring in that she employs techniques that may cause real distress for the reader. How she accomplishes this, and why she does not relieve this distress, is a major component of this chapter's discussion. In a visual style similar to Silkos's literary assault upon readers, Kukuli Velarde, a Peruvian ceramic artist of mixed Indian and white ancestry, also creates characters and stories via clay sculpture in such powerful ways that viewers often recoil

from them. Between them, Silko and Velarde aggressively tackle issues of borders, self-esteem, and the crippling dynamics of addiction. These women, from two different continents, nonetheless share a vision of their respective people's suffering as the result of Spanish exploration and colonialism. In the minds of these artists, contemporary political borders are insufficient reason to limit a discussion of Indian pain to the United States proper or even to North America.

Chapter Four moves into the final geographic region, the Northwest, to consider modern-day acts of violence. Sherman Alexie's (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene) novel *Indian Killer* sets the discussion stage with a serial killer in late twentieth-century Seattle. The title itself creates the ambiguity of who is actually killing whom within a community of privileged whites, "invisible" homeless Indians, pseudo-Indians, and "lost-identity" Indians. For this discussion, I will return to Elaine Scarry's theoretical deconstruction of torture and its relationship to power. Also included here will be the violent acts of murder and suicide. Because we have a continuation of identity issues entangled with issues of power and control, the artists who offer much to this discussion are John Hoover (Aleut) and Rick Bartow (Yurok) primarily because of their images of transformation. As one of the acts most widely attributed to the role and skill of shamans, transformation can be life-saving and life-destroying. The works of Hoover and Bartow provide the healing properties of transformation in contrast to Alexie's grimmer images.

The final chapter takes a closer look at the overall process of healing from a contemporary Native American perspective. Drawing from all of the previous chapters,

I will present some conclusions regarding Native American writers and artists as healers in the shamanic tradition.

It is my sincere hope, as I examine some of the worst episodes in Native American/American history, that I do not aggravate the feelings of discord and anger that I believe are still latent in America at large. Rather, I hope that this document might serve in the greater good of healing for all who read it.

[1] Still unsubstantiated research into the wind speeds and degree of damage suggest to some climatologists this may be the first ever recorded F6 category tornado in the world.

[2] NARF is the acronym for Native American Rights Fund, a non-profit organization located in Boulder, Colorado. According to their website at www.narf.org NARF "provides legal representation and technical assistance to Indian tribes, organizations and individuals nationwide."

[3] In an interview with Mike Wallace for CBS *Sunday Morning,* which aired February 6, 2000, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated he did believe racism was a significant reason the U.S. and other European countries refused to send peacekeeping troops to Rwanda in 1994.

[4] The word *Wasi'chu* comes from the Lakota language. Bruce Johansen and Roberto Maestas offer the following definition in *Wasi'chu: The Continuing Indian Wars* (1979). "The Lakota . . . used a metaphor to describe the [European] newcomers. It was *Wasi'chu*, which means 'takes the fat' or 'greedy person.' Within the modern Indian movement, *Wasi'chu* has come to mean those corporations and individuals, with their government accomplices, which continue to covet Indian lives, land, and resources for private profit. *Wasi'chu* does not describe a race; it describes a state of mind" (Foreword)

[5] Dr. Candace Pert made this statement in an interview with Bill Moyers as part of a video series *Healing and the Mind.* She can be seen in Volume 2: "The Mind Body Connection." David Grubin, executive producer, 1993.

Chapter One
Northeast:
The Prayer Begins

A long time ago came a man on a track
Walking thirty miles with a sack on his back
And he put down his load where he thought it was best
And he made a home in the wilderness
He built a cabin and a winter store
And he ploughed up the ground by the cold lake shore
And the other travelers came riding down the track
And they never went further and they never went back
Then came the churches then came the schools
Then came the lawyers then came the rules
Then came the trains and the trucks with their loads
And the dirty old track was the telegraph road

Then came the mines -- then came the ore
Then there was the hard times then there was a war
Telegraph sang a song about the world outside
Telegraph road got so deep and so wide
Like a rolling river...

from Telegraph Road
recorded by Dire Straits

Perhaps one of the most difficult concepts for non-Indians to understand about the Native American experience is how devastating the loss of traditional land holdings has been in historical and emotional terms. These losses continue to be a source of grief for living Native Americans. Various viewpoints suggest that such losses took place "in the past" and therefore should have lost their emotional hold by now. Others suggest that the land losses were part of a larger trade-off which endowed Native Americans with other opportunities, such as material wealth, position in American society, and educational systems that promote these concepts of progress. This belief is backed by

the few highly visible examples of Indian casinos and other gambling operations, in light of other real or imagined treaty rights, and compels many non-Indians to believe that Native Americans get "special" treatment, placing them in opposition to the tenets of American democracy and fairness. A few would even suggest that as a "conquered" people, Native Americans should "just get over it." There is no denying that a great many Indian people have chosen paths of acculturation or assimilation wherein the sense of loss experienced tribally no longer produces significant pain for the individual. However, to ignore, to deny, or to forget are frequently the strategies that individuals employ to alleviate pain, and while they do provide some comfort, eventually many Indians find such comfort to be temporary and hollow, and feelings of depression, grief, anger and even suicidal despondency arise in the face of failed coping strategies.

This study undertakes an investigation of Native American pain and some of its causes. There is a peculiar duplicity about cultural pain because, in that my opening remarks about land loss as a cause for such pain may make perfect sense to Indian people, many non-Native people also fail to grasp how *real* the pain is for Native American individuals. This is closely related to another duplicity, or paradox, about the very nature of pain itself. Elaine Scarry is one contemporary scholar well-versed in the study of this paradox. In *The Body in Pain,* an extensive study of pain and the perception of it whether caused by disease, accident or violence, Scarry states the sensation of pain within one's own body is understood effortlessly and is accepted as real. However, that same person will have difficulty fully accepting the reality of pain within another person's body:

> So, for the person in pain, so incontestably and unnegotiably present is it that "having pain" may come to be thought of as the most vibrant example of what it is to "have certainty," while for the other person it is so elusive that "hearing about pain" may exist as the primary model of what it is "to have doubt." Thus pain comes unsharably into our midst as at once that which cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed. (Scarry 4)

It becomes entirely possible that the already difficult task of hearing about someone's pain and accepting such pain as real can be compounded by the need to deny that any such pain exists. The pain Native Americans experience is the result of years of behavior on the part of Europeans and Amer-Europeans pursuing their own goals at the expense of the homes, lands, livelihoods, customs, religions, languages, and the very bodies of indigenous peoples. To accept responsibility for these historical or present-day behaviors is itself a pain-inducing act, and we should not be surprised that many Americans are unwilling to engage in any act that might promote increased awareness and empathy of Native American experiences.[1]

Native American scholars, activists, politicians, and lawyers have been the vanguard, raising mainstream awareness of Native American issues for years, sometimes with blazing immediate success, but too often with only temporary results. Native American artists and writers are increasingly involved in this effort, and it is their methods and processes which this research analyzes. The late 1960s, in particular, saw a number of creative Native Americans produce works that challenged and reshaped the existing stereotypes of what it is to be "Indian" in the post-reservation era. The establishment of the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe in 1962, with Fritz Scholder and Allan Houser among its faculty, enabled young artists like T.C.

Cannon, Bob Haozous, and Harry Fonseca to make their own stamp on a contemporary art movement that explores individualism (Bernstein 68). Likewise, acknowledging the works of a growing number of Native American writers brought greater exposure to these writers as individuals. In 1969, Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his novel *House Made of Dawn* made new literary works more widely available to mainstream publishers and reading public (Nies 366). The doors opened for other young writers and artists to pursue avenues of expression previously denied to them as "Indian" writers and artists, and much of this new work continued to challenge the stereotypes of Indians as dying-out nineteenth century artifacts. In addition, these works increasingly revealed the reality, the certainty, of felt pain among contemporary Native Americans. Native American artists and writers continue to engage in seeking out the causes of contemporary pain in the context of their respective mediums and artistic interests or goals. For some, the goal is to simply show the pain. For others, a process of naming or "diagnosing" is necessary, especially if the ultimate goal is one of promoting healing, either for the self as a creative act or for the viewer as catharsis.

In the present chapter, I explore the works of poet and novelist Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) and the mixed-medium works of visual artist Ric Glazer Danay (Mohawk). For each of these artists, the issues of land loss and enforced acculturation, particularly religious conversion, are central to their discussions of the Native American experience. The issues are deeply rooted in the shared history of Native Americans and European colonists, but they are also very much a part of

contemporary life, at least for Native Americans, and have a range of consequences, and as we shall see, symptoms of psychological distress and pain.

Despite its mundane familiarity, pain eludes us in our efforts to actually describe it, to share what a particular form of pain *feels* like. Scarry considers this difficulty and rules out issues of "the inflexibility of any one language" or "the shyness of any one culture" and situates the difficulty of expressing the nature of pain in "the rigidity of pain itself: its resistance to language is not one of its incidental or accidental attributes but is essential to what it is" (Scarry 5). In a comparison to other interior states:

> Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned [. . . .] Contemporary philosophers have habituated us to the recognition that our interior states of consciousness are regularly accompanied by objects in the external world, that we do not simply "have feelings" but have feelings for somebody or something, that love is love of x, fear is fear of y, ambivalence is ambivalence about z. If one were to move through all the emotional, perceptual, and somatic states that take an object -- hatred for, seeing of, being hungry for -- the list would become a very long one and, though it would alternate between states we are thankful for and those we dislike, it would be throughout its entirety a consistent affirmation of the human being's capacity to move out beyond the boundaries of his or her own body into the external, sharable world. This list and its implicit affirmation would, however, be suddenly interrupted when, moving through the human interior, one at last reached physical pain, for
> physical pain -- unlike any other state of consciousness -- has no referential content. It is not *of or for* anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language. (Scarry 4-5)

In so many cases where there is pain, there is also quite often the doubt that such pain exists. This fundamental paradox concerning the nature of pain permeates the practice of medicine itself. Even in American biomedical treatment centers, patients

attempt to describe what to them is a very real experience[2]. However, physicians must overcome their own doubts about the reality of that pain, "they in effect perceive the voice of the patient as an 'unreliable narrator' of bodily events" (Scarry 6). There are other situations in which Scarry sees another party speaking on behalf of those in pain because of this profound difficulty of sufferers to speak of their own pain. These other situations include the court room, the arts, and organizations such as Amnesty International. In each case, someone attempts to place the pain of the sufferer into language which others (non-sufferers) can hear and accept the reality of the pain being described.

Besides physical pain, there is emotional pain -- just as real for the sufferer, and just as uncertain to the observer. The difference between these forms of pain lies in their ability to be communicated to non-sufferers.

> The rarity with which physical pain is represented in literature is most striking when seen within the framing fact of how consistently art confers visibility on other forms of distress (the thoughts of Hamlet, the tragedy of Lear, the heartache of Woolf's "merest schoolgirl"). Psychological suffering, though often difficult for any one person to express, *does* have referential content, *is* susceptible to verbal objectification, and is so habitually depicted in art that, as Thomas Mann's Settembrini reminds us, there is virtually no piece of literature that is *not* about suffering, no piece of literature that does not stand ready to assist us. (Scarry 11)

So we have a basic understanding of the paradoxical nature of pain. With or without referential content, pain does damage to the body that feels it. The pain that is experienced in Indian Country is sufficiently unique from other forms of pain to require Eduardo Duran to coin a phrase in an attempt to encompass the depth and longevity of

the symptoms of pain whether they manifest physically, psychologically or both. Duran's term *soul wound* refers to the concept of deep loss experienced by Native Americans in the last five hundred plus years and has received acceptance as the appropriate term from both Native Americans and health care professionals who work with them. Duran's definition of the term is given in *Native American Post Colonial Psychology:*

> If one accepts the terms soul, psyche, myth, dream, and culture as part of the same continuum that makes people's experience of being in the world their particular reality, then one can begin to understand the soul wound. The notion of soul wound is one which is at the core of so much of the suffering that indigenous peoples have undergone for several centuries. (Duran and Duran 24)

Eduardo Duran's diagnosis of what ails in Indian Country is the direct result of community needs assessment along with extensive dream work with individual clients. As a result of the dream work in particular, Duran realized Native American people exhibit symptoms that result from a perception of living within a hostile environment.

> What is of issue is that something occurred at a very deep psychological level and had completely overwhelmed and destroyed the world for the Native American people. E.D. interpreted the dream content to say that the harmony with the world was no longer there. When viewed from the stand point of the seventh sacred direction (the center), it is apparent that the psyche of the community recognized the wounding of the environment and that this awareness in turn was perceived as a wounding of the psyche. Harmony had become discord and the community's unconscious perception was that the world was unfriendly and hostile. The problems that were manifested and verbalized were merely symptoms of a deeper wound – the soul wound. (Duran and Duran 195)

As a novelist, Louise Erdrich has joined the ranks of artists "willing and able to assist us" in understanding pain experienced by Native Americans, particularly among

the Ojibwa.[3] Although her first publications were in poetry, Erdrich has stated she soon felt limited by that structure: "There was not enough room to really tell the story. I just began to realize that I wanted to be a fiction writer [. . .] I have a lot more room and it's closer to the oral tradition of sitting around and telling stories" (in Coltelli 45).

Louise Erdrich was born June 7, 1954 of an Ojibwa-French mother and German-American father in Little Falls, Minnesota. She is an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe in North Dakota where her grandfather was once tribal chairman. Five of her novels, all with interrelated characters, are a rich opportunity to see in fiction how one author imagines the lives of generations of Indian and mixed-blood families in North Dakota and how they respond to the pressures and consequences of colonialism in the twentieth century. The settings for her novels include the fictionalized Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota. The small and also fictional town of Argus becomes a social focal point for many of the characters. Occasionally, characters make excursions to the urban areas of Williston, North Dakota, and to Minneapolis, Minnesota. In turn, each novel covers a span of years, sometimes overlapping the years of another novel but with a different focus on the core characters or examining the lives of other community members. The time periods for the five novels are as follows: *Tracks,* 1912 - 1924; *The Beet Queen,* 1932 - 1972; *Love Medicine,* 1934 - 1984; *The Bingo Palace,* no years are given with chapter titles as is Erdrich's usual method but events proceed from 1984; and *Tales of Burning Love,* 1981 - 1995.

Most of Erdrich's novels use the first-person voices of her characters to tell the overlapping and sometimes conflicting stories of life amid ever increasing losses and acts of survival. A few of the characters appear in most of the novels. The most notable of these recurring characters is Pauline Puyat, also known as Sister Leopolda, who is the only character to appear in all five novels. Fleur Pillager is a central character in *Tracks* but she makes only brief appearances in *The Beet Queen* and *The Bingo Palace.* Her daughter, Lulu Nanapush Lamartine, is one of the core characters who creates a persistent sense of community in Argus, along with Pauline, the brothers Eli and Nector Kashpaw, and Nector's wife Marie Lazarre. Growing up at the turn of the twentieth century, these characters are a transitional group, knowing first-hand the old traditional ways and witnessing the slow demise of those same traditions. Using this extended family, whose lives span the twentieth century, gives Erdrich an opportunity to refer to historical events as direct influences upon her characters and show the consequences of those events over time and generations. On either generational "side" of this transitional group are characters who may appear for a single novel or even a single chapter, but serve as links in the continuum that is tribal memory and community story. The impact on the reader of so many voices and stories is the understanding that no single life is unaffected by what has happened previously to others within the community. Therefore, even in the present-day chapters where characters are dealing with present-day issues, the realities of the history of encroaching white colonization are also present as very real forces to reckon with. These forces of encroachment, capable of causing such extensive symptomatology, are disease, Christianity, and land loss. John Purdy

suggests of Erdrich's works, "by understanding the stories of how loss came about and what individuals did to deal with it, one can better address contemporary events, some of which may prove equally threatening. Furthermore, the novels suggest that loss need not be irrevocable; colonialism can be countered" ("Against Odds" 9).

To outline the effects of these three symptoms in Erdrich's novels, we must begin with disease. *Tracks* begins with a description by Nanapush of the losses due to assaults from several fronts:

> We started dying before the snow, and like the snow, we continued to fall. It was surprising there were so many of us to die. For those who survived the spotted sickness from the south, our long fight west to Nadouissioux land where we signed the treaty, and then a wind from the east, bringing exile in a storm of government papers, what descended from the north in 1912 seemed impossible. (*Tracks* 1)

That impossible descent from the north was another round of devastating disease, this time consumption (tuberculosis). Nanapush takes in Fleur Pillager, each of them now the sole survivor of their respective families. Their loose adoption of each other was necessary for survival and sets into motion family alliances and jealousies that appear throughout Erdrich's five novels. According to Basil Johnston, the Ojibwa's "major purpose in life was to survive as individuals and communities" *(Manitous* xvii), and certainly without this determination to "make family," many of the characters of *Tracks* would not have survived the periods of sickness or starvation that seemed to threaten them regardless of their efforts to prepare for each winter.

The losses to disease which Erdrich describes are significant and symbolic of losses to Native populations in general as Russell Thornton describes in his population history *American Indian Holocaust and Survival*:

> Europeans brought smallpox, measles, the bubonic plague, cholera, typhoid, pleurisy, scarlet fever, diphtheria, mumps, whooping cough, colds, the venereal diseases gonorrhea and chancroid, pneumonia and unusual influenza and respiratory diseases, quite probably typhus and venereal syphilis and only remotely possibly, tuberculosis. From Africa came the arthropodborne diseases malaria and yellow fever and, some say, probably dysentery and syphilis, among other less important diseases. (Thornton 44)

> The diseases did not merely spread among American Indians, kill them, and then disappear. On the contrary, they came, spread, and killed again and again and again. It has recently been calculated that there may have been as many as 93 serious epidemics and pandemics of Old World pathogens among North American Indians from the early sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. In other words, a "serious contagious disease causing significant mortality invaded Native American peoples at intervals of four years and two and a half months, on the average from 1520 to 1900." (Dobyns in Thornton 45)

Smallpox was especially virulent, killing approximately 2,000 Ojibwe in the Great Lakes region about 1780 (Thornton 81). Smallpox returned to the Ojibwe in fewer than five years and still again about 1899 - 1900 (Thornton 100). The most direct result of these diseases for any community would be the loss of loved ones, but there were other long term consequences as well, including lowered fertility rates and increased numbers of spontaneous abortions. Concerning the deaths, particularly those individuals in their prime adult years, the cultural losses were staggering. Members with specialized knowledge of herbalogy or clothing production or ritual or community

leadership were lost along with their knowledge. Of more immediate concern, also killed were those who had the ability and skill to procure food in sufficient amounts.

To describe the nature of disease is a significant opening then for Erdrich's earliest novel in terms of setting. Throughout *Tracks,* Erdrich reveals how the losses to disease diminished a family's abilities to provide food and could, in turn, cause more losses due to malnutrition and increased susceptibility to other diseases. In addition to these physical realities are the emotional complications. In *Tracks,* Nanapush appears to be the most willing to share his feelings of grief and mourning, an act that should remind us that grief itself is widely known as a cause of lowered immunity. It is difficult to tell from Erdrich's novels if the fertility rates of her fictional community have been damaged as a result of the epidemics, but the difficult births that Fleur endures, and the loss of her second child, may indeed have causal links to her own earlier bout with consumption aggravated by poor diet. Combined, these events most certainly damaged tribal communities' ability to fend off other assaults such as influxes of non-Indian settlers and their increasing demands for tribal lands and resources.

For most Americans, history in the New World begins on the Atlantic shore with the arrival of English settlers. Despite the fact that scholars continue to argue over the time and location of the first Thanksgiving celebrated by Europeans and their Indian hosts on American soil, every school child is taught that Plymouth Rock received the first Pilgrims to the American bosom and the Indians shared in their harvest feast in October 1621.[4] As many contemporary and more inclusive historians have noted, the version of American history that begins with English colonization and which presents

only those events of importance to English historians, leaves out a great deal of the emotional, political, and physical struggle between the native inhabitants and the colonists. The first settlers may have been willing to accept limited "land use agreements," but these agreements were quickly replaced by increased pressures on the Indians to sell land and were followed in turn by armed skirmishes and outright war for title to land. The end result of many of these struggles has been a land transfer from tribes to an ever-growing American nation. As for Christianity, perhaps the past five hundred years of struggle between Europeans and Indians concerning the teachings of a religious faith in all its dogmatic forms can be summarized by Erdrich herself in the first description of Argus as presented in *Tracks*: "Two stores competed for the trade of the three hundred citizens, and three churches quarreled with one another for their souls" (13).

If close attention is paid to the full history of America, as well as to the stories of Native Americans, in whatever form they may come to us, we see the early symptoms of soul wounding, the essential grief that Native Americans carry with them despite the passing of years. Without sufficient solace, typically from family and community sources, this grief is passed along to the next generation. This is the essential nature of intergenerational PTSD. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is characterized by a severe shock to an individual who then must respond psychologically in such a way as to prevent further emotional and mental trauma. Typically, PTSD is understood to have several stages that an individual evolves through, eventually to a possible recovery. Duran and Duran offer a basic definition of PTSD in the first of these stages:

> *Impact or Shock.* The first phase starts at the moment the person is traumatized [. . .] this is the point at which the ego must split in order to avoid complete dissociation. There is either a partial or complete regression, which allows the complex to develop a life of its own in the unconscious. Lack of resolution of the repressed issues are continuously manifested in symptoms that require some type of medication. If the person does not medicate him/herself, then the only defense left in the light of pain is dissociation. The person no longer has an awareness of who or where s/he is, thus rendering them (sic) nonexistent. (Duran and Duran 40)

The intergenerational nature of PTSD is the result of unresolved trauma that becomes shared over time with successive generations. Much of what is known about intergenerational PTSD is the result of research done with Nazi Holocaust survivors. Duran and Duran note one major exception, however-- that of acknowledgment:

> Many of the dynamics in effect in the Jewish experience are similar to those of the Native American experience, with the crucial exception that the world has not acknowledged the Holocaust of native people in this hemisphere. This lack of acknowledgment remains one of the stumbling blocks to the healing process of Native American people. The inherent denial keeps the colonial perpetrators trapped in an aura of secrecy and continuing alienation, since their acts continue to haunt them with guilt and existential emptiness. (Duran and Duran 30)

The issue of acknowledgment is something of a double-edged sword. Many readers of the above passage could react with chagrin to the implication that a form of permission is needed for the healing of tribal communities. This would suggest a denial of tribal self-sufficiency. On the other hand, the need for acknowledgment speaks of the long-standing intimacy existing between the cultural groups living on American soil. The issue of this intimacy will be taken up in Chapter Two, but quite simply, for healing

to occur, sometimes one needs to know another person cares and is willing to respond accordingly.

Beginning with *Tracks*, Erdrich literally tracks the pain that requires families be re-formed to ensure survival, that old customs must slip away due to loss of knowledge or practical means, that odd new customs must be undertaken to accommodate or to be made acceptable to the invading peoples, that each individual will struggle with issues of self and community, and that despite many good efforts, communication among family members will be filled with sorrow and successive generations increasingly troubled. The characters of Erdrich's series reflect in fiction the observations made by researchers concerning the effects of intergenerational PTSD. One study found that:

> Violent sudden separation from their closest family members determined the extent of survivors' individual traumas. Uncompleted mourning and the depression and somber states of mind it created were absorbed by their children from birth on. Children of survivors react to the lack of memories and absence of dead family members. (qtd in Duran and Duran 30-31)

It could be said of Erdrich's serial epic that the stories told therein are part of the process of remembering. This process of hearing, remembering, and then retelling those stories makes it possible for individuals to open their hearts to grief and the process of healing. Erdrich offers a rich variety of characters whose struggles are familial in context while being symptomatic of colonization.

In fictional form, Erdrich offers us a close examination of that list of painful adjustments made by Native Americans offered in previous paragraphs. Erdrich takes socio-political statistics and brings them to life in the form of people living the stories

within her five novels. Beginning with the reality of families reforming themselves to ensure survival, Erdrich's saga begins in *Tracks* where Nanapush tells Lulu the story of her mother Fleur in the time of the epidemics.

For Fleur and Nanapush, it was crucial they adopt each other as family for the immediate reasons of physical survival, and while unstated, for reasons of emotional support during what must have been months of active grieving. There is also the lingering possibility that Nanapush and Fleur accepted each other as lovers since it is never explicitly stated that she became pregnant after her rape in Argus. Nanapush's experience with pregnant women gives him reason to watch for the signs of her pregnancy and he does so when, apparently, no one else thinks to do so and he advises Eli in his courtship of Fleur accordingly.

The second supporting clue to an intimate relationship with Fleur is Nanapush's "admission" that he is Lulu's father and thus has the right to request her return from the boarding school where Fleur had sent her before she herself left Argus. However, the knowledge of who Lulu's father is remains unimportant to the tribal community and only a concern for the white administrators and the papers kept for their own bureaucracies. As such, the actual father's identity remains unclear and Lulu herself gives no clue that she has sought it out.

Lulu's adjustments include her experiences with the boarding school system. Clearly, here is a new custom implemented and enforced by non-Indians based on rhetoric of improving the "Indian's plight." The actual experiences of boarding and missionary schools varied for Indian children, but as described in *Tracks,* the school and

its punitive treatment came at a time in Lulu's life when she is vulnerable and angry at Fleur. She feels she has been abandoned by her mother, although for many Indian children there was simply no recourse for their parents since government or school officials would simply take the children by force. These are facts that Nanapush tries to explain to Lulu near the conclusion of *Tracks:*

> Because you think she gave you up willingly then, because she made you go, because you think she punished you for playing near a dead man in the woods, you turn your face and won't listen. Don't stop your ears! [. . . .] She sent you to the government school, it is true, but you must understand there were reasons: there would be no place for you, no safety on this reservation, no hiding from government papers, or from Morrisseys who shaved heads or the Turcot Company, leveler of a whole forest. There was also no predicting what would happen to Fleur herself. (*Tracks* 218-219)

The adjustments by Native Americans to the demands and assaults of the colonizing forces were, are still are, rarely in response to one single event. The complexity of the interactions included both private and public spheres; therefore, the adjustments must also be made at these levels. To say that Christianity "effected change among Native American communities" is overly simplified and serves to diminish and obscure much pain. Even where some Native Americans felt Christianity the source of a life's calling, there were repercussions resulting from a new religious expression commingling with traditional practices in tribal communities. Erdrich excels at telling stories full of small emotional ripples all the while building up to the devastating tidal waves of emotion experienced by characters who act out their spiritual and identity crises on a grand scale. Some of the more contemporary characters, such as Albertine or Lipsha, reveal they are attempting to reconcile their traditional Ojibwa beliefs,

usually received in the form of stories, with mainstream Christianity. The result is frequently an emotional truce -- a juggling act that tries to keep several cultural and theological balls in the air at once to create an ever-changing, dynamic process of belief. Shortly after June's death, Albertine watches the Northern lights and considers their place in the order of things. She considers the pulsing patterns in terms of nerves and the means of travel for human thought and memory.

> Or a dance hall. And all the world's wandering souls were dancing there. I thought of June. She would be dancing a two-step for wandering souls. Her long legs lifting and falling. Her laugh an ace. (*Love Medicine* 37)

Lipsha's cultural and theological juggling act begins as a simple request to create a love medicine that would bind Nector and Marie for the rest of their lives. Lipsha has the idea that a pair of goose hearts would be the perfect solution. However, the difficulty in acquiring these hearts and his fear of asking Fleur Pillager's advice, leads to a series of shortcuts. A pair of frozen turkeys are purchased and the thawed hearts taken to first a priest, then a sister for blessing. Ultimately, Lipsha must bless them himself with a quick, unseen dip into the holy water.

Erdrich's complex community response to Christianity is included in Catherine Rainwater's critical article "Reading Between Worlds: Narrativity in the Fiction of Louise Erdrich." Rainwater explores the dual symbolic code patterns within *Love Medicine* and sees Erdrich creating characters who are liminal or marginal to one or both of the cultures they live within. In order to give readers a sense of this experience, Erdrich places codes in her fiction that would signify either the Amer-European culture or Native American culture. By embedding an equal number from each category,

Erdrich "frustrates narrativity" and makes her audience marginal, at least temporarily, to the cultures of the text (Rainwater 406). The dual codes categories that Rainwater identifies include the following:

> Christianity vs. Shamanic religion; mechanical or industrial time vs. ceremonial time; nuclear family vs. tribal kinship systems; main or privileged characters vs. characters of equal status; privileged narrative voices as opposed to dialogical or polyphonic narrative development. (406-407)

Erdrich is particularly adept at exploring human experience -- pain-- by moving back and forth through the positions represented by Rainwater as codes. Many of her characters offer opportunities for rich discussion on this issue, but few illustrate the myriad conflicts as well as Pauline/Sister Leopolda.

This character is unique in several regards within Erdrich's fiction. First, she appears in all five novels, the only character to do so. Second, she is a primary narrator of events in *Tracks.* She, along with Nanapush, relates all events, and thus creates another departure from the other of Erdrich's related novels which include more voices. Ironically, Pauline's narrative is widely regarded as unreliable, the product of a psychologically confused individual. Finally, although she appears in all five novels, *Tracks* is the only one in which we hear her story directly. In the other novels, she is a figure spoken of, either witnessing or participating in significant events in the lives of the other characters.

Recognizing the dual codes of Christianity vs. Shamanic religion are particularly helpful in understanding the relationship between Pauline/Sister Leopolda and Marie, the unlikely mother and daughter who are attracted to similar notions of Christian faith, including martyrdom, but who also incite moments of pain and violence against one

another. This is particularly true of Pauline. The entire nature of Pauline is dualistic, a fact that is reflected in her name change at the conclusion of *Tracks*. Pauline becomes Sister Leopolda when she accepts her vows in the convent; therefore, I will use her given name of Pauline when referring to incidents taking place in *Tracks* and the title Sister Leopolda to refer to all incidents taking place in the other four novels. Using her names in this manner will also signal those events as taking place in her adolescence or adulthood.

For many new students of Native American literature, their first experience with Erdrich's fiction is the novel *Love Medicine*. My students frequently stop short at the story "Saint Marie," in which the teenage girl Marie feels she has been called to enter the convent. This places her in constant proximity with Sister Leopolda, already well-known to Marie as a grade school teacher bent on eliminating the devil from Marie's soul. Their relationship as seen through Marie's eyes is haunting, confusing, and laced with moments of brief, extreme, and even intimate violence. The first such example is during Marie's school days when the nun suddenly hurls a spearlike window hook directly over Marie's head. The window hook impales a boot in the coat closet and leaves an indelible scar on Marie's psyche. This incident appears to confirm a sense of inferiority in Marie – one that was established by Sister Leopolda's assertions that the Devil had marked and desired Marie. Marie's entry into the convent as a potential novice intertwines Marie and Sister Leopolda in a bizarre competition of excessive humility, excessive pride, acts of graciousness, and sudden torture. The results of which are seen by the other nuns of the order as miraculous stigmata on the hands of an Indian

girl. While it remains unclear is Marie knows the nun is her biological mother, the two are psychologically connected in their need to inflict pain on the other. As an outsider, one could wonder if this were the only available option for their relationship in the absence of accepting and loving one another.

In a later chapter, a mature Marie returns to the convent with her own teenage daughter to visit the nun presumed to be on her death bed. Sister Leopolda has been tormenting everyone with her incessant banging of an iron spoon on the metal bed frame. Marie decides the old nun must be insane and that one last visit will show her how much Marie had been able to improve her station. During the visit, Sister Leopolda insults Marie, calling her impoverished and destined for hell. The older woman produces her spoon and begins banging. In the deafening racket, Marie has a clear thought. "And then I knew what I had come there for. It came to me with the touch of iron. I wanted that spoon." (*Love Medicine* 156) The two struggle for possession of the iron spoon and Leopolda nearly manages to deal a blow with it to Marie's head. In the end, Marie lets go and realizes "there was nothing I could do after hating her all these years" (*Love Medicine* 158).

These incidents are profound in a number of ways. It is not revealed in any of the novels that Marie is aware she is Pauline's illegitimate daughter and the product of an "illicit" affair with the older and alcoholic Napoleon Morrisey [5]. Pauline's own struggles with identity have led her to acts of seemingly irrational behavior, including resisting Marie's birth to such a degree that intervention was required in the form of "home-made" forceps -- the iron spoons. While Pauline called for death for herself and

her child throughout labor, Bernadette uses ropes to tie Pauline's hands and feet to the bed. With the spoons wired together at their handles, " she managed to put the spoons to the child's head and wrenched her into the world" (*Tracks* 145). Aethestically and symbolically, Erdrich uses the image of the spoon to create a sense of closure for the two women and to suggest ideas of identity as self-controlled as well as imposed. This attempt at closure is a necessary response to the forces demanding a variety of cultural changes. Conformity to white Christian standards placed Pauline on the margins of society. Her needs to be recognized and accepted lead her to a number of desperate and even violent acts.

For Sister Leopolda, the goal was always to be white, and she carried with her, through her teen years at least, the notion that what was expected of her and what was acceptable was to be white. Marie's struggle seems to be somewhat the reverse-- from denying what many saw as poor mixed-blood/white in favor of proud Ojibwa. The struggle over the spoon then becomes something of a struggle over who establishes identity, the mother or the daughter, the white church or tribal community and government. The birth "marked" Marie in several forms. To Pauline, a baby who breathed air was fallen and sin marked the infant's temples with the "Devil's thumbprints." To Bernadette, these were merely the marks made by the spoons, but it is no coincidence that years later, Sister Leopolda tries to strike Marie's head with the spoon instead of bestowing a blessing as she had on Zelda's head. For Marie, her birth marked her a poor mixed-blood, a nothing who had to devote her life to rising above the status of a "no-good Lazarre."

The character development of Pauline as an individual mirrors the experience of many Native Americans faced with significant acculturating forces such as those of colonialism and Christianity. Even where acculturation is willingly embraced, there are associated stresses. Family or community members may fail to understand the need for one individual's evolution or be unable to assist that individual in achieving what are culturally unfamiliar goals. We may never know Pauline's "true" motives but, given her thoughts in *Tracks,* she is distressed by what she calls her invisibility. She becomes increasingly jealous when she observes the men of Kozka's Meats watching Fleur, but who fail to notice her own presence. In Pauline's first narrative chapter, she begins by describing her younger cousin Russell, but it becomes clear it is her own condition that interests her:

> Russell and I were different. He never sat to rest, never fell to wishing he owned a pair of shoes like those that passed on the feet of white girls, shoes of hard red leather decorated with cut holes. He never listened to what those girls said about him, or imagined them doubling back to catch him by the hand. In truth, I hardly rinsed through the white girls' thoughts. (*Tracks* 15)

Given the examples of Marie and Sister Leopolda, we see they are indeed switching between their tribal community influences, which maintain both Shamanic elements and the Catholic influences of the colonizer. Erdrich also requires that readers must negotiate with their own reactions to these mother/daughter encounters. Frequently, my students label Sister Leopolda as crazy. In light of Kathleen Earle's study, this is an expected reaction. In her 1998 study published in *Social Work Research,* Earle states:

> Attitudes toward what constitutes good or poor mental health differed significantly between white and American Indian respondents on seven specific items and on one of the subscales, "unconventional reality"...the American Indian respondents reported that having visions, seeing things others do not see, and guiding one's life according to spirits are related to either poor or good mental health. White recipients reported these statements were indicative of poor mental health. (Earle 94)

However, given the persistence of Pauline/Sister Leopolda through five novels, it is highly doubtful that Erdrich perceives the character as merely crazy or deranged. In fact, she plays with the ambiguities of insanity and religious mysticism. The girl Pauline sees the water monster Misshepeshu in Matchimanito, as well as the Virgin, as in this pair of visions from *Tracks:*

> Our mothers warn us that we'll think he's handsome, for he appears with green eyes, copper skin, a mouth as tender as a child's. But if you fall into his arms, he sprouts horns, fangs, claws, fins...he takes the body of a lion, a fat brown worm, or a familiar man. (11)

Pauline is restating a story as told to her by her mother, but this description comes very early in Pauline's narrative establishing a fundamental component of her personality. Much later in *Tracks*, Pauline will see the water monster herself in the form of a man who is very familiar to her. In this second significant vision, Pauline sees a member of the Christian Holy Family:

> I kept my place, kneeling in the Virgin's sight. Our gazes were locked now, and no one noticed when I put out my hand and scooped the hardened tears that lay scattered at Her feet. They resembled ordinary pebbles of frozen quartz, the kind that children collect and save. (95)

Pauline's dualities appear in all the phases of her life, manifesting themselves physically and psychologically (which should also imply spiritually and emotionally),

and are presented as causes of persistent pain at several points in her life. Pauline is consistently portrayed as a personality struggling with identity and belonging, both issues embued with strong conflicts along the lines of religion, family, and sexuality. As a girl, she is recognized and self-identifies as Indian. As a young woman, she begins to reject her Indianness and passes as white throughout her adult years. It is not clear how many in her community also accepted her white identity, although the sisters in the convent at the time of her joining are satisfied with her claims of white parentage. In her advanced years, she is widely regarded by the community as Indian and there is even talk of her becoming the first mixed-blood saint. The character Pauline/Sister Leopolda experiences pain of unresolved identity, but is also frustrated in her efforts to resolve it. She becomes defensive and attacks what she perceives to be threatening to her preferred identity. Pauline's transformation of identity fulfilled her emotional needs for acceptance but she remained vulnerable to the "talk" of the Indian community. Just as Pauline becomes the white Sister Leopolda, her Indian relatives become the enemy, inferior beings made in the Devil's likeness. Thus, Sister Leopolda's harsh treatment of her daughter Marie illustrates how threatened she is of the little girl who represents not only her past, but her connections to her Indianness. Reflecting back on her pregnancy in *Tracks,* Pauline states, "I even knew the sex of it, the name. Marie...named for the Virgin. I knew different. Satan was the one who had pinned me with his horns" (133). For Sister Leopolda, and then for Marie, being Indian is being "bedeviled," their own family version of internalized oppression.

The process of emotionally and psychologically separating from one's original identity is itself significant and worthy of closer examination. In *Tracks,* Pauline undertakes the process by denying her Indianness. This denial leads to two significant acts which can be categorized within the dual codes of Christian versus shamanic religion and nuclear family versus tribal kinship systems. First was denial of her living family. From a semi-dream state, she accepts a new personal reality of a dead family who were actually white, but who left her to be raised in an Indian community:

> One night of deepest cold He sat in the moonlight, on the stove, and looked down at me and smiled in the spill of His radiance and explained. He said I was not whom I had supposed. I was an orphan and my parents had died in grace, and also, despite my deceptive features, I was not one speck of Indian but wholly white. He Himself had dark hair although His eyes were blue as bottleglass, so I believed. I wept. When He came off the stove, his breath was warm against my cheeks. He pressed the tears away and told me I was chosen to serve. (*Tracks* 137)

Her second act of identity creation within the code switching model is her recreation of Jesus' forty days in the desert. She takes a boat to the center of the lake and resolves to stay there:

> I was safe, at least left to my purpose, which was to suffer in the desert forty days, forty nights, or as long as the patches lasted on this boat. I had determined to wait for my tempter, the one who enslaved the ignorant, who damned them with belief. My resolve was to transfix him with the cross. (*Tracks* 200)

While her metaphor of trial in the desert is Christian, Pauline's motives are ambiguous. She speaks of tempter and enslavement of the ignorant. Is she speaking on behalf of others or of herself? A number of questions arise on this note. Is the tempter the Devil, Jesus, Misshepeshu or a more earthly figure such as Nanapush or Napoleon?

Eventually, the boat drifts ashore and she encounters her tempter in the form of her former lover and kills him. After Napoleon's death, Pauline is shocked at her deed:

> I felt a growing horror and trembled all through my limbs until it suddenly was revealed to me that I had committed no sin. There was no guilt in this matter, no fault. How could I have known what body the devil would assume? He had taunted me, lured me, shred blankets in a heap. He had appeared as the water thing, glass breastplate and burning iron rings. (*Tracks* 203)

After hiding the body in the woods, she rolls naked in mud, feces, plants, and feathers to entirely cover her skin -- a "rebirth" as a thing made from God's handiwork, a nature-being. "Then I stood. I was a poor and noble creature now, dressed in earth like Christ, in furs like Moses Pillager, draped in snow or simple air. God would love me better as a lily of the field, though no such flower as I had yet appeared on reservation ground" (*Tracks* 203).

These two acts make it possible for her to join the convent as a white woman, although over time, it appears there was always the knowledge on the part of the order that she was not the white woman she claimed to be. Her use of the phrase, "lily of the field" could also be an attempt to align her image with that of an earlier Indian girl who sought a life in the church, Kateri Tekakwitha known as the "Lily of the Mohawks."[6] Still, at the time of her joining, it was important to the order that all members be of a certain ancestry:

> For one day during supper Sister Anne announced that Superior had received word that our order would admit no Indian girls, and that I should go to her and reveal my true background. Which I did. And Superior was delighted that the hindrance was removed, since it was plain to see that I abided in His mystical body. She had never known a

> novice so serious and devoted, or so humble. I swelled on that and smiled. *(Tracks* 138)

Erdrich uses the dualities in Pauline/Sister Leopolda to comment on the human experience of pain. Pauline's creative stories, her ambiguous visions, her outright lies, her hunger for attention, and even her lust can be seen through two lenses. One is that of the individual acting out of pain, desperate to know herself, to be free of the pain. The other is the Trickster, always looking out for the best opportunity for self-gratification.

Tricksters, according to Gerald Vizenor, are "androgenous, comic healers and liberators in literature" (Vizenor 188). Traditional trickster figures abound in tribal cultures around the world and a variety exist among the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Folklorist Andrew Wiget acknowledges the Trickster as difficult to define. "The nature of the character conveniently called the Trickster is in fact an elusive one. The ambiguity in his nature and the source of his power are a mystery to his creators and creditors" (Wiget 15). Traditional trickster narratives can bring about positive changes for the people. Important concepts fundamental to a tribal community's understanding of itself are frequently received via the foolishness of a trickster. For a literary character to behave like a trickster creates a number of interpretive challenges that fly directly into the face of a declaration that character is "crazy" or insane. Therefore, we cannot discount Pauline's narratives simply because she problematizes that same narrative. Wiget elaborates:

> His behavior is always scandalous. His actions were openly acknowledged as madness by the elders who performed the stories with

> obvious relish on many winter evenings. Yet these same respected voices would solemnly assert the sacredness of these very tales, which always involved the most cavalier treatment of conventionally unassailable material like sexuality or religion. To many Westerners reading thee stories for the first time, it seemed at best a puzzling inconsistency and at worst a barbaric mystery that in many tribal mythologies this idiot was in some unaccountable way also the culture hero. (Wiget 16)

Wiget uses the male pronouns in his text but elsewhere notes there is a peculiar bias among early researchers, perpetuated today, that tricksters are male. In such light, many descriptions of the trickster personality serve to limit our understanding as much as they do to expand our understanding. Vizenor takes issue with descriptions of tricksters that serve to isolate what he calls a "comic holotrope" from its tribal and cultural context. "The Trickster in modernist literature was invented to be an individual, or at least the metaphor of individualism; this image supported the notion of the vanishing tribes" (Vizenor 193).

Based solely on the act that Pauline/Sister Leopolda is the only characters to appear in all five inter-related novels, we cannot deny her as a significant character to the series and to the community. However, placing her in the category of "Culture Hero" does cause one to take pause. Still, it is undeniable that she does posses some strange power as evidenced in her excessive denial of physical pain, the phenomenal strength that she draws upon to strangle Napoleon, and even as an aged woman, to strike with the intent to kill Marie with an iron spoon. Finally, there are the mentions in several of the novels of sacrificial acts that are cause for some to place her in the same realm as the saints. To understand Pauline/Sister Leopolda as a trickster, we need to

understand Erdrich as concerned with issues of tribal and cultural survival in the face of colonization and who also sees the trickster as someone capable of calling those same powerful forces into question.

Tiffany Ana Lopez explores the feminine side of tricksters in an article exploring the works of an early twentieth-century Chicana writer. "María Cristina Mena: Turn-of-the-Century La Malinche, and Other Tales of Cultural (Re)Construction" offers a number of points about tricksters, especially those who happen to be mothers, that are particularly helpful in our understanding Pauline/Sister Leopolda. Lopez explains tricksters and trickster tales as:

> . . . the means by which the underrepresented engage in a politics of visibility by asserting – if only to their own cultural group – the significance of their culture, its interpretations of history, its methods of survival outside of the hegemonic systems that seek to contain them. The points of mediation, the trickster's methods of cultural translation, are her tricks, the turn of her story, the twist of her tale, the skeleton key for the cultural insider. She is multilingual and double-voiced, a speaker of many languages. [. . .] Trickster tales are defined by their function in the interpretation of culture. We can't define a story as a trickster tale until we describe how that tale "demonstrate[s] the artificiality of culture itself. Thus, trickster tales make "available for discussion the very basis of social order, individual and community identity. In essence, they delineate cultural survival in a world that threatens one's very existence as an individual and as a communal being. (Lopez 21)

Lopez's description fits Pauline/Sister Leopolda nicely at several places. Lopez states, "[Tricksters] want and need a way to assert a politics of visibility, at the same time, by virtue of the system they are rendered invisible" (29). Pauline is greatly concerned with her visibility in the non-Indian community and manipulates her personal history, her "twists of the tale," to highlight what is desired by the colonial and church

powers. On the issue of "multilingual and double-voiced," Pauline is at least bi-lingual and is certainly not concerned with a more metaphorical multiplicity of voices and stories to serve her own ends.

Lopez, like the author Mena, sees La Malinche and La Llorona as horror figures in the folk narratives of the southwest and Mexico. They are understood as such for having killed or brought violence upon their own children. Here is certainly another valuable point of comparison to Sister Leopolda who, at several points, took advantage of opportunities to harm her daughter Marie. As Lopez points out, these tales serve to instruct in "the terms of cultural survival" and that trickster narratives develop when the existence of a culture is threatened" (Lopez 22). The question remains then, what aspects of cultural survival are at stake that cause Pauline to act violently?

In Lopez's close reading of the La Llorona tales, she describes two strands of narrative. In the first, La Llorona has children with a man of higher social class. He is Spanish to her Indian ancestry. One day, it is revealed that he will wed a woman of the same class/ancestry as himself and La Llorona kills her children in rage (and pain of loss). The second strand extends an Aztec myth concerning an Aztec mother, who "knowing of the Spanish conquest, kills her children rather than see them live a life of domination. In both strands of the tale, the murder is an act of resistance, and La Llorona a tactician who operates within a delineated space as a model of adaptive behavior" (Lopez 26).

Another element to Lopez's description of the female trickster concerns gender politics and male oppression. Lopez sees a variety of cultural forces and narratives that

enforce male domination over women and deny women their anger. Through sexualizing women, men contain women and deny them any number of emotions as "inappropriate" and this in turn leads to a "rape culture" in which women need to be controlled. To review Pauline's life, she is ignored by the same men who harass and then rape Fleur while Pauline watches. Pauline continues to have difficulty attracting to her the men she desires and becomes involved with the alcoholic Napoleon out of more desperation than real affection. She becomes pregnant but continues to feel invisible and increasingly angry. In *Tales of Burning Love,* Eleanor comes to the conclusion that the elderly Sister Leopolda has a unique perspective on her life in the church. Eleanor states:

> ". . . I was married. I lived with a man who wanted everything from me, who was absent half the time, who loved other women, who claimed to love me, but allowed terrible things to happen and could never be counted on."
> "Then you've had practice."
> "In what?"
> "Loving God."
> Eleanor fell silent, wishing for her notebook. *Loving God. So to her He's a faithless husband."* (*Tales of Burning Love* 51).

Pauline/Sister Leopolda appears to have much to make her angry but is denied her anger throughout her life. In this context, the violence she enacts on Marie could be in response to either of the narrative strands as identified by Lopez. Pauline tries to kill her fetus as the response to Napoleon's hold on her. With the infant Marie transferred to Bernadette, Pauline kills Napoleon himself, even finding a "twist of the tale," God's absolution for her behavior, as her justification. As Sister Leopolda, she enacts the second narrative strand when she tries to abuse Marie with the iron spoon, and disabuse

Marie of notions that her life is best spent in support of Nector – another faithless husband.

The possibility that Pauline functions as a trickster within Erdrich's fiction raises another issue concerning a pair of dual codes and an act of code-switching Rainwater does not address. This code pair is the choice of English vs. a native language. Certainly the texts themselves are written in English, with occasional phrases in Michif or Chippewa. The seriousness of choosing a language is subtly embedded in the exchange between particular characters. Rainwater acknowledges in Erdrich's works a pairing of codes she labels privileged narrative voices versus dialogical or polyphonic narrative. Throughout her five novels, Erdrich creates a sense of the community through the multiple voices of its inhabitants. However, a cataloguing of the speakers and non-speakers of Ojibwa reveals an interesting clue to Erdrich's motives as a Native American writer. For instance, Moses, Fleur, Eli, and Gerry, the first three of which are of Pauline's generation, never tell their own stories. Erdrich seems to reserve the act of telling (via the novel) to those who are willing to speak in English. The above characters present plenty of evidence in the action of the novels that they are capable of understanding and speaking in English, but they choose (or Erdrich chooses) not to engage that language to speak of themselves. Their act is all the more compelling when compared to Nanapush. He is older than any of the non-speakers, tells his own life story and related events, but also remarks that he does not write his real names, whether Ojibwa or English, so as to prevent the loss of power that would inevitably result. He acknowledges he is an oddity, and somewhat feared in that he can read and write in

English and supposedly understand the powers of the whites which are so threatening to the Ojibwa. He is an especially compelling character when examined in the light of the Ojibwa Trickster for whom Nanapush is named. As such, we might expect both mischief and creative acts from him, and while he appears only in *Tracks,* he meets those expectations. Pauline's oral narrative is interwoven with Nanapush's throughout *Tracks*. Noting this, some questions emerge concerning issues of language and concepts of traditional culture for the characters of the novels. If refusing to narrate in English becomes one of the identifiers of traditional behavior on the part of this Ojibwa community, then a compelling exception to that rule is tricksterism. Nanapush admits to such behavior, but Pauline does not. On the issue of telling, Lopez remarks on the parallel act of writing one's story. "[Trickster's] writing is appropriated into the existing system of images rather than read against it. A trickster discourse is not naturally read; one has to be trained to read it. What is naturalized is the culturally constructed system of dominating images" (Lopez 29). In this light, the narratives of both Nanapush and Pauline must be examined as working against the system, those forces of commerce, culture and religion that threaten tribal integrity.

Possible Tricksterism serves as one piece of the puzzle in determining reasons for character language choice. Other clues may be found in the texts based on use of ritual, types of food and the processes of its procurement, how kinship ties are recognized, and gambling. I see a spectrum that allows for different behaviors among Erdrich's characters. Concerning identity, some aspects are chosen, others are imposed. English is an imposed language, but a few characters appear to restrict their use of it.

Our first clue to this possibility is that some characters are not heard from despite their importance in one or more novels. This requires some speculation, however, assuming one's choice of language may indicate, among a variety of motives, a form of resistance to colonial pressure. If, for the sake of this investigation, we can accept this motive, some of Erdrich's characters refuse to speak of their lives in order to avoid being misunderstood, to reinforce an Ojibwa identity and to distance themselves from the English-reading audience for cultural and political reasons.

The behavioral spectrum is composed of those who freely speak English as the language their stories are told in, such as Pauline, Lulu, Marie, Lipsha and Albertine. Those who never tell include Fleur, Moses, Eli, and Gerry. Situated at various points between the poles are Nanapush, who describes his self-imposed limitations such as withholding his written name in any language, and characters such as June, Gordie and King, whose emotional suffering thwarts organization of their respective stories.

Recalling Scarry, there is great difficulty speaking for oneself when in profound pain. Thus, the assistance of another who can "speak on behalf of pain" is required:

> Because the person in pain is ordinarily so bereft of the resources of speech, it is not surprising that the language for pain should sometimes be brought into being by those who are not themselves in pain but who speak *on behalf of* those who are. Though there are very great impediments to expressing another's sentient distress, so are there also very great reasons why one might want to do so, and thus there come to be avenues by which this most radically private of experiences begins to enter the realm of public discourse. (Scarry 6).

This speaking on behalf of another appears frequently in the five Erdrich novels. Lulu and Nanapush share the tellings for Moses. Fleur's stories come from Nanapush,

Pauline, and Lulu. Eli's story is recalled by Nanapush, Pauline and Albertine. Gerry, the son of the loquacious Lulu and the silent Moses, does not narrate, but we learn his story from Albertine and his son Lipsha.

The significant pain of each of the traditional characters can be ascertained in one or more of the novels, and each has been subjected to traumas so as to be recognized as characters suffering from soul wounds. Moses nearly died in childhood from one of the many epidemics that killed large numbers of Indian people. He was spared, but according to Nanapush, the treatment his mother procured for him "bent his mind" *(Love Medicine* 75). As a result, he wore his clothing backwards, was referred to by a name other than his "real" one, and lived alone on a island with cats as his only company. From a clinical perspective, his retreat is logical. The force of enculturation "is such a powerful process that health crises often lead even the most acculturated people to return to their original cultural patterns" (qtd in Loustaunau & Sobo 12). Lulu recalls seeing Moses when she was a child:

> One summer long ago, when I was a little girl, he came to Nanapush and the two sat beneath the arbor, talking only in the old language, arguing the medicine ways, throwing painted bones and muttering over what they had lost or gained. (*Love Medicine* 73)

Even while aspects of Moses' lifestyle place him outside the norm for both the Ojibwa and non-Indian community, Moses becomes a standard of sorts for purist, traditional behavior. He is recognized by the others in the community as living a lifestyle based on old tribal concepts and is accepted for being either unwilling or fearful of joining the community off his island. For Erdrich, strict adherence to the old

ways becomes isolating and thus another form of loss as the meaning behind the old ways becomes foreign and lost to successive generations shaped by colonialist values. There is irony here as well, for those who prefer their traditional language retain one sense of community, but become inaccessible to the larger, assimilated community.

Fleur is frequently compared to Moses for reasons of kinship and lifestyle. Fleur lost her entire family to another of those epidemics and was raped by white man/men while working in the town of Argus. Each of these experiences is sufficiently traumatic to inflict a soul wound. Unfortunately, she seems to barely recover some balance from one when another trauma falls. Her second child dies at birth and her family landholdings are lost to the timber company.

Eli's loss is most overtly described in the novels as that of land loss. After losing much of the family's land holdings, his mother gave one son (Nector) to the white government and school but kept one (Eli) in order to have one on "both sides" in order to assure some continued family status. It can be inferred then that Eli also suffers from cultural disintegration, for even while he appears to have been the personal winner in having learned the ways of the bush, he had to observe the difficult choices and sacrifices his family had to make to ensure survival.

Gerry is the surprise on this list. As the youngest of the four, he probably has the least memory or experience with nineteenth century traditionalism and is clearly seen by the authorities of Argus as criminal. He repeatedly escapes his prisons and is repeatedly caught. According to Albertine, "He was mainly in the penitentiary for breaking out of it, anyway, since for his crime of assault and battery he had received

three years and time off for good behavior. He just never managed to serve those three years or behave well" (*Love Medicine* 199). The comedy of this statement is challenged by the reality of minority men in American prisons. The rates of African-American, Native American and Hispanic men in prison are well above the rates for white men. Various reports place the number of Native American men incarcerated to be anywhere from two to ten times the number of white men. "Native Americans have historically been considered to have the highest arrest and crime rates of any ethnic group in the United States...these high crime rates have remained constant for the last forty years" (Grobsmith 93). The Bureau of Justice Statistics report states:

> An estimated 63,000 American Indians are under the care, custody, or control of the criminal justice system on an average day -- about 4% of the American Indian population age 18 or older. In 1997 about 16,000 American Indians were held in local jails -- a rate of 1,083 per 100,000 adults, the highest of any racial group. (Greenfield and Smith viii)

Gerry's proxy speaker probably describes the feelings of many of these imprisoned Native men:

> (Gerry) simply knew he did not belong in prison, although he admitted it had done him some good when he was younger, hadn't known how to be a criminal, and so had taken lessons from professionals. Now that he knew all there was to know, however, he couldn't see the point of staying in a prison and taking the same lessons over and over. "A hate factory," he called it once, and said it manufactured black poisons in his stomach that he couldn't get rid of although he poked a finger down his throat and retched and tried to be a clean and normal person in spite of everything. (*Love Medicine* 201)

Regardless of the differences in their experiences, it can still be said, using the concepts from Duran and Duran, that each of these characters is suffering from the

direct consequences of colonialism. Their pain is not easily spoken of, therefore they choose not to, especially when the audience who must hear it is a colonial audience and the language the stories must be told in is the colonizer's language. Thus, we need to realize we are fortunate to hear these stories at all through the voices of narrators on behalf of pain. That Scarry notes a few institutional models, such as Amnesty International or a judicial system for speaking on behalf of pain, should also remind us there can be immense differences in power between speakers and listeners. Such differences can reflect unresolved circumstances between victim and perpetrator that are in fact the same parties with disparate powers. However, for readers, to be denied a story is a form of insult. It is an "undeclared" declaration that as non-Indian readers, we are unworthy or unmannered, rude and incapable of a proper response. Therefore, another significance of Erdrich's selective narration is its traditional approach to handling a rude audience. In Native American fashion, readers will be ignored until the pain of ostracism is realized and reader behavior is altered accordingly. Herein is the first example I offer of a writer "doing something directly to the audience" as a means of drawing attention to audience behavior, especially those that impart the community of the author. For a sensitive reader, the withholding of stories creates a shock of realization of being left out and it improves the potential for greater awareness of another's, the Native Americans', pain.

Another way in which Erdrich educates readers about the pain felt by Native Americans is to create characters who have symbolic functions. Again, Pauline serves in this category as a device to raise issues of self-esteem, sexuality, identity, the power

of the church, and the destruction of traditional belief systems. However, it is Karl Adare who is an excellent example of an individual narrator transformed into symbol and political commentary. He is not Indian, nor is he someone with long or respected standing in the community. If Erdrich is concerned with community and cultural healing, then the inclusion of Karl includes the colonizers themselves in the processes that examine pain and its causes.

Karl appears exclusively in the novel *The Beet Queen* as one of the non-Indians whose families have connections, primarily economic, to the community of Argus. As a teenager, he is abandoned by his grieving mother. Overwhelmed, he jumps aboard a freight train and shortly thereafter has a sexual encounter with an older, opportunistic man who is seasoned at riding the rails. Karl's soul wound is the loss of his parents, compounded by an inability to find stable guidance that would have assisted him in developing his personality, character, and sexuality. Karl eventually joins a Catholic seminary, but he leaves within a short period of time. Erdrich maintains a certain ambiguity about Karl's leaving the church although, she suggests he was expelled for his sexual misconduct, apparently homosexual in nature:

> I had a great talent for obedience. I was in love with the picture of myself in a slim black cassock, and felt that the green lawns of the seminary and white brick of the chapels set me off to good advantage. While I walked the grounds, reading my daily lessons, I was exposed to many eyes. Between the lines of sacred texts, I rendezvoused with thin hard hoboes who had slept in the bushes. Ghostly, rank in their own sweat and travel dust, they saw me as a pure black flame. They could not resist me. I always knew that if I kept my eyes moving strictly down the page of print, if I paused in the darkest corners of the landscape, if I closed my eyes as if in communion with someone greater, they would come. They would force me to worship them like an animal. I would

> fall. I would burn and burn until by grace I was consumed. (*The Beet Queen* 55)

After leaving the church, Karl becomes a door-to-door salesman and a sexual opportunist who manipulates his customers. He reveals no particular preference, engaging in both heterosexual and homosexual encounters as they become available to him. In any case, he uses his customers' vulnerabilities to make himself appear sympathetic and to complete a sale. The scene Erdrich gives us of this process is through Celestine's perspective, and while Celestine recognizes that Karl is indeed "working her," she buys some of his cheap knives after having moved through sympathy, guilt, and then pity for his condition. Moreover, he apparently has a diminished capacity to respond to any of his partners with the intimacy for which they hope and yearn. He stays for a short period with Celestine and also with Wallace Pfef, but he eventually abandons each in turn.

Karl's limited ability to achieve intimacy with Celestine causes him to leave her when she becomes pregnant. He offers no indication of how or when he will ever give any parental or financial support. Thus there is an intergenerational consequence of Karl *becoming* the abandoning parent. Fortunately for the child, nick-named Dot, the damage is lessened by the "making of family" that results when Karl's other abandoned lover, Wallace Pfef, steps in as a surrogate parent to assist Celestine. These characters create another pattern of code-switching possibilities with identities as gay vs. straight, white vs. Indian, biological family vs. blended family.

Erdrich's presentation of Karl reveals him to be struggling with issues of identity, but she does not apply a sexual identity label to him. Hence, we see him in a variety of sexual encounters, but we cannot say with any certainty that he is gay, straight, or bisexual. Karl's short stint in the seminary conditions him to associate his sexuality with spirituality. One can presume Karl's need for guidance, structure, parenting, draws him to a life within the Catholic priesthood, but his sexual drives place him in direct conflict with church expectations. Like Pauline, Karl sometimes resists a sympathetic reading. One meaningful way to understand his behavior relies on the acceptance of the premise that traumatized victims will in turn victimize. However, in another similarity to Pauline/Leopolda, Karl is placed into this community by Erdrich as another means to call attention to the traumas caused by an environment that so openly favors Christianity, that to deny it is to accept severe oppression.

In addition to the direct losses of religious knowledge sustained as a result of enforced Christianization, there were other consequences for tribal people. The close working relationship between the institutions of churches, governments and schools led to missionary and then boarding schools for Native American children. Erdrich creates impressions of these schools as difficult places in her poem "Indian Boarding School: The Runaways," as well as through the experiences of Lulu in *Love Medicine.* Like the unknown children of her poem, Lulu tries to run, but she is caught and returned to the school where punishment is meted out. This is evident in the last stanza of the poem:

> All runaways wear dresses, long green ones,
> The color you would think shame was. We scrub
> The sidewalks down because it's shameful work.
> Our brushes cut the stone in watered arcs

and in the soak frail outlines shiver clear
a moment, things us kids presses on the dark
face before it hardened, pale, remembering
delicate old injuries, the spines of names and leaves. (*Jacklight* 11)

As has been quoted previously in this chapter, Nanapush describes to Lulu the events of her childhood that precipitated her being sent to the boarding school. Her mother's fear for their safety caused her to place Lulu in the government vehicle, an act Lulu struggled with her entire life as an act of abandonment. Nanapush succeeds in getting her returned to the reservation, but she comes back changed:

> You were the last to emerge. You stepped gravely down, round-faced and alert, so tall we hardly knew to pick you out from the others...Your braids were cut, your hair in a thick ragged bowl, and your dress was a shabby and smoldering orange, a shameful color like a half-doused flame, visible for miles, that any child who tried to run away from the boarding school was forced to wear. The dress was tight, too small, straining across your shoulders. Your knees were scabbed from the punishment of scrubbing long sidewalks, and knobbed from kneeling hours on broomsticks. But your grin was bold as your mother's, white with anger that vanished when you saw us waiting. (*Tracks* 226)

Through these descriptions of punishment and an emphasis on shame, we can ascertain Erdrich is critical of these boarding school policies. What she does not mention directly is the sexual abuse that also took place at many boarding schools both government-run and church-operated. A number of Native Americans have described these abuses and, in some recent cases, charges have been filed both in Canada. In several of his editorial columns and essays, Tim Giago (Lakota) has addressed the history of these schools. His own experiences are with the mission schools established by the Catholic Church on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. He was a

student in the mission for over ten years and has written poetry as well as essays describing his treatment and residual anger. In one recent essay, he writes:

> Boarding schools operated by different church organizations and by the federal government in the United States have a similar history of child abuse that pre-dates that of Canada. In fact, Canada learned many lessons by observing the "kill the Indian, save the child" mentality of their cousins in the lower 48. ("Indian Lawsuits")

Part of his reason for writing has been the increase in charges of physical and sexual child abuse filed against four of Canada's mainstream Christian churches: Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and United Church. Giago is also concerned with the legacy of such abuses. In another recent essay, he writes:

> I believe that many of the psychological conditions still prevalent in Indian country are the direct result of the residential and boarding-school experiment.
>
> Imagine if you will what the consequences would be if an invading power took at least 90 percent of the children of America and placed them in residential schools where they were forced to give up their religion, language and culture -- and, on top of that trauma, added psychological, physical, spiritual and sexual abuse to the mix.
>
> ...Those children exposed to such abuses would become adults. They go out into the world as damaged goods. If they had all lost their self-esteem, they would try to regain it by abusing themselves with alcohol and drugs. If they had been badly abused physically and sexually, they would become the abusers. ("Aboriginal Canadians")

Giago's essays quickly sketch the process of trauma becoming an intergenerational problem. He also refuses to accept the apologies of several of these churches made to the aboriginal residents of Canada as sufficient and advocates the filing of more such lawsuits in the United States. It could be inferred that the necessity for these apologies is driven partly by the fact that more abuse victims are coming

forward, and a re-examination of memoirs and family lore is revealing a large and persistent pattern of abuse that transects location, time period, or denomination. Another fictionalized narrative of sexual abuse, both heterosexual and homosexual, is the 1989 film, directed by Bruce Pittman, entitled *Where the Spirit Lives.* Set in 1937, the film depicts the kidnapping of young Indian children who are placed in one of Canada's boarding schools and where they are subjected to a variety of abuses in the name of cultural assimilation and education (Chisolm).

While Karl is not Indian, nor involved with the boarding schools for the Ojibwa children, he is, however, a victim of sexual abuse, and as a result of his trauma, he becomes a victimizer. He is also attracted to the priesthood of the Catholic Church. Erdrich uses an oblique method here to challenge the church once again. If Karl is what Giago has termed "damaged goods," then how did the church assist him in overcoming his trauma? Since Karl persisted in his behavior of engaging in opportunistic sexual encounters, perhaps with overtones of using his position as a member of the church to assist him in gaining those opportunities, how did the church help him find peace of mind, or was he merely asked to leave? Erdrich's method here is two-fold. First, she makes it understood that anyone, regardless of ethnicity, can become a victim of sexual and religious predation. Second, she reveals how easy it is for a victim to become a victimizer, even within a religious institution. The extension of this line of reasoning is that Indian children were harmed and we need to take a look at any social, religious or economic system which produces traumtised victims capable of perpetuating their pain. In light of this, and Giago's criticism of those who wish to avoid any contemporary

responsibility for historical actions, Erdrich challenges her readers to consider their own roles in maintaining these systems.

Pauline and Karl can be seen as characters whose behaviors must be considered in the contexts of their individual lives rather than individuals deserving automatic condemnation. Through them, Erdrich reveals her sophisticated understanding of human psychology which includes the role pain can play in shaping an individual's behavior. The inability of Pauline and Karl to recognize the personal boundaries of others does in fact reveal the intense desire to have personal needs met at other's expense. While their behavior is at times merely aggravating, the more serious of their acts reminds us that even members of the church can be predators. In a more positive light, these characters can also be understood as role models and as extenstions of the clown or contrary figure promoting an individualistic perspective in an oppressive social environment. An article published in *The Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* advocates using the images of the clown or contrary in a clinical setting with Native American clients. Doing so emphasizes the idiosyncratic possibility of the individual that allows for an altered, and presumably positive, change in the relationship between individual and community.

While overlooking what appears to be a preference for the individual over the communal in Herring's article, there are some compelling ideas here that the behaviors of Pauline and Karl serve to call attention to greater problems for a communal and cultural good.

Part of the church's role has been to establish and adjudicate what is "saintly" behavior and what is "obscene" behavior, despite the different cultural contexts. Much debate has been centered on the issue of sex, such as sexual behavior or sexual identity. When combined with issues of the spirit such as one's own sense of spirituality, the debate concerning "appropriate" or church-sanctioned behavior intensifies. Erdrich points out the contested areas via her characters who personify the views of the church pitted against those who prefer the more earthy ways of traditional Ojibwa. In this case, Nanapush and Pauline illustrate the Catholic versus Ojibwa views of life and the spirit:

> If he was there in those winter days when I came to visit, he tried to lift my habit with his walking stick and glimpse what I wore beneath. He also wanted to see my hairshirt, insisted on it no matter how many times I denied I wore one. But at last, in a distracted moment, I confessed that I had made a set of underwear from potato sacks, and when I wore it the chafing reminded me of Christ's sacrifice [. . .] He suggested after mock-serious thought that I might secretly enjoy the scratch of the rough material against my thighs.
>
> "Like the beard of a Frenchman," I thought I heard him mumble.
>
> I spoke high and loud. "Suffering is a gift to God! I have given away everything I owned. All that I have left is my body's comfort and pleasure, and I give that last pearl to Him now."
>
> "A pearl without any price," Nanapush agreed, or disagreed, leaning on his stick...
>
> "And what about the fruit without price?" he soon wondered. "Did you give that up too?"
>
> I was stern. "You mean Christ. He dwells within us, He is the fruit of the Virgin's womb."
>
> "No," he said, leaning toward me with a false frown. "Not that fruit. The cherry." (*Tracks* 143 - 144)

Even in Nanapush's burlesque humor, there is an underlying concern for Pauline's behavior. Sexuality and spirituality conflict consistently in American literature, the result of a long history of European Christian explorers and colonists

trying to reconcile their own theological crises while imposing their values upon the American landscape. Richard Slotkin notes that all colonial leaders shared the problem of maintaining some sort of psychological discipline that kept their followers from straying in search of their own sensual pleasures so readily available in the New World:

> The remythologization of the West began with attempts by French and Spanish Jesuits and English Puritans to order the chaos of the New World and its citizens by providing the colonists with a sense of a shared mission -- a belief that their presence in the New World was decreed from above with definite ends in view and that deviation from those ends was equivalent to mortal sin. (Slotkin 37)

Thus, a notion of obscenity permeates the relationship between white colonizers and Native Americans which describes the world of the Indian as godless, cannibalistic, unconcerned with matters of family or community, and pursuant of sexual and other desires at will and without social constraints:

> The Puritan's attitude toward the way in which myths express man's passional nature is a good index to their sexual attitudes. Sexual expression was synonymous with the sin of lust, save where such expression was placed under patriarchal authority in marriage and where the passional element was repressed in favor of more reasoned and social behaviors. (Slotkin 47)

This was in direct contrast to the Indians who allowed more sexual freedoms for a variety of social and survival reasons. Even where taboos existed concerning adultery, there were also means by which consenting marriage partners could dissolve that marriage at will. While these more relaxed views of sexuality were practical to living in the environment of the Americas, the colonists often compared such behaviors

to those of the lower animal forms and thus beneath human consideration if a life of godliness were to be achieved. Both views of sexuality become bound up in their corresponding views of spirituality as described by Slotkin:

> On the level of myth and ritual the divergence of the Indian and Puritan, or European, minds becomes more apparent. For the Puritan the figure of God was purely patriarchal, sternly just, logical, and absolutely transcendent and unworldly. He was primarily the fountainhead of authority, continuing to rule his world according to the law of Logos, his Word. The Catholic maternal deity, mother of the Son of God, was likewise an asexual being in her relationship with the Father; and her Son's presence in the world was a temporary one, to be consummated in a bliss beyond the world. The Indian conception of creative divinity was, in contrast, distinctly sexual, combining both paternal and maternal aspects. The earth was a primary, female deity– maternal, sympathetic, loving, passionate, violent, and absolutely bound up in the tangled veins and arteries of the world. She did not administrate or rule the world, nor did she function as an intermediary for men in some unworldly heaven. Rather, she was the world itself. The paternal aspect of divinity, actively fathering life upon the passive earth, was conceived by the Delaware Indians as Kickeron, which is "Life, Light, Action or Energy...[or] the abstract conception back of all these." (Slotkin 45)

The fusion of sex and spirit was decidedly an uncomfortable one for many colonists. It is a mix that continues to be problematic for many today as political and religious leaders attack it when it appears in various forms in current artistic or social debate. Examples of such debate include the actual definition of marriage and the rights and privileges thereof. Traditional ideas of marriage as one man, one woman have come under intense criticism as gay and lesbian groups challenge these models seeking for their partnerships more societal acceptance, full and welcoming church membership, as well as better socioeconomic benefits and protected rights as parents and partners.

What is at stake here is the right to define what is offensive and what is acceptable. Part of the confusion, it seems, is the tendency to make "obscenity" interchangeable with "pornographic." D. H. Lawrence's attempt to define the latter led him to write "pornography is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it" (12). More recent definitions focus on the marketability of images designed to arouse sexual interest. Despite how Native Americans might view sexuality as part and parcel of spirituality, the current mainstream of American culture sees sex as separate from and very often in direct opposition to their spirituality. Insisting that Native Americans also participate in this form of thinking becomes oppressive and another way in which traditional forms are pushed aside on the road to assimilation. In direct challenge, a variety of Native artists are taking on the issue of their religious freedoms by attacking the basic premise that sexual behavior is at the root of obscenity. Ric Glazer Danay is one such artist.

Danay is a Mohawk artist who was born 1942 in New York and holds a Bachelor of Art degree from California State University and a Masters of Fine Art degree from the University of California, Davis. His pieces of mixed-media, part assemblage and part painting, are held in major collections such as the Heard Museum in Arizona. In the eyes of some viewers, he also has the reputation as a "pornographer" and at least one of his pieces, *Buffalo Gal with Boots*, has been removed from shows on the grounds it was pornographic[7] (Fuller).

Danay takes on the task of defining obscenity with his 1978 *Missionary Headrest* (Fig. 1). Of wood construction and entirely covered in Danay's highly

decorative and stylized scenes, the headrest challenges several notions concerning sexual behavior together with a pun on the word "missionary." In at least two scenes, couples copulate while other spaces are filled with people who may well be the stuff of sexual fantasy – a male super hero and a Japanese geisha. Huge lip prints form part of the decorative background pattern with other designs easily suggesting the liquidity of bodily fluids. The punch of Danay's joke is not the obvious scenes of human sexual intercourse, but rather the sarcastic reminder that "missionary" is at once a person preaching conversion



Figure 1. Ric Glazer Danay, *Missionary Headrest*, 1978.
Oil, enamel on wood, 12 x 9 x 9
Wade and Strickland, *Magic Images.*
(Tulsa: Philbrook Art Center; Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1981) 97.

to a new religious practice, as well as a term to describe male-on-top heterosexual intercourse. In light of Slotkin's assessment of the differences in male-dominated Christianity versus the more female-centered (or balanced male/female) Native American belief systems, Danay is quite pointed about how he feels regarding the history of enforced Christianity upon native peoples. Renowned art critic Lucy R. Lippard comments:

> Danay takes on white patriotism and taboos in the light of a relaxed Indian sexuality. Here a couple is locked in intercourse on the "underside" both of his arched form and of hypocritical religions. Superheroes and Asian maidens overlaid with lipstick kisses and surmounted by a sexually adorned preaching platform suggest the erotic values that the Puritans had to confront in their attempt to convert the Third World.[. . .] In bright colors, exuberant patterns, pop cultural imagery, and a conglomeration of cultural symbols, he uses politics and eroticism to make humorous and ironic points about centuries of repression. (Lippard 215)

Danay's redefinition of obscenity moves away from sexuality as horrific behavior and takes a much closer look at acts which dehumanize. In Danay's visual catalogue, this includes images of the colonizer's treatment of Indians, particularly those acts which resulted in the loss of land. Danay considers the role of sexual predators, and all acts which lack respect, to be violent, to cause pain, and to lead to manipulation, theft, murder. The painting *I'll Take Manhattan* places a Liberty-esque figure within a circle holding a scroll and small box. Her landscape comprises silhouettes of human figures that blend into more traditional mountains to create multiple horizon lines. The title of the piece refers to the 1626 transaction between Dutch and Shinnecock Indians which has since become known in American mythology

as the purchase of Manhattan Island for $24.00. The piece is an ironic reminder that the highly praised "deal" was more like a dupe that caused suffering to Native people of the region.

Like many of Danay's works, *Coast to Coast and See to Sea* (Fig. 2, 3) is mixed media, a traditional-looking painting on the bottom side of a shallow box or tray style construction and a collage of objects and images on the other side much like a shadow box. In this particular work, side B uses portions of a child's puzzle map of the United States with a row of Liberty head coins and small game tokens representing houses. An airplane occupies the lower right corner. Transportation and the settling of the land by non-Indian peoples becomes the overall theme of this side. The painting on Side A is more challenging in interpretation and seems to confuse historical time periods. A large three-mast sailing ship dominates the background while on the foreground shore, three distinct groups engage in apparently unrelated activities. To the far left, the largest group appears dressed as fifteenth- or sixteenth-century explorers, nuns, and clergy. To the far right, a more contemporary group of four is seated on the ground in various degrees of undress. They appear to be involved in a game of strip poker as one woman with her back to the viewer is removing the last of her clothing while the others appear to gaze at the cards they hold. In the center is a lone figure, a Native American man wearing breechcloth and moccasins, his arms bound behind him over a short section of log. He is the unseen captive, stumbling towards the distant ship. "Seeing" becomes pun and visual motif gaining in momentum and irony as the viewer moves from Side A to B. On Side A, Danay's lipstick kisses decorate on a vertical band down the right side



Figure 2. Ric Glazer Danay, *Coast to Coast and See to Sea*, 1981.
Mixed-media, 25.3 x 38.2 x 7 cm. Side A.
Archuleta and Strickland, *Shared Visions.*
(New York: New Press, 1991) 66.

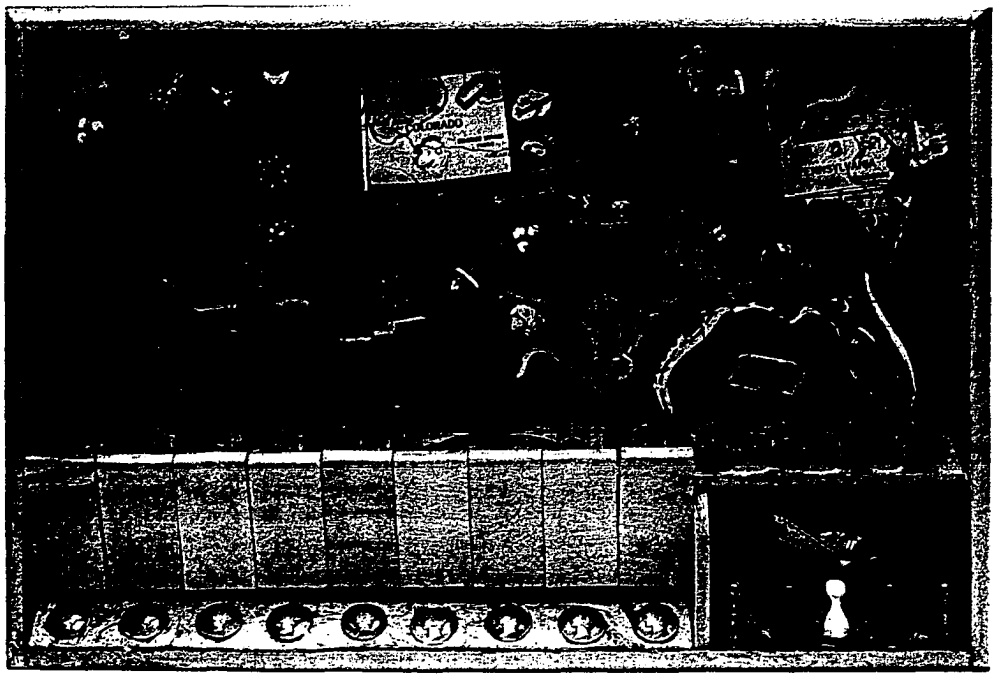


Figure 3. Ric Glazer Danay, *Coast to Coast and See to Sea*, 1981.
Mixed-media, 25.3 x 38.2 x 7 cm. Side B.
Archuleta and Strickland, *Shared Visions.*
(New York: New Press, 1991) 66.

but on the left, a similar decorative band is composed of eyes – blue eyes, to be exact. The position of every character heightens the realization of sight, of who sees and who doesn't. The church in partnership with the explorers (symbolized by a handshake) is just as unaware of the Indian man's struggle to be freed as are the increasingly naked poker players. The challenge for the viewer is to approach Side B and "see" what has been done to this land. It seems Danay sees most Americans playing games with progress, and liberty is just another coin for the purpose of buying up land. In this view, religion and sex join with money to form a trilogy of blindness, three obsessions that prevent us from seeing the pain of another. For Danay, this is true obscenity.

Danay's images operate visually the way myths operate verbally or orally. He re-combines the familiar mythology, that version of American history that is accepted and taught as complete truth, with elements of an actual, painful history. Also, by integrating odd combinations of historical and contemporary dress or other objects, he distorts our understanding of time. "When did this take place?" becomes the door by which the possibility these activities are still happening walks through and challenges the viewer. Understanding Danay's motives for mixing historical periods, creating events that could not have taken place requires an understanding of the tradition of Native American myth. In *Artistry in Native American Myths,* Karl Kroeber states:

> Among Native Americans, whose traditional societies were without writing, continual reimagining of culture was an imperative. Their cultures continued to exist only through being acted out, conversed about, realized in speech and behavior. If a preliterate people stops talking self-consciously about its culture, that culture vanishes. This may even help to explain the importance of dreams to many Native American peoples; were they to stop dreaming their culture it would disappear. (67)

Unlike cliché, much Native American story and myth involves a form of repetition and reimagination understood as "renewal" or a process of restoring fundamental and healthy qualities of a culture: "Most of us do not actively, participatively, continually reimagine our culture; thus, unwittingly, we alienate ourselves from it even while we think we are supporting it fervently. One does not contribute to sustaining a way of life when one takes it for granted, discoursing about it only in clichés" (Kroeber 66). For Danay, the process of reinvigorating is also one of reimagining, placing disparate scenes of American history together for the purpose of wonder, questioning, commentary, and renewal: "Indian cultures exist through the fashion in which every part of their world is both the object and the inspiration of continual imagining and reimagining" (Kroeber 67). In Danay's works, the stories that emerge can become the means of giving voice/language to pain, including others in acts of imagination (the dominant American society), and thus including the oppressing colonizer in the acts of healing.

Kroeber states that "Myths are the means by which cultures adapt...narratives are a discursive practice by which preliterate societies modify as well as reaffirm their cultural systems" (72). I would suggest that these practices are not limited to the "preliterate" societies. Native Americans are firmly involved in using their literacy in terms of their ability to navigate a contemporary, technological society, as well as their sense of an ongoing tribal tradition to reaffirm their present-day cultural systems. To paraphrase Kroeber, artists and writers such as Erdrich and Danay refer to tribal narratives, to myths "because they articulate -- thereby presenting for renewed scrutiny

and possible reassessment -- the shifting forces that generate specific cultural practices" (72). N. Scott Momaday presents this process in the form of a question encapsulating his wonder at the process even while he is aware he practices it himself: "Do you see what happens when the imagination is superimposed upon the historical event? It becomes a story. The whole piece becomes more deeply invested with meaning" (Momaday *Man* 104-105).

In A *Long and Terrible Shadow,* Thomas Berger recalls a presentation made in 1976 by Dr. Pat Abbott, a psychiatrist with the Division of Northern Medicine, Department of Health and Welfare. Despite the steady call for more treatment facilities and health care professionals, Abbott felt the establishment of new programs, recruitment of personnel and delivery of even improved health care services and social services by themselves were acts of futility:

> The vast majority of the problems that I have seen as a clinical psychiatrist cannot, in all honesty, be classified as psychiatric problems ... many of the problems seen are so closely interwoven with the life-style of the Native people in the North, which in turn is closely bound to such problems as economics, housing, self-esteem and cultural identity, that to label them as psychiatric disorders is frankly fraudulent and of no value whatsoever, as the treatment must eventually be the treatment of the whole community rather than [of] the individual. (Berger 37)

Duran and Duran offer a warning to the discipline and practitioners of psychology that echoes Berger in their assessment of the treatment of Indian people and which validates the practices of Erdrich and Danay for including the colonizer in the processes of reading, viewing, and understanding the sources of pain for Native Americans.

> If psychology continues on its present course, the judgement of history will continue to be unkind. . . It is no longer acceptable for psychology to continue to be the enforcement branch of the secularized Judeo-Christian myth. Through the worshipping of logical positivism, our discipline has been a coconspirator in the devastation and control of those peoples who are not subsumed under a white, male, heterosexual, Christian subjectivity.
> (Duran and Duran 7)

Disease, land loss, enforced Christianity and its values are the opening acts of trauma, the initial soul wound of Indian people. Some first important steps of healing that wound can be found in the literary works of Louise Erdrich. Accepting the self and one's family, tradition, culture for all its strengths and weaknesses is an important healing act. These small acts of acceptance and affirmation are scattered throughout Erdrich's works. Reimagining one's culture and the mythic narratives that perpetuate it are the tools for renewal brought to us by Ric Danay. These are ideas of strength and health and can promote much healing among Native people but they are by no means limited to them. However, our journey through the pain of Native Americans is just beginning.

[1] My own experience with accepting responsibility for ancestral events involves the infamous Sand Creek massacre. I discovered in the late 1980s that at least one of my extended family was a volunteer in the Colorado "100 Day" Militia led by Reverend John Chivington. Carson Walker participated in the attack on Black Kettle's band of Southern Cheyenne on the banks of the Sand Creek November 29, 1864. Chivington's 700 men and four howitzers attacked at dawn and killed an estimated 30 men and 125 women and children. Local papers celebrated the event as a great victory. In a short history published by the town of Lyons, Colorado (and quoted by a family genealogist), Carson Walker is described as "a friendly, Christian man, was fond of children. He was the first to pan gold and he was the first of the Bullwhackers and Buffalo hunters. When he was down below Denver in 1864 and the Sand Creek Indian War broke out, he was right on the job. He laid aside his gold rocker, primed his gun for the hostiles and joined the vigilantes." Bertram Adams *Walkers of Blakesburg,* self-published 1986. The dissonance between the romanticization of the published descriptions and the visible pain that I witnessed from a descendent of a Southern Cheyenne Sand Creek survivor made me realize the pain of historical events does not lie quietly within the pages of history texts, but lives in the people, including myself.

[2] Scarry notes there are a number of articles concerning the use of the McGill Pain Questionnaire which uses lists of words to assist patients in describing their pain and as a diagnostic aid for doctors. In those articles which describe the patients' reactions to being given a list of words, those "administering the questionnaire have been struck by the ease with which patients recognize what they consider the 'right' word." In addition to the ease with which words from the list are chosen, patients describe a sense of "certainty" in making their selections and "relief" or even "happiness" in having been given words to choose from at a time when pain effectively prevents them from formulating their own words. (Scarry 328)

[3] There are three acceptable names for this northern tribe and various spellings of those names as well. I will use the form "Ojibwa" in my own writings but I will defer to the name and spelling used by a cited source. For instance, Chippewea is used by the federal government in treaties, and other sources mention the Anishinabe or Ojibwe.

[4] President Lincoln moved the annual October event to November beginning in 1863. The contention among scholars is that the first Thanksgiving actually took place in San Elizario, Texas in 1593, where early settlements were being established in the Rio Grande area of Texas and New Mexico.

[5] The parentage of Marie and her birth scene are stories exclusive to *Tracks*. In my Survey of Native American Literature courses, I reserve this information until we have discussed the emotional scenes in *Love Medicine* describing Sister Leopolda's treatment

of Marie. To accomplish this easily, I use copies of a family tree created by Julie Maristuen-Rodakowski for her article "The Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota: Its History as Depicted in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* and *Beet Queen.*" The resulting surprise creates a whole other discussion on the relationship of mothers and daughters and culturally shaped perceptions of issues such as sanity, religiousity, child abuse, and victimization among other issues too numerous to list here.

[6]Kateri Tekakwitha was born in 1656 and died 1680. She was Beatified by Pope John Paul on June 30, 1980. Erdrich demonstrates her familiarity with Kateri by including her by name in the conversation between Lipsha and Sister Martin in *Love Medicine* (247).

[7] *Buffalo Gal With Boots* was removed from an Iroquois show in 1985 when the director of the facility holding the show deemed the piece a mild form of pornography. The work, which looks much like a decorated *Playboy* pin-up, hardly seems worth the attention required to remove it from a show. The piece did travel with another exhibit called *The Human Figure in Indian Art: Cultural Reality or Sexual Fantasy?* with other works provided by the Institute of American Indian Art Museum in 1992.

Chapter Two
Southeast:
Giving Birth to Loss

Who else is gonna bring you
a broken arrow
Who else is gonna bring you
a bottle of rain
There he goes, moving across the water
There he goes turning my whole world around

Do you feel what I feel
Can we make that part of the deal
I gotta hold you in these arms of steel
Lay your heart on the line...
this time

from *Broken Arrow*
by Robbie Robertson

This chapter explores family and the individual's relationship to his or her own family, particularly under the circumstances when violence breaks out. For the sake of this discussion, the forms of violence subsumed under the broad terms "domestic violence" or "family violence" are spousal abuse and child abuse. These forms of abuse range from the verbal and emotional to the physical and sexual. More specifically, the behaviors include "Physical assault[. . .], assault with a weapon, forced sexual contact and rape, destruction of property, injury or destruction of pets, threats and intimidation, including threats to harm children or other family members, control of money, transportation, activities and social contacts" ("Family Violence"). The causes for such violent expressions are complex and are often aggravated by other behaviors, such as drug and alcohol abuse, the focus of Chapter Three. To explore how

Native American writers and artists perceive domestic violence, the reality of denied identity as a form of abuse, the causes of abuse and some of the processes of healing, I will draw from a larger variety of creative works than in the previous chapter. Central to this discussion will be two novels --*Pushing the Bear* (1996) by Diane Glancy, and *The Mercy Seat* (1997) by Rilla Askew. For support of some concepts, I will refer to a poem entitled "For My Ex-Husband" by Karenne Wood from her manuscript *Markings on Earth*[1], and William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1940). In addition to these literary works, I will include several pieces of mixed-media visual art by Richard Ray Whitman, Dorothy Sullivan, and Robert Colescott.

Eduardo and Bonnie Duran confront the issue of domestic violence directly in *Native American Postcolonial Psychology* by stating that "(t)here is no way that the (Native American) client can deal with the issues of violence in the family without understanding the dynamics of the historical violence perpetrated on Native American people by the European colonization process"(90). This history of colonization after the contact period became a more concentrated effort to remove Indian peoples from traditional homelands and hunting grounds to make room for an increasing number of white settlements. While the rhetoric of such removals may have begun as disguised concern for the corruption of primitive peoples by the bad elements within white civilization[2], the tone became more strident and racist as events soon led up to Georgia's declaring land ownership by Indians illegal and with the passing of the federal Indian Removal Act in 1830. In brief, these were the events that led up to the infamous Trail of Tears, in which thousands of Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole

Indians were forced from their homes, after having ceded millions of acres of land in Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida to United States' control, to cross overland to Indian Territory, later known as Oklahoma.[3]

Before, during and after removal, military and political force was applied to tribal governments. These efforts were destabilizing as traditional forms of government were either voluntarily or forcibly changed to meet the expectations of the alien governmental powers. For the Cherokees, some of the voluntary changes were to limit the (public?) powers of women in governmental discussions. These and other changes were made by tribes themselves to establish a more permanent governing body to deal with the demands of the growing white population and their expectations of proper governing procedures. Previously, a Town House style of government was used that allowed for debate and consensus building:

> Females played an important role in both domestic and war councils, with evidence indicating that on occasion they even served as white chiefs. The fact that most village chiefs were males does not, however, imply that the females played subordinate roles to men. Females seem to have had an equal voice in all village councils, in addition to playing a very crucial role in the social regulation and enculturation of the traditional ways. The males played the dominant role in external affairs such as wars, hunting and intervillage competition while the females regulated intravillage domestic affairs as well as intervillage matters. The females may have had the upper hand since males had little to say regarding clan regulations and sanctions while females played an important role even on the war council where an assemblage of *war women* or *pretty women*, offered counsel concerning strategy, time of attack, fate of captives and other important matters. (French et al 82)

Changes to these traditional governmental forms had internal impact, much of which may be impossible to know at this juncture. However, the diminishment of women and women's roles will be included in this chapter discussion as another potential form of domestic abuse. It is my assertion that the distortion and exclusion of women's histories in the context of family narrative is especially dangerous for the health and survival of all members, not just that of the women or their children. By failing to respect the importance, relevance and power of each individual in a family, instability and vulnerability to outside forces such as colonialism are created.

The Native American authors chosen for this discussion are each of mixed ancestry -- Glancy of Cherokee and German-English descent, and Askew, who acknowledges she is part Cherokee. That each is descended from a removed tribe seems more than mere coincidence, considering that each also takes a close look at the pain involved with uprooting a family to relocate them in unfamiliar terrain. Their novels, *Pushing the Bear* and *The Mercy Seat,* respectively, deal with arduous journeys. The history of removal, like the land loss described in Chapter One, is greater than the process of uprooting[4] people to plant them in another place. The loss of home can be the very cause of profound pain -- the Soul Wound. The healing of such deeply inflicted wounds does not come easily or quickly and, in subsequent years, each additional pain adds to the Soul Wound, thus creating great despair that continues many years after the original event. This can be understood by examining two processes occurring first in the Native American individual and then increasing exponentially into the family and community. The first process is the internalization of the oppressor

followed in turn by intergenerational posttraumatic stress disorder. Duran and Duran explain these processes as the end products of enforced acculturation, especially via boarding schools which destroyed native language, prevented access to native culture and family, and prohibited practice of native religion. The English language, Christianity and European values were substituted and native children were expected, under threat of punishment, to live up to the idealized models of European behavior presented to them. In the 1994 TBS production *The Native Americans*, historian John Mohawk (Seneca) offers this assessment of the boarding school system as established by Colonel Richard H. Pratt:

> The boarding school system would today be considered criminal child abuse. They not only beat them for speaking their language, but it was their conscious effort to break the Indian extended family. So they didn't really want all that sort of bonding that goes on among people about extended families, about aunts and uncles...but the real objective was to beat the culture out of the children. And after they done that, of course, what they also beat out of the children were the nurturing skills, the child rearing skills, all the things that you need from your parents and your grandparents and your relatives and the internetworking of stuff that made us full human beings. That's what they beat out of people. ("Give and Take")

> Using more clinical terms, the Durans concur with Mohawk's view: Once the idea of family is eradicated from the thinking and lifeworld of an individual, cultural reproduction cannot occur. The problems that we face today in the process of intervening with Native American families are problems caused by a conspiracy that was implemented over one hundred years ago. (Duran and Duran *Postcolonial* 28)

The first of two primary processes discussed in this chapter, the internalization of the oppressor, begins as what might be argued a logical response to a traumatic experience much in the same way kidnap victims identify with their kidnapper as a

means of physical and psychological survival. In other words, the victim adopts a previously foreign way of thinking and believing about themselves in order to survive in the current situation. Duran and Duran describe the process:

> Once a group of people have been assaulted in a genocidal fashion, there are psychological ramifications. With the victim's complete loss of power comes despair, and the psyche reacts by internalizing what appears to be genuine power --the power of the oppressor. The internalizing process begins when Native American people internalize the oppressor, which is merely a caricature of the power actually taken from Native American people. At this point, the self-worth of the individual and/or group has sunk to a level of despair tantamount to self-hatred. This self-hatred can be either internalized or externalized. (*Postcolonial* 29)

Native women themselves reveal to counselors, and others who work with battered women, an understanding of the dynamics of abusive relationships that includes internalization of the oppressor:

> Men batter, they say, because our culture makes violence an acceptable, masculine way to express or to deal with feelings of anger, fear, depression, hopelessness, and the like. American Indian men who have accepted the values of the dominant culture may, like other American men, act violently toward women and children. (Hendrickson 18)

Nor is this a phenomenon known only to mental health care professionals. Rennard Strickland quotes a letter he received from then Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation Wilma Mankiller[5]:

> That oppressed people internalize their oppressors is a well-known fact. A discussion of the trauma [Indian] people suffered since the first encounter with Europeans would [help us] understand why some...felt the need to deny their own sense of self and internalize their oppressor. A blame the victim approach...does little to further an understanding of the complex issues...(Strickland 12)

The second culturally disruptive process is called posttraumatic stress disorder, commonly referred to as PTSD. In general, it takes the form as follows, although certain groups may exhibit specific symptoms associated with the disorder which are recognized as a "sub-type" such as the form of PTSD some Vietnam Veterans suffer from:

> Posttraumatic stress disorder can be manifested in primary or secondary symptoms. Primary symptoms are those acquired through firsthand account or experience of the trauma. Secondary PTSD is a normal reaction and can be acquired by having family and friends who have been acutely traumatized. These reactive behaviors are passed on and learned and become the norm for subsequent generations. (Duran and Duran *Postcolonial* 40)

It is the reality of learning the reactions to another's traumatic experiences that results in the additional descriptive term "intergenerational." Duran and Duran note that because the internalization of the oppressor takes place over long periods of time and traumatized people go on to marry and have children who are then raised with a heightened sensitivity to certain emotional responses from their parents and grandparents, several generations from the original experience may be reacting to deep feelings, the source of which they do not entirely understand. Most of the literature detailing the insidiousness of intergenerational PTSD comes from studies done with the victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Duran and Duran quote several such studies in *Native American Postcolonial Psychology* while noting that the Indian holocaust on the American continents has not been acknowledged and which they maintain retards any hope for significant healing. In one study of Jewish survivors, T. Shoshan found that

> violent sudden separation from their closest family members determined the extent of survivors' individual trauma. Uncompleted mourning and the depression and somber states of mind it created were absorbed by their children from birth on. Children of survivors react to the lack of memories and absence of dead family members."[6] (Duran and Duran *Postcolonial* 31)

Scarry cites three studies conducted in the 1950s and early 1960s concerning the body's ability to learn culture as its range of gestures, signals and other physical habits:

> (S)tudies of third and fourth generation immigrants in the United States show that long after all other cultural habits (language, narratives, celebrations of festival days) have been lost or disowned, culturally stipulated expressions of physical pain remain and differentiate Irish-American, Jewish-American, or Italian-American."[7] (Scarry 109)

It is reasonable to assume that the body's ability to remember culturally learned habits and expressions is not limited to the ethnic groups offered here as a sample. Therefore, it can be expected, that among Native American communities there might exist a range of remembered cultural expressions and that the process of remembering and expressing pain is the most persistent.

Other studies of Holocaust survivors reveal that PTSD was generationally cumulative: "Children of Holocaust survivors who were themselves involved in war experienced more PTSD than those involved in war whose parents were not Holocaust survivors."[8] For survivors who were children at the time of the Nazi regime, their lives were filled with questions and fragmented memories: "The normal developmental tasks of growing up were mutilated beyond recognition by the traumas of loss and grief, danger and fear, hatred and chaos"[9] (Duran and Duran *Postcolonial* 31).

The continuing distress of Jewish survivors and their families due to PTSD currently has received international recognition and sympathy, which contributes to the process of healing when no formal assistance is readily available. For Native American families, however, the recognition of widespread PTSD in their communities has not been forthcoming from non-Indians, except from the small number of social workers and health care practitioners working directly with those communities and who have an enlightened sensibility rather than a racist or ignorant one.[10]

Experts who study PTSD, including Eduardo and Bonnie Duran, note that there are several phases which sufferers move through to possible recovery. These are, 1. Impact or Shock, 2. Withdrawal or Repression, 3. Acceptance/Repression (Magical Thinking), 4. Compliance and Anger (Decompensation), 5. Trauma Mastery (Healing). Understanding these steps is an important part of the therapy for any individual, but it has particular importance for the Native American client. Duran and Duran believe that for a Western therapist, acting out of ignorance, more damage can be done to the Native American client through an invalidation of the Native American experience. Their modified model, summarized below, reflects Native American experience.

> 1. Impact or Shock. The first phase starts at the moment the person is traumatized[. . . .] this is the point at which the ego must split in order to avoid complete dissociation. Lack of resolution of the repressed issues are continually manifested in symptoms that require some type of medication. The person no longer has an awareness of who or where s/he is, thus rendering them nonexistent.
> 2. Withdrawal and Repression (Warrior Regression). At this point, the person attempts to survive psychologically in the only way available to him/her. One of the quickest ways[. . .]is to withdraw emotionally and literally shut down emotions so as to avoid the pain.
> 3. Acceptance/Repression (Magical Thinking). This phase is characterized by denial; the person attempts to believe that things are not

> as bad as they seem or that they will get better through some miraculous intervention. There have been many instances[. . .]where Native American people thought that if they were to have just the "right type" of medicine that a way of life would magically be restored.
> 4. Compliance and Anger (Decompensation). The person at this point realizes that things are going to continue to be bad and that optimism is unrealistic. This creates a sense of anger, and at times the rage is ambivalent. The person cannot cathect the rage and does not know at whom the rage needs to be targeted. In many instances the anger is targeted against members of the family. This is the point at which the internalized self-hate creates ego-splitting.
> 5. Trauma Mastery (Healing). This is the ideal final stage at which the person hopefully arrives. Through understanding of the dynamics of the trauma, the person finally validates their reality and focuses the anger and frustration at the appropriate target. At this point, the person realizes that s/he, the family, and the tribe are the victims of a scenario that was initiated over one hundred years ago. (Duran and Duran *Postcolonial* 41-42)

This "centuries old scenario" mentioned in the description of Step Five includes calculated acts on the part of both state and the federal government to acquire Indian-held lands, to remove Indian children from their homes to be placed in boarding schools for the purposes of enforced acculturation resulting in oppression and racism, continued poverty on reservations, ill-conceived social programs, such as urban relocation, and the governmental attempts to simply end the "Indian problem" by terminating the status of tribes as sovereign nations. All of these acts are in addition to those early contact-era traumas for Native Americans in terms of heavy personal and tribal losses due to disease, warfare, slavery, and enforced acculturation. Any single event listed here holds the potential for becoming a PTSD first phase shock or impact. What may come as a surprise to some is that within three generations, *all* of these events could be experienced by a Native American family. The potential levels of PTSD then,

especially in light of the intergenerational reality of its impact, can be tremendous and the cause of overwhelming despair for many years at a time.

While the above phases are experienced by men and women of all ages, Duran and Duran see special risk factors for Native American men. This is partly so because of the expectation of men as "warriors," the protectors of home, family and community. Years of warfare with various colonial powers have defeated Native American men in a variety of ways, including the psychological:

> These (psychological) ramifications are even greater if the colonizer imposes a diametrically opposed mythology on the people and also on the land that the warriors are supposed to keep safe and alive within the traditional tribal lifeworld. Add to this the destruction of men's roles in the traditional economy and you have men divested of meaningful cultural roles. (*Postcolonial 35)*

Richard Ray Whitman's mixed-media photograph *Good/Bad Indian* serves as an illustration for this diametrically opposed mythology in which the Indian male simply becomes a target. Using a self-portrait in which he is wearing typical Western clothing, Whitman superimposes a symbol over the left half of his portrait, a circle divided into quadrants with each section a different color. The circle divided into quadrants has specific meaning to both Indian and non-Indian cultures. For a Native American, especially a Plains tribe, this symbol was protective and is often referred to as a medicine wheel or hoop. It represents everything in Native American culture that is whole and balanced. This symbol is also similar to that of a gun sight. Whitman superimposes the wheel/sight over his own portrait to suggest his role as an Indian man but also to recognize that to many, he is better off dead. Whitman comments on the

"catch-22" that whatever makes Indians themselves makes them visible as targets. Whether as the stereotypical savage of the "B" Hollywood movies or the contemporary individual who refuses to accept a diminished role in American society, Indian males are unwanted and perceived as dangerous to mainstream America. The violent deaths of Indian men at the hands of non-Indians bears out this reading.

Historically, it has not mattered what Indians "do" to be recognized by mainstream Americans as full-fledged human beings with all the attendant rights and privileges thereof as these acts receive little notice. Instead, for most Americans, Indianness is a complex of two myths, the first composed of warrior images as described by Duran and Duran. This myth refers to the Indian of history. The second myth enfolds ideas about the Vanishing Race, a presumed genetic predisposition to alcoholism and beliefs suggesting a tendency towards self-destruction to create an image of people who are markedly different from their ancestors. This myth creates a "new savage," or an Indian male incapable of self-determination. Therefore, there is little opportunity for a Native American male to be anything other than a focus, a target, an objectification of what it is to be Indian.

This second myth is especially painful because the process of alleviating pain has led to drug and alcohol abuse and other self-destructive behaviors, the ultimate form of which is suicide. These are realities that reinforce the legitimacy of the myth for many Americans. Alcohol is of particular importance here because it serves as the means to remove impulse control and allows for venting of rage. Unfortunately, the rage cannot be directed at the proper source, i.e., historical events, colonial power or

U.S. military, and therefore is frequently turned on those close at hand -- loved ones. Duran and Duran also see another angle to this warrior male risk factor:

> Because women are the ones who carry life, it makes sense that they are the ones who have been carrying the life of the people through their sacrifices over the past five hundred years. The regression of tradition in the male has been based on the male's inability to be physically pregnant. Since humans interpret psychological and spiritual reality through physical perception, the issue of pregnancy or the carrying and giving of life becomes symbolically important. If we accept that males can be psychologically pregnant, then we can expect the male to carry and give birth to the spiritual life in the community. The female, through her ability to be pregnant, has gestated the traditional lifeworld in order to ensure its life. Since the female brings into the world the physical life of the people, the expectation has been that she also carries the psychological and spiritual well-being and life of the community. However, this should be a role shared by men and women. (*Postcolonial* 37-38)

Too often, this expectation for women to care for the physical needs of family and community, in addition to the psychological and spiritual needs, has exhausted them. Women are desperate for their men to resume a caretaking role for their families and communities. However, this dynamic often becomes another trigger for men's repressed rage: "Because of the male's misunderstanding of the female's role, the task of the female has been one of extreme sacrifice and at times the sacrifice has involved the absorption of the negative cathexis of the repressed male rage" (Duran and Duran *Postcolonial* 38). This sacrifice absolutely must not be interpreted as Native American women "asking to be hurt," already an easy assumption made by some who are resentful of women's power. This assumption not only denies women's pain, it continues to create binary oppositions which separate the civilized "us" from the savage "them" in that it feeds the stereotype perpetuated in Hollywood movies and

elsewhere of the Indian society so savage that the women seek out abuse from their men. In addition, there may be some who simply find the concept of male regression of tradition related to an inability to be physically pregnant to be odd or spurious. At this point, it is good to remember that traditional Native American societies have always placed a great deal of emphasis on and have associated power with the female's ability to be pregnant. Charles Hudson relates one brief story of world views colliding over this issue during the negotiations taking place in the eighteenth-century between the Cherokee and the British:

> Little Carpenter had attended a council in Charles Town, where he was shocked when he found no women present among the representatives of the British colonists. When Little Carpenter asked whether it was not true that "White Men as well as the Red were born of Women," he left the British stammering for an answer. (269)

Therein lies another point at which the Indian male is singled out for persecution. The dominant society favors and celebrates male power over the female and sees such inclusion of female power as incomprehensible and a clear sign of weakness. With time, the colonial view of dominant male power became an overlay upon Native American culture. This took form as an actual change in tribal culture to shift power more exclusively to men or as a distorted idea Europeans and Amer-Europeans used to express their opinions concerning Native American cultures. The extent to which images of Indians were present in European minds can be partially understood through an examination of some artistic representations of Native Americans:

> In the British political cartoons of the mid-eighteenth century...the Indian became a familiar symbol of the American colonies themselves. Between 1765 and 1783, the colonies appeared as an Indian in no fewer than sixty-five political prints – almost four times as frequently as the other main symbols of America, the snake and the child. British cartoonists used Indians to symbolize the colonies as alien and uncivilized and therefore needful of (and deserving) the rule of the empire. At an intersection between noble and savage, tawny white or colored, the figure of the Indian had enormous iconographic flexibility. By arming it, clothing it, shifting its gender or coloring its face, British cartoonists could depict the colonies as violent, civilized, savage, genteel, aggressive, subservient, rebellious, or justified. Visualizing the figure as an Indian Princess, for example, allowed one to evoke female sexuality in picturing the fertile landscape or to show the colonies as available and vulnerable to the desires of English men. (Deloria 29)

David Richards suggests that many of these early artistic efforts reveal a "double obsession" with representation of the other using experimental lines of sight and perspective. Two images created by E. Beck in 1740 require the use of a polished cylinder placed within the strangely distorted depictions of exotic women. By looking at the reflection rather than the drawing itself, one sees "perfectly proportioned figures representing Africa or America in allegorical form" (Richards 1). Richards sees the distortion and the technical trick as a means of informing the viewer there are secrets to be had here: "The image must be distorted, tilted, inverted and then re-envisioned" (1). The "secrets" revealed in this manner are as follows:

> 'Africa' is an olive-skinned female, breast-plated, and dressed as a figure from the Roman carnival. She carries an indeterminate branch and the mythical unicorn is her heraldic beast. 'America' is a bare-breasted Amazon, darker skinned, barefooted, warlike with a heraldic parakeet. Now that the object has come into focus, the viewer can begin the work of interpretation as the 'primitive other' displays its mysterious and female nature. The viewer progresses from one kind of distortion (inchoate, malformed, undesirable, obscure, ugly) to another (allegorical, proportioned, aesthetic, desirable, orderly, known). (Richards 2)

A much later British depiction of America as the Indian woman was published as "The Able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught," by the *London Magazine*, May 1, 1774. Phillip Deloria comments on its dramatic content:

> Once the Indian Princess came to represent the colonists themselves and not simply the landscape, images of sexualized violence had less to do with Imperial conquest and more to do with British repression. With arms and legs pinioned, breasts exposed, dress lifted, and petition in tatters on the ground, America is force-fed by Lord North. (Deloria 31)

The relationship between these historical images and contemporary behavior patterns can be found in the statistics concerning the rates of violence and domestic abuse among Native Americans. On February 14, 1999[11], the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics released a report based on a review of five years of data due to increasing demand that statistics be made available which shed light on Native American involvement in violence, as victims and offenders, on and off the reservation. The report revealed rates of victimization more than double that of the general population:

> From 1992 to 1996, the average rate of violent victimizations was 124 per 1,000 among Native Americans older than 12. Among American blacks, the rate was 61 per 1,000. Among whites, it was 49 per 1,000. Among Asian-Americans[12], it was 29 per 1,000." (Greenfeld and Smith i.)

Especially troubling are the statistics that identify the race of the offender in the reported cases of violent victimizations. For the years 1992-1996, of all reported cases

of aggravated assault on Indians, 61% were by white offenders (Greenfeld and Smith 7).

Most telling of the historical attitudes of European men concerning Indian women are the statistics of domestic abuse. Thus intimate violence also becomes an issue of race-based violence. For example, of all rape/sexual assaults reported in 1992-1996 where Indian women were the victims, 82% of the offenders were white (Greenfeld and Smith 7). Greenfeld and Smith comment on this issue in conjunction with additional statistics:

> Intimate and family violence each account for about 9% of all violent victimizations experienced by American Indian victims, about the same percentage as found among all victims of violence. Most striking among American Indian victims of violence is the substantial difference in the racial composition of offenders in intimate violence incidents when contrasted with family violence. Among victims of all races, about 11% of intimate victims and 5% of family victims report the offender to have been of a different race; however, among American Indian victims of violence, 75% of the intimate victimizations and 25% of the family victimizations involved an offender of a different race. Intimate and family violence involve a comparatively high level of alcohol and drug use by offenders as perceived by victims – as is the case for Indian and non-Indian victims. Indian victims of intimate and family violence, however, are more likely than others to be injured and need hospital care. (Greenfeld and Smith 8)

Karenne Wood (Monacan) expresses this reality of domestic violence in her poem, "For My Ex-Husband," describing events that required much physical and emotional healing for her own life:

> For My Ex-Husband
>
> > "The effects of repeated domestic violence upon the victim may be likened to those experienced by prisoners of war or concentration camp survivors..." Domestic Violence Training Manual for Advocates

It begins slowly and small, like an incinerator's
fire, as it must, because no woman would
love what you became. After five years,
you would wake me in the night to interrogate
with candles, burning incense as your serum.
Whom had I seen, and when, did I
have lunch with any man? Until, exhausted,
I began to learn why people may confess
to crimes. You and your psychologist:
Delusional, he said – you called it driven
mad with love. I left you anyway.
That night a year later, near Halloween,
you broke into my home and beat the man
asleep next to me until he had no face;
he left his cheek's pulp in his place as he ran
out, naked and faceless, and drove himself
away from both of us. You raped me then,
dragged me by my ankles through blood and
shards of glass. Even today, I do not understand
how any man could do it or why you left me
alive, your own face contorted into nothing I
recognized; how, within minutes, you swept my
dignity, my god, the whole order of the world
as I knew it, away, how I remained imprisoned
in my own body as though it had stayed there
on the floor. After your incarceration, you visited
our child and wondered why I would not let you
kiss me goodbye. Because my skin would not
allow it. By day I cowered behind my own shoulders;
at night, I dreamed of bullets. Finally, years after,
your mind let me go but I did not believe it;
I stood squinting in the blue air like one of your
country's women who walked out of Auschwitz or
Treblinka wondering what I should do with the
shreds of woman left through every long
day that would follow, not that I could choose.
(Wood manuscript)

Scarry's analysis of pain and its ability to abolish a person's entire sense of his or her own personal world is expressed with singular clarity in Wood's poem. Scarry states:

> It is the intense pain that destroys a person's self and world, a destruction experienced spatially as either the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body or as the body swelling to fill the entire universe. Intense pain is also language-destroying: as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject. (35)

In private correspondence, Wood informed me her poem is autobiographical and "contains no poetic conventions."[13] Wood's line, "you swept away my dignity, my god, the whole order of the world as I knew it, away, how I remained imprisoned in my own body as though it had stayed there on the floor..." matches precisely the perception Scarry describes as a "contraction of the universe." Wood is also successful in reflecting back on her experiences in order to make them visible – to herself as well as to readers. Again, Scarry comments on this process:

> If the felt attributes of pain are (through one means of verbal objectification or another) lifted into the visible world, and if the referent for these now objectified attributes is understood to be the human body, then the sentient fact of the person's suffering will become knowable to a second person. (13)

Wood is able to make the body visible to the reader, thereby making the reader aware of her felt pain. Most profound of these examples could be the image of her ex-husband dragging her by the ankles through blood and glass. It is difficult to not have a clear mental picture of that moment. Wood's poem expresses the horror of one woman's experience -- her own -- but in so doing, she also encompasses the realities of many Indian women expressed coldly and efficiently in the statistics "where Indian women were the victims, 82% of the offenders were white" (Greenfeld and Smith 7). Wood explains in correspondence:

> The abusive man referred to is not a Native man, though – he's Polish, which is why I used the phrase "like one of your country's/women who walked out of Auschwitz . . ." I think the dynamics of abuse are exactly the same, though, regardless of the abuser's culture . . . (Wood letter to author)

Scarry indicates that, with severe pain, there is an inability to describe it as the self disintegrates, "so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject" (35). For many abuse victims, even returning to the events of abuse within the memory is cause of sufficient pain to make description of it difficult. With that it mind, it becomes all the more apparent how persistent Wood has been in retrieving her voice, not only to tell the story of her pain, but also to do so in a gesture like a personal letter to the abuser himself. Wood's often very spare poetic style is also reminiscent of Native American oral narration. Kroeber explains the brevity and complexity of much myth-making:

> . . . brevity in oral storytelling may be evocative by concentrating on actions as actions, by excluding description, motive analysis, philosophizing, even figures of speech. What seems a formal "poverty" of many oral tales in fact testifies to the intensity of social transactiveness embodied in their exclusive attention to *events*. (Kroeber 70)

What this means in the context of Wood's poem is pain made accessible to readers who may then retell her story as their story, just as myths told and retold with subtle variations and for the possibility of regeneration, for it is "through a starkly 'objective' narrative of specific actions they evoke in their listeners an imagining of the complex of considerations creating particular behavior" (Kroeber 71).

The personal experience of rape as described by Wood is applied more broadly to Native American people in general by Duran and Duran who see the act as an important metaphor of colonial violence:

> The Western masculine cosmology literally raped the New World. The rape occurred at all levels of the Native American experience; rape was done to the Earth as well at to the people who were in close harmony with the Earth spirits. The Western way of being in the world has been systematically forced on Native American people in such brutal and genocidal proportions that there has been a wound severing their connectedness with the Earth. (*Postcolonial* 82)

For the present-day counselor, social worker or other health care professional, there are more concerns to be aware of here than are immediately discernible on the surface of a family or even an entire community:

> (F)or Native American women who work with battered Indian women and abused Indian children today, the fact that these women are battered and these children abused means that the cultural values of the past have not survived in their families. That is part of what has been lost in the deliberate destruction of Native American cultures and the forced acculturation of Indians by whites in the past." (Hendrickson 23)

Duran and Duran remark on this cultural loss for the Native American client seeking counseling help today:

> Some therapists react with guilt, which is usually manifested in their pointing out that this colonization happened a long time ago and we must help the client in the here and now. If the therapist understands the intergenerational effects of PTSD, the therapist will obviously not make such hegemonic observations. If the client is to own his/her part of the therapeutic dynamic, then it is imperative that the therapist (if s/he is of Western descent) own his/her part in the historical dynamic. (*Postcolonial Psychology* 90)

Owning one's role in the historical events that have led all of us to this time and place can be decidedly difficult for a number of reasons. Perhaps one just does not know enough about history to see how different forces interact. In fact, historian Richard Drinnon suggests that "in a way every inquiry into Western history, into reified repressed Time, implicitly raises the question: How have we become so alienated from ourselves and from the land?" (Drinnon xxix). Or perhaps some among us have simply decided that history is "bygones," to paraphrase a popular TV character[14], and therefore nothing matters but today and tomorrow. Then there is the belief related to these first two that history was the present day of people who are now dead, therefore the mistakes, or crimes, committed by people now dead does not transfer responsibility for those crimes onto the heads of the living descendants. These beliefs work well to reinforce behaviors or situations which are themselves the result of power inequities, such as ownership of Native land by non-Indians, the high incarceration rates of Indian men, attacks on tribal sovereignty, and so on. I have witnessed first-hand this process, which I call "responsibility splitting" as an instructor of Native American Studies and Literature over the last ten or so years. Even in the face of much historical information concerning non-Indian offenses against Native Americans, students frequently prefer to separate themselves from having any continued responsibility for actions taken by their ancestors. Their attitude can be frequently summed up as "What's done is done; let's move on." I have even been advised to adopt this way of thinking for myself after relating my family's involvement with the Sand Creek Massacre. The fact that I feel enough responsibility to relate the story and express how I have incorporated it into my

research and teaching causes discomfort among students and they frequently offer me this "move on" advice as a curative. Such a proposed solution is odd, and certainly misplaced, as my students are trying to treat their own discomfort and do not understand how my telling may indeed be my healing. This repression becomes another part of the continuing invalidation of Native American experience that perpetuates pain and prohibits real healing. Without healing, pain simply begets more pain.

Domestic violence is an insidious form of violence in that it is closely bound up in the emotional lives of the participants. For a wide range of reasons, the victims do not (or cannot) reveal the violence in their lives. Domestic violence also carries a certain amount of baggage that shapes our perceptions of it. For example, like other negative social traits, it often becomes associated with ignorance and incivility. Therefore, we are trained to "suspect" it occurs more often among those of lower socio-economic classes. This is, of course, contemporary language. In other times, the categories of people who practiced domestic abuse would have been called "primitive," "uncivilized." It is an unfortunate irony that the words primitive and uncivilized are exactly those used to describe Native Americans both historically and in contemporary times as well. I personally have been told, much in the way someone offers their best advice, to be wary in my dealings with Indians because they really are savages. Much of the evidence actually suggests otherwise and calls into question who the real savages are:

> At a Cherokee Reservation elementary school in North Carolina, the BIA employed Paul Price, another confessed child molester – even after his previous principal, who had fired him for molesting seventh grade boys, warned BIA officials that Price was an admitted pedophile.

> Shocked to learn several years later from teachers at the Cherokee school that Price continued to teach despite the warning, Price's former principal told several Cherokee teachers of Price's pedophilia and notified the highest BIA official at Cherokee. Instead of dismissing Price or of conducting an inquiry, BIA administrators lectured an assembly of Cherokee teachers on the unforeseen consequences of slander.
>
> The Committee found that during his 14 years at Cherokee, Price molested at least 25 students while the BIA continued to ignore repeated allegations – including an eyewitness account by a teacher's aide. Even after Price was finally caught and the negligence of the BIA supervisors came to light, not a single official was ever disciplined for tolerating the abuse of countless students for 14 years. Indeed, the negligent Cherokee principal who received the eyewitness report was actually promoted to the BIA Central Office in Washington. (S. Prt. 101-60 qtd in French et al 30-31)

The Congressional Committee that investigated and wrote the above passage found that such abuse was not unusual or isolated among BIA-supervised schools. Another incident the committee uncovered involved 142 Hopi children abused by remedial reading teacher John Boone. And while these may be the most horrific of cases, the BIA failed to implement any child abuse reporting standards or even minimal background checks for potential school employees during the same 15 year period all 50 states passed such guidelines (French et al 30).

Thus, the end result is that Native Americans have learned to expect only limited attention or resources devoted to issues such as domestic abuse, simply because many non-Indians will not find the rate of abuse alarming enough, given the population in question:

> In our work with Native American families we have found that one of the effects of the systematic disruption of the family system through the implementation of intergenerational ethnocide is a rate of child abuse that equals that of the non-native American population. The incidence of

> child abuse can also be traced directly to the destruction of Native American culture in which the care of children was a sacred trust. (Duran and Duran *Postcolonial* 159)

Duran and Duran's assessment of the rates of child abuse is very similar to the results presented in the Bureau of Justice Statistics report involving American Indians. Greenfeld and Smith report:

> In the United States from 1992 to 1995, American Indians and Asians were the only racial or ethnic groups to experience increases in the rate of abuse or neglect of children under age 15, as measured by incidents recorded by child protective service agencies. (15)

In actual numbers, this means that for every 100,000 American Indian children, for the year 1992 there were 2,830 reported incidents of abuse or neglect and for the year 1995, that number grew to 3,343 incidents. This is an increase of 18 percent. In the same time period, the rates for white and black children each went down 7 percent and for Hispanics, the rate decreased by 16 percent (Greenfeld and Smith 15).

> Non-Hispanic American Indians accounted for just under 2% of the victims of child abuse/neglect in reports collected nationwide in 1995. There is evidence that their share has been increasing. Non-Hispanic American Indians, who accounted for just under 1% of the population 14 or younger, were overrepresented twofold as victims of child abuse. (Greenfeld and Smith 15)

Part of the difficulty in discussing domestic violence and child abuse is related to ethnicity and that rape, spouse abuse, molestation can all be committed by those outside as well as inside the family. Entire families are affected adversely when one member is traumatized. This is especially true when a teacher is at fault, since teachers are often thought of as extensions of the family, involved in the upbringing of children

in the proper way. It should also be recalled that many experts and many victims of abuse see the abuse as a direct result of two processes. The first is internalization of the oppressor, and the second, violent behavior learned from the model of violence provided by Amer-European culture. Rather than simply wait for outside powers such as the BIA to rectify these patterns of violence, Native American individuals and tribal councils are actively working to make changes. The Qualla Cherokee responded to the Price sexual abuse incidents by passing their own child sexual abuse law. This law even covers tribal members who sexually abuse children and gives the tribal council the authority to banish tribal members from the reservation (Qualla Boundary) in the case of a conviction (French et al 34).

For the actual treatment of abusers, the process is an arduous one. Duran and Duran see two important steps necessary for a Native American individual to overcome a pattern of domestic abuse. These include the improving of one's self-esteem or one's sense of identity, and by making the abuser aware of the historical factors that promote such internalization of the oppressor. This is not to allow the abuser to absolve himself of responsibility, but rather to assist in a process of educating that might reveal to the abuser the sources of his own pain. Each of these concepts deserves more exploration and discussion in the context of literature, art and healing practices since little publication is currently available that explores these processes in the context of specific tribal world views, practices, and metaphors.

Devon Mihesuah sees self-esteem as directly related to issues of cultural identity which is a much wider range of possible identities than are typically recognized by mainstream Amer-Europeans and scholars:

> Whether an Indian person can be at peace with himself can only be answered on a case-by-case basis. As the few examples of the Cherokee seminarians, Indian adoptees of white parents, and the victims of prejudice and stereotypes illustrate, just because a person is visually recognized as Indian does not mean that he is satisfied with his identity. In addition to the perceived level of discrimination, rejection of one's identity choice by Indians and non-Indians, unfamiliarity with tribal culture and residence away from the tribe, social status of the group, and appearance, another reason for Indian people's identity insecurities may be because they almost always suffer from "internalized oppression" because they often reject a part of their racial heritage that is also a part of themselves. (Mihesuah 215)

Before actively discussing the psychology at work within the selected novels, it is helpful to know something about the plots and the historical events each author has used as the backdrop for her work. Diane Glancy's novel *Pushing the Bear* details the last of the enforced Indian removals of Cherokees by the U.S. military in the winter of 1838-39.[15] Holdouts from earlier caravans were rounded up at gunpoint with no warning. Often, they were allowed only the few possessions they could grab and carry in a few minutes and then they were taken to various embarking sites in North Carolina. This caravan of wagon trains – or contingents, as the government called them -- took the northern route traveling across Tennessee and Kentucky, the southern tip of Illinois and into Missouri and then south into Arkansas before ending in Indian Territory (Oklahoma). The lack of preparation was not only devastating emotionally, it had consequences later in terms of exposure due to improper clothing, malnutrition and

illness due to a lack of food and medical supplies, and insufficient household items and tools to begin a new life. As described in Chapter One of this work, the loss of family and land are significant first phase PTSD traumas. The techniques of Glancy and Askew, however, differ from Erdrich's in that the narrative time remains more closely focused on the events of the journeys, rather than with the present-day aftermath. Askew and Glancy keep the reader in the historical time, making the rigors of the characters apparent to the readers. Like Wood, their narratives become the acts themselves, with varying degrees of additional commentary, such as character motivation or descriptive detail.

Rilla Askew's novel *The Mercy Seat* describes the journey undertaken by two families 50 years after the last Trail of Tears. Askew's characters are the families of two brothers who feel threatened by the law for gun patent violations in the late 1880s. In mule- and horse-drawn wagons, two families travel across Tennessee into Missouri, Arkansas, and then into Oklahoma. The brothers are introduced early in the novel as white men, but to accept the identity of their extended families as also white may be committing an act of denial similar to what is described by Toni Morrison in her investigation of race and literature *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* In a tone that is part wondering, part critical wake-up call, Morrison describes the beginnings of her position concerning race in American literature:

> For some time now I have been thinking about the validity or vulnerability of a certain set of assumptions conventionally accepted among literary historians and critics and circulated as "knowledge." This knowledge holds that traditional, canonical American literature is free of, uninformed, and unshaped by the four-hundred-year-old presence of, first, Africans and then African-Americans in the United States. It

> assumes that this presence -- which shaped the body politic, the Constitution, and the entire history of the culture -- has had no significant place or consequence in the origin and development of that culture's literature. Moreover, such knowledge assumes that the characteristics of our national literature emanate from a particular "Americanness" that is separate from and unaccountable to this presence. (Morrison 5)

With very little revision, this paragraph could just as easily refer to the presence of Native Americans in America. Other than as savage threats to the white characters of most American literature, Native Americans are ignored as a presence in the "body politic, the Constitution or the history of culture." Morrison refers to the Africanist presence as American Africanism, "an investigation into the ways in which a nonwhite, Africanlike presence or persona was constructed in the United States, and the imaginative uses this fabricated presence served" (Morrison 6). Certainly, there are a growing number of works by such scholars as Vine Deloria Jr., Robert Berkoher, Phillip Deloria and others who pointedly examine the ways in which "Indian" is an imaginative construction created by non-Indians for a wide variety of control and propaganda purposes.

There is one significant difference between American Africanism and American Indianism which might be described as "stable coloration." The presence of American Africanism is always one of blackness, of darkness. Regardless of the varying hues found on the interracial palette, the American tendency is to default to an "always black" understanding and labeling. By contrast, American Indianism is one of shifting coloration, of gradual lightening until the Indian is lost and all is left is the American -- white American. Referred to as "enwhitening" or even "lactification," this is the

persistent assumption that Indian people are engaged in acts which by intent or circumstance over time, make them "more" white than Indian.[16] It is a profoundly subtle and cruel form of ethnocide that simply denies the existence of Native American ancestry in the living, breathing individual who openly acknowledges such ancestry. And yet it is common discourse in America by Amer-Europeans to deny in others their Native American ancestry and culture and then to curiously claim an Indian ancestry for themselves via the Indian Princess phenomenon.[17]

One example of enwhitening can be found in a famous Dust Bowl era photograph by Dorthea Lange called *Migrant Mother,* (Fig. 4) taken in 1936 in Nipomo, California. Lange's depiction of an economic refugee is widely recognized as capturing the despair of the time. Florence Thompson was thirty-two at the time her portrait was taken with three of her seven children. She was recently widowed and facing the prospect of starvation at the edge of a frozen pea field. Photohistorian Beaumont Newhall gives *Migrant Mother* a prominent place in *The History of Photography.* He states, "During the Depression [Lange] saw the breadlines of the homeless and unemployed and wondered if she could photograph them so that others would feel as she did"(146). The photograph indeed raised American awareness to the severe problems many were experiencing during the Depression and continues to be studied in art history classes as an outstanding example of Twentieth Century photography and social commentary. The forgotten fact of this photograph is the woman's Native American ancestry, since she was a member of one of the Southeastern tribes relocated to Oklahoma a century earlier. She is not only a victim of poverty, she is, in Rennard



Figure 4. Dorthea Lange, *Migrant Mother*, 1936.
Photograph
Newhall, *Photography: Essays & Images.*
(New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980) 265.

Strickland's view, arguably the victim of colonial violence which has predisposed her to be in this place at this time (*Tonto's Revenge* 14).

By contrast, African American Indians, when they are denied their Indianness, are once again relegated to the Black only identity. In one brief example, Nell Carter plays the part of a longtime cook and housekeeper for a 1930's era Southern family in the movie *The Grass Harp*[18]. Throughout the film, she insists that she is part Indian,[19] but the function of this statement is for comic relief. All the other characters find this to be laughable, and a bizarre denial of her blackness. A more complex example of the African American Indian is found in William Faulkner's novel *Go Down, Moses*. From the perspective of the boy Isaac McCaslin (who is white), the elder man Sam Fathers is teacher, friend and enigma:

> For, although Sam lived among the negroes, in a cabin among the other cabins in the quarters, and consorted with negroes...and dressed like them and talked like them and even went with them to the negro church now and then, he was still the son of that Chickasaw chief and the negroes knew it. And, it seemed to the boy, not only negroes. Boon Hogganbeck's grandmother had been a Chickasaw woman too, and although the blood had run white since and Boon was a white man, it was not chief's blood. To the boy at least, the difference was apparent immediately you saw Boon and Sam together, and even Boon seemed to know it was there -- even Boon, to whom in his tradition it had never occurred that anyone might be better born than himself. A man might be smarter, he admitted that, or richer (luckier, he called it) but not better born. (163-164)

> . . . Boon already sat at the table at breakfast, hunched over his plate, almost in his plate, his working jaws blue with stubble and his face innocent of water and his coarse, horse-mane hair innocent of comb -- the quarter Indian, grandson of a Chickasaw squaw, who on occasion resented with his hard and furious fists the intimation of one drop of alien blood and on others, usually after whiskey, affirmed with the same fists and the same fury that his father had been the full-blooded

> Chickasaw and even a chief and that even his mother had been only half white. (217-218)

It is fairly easy to discern from Faulkner's two characters that it is the man whose Indianness comes from his mother's side who has been integrated into and accepted by Southern white society. Boon may at times feel the loss of his Indian identity and yet at other times exhibits symptoms of internalized oppression, but overall, he enjoys the status of being seen as a white man. His claims of an Indian chief as a father could be true or simply claims made to "out-Indian" Sam Fathers. On the other hand, Sam Fathers marks his Indian ancestry more immediately and to an actual Indian father. His mother is mentioned in the novel only as a "Quadroon Slave," thus marking Sam as black first, Indian second.[20] Perhaps the Indian parents in these two cases are actually coincidental and have no significant bearing on whether the men in question are seen as white or black. However, when one compares the parentage of these characters to others of the same novel, a persistent pattern of Faulkner's is revealed concerning female ancestors. We can assume every character had a mother and a grandmother and so on, but for Faulkner, these necessities seem merely mechanical and he rarely mentions any of his women by name, let alone create fully developed characters with individual personalities and histories. Faulkner's world is a man's world. All ancestry is through the father's line and even in assembling a family tree for the characters of the novel, there are a large number of blank spaces designating women who are faceless, nameless, known only as the mother or grandmother of particular and named male characters. Thus, for Boon, an Indian female ancestor is fairly easy to ignore, allowing

the progeny of a white father to be admitted as white. For Sam Fathers, however, the reality of his Indian father is too difficult to set aside, especially when his mother has black blood lines.

Instead, Sam becomes symbolic of a bygone era in a time and place when the Indians are simply vanishing. Isaac comes to see this vanishing as sad, but inevitable, taking with them a "better way," a way of oneness with the land, a respect for all creatures, but still a primitive way destined to be put aside in the face of the white man's progress. Faulkner's view of American Indianism is in step with other writers of his time who saw Indians according to their own social construct of female subservience (note the switch in terms between the two quotes where Chickasaw woman becomes "squaw") and male power, which in this case acknowledges the superior power of white men.

Contemporary African-American artist Robert Colescott is unwilling to allow America an identity of simplistic black, white or red images or ideas. His paintings openly explore the racial and cultural mixings that have historically been ignored, or even outlawed by Jim Crow or anti-miscegenation laws. Colescott is also sensitive to the mixing of Indianness within both white and black America. Several of his paintings selected to represent the United States at the 47th Venice *Biennale* held in 1997 include motifs of three cultures mixing.[21] Colescott's perspective on American history breaks the simple binaries of White vs. Indian or White vs. Black, and in *Choctaw Nickel* (Fig. 5), he clearly presents a world more "mixed-up" in which Black Indian cowboys are not only possible, but Whiteness hardly appears at all.

Colescott divides *Choctaw Nickel* into visually demarcated areas of black, red, yellow, and white. The image of an oversized silver coin frames a portrait of an African American Indian smoking a cigar, wearing long feathers in his hair with a speech bubble pronouncing "No mo' buffalo." The characters that Colescott presents challenge the viewer with mixed codes of Indianness and Blackness using color and symbols of ethnic identity and economic role. For instance, black hands in chains reach out from either side of the framed face, while another pair of eyes peer just over the coin. The hands and the nickel itself emerge from an area of vibrant kinetic yellow brush strokes strongly suggesting flames. The hands may indeed be the silent protest of this faceless slave, whose chains surrounding the coin are sure reminder that slavery was always an economic and painful reality in America that affected the lives of both Blacks and Indians.

Another outlined figure, this one with some suggestions of facial paint, is the face of an Indian, to perhaps offer what viewers would expect of an Indian portrait. This man with braids is done in black lines over a dark red background. Unlike the Black Choctaw, this figure is not fully modeled or shaded, and he stares off in the distance – the Indian of history perhaps?

Beneath the coin, painted in crude outlines, blocks of color with areas of modeling and shading are members of a black family who completely occupy the lower corner. The family consists of a father wearing a large cowboy hat and holding an infant, and a mother wearing small yellow feathers in her hair, as another speech bubble states "Choctaw + Negro = Choctaw" with a black handprint included in the area of the



Figure 5. Robert Colescott, *Choctaw Nickel*, 1994.
Acrylic on canvas, 84 x 72 in.
New School for Social Research, New York.
Robert Colescott: Recent Paintings.
(SITE Santa Fe and U of Arizona Museum of Art, 1997) 49.

bubble. Colescott plays with the expected signs of race by mixing the codes of black, red and white in such a way that white is merely an accent color. The other colors plus yellow are the real action of the piece and their layering is visually symbolic of the intermarriages that did and continue to take place, producing children with rich and "colorful" genealogies. Colescott, in a sense, re-appropriates history from the racial codes of an American popular culture which keeps the colors separate and the whites dominant. He reminds us acts of physical and economic violence and intermarriage created the diversity that is America. Colescott says of his work, "I pull the viewer in with humor, but when they begin to understand what they have to deal with in the paintings, they don't know whether to love them or hate them" (Queensmuse). Of *Choctaw Nickel,* in particular, Colescott comments on interracial mixing:

> Well, the Buffalo Nickel is gone, appropriately so, since the buffalo are gone. Most people don't know there were black tribes – Seminole and Choctaw. Escaped slaves became Choctaw warriors and fought the white man to a standstill in the swamps. "This is not an Indian war," the General said, "but a Negro war."[22]

Colescott's visual narrative fits well into a discourse that encompasses the literary work of Rilla Askew who also recognizes that families of the Southeast are frequently more racially varied than others can see or the families themselves know and will admit. The need to hide racial history is, of course, related to the history of economic and political oppression, and a form of domestic violence in itself. It has its own intergenerational aspects and diminishes an individual's sense of self that opens the door to internalization of the oppressor. Askew opens *The Mercy Seat* with the following description, and while it appears here that the races are clearly distinct for

now, this brief introduction not only focuses on the pain of relocation and oppression, it also gently implies the circumstances that make racial mixing and marriage possible:

> When the Choctaw people knew white soldiers were coming to force them from their homes in Mississippi, up the Great River and over the face of the earth to this unknown land in the west, the people walked for the last time in their forests and touched their hands to the trees, the rocks and healing plants, to say goodbye. They were herded on flat boats along the waterways, walked suffering over the earth, and brought longing, sickness for home, here. Others -- white women, some of them -- turned their faces backward, and then front, and ever after kept their eyes forward; they snapped at their children, grew tough as jackoak, and brought longing for home here. Men and women in the bellies of slaveships keened longing across the Deep and brought homesickness here. (Askew 1-2)

The denial of racial identity becomes a precedent which can be applied to a reading of *The Mercy Seat* regarding to the family ancestry of Demaris Billie Lodi, the suffering mother of Mattie, who is the book's child protagonist and narrative voice. The surname Billie comes from Demaris' paternal ancestry. While the Lodi family is identified as White, the Billies are not so clearly identified. In general, the novel provides only vague clues as to racial or ethnic background for the Billies such as descriptions of skin or hair color. The exception to this rule is Demaris' mother, Mary Whitsun. Askew offers a brief biography in the novel explaining that Mary is English, and that she arrived in America as a child and married Cornelius Billie in Kentucky in 1848. The name Billie, in this or in other spellings, is widely found among Southeastern Indian people and introduces the possibility of a family practicing cultural camouflage. According to Demaris, the wedding of Mary and Cornelius took place just ten or so years after the forced removal of Indian people from the region. The oral

presentation of a family history without clear ethnic markers was quite often the result of habitually hiding Indian ancestry in order to avoid removals. Assuming Demaris is a white woman married to a white man could be erroneous. Like Faulkner's Sam Fathers, Demaris could easily be the child of an Indian father, and because a father's ethnicity was privileged, greater efforts had to be taken to present her family's image. Thus, Mary Whitsun's ancestry and history becomes a dominant family narrative. This is also a practice that would be easily championed by the female members of a family who would likely see great value in a mother's lineage.[23]

After the death of Demaris, Mattie attempts to keep her mother's family history alive for her younger siblings:

> Your mama's mama was Mary Whitsun Billie and she was a blind woman. She had lived forty years when she went blind from a fever at ten o'clock one autumn morning (of a sudden, I told them: so you see it? Like the closure of Heaven) in the year of Our Lord Eighteen Hundred Sixty-seven, and she was born in London, England, where the King of all English-speaking people lived. (*Mercy* 195)

Tribal identities can be nearly invisible to many non-Indian readers, but Native American authors do not hesitate to integrate clues for the existence of these identities within their characterizations. Louise Erdrich, as discussed in Chapter One, uses complex behaviors as identity clues for her traditional Ojibwa characters such as an individual's choice of Native language over English. For the writers I have selected from the Southeast, a primary clue for identification appears to be an association with the image of bears. Depending on the author, this association of Indianness with "bearness" can be symbolic, as in the works by Faulkner, or as a link to a traditional

past, as expressed through oral narrative. James Mooney recorded Cherokee beliefs and some stories late in the nineteenth century concerning bears:

> The bears (*yânû*) are transformed Cherokee of the old clan of the Ani'-Tsâ'gûhi...Being really human, they can talk if only they would, and once a mother bear was heard singing to her cub in words which the hunter understood. (264)

In addition, Charles Hudson states that tribes in the Southeast were concerned with categorizations and of the anomalies that sometimes occurred. The bear is considered an anomaly in that it fits into two categories, those of both human and four-footed animal. Bears figure in Cherokee folklore, based on the observations that they frequently walked upright and ate many of the same kinds of foods humans ate: "(A)nd the bear shows up in the Cherokee oral tradition about the origin of disease and medicine, which is itself primarily concerned with the opposition between men and animals" (Hudson 139).

The image of the bear appears in all three of the works of fiction discussed in this chapter, with two scenes of remarkable similarity and finality. My selections for this discussion reflect a number of concerns. In addition to describing experiences of the region of the Southeast, each work touches upon issues of identity, relationships, especially those among family members, and offer attempts to describe pain.

The first comes from Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*. Throughout one long chapter of the novel, entitled "The Bear," an annual hunt has occupied the men's thoughts as one particular bear, Old Ben, has the reputation of being especially cagey, brutal to dogs and capable of surviving many a hunter's

bullets. As one of the youngest men in the annual hunt, Isaac sees his manhood connected to the hunting of this bear:

> By now he knew the old bear's footprint better than he did his own, and not only the crooked one. He could see any one of the three sound prints and distinguish it at once from any other, and not only because of its size. There were other bears within that fifty miles which left tracks almost as large, or at least so near that the one would have appeared larger only by juxtaposition. It was more than that. If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old male bear itself, so long unwifed and childless as to have become its own ungendered progenitor, was his alma mater. (201-202)

When circumstances finally allowed the hunting men to bring down the old bear by cutting his throat, the consistent and close association Faulkner makes between the bear and Sam Fathers becomes a final and intimate connection. With the bear dead and the best dog fatally wounded, it is also discovered that Sam has fallen and lies face down near the river's edge:

> Major de Spain caught the bow of the skiff as Boon jumped out and past him before it touched the bank. He looked at Old Ben and said quietly: "Well." Then he walked into the water and leaned down and touched Sam and Sam looked up at him and said something in that old tongue he and Joe Baker spoke. (232)

The wounded dog and fallen man are taken back to camp and a doctor brought to treat them:

> He lay there – the copper-brown, almost hairless body, the old man's body, the old man, the wild man not even one generation from the woods, childless, kinless, people-less – motionless, his eyes open but no longer looking at any of them, while the doctor examined him and drew the blankets up and put the stethoscope back into his bag and snapped the bag and only the boy knew that Sam too was going to die. (236)

Within two days, both the dog named Lion and Sam Fathers die. In Faulkner's world of masculinity, all the dead were male and loners. It should be noted that both Old Ben and Sam Fathers are described as without wives, without children, without any people or kin. Their deaths mark the passing not only of individual lives, but of a whole way of life which was somehow better, but incapable of remaining in the face of white man's progress. The strange absence -- or rather, the appropriation of Indian women by white men -- makes this vanishing seem all the more likely, even inevitable as all Indians will eventually become white. Faulkner sets our stage with the image of the bear as symbol of wilderness and Indian, interchangeable concepts that suit a variety of needs for non-Indian readers.

In *Pushing the Bear*, Glancy uses the bear image to represent the internal and resistant force the Cherokee people must somehow push against in order to obey the demands of white soldiers working for a white government that insists Indians must relocate to Indian Territory. Maritole, wife to Knobowtee, and mother to small infant, is the first character to note the presence of the bear in the early days of their forced march:

> I woke once shivering and saw the fires gone out. I looked up into the huge black sky. I had dreamed it was white and wet as the inside of an apple. The stars were black as apple seeds. Maybe I only imagined instead of dreamed. The earth was strange to me now. There was something over us. Some dark animal we pushed against. I could almost hear it breathe. (27)

The stress and shock of enforced removal has caused distortion of the universe in a fashion similar to Scarry's description. For Maritole, the world has become a

photographic negative -- a complete reversal of itself. The reality of leaving behind familiar landscapes and beloved homes demoralizes the people. With every hardship of the journey met and accomplished, the possibility of going back becomes more remote. Again, Maritole gives voice to the feelings of loss and despair:

> A great cloud hung over us. We marched as though we weren't in our own bodies. As though something would happen to jar us back to the way we had been. Then I heard the growl of thunder like a bear, and I knew it was happening to us. As we neared the top of the mountain, I turned and looked back and saw the enormous line of Cherokee. "Ten miles long," my father said.
>
> When we reached the top of the Cumberlands, I looked back again and wailed with the others. I waved to the North Carolina woods already far behind. Du'stayalun'yi! It was no longer ours. Even with Thomas hiding there. The loss and sorrow was so jumbled I could hardly walk. (67-68)

Throughout the novel, Maritole's awareness of the bear intensifies, becoming an ever more real and physical presence . At this point, Maritole enters a state of shock as the bear "devours" her:

> "The bear's at my feet," I told Luthy. "My toes feel like the bear's eating them!" I could feel the bear's teeth tearing the skin from my feet. "Luthy!" I jerked my legs, but they were weighted to the wagon. I couldn't move. I felt the bear's claws holding me down. "He's eating my legs!" I screamed to Luthy. I kicked in the wagon, but the bear didn't stop. I tried to sit up, but Luthy held me as I jerked under the blanket. I pitched with the wagon over the hard ground. The bear kept eating my body. He ate my stomach. My chest. There was nothing anyone could do. The bear kept eating until I was inside him. There was nothing left of me in the wagon. I could feel the bear's warmth. My whole body was stinging. I saw nothing but the dark. (114)

Glancy does not reveal much to suggest how this incident is understood by the witnesses or by Maritole herself. This scene, combined with the other mentions of the

bear's presence, suggests the bear could be a representation of a distorted self, possibly even in the process of psychological disassociation. In this reading, the bear is symbolic of PTSD symptoms and represents the self's desires to preserve itself under times of stress. Glancy's use of the bear image also contradicts traditional understandings of bears as healers. In this case, the bear causes pain to induce change, specifically a change of direction. The bear knows the people need to remain in their homeland in order to be healthy. One of the dangers of the journey itself is that self-preservation will take precedence over the needs of the group. If this is allowed to happen on a broad scale, the society not only suffers, it falls apart. The "Story of the Bear" that appears later in the novel appears to confirm this. Its appearance in italics, after a short section in Maritole's voice, suggests the story is one of Maritole's memories:

> *A long time ago the Cherokee forgot we were a tribe. We thought only of ourselves apart from the others. Without any connections. Our hair grew long on our bodies. We crawled on our hands and knees. We forgot we had a language. We forgot how to speak. That's how the bear was formed. From a part of ourselves when we were in trouble. All we had was fur and meat to give.* (176 author's italics)

From these passages, it can be understood that it is Martiole fighting and pushing herself into Indian Territory even as she wants to abandon everyone to the trail and return to her home. The devouring by the bear is thus a crisis of the self. Pain has overtaken her world, leaving darkness and her own realization "there was nothing left of me in the wagon" (114). The response must be one that reintegrates Maritole and her world even if it means pulling her from the darkness back to the cause of her pain and

stress. Glancy does not reveal this process in much detail, but through Maritole's voice, we are offered a few glimpses of this reintegration:

> What was that spasm? It was the shaman over me. Sucking me out of the bear. I had been warm. Now I felt cold again. I heard the shaman talking to the bear. He looked at the sky above the wagon. He chanted. I tried to kick him away with my feet but someone held my legs. (114)

Maritole comes to understand the presence of the bear as an internal battle with potentially deadly consequences. She describes her new understanding:

> The bear had once been a person. But he was not conscious of the consciousness he was given. His darkness was greed and self-centeredness. It was part of myself, too. It was in all of us. It was part of the human being. Why else did we march? No one was free of the bear. (183)

Near the end of the novel, the bear's presence is noticed by more characters. The most notable example is by Knobowtee, who associates bears with the non-Indians who have swarmed into the Cherokee homelands. Knobowtee describes his concerns with those whites who promote their interests over all others and whose greed is satisfied by removing Indians:

> I didn't know what would happen in the new territory. There was a bear larger than the one Maritole pushed. It was greed. *I'm going to have it all. I'm going to push them out of the way.* It stretched over the land. I knew it now because of all the farms I saw along the trail. They would even come into Indian Territory. Push the Cherokee over there, too. It would only be a matter of time. It was in the heart of men. (221)

When recalling that the source of internalized oppression is often anger with an inappropriate target, Knowbowtee's understanding of the bear is a redirecting of that anger from self to the appropriate target. This makes for thought-provoking comparison

to Faulkner's use of the bear to represent a "pre-" or part-human being that, conflated with ideas of wilderness, progress, and race becomes Indian.

Askew's use of the bear image in *The Mercy Seat* recalls those of both Faulkner and Glancy. The scene to follow most directly resembles Faulkner, but the connections between being bear, being human, and suffering from loss of home also recalls Glancy's "memory" that bears were once humans and beings that continue to have a vested interest in the activities of their human relatives. In the following passage, the Lodi family has created a campsite for an extended stay in the mountains of Tennessee. Here the hardships of wagon travel and the realizations of a permanent move have taken their toll on Demaris as the story is told by Mattie:

> She leaned back and closed her eyes, her one hand in the place where it lived in a fist against her chest, her other hand brown and limp in her lap. I heard the baby Lyda crying in the lean-to. I knew she had been crying a long time. Mama opened her eyes, wet and milky blue, and she looked down at me. "Honey?" she said. "You know it?" I'm never going to see my mama again. I'm never going to see Kentucky. I'm never going to see my home."
>
> There was a noise then. A great thrashing and yelling, like when Papa and Uncle Fayette had their knockdown-dragout, only it did not rise from the clearing around us but fumbled and smashed toward us from the deep brushy woods. Louder, and coming louder, until at last Papa crashed into the clearing, with the dogs and the man Misely holding Papa's gun and a dozen blond Misely children and our children whirling alongside him, the dogs barking and jumping and Jonaphrene and Little Jim Dee hollering and jumping, and Thomas waking up on his pallet under the pine tree to join his wailing voice with Lyda bawling in the lean-to, and Mama's grief drowning in it, disappearing in it like a dead leaf sucked in a whirlpool, because Papa held in his two hands, above the leaping mouths and fingers, the cut and bloodied head of a bear. My Papa was grinning. Blood dripped in small plops onto the rock dirt of the clearing. (52-53)

What ensues next between Demaris and John is a struggle of wills, female power versus male, conducted in few words, but with much psychic energy. Demaris insists on returning home, John tries to avoid the issue by pointing out how much meat a bear carcass provides. The daughter Mattie watches in breathless suspension because she also wants to return home but knows the awful possibility she will have to choose between her parents to do so:

> I watched it go back and forth between them, weighing heavy first on one side and then on the other, passing over the hot small space of sunlight, back and forth between them, with the Miselys and children and hound dogs and silent cut bear head for witness, until they settled it finally, their business between them. Watching each other. Mama stood up.
>
> "Reckon you better cut up that carcass wherever you killed it, John," she said. "I don't want any bloody bear guts strung here into my clean yard."
>
> She took a step toward the lean-to, where Lyda was hiccupy crying. Her left hand swung up to clutch the right one in the center of her chest, and she turned and looked at me, surprised a little, and fell down dead in the yard. (55-56)

When we recall that in Faulkner's last vestiges of wilderness, the bear Old Ben seemed impossible to kill for many years even with packs of dogs and mounted men carrying firearms. The bear was finally killed by a single man with a hunting knife who slit the bear's throat. That certain death was echoed by Sam Fathers' falling to the ground and rapidly wasting away. Askew's version varies only slightly with John Lodi severing the mother bear's head to show as a trophy to his wife whose own response is to fall dead. For these white hunters, there exists no knowledge that the bear might be distant relative, a speaker of similar language. In fact, they don't speak the same language at all or else John might have recognized a parent's concern for her cubs and

not have entered the space between them. In either case, the end result is the death of an Indian who longs for family and home. Unlike Faulkner, Askew's world is populated by fully developed female characters. However, in all three novels, violent acts on the part of men, especially white men, lead to the destruction of traditional social systems. Askew makes a parallel statement in the first of her short stories in the collection *Strange Business.* "The Killing Blanket" opens with the lines, "This is an old story. White man does a good job turning the people against themselves. Here's how he done it one time." (*Strange* 1)

The story describes the Choctaws struggling internally with the demands of the white government and various social pressures to allot tribal land holdings. Silan Lewis is a full-blood Choctaw man, married to a white woman, who chooses to oppose the Progressive Choctaws by forming a small posse to assassinate key Progressive leaders. The plan goes awry after the first killing and Silan is eventually sentenced to be shot. Silan's best childhood friend is Sheriff Tecumseh Moore who must arrange the execution. On the day of the execution, Silan follows the old ways by presenting himself to his executioners and they in turn place him seated on the killing blanket. But the shot to Silan's chest does not kill him and Sheriff Moore must step in again:

> After too much time passed, Sheriff Moore knew again that there wasn't any help for it. He went over and knelt on the blanket. He put the palm of his hand over the mouth of his friend, and felt the warm breath pushing against it. Silan's eyes were glazed over, but he turned them from the sky to look up at Tecumseh Moore's eyes.
> Sheriff Tecumseh Moore saw it then.
> He saw it like a memory he'd nearly forgotten.
> How there was no reason for the people to be all turned against themselves and killing each other. How Silan Lewis had no call to shoot Joe Hokolutubbee in his bed on his dark porch. How Lyman Pulsey had

> no call to shoot Silan Lewis. How in the old time in the old Nation, in the homeland where the bones of the ancestors were buried, in *okla falaya* by the Tombigbee waters, in the long-ago time the Choctaw knew how to fight and kill enemies. How enemies were always, in the old time, only others and not the Choctaw people themselves.
> And how it was when the white man wanted the land of the old Nation that the people first came to be divided. How the white man said to some of them, here, you give us this land and we'll give you this other, and it will belong to the Choctaw as long as the waters run. How the white man had a good trick then to give whiskey to some and money to others, how he'd name some of them chiefs who had no right or honor to be named so, for the one purpose of getting those Choctaws to sign papers of lies giving away the people's land. (*Strange* 7-8)

We can now take a closer look at the psychology of Glancy's and Askew's work by focusing on a few of the indicators of severe distress and PTSD, as well as a series of identity stages and acts (or attempts) at healing. The identity stages as described by Mihesuah borrow extensively from the "life stages" paradigm first proposed for African Americans by William Cross in 1978. The paradigm suggests that "as Blacks respond to a variety of social events, pressures, and expectations, they progress through a set of definable stages that lead to identity resolution" (Mihesuah 194). The four stages are labeled pre-encounter, encounter, immersion – emersion, and internalization. Mihesuah believes an understanding of these stages can assist Native Americans in recognizing different stages of development and that it is possible to achieve, if so desired, a stage where a person feels confident and secure with individual identity. There are also interesting parallels between the "Life Stages" and those of PTSD, particularly in the final stages of each model where the individual develops a more balanced outlook concerning their own or their family's experiences with traumatic events. A closer examination of the novels by Askew and Glancy present the more

advanced stages of PTSD that can lead to acts of domestic violence. Each uses different stylistic approaches, but each is able to document specific stages of PTSD.

For the first stage of Impact or Shock, Askew and Glancy detail events of sudden separation from loved ones. This is particularly true when it is recalled the land is considered as a relative. Just as Duran and Duran see this concept of land as relative at the heart of a uniquely Native American form of PTSD, Glancy and Askew both add the image of the bear as another relative who connects them to that land.

Mattie in *The Mercy Seat* offers the best example of a young person trying to create a self identity in the face of family upheaval and loss of her mother. Her anxiety over the African American woman who serves as wet nurse to the baby Lyda and the Creek/Choctaw Indian healer indicate Mattie is in the *encounter* stage. Mihesuah describes this stage as a time when a person "experiences a shocking event which jolts them into considering their frame of reference for forming their identity is inadequate" (196). The second half of this stage occurs when the individual decides to develop the identity they may have been repressing previously. However, Mattie does not seem to enter the second half of the encounter stage, preferring a *pre-encounter* position during the narrative time of the novel where stereotypes offer more comfort. For Mattie, the women who come into her life after her mother's death are shocking in their difference. Mattie offers this clue to her limited, and stereotypical, understanding of others when the arranged-for wet nurse arrives at the Lodi's lean-to:

> I knew what she was there for. I'd never been around colored people because we lived far from town and we didn't have sharecroppers, but I knew of them in the same way you know about Indians and panthers and other things you don't hardly ever see. (*Mercy* 61)

For any child, any other woman is strange compared to the familiarity of their own mother. However, there is still room here for a variety of difficult questions for Mattie concerning her mother's ancestry. Two of the women who assist the Lodi family are identifiably Indian and present themselves as such. If Demaris shared any physical or cultural traits with these women, this recognition would cause Mattie to experience cognitive dissonance with the protected story of Demaris' English/White mother and lineage. Moreover, there is Mattie's grief for the loss of her mother causing strong conflicting emotions and behaviors as those Mattie experiences during the visits of the Black wet nurse:

> I was trembling. I cannot tell you how it all swept me at once, my thoughts flapping like crows looking for something else I could order her to do because I wanted to say, Do this nigger! and watch her do it, and at the same time hating her for how she'd witched Lyda to make her touch her like Mama, and I was frightened because I could not see why she did it, the woman clearly did not want my sister but held her like a feedsack, a lump of lye soap, a nothing, and that very idea scared me more than the witchery, and all at once I felt my brother Thomas beside me, how he used to feel, small in the featherbed beside me back home in Kentucky, how he'd put out his little palm toward me, sleeping, just to touch me, and I felt a pang for the way I used to be tender with Thomas and that pang started to swell so I had to push back at it, shove it down deep. I stood up. (Askew 71)

In the second stage of Withdrawal, emotions shut down as Mattie does when she recalls her feelings for Thomas while watching the wet nurse feed Lyda. Mattie has no outlet or safe means to vent or understand her own grief. The close association of small children and the bloody bear combine with Mattie's shock of sudden loss to create an emotional overload. The only appropriate response for her is to shut down all emotions.

Mattie also describes her father as he undergoes similar withdrawal behavior at various points in *The Mercy Seat.* Early in their journey, John becomes unaware of his surroundings. He loses so much awareness that he fails to hear the cries of the cow and her calf he has tethered to the back of the wagon, even as the calf is dragged to death. Mattie describes her father as "wordless," and "driven by demons" (99). Prior to her death, Demaris likewise ceased all forms of communicating with her family. Her emotional pain took the physical manifestation of holding her right fist to her chest at all times.

Glancy's approach is less direct in that the sufferers are faceless, too numerous to name. She describes the process simply in the first pages of the novel: "The men who walked near the wagon looked to the ground. Knobowtee told us all to be quiet. Some of the women cried to themselves. They held their faces in their hands" (8).

The third stage of Acceptance/Repression is marked by denial and magical thinking. During this stage, sufferers create scenarios in which the oppressive order is reversed. Knobowtee and other of the men in *Pushing the Bear* imagine themselves rising up against the white soldiers and then routing the squatters off their homes and lands. Even as they are powerless and forced to continue west, their thoughts are focused on fantastic solutions that will enable them all to return home. In contrast, Maritole sees the strength and courage that could precipitate such a rescue in a white soldier when she no longer sees those traits in her own husband. Faced with family disintegration, Martiole denies some of the pain related to her husband's struggle by replacing it with a fantasy of rescue. In *The Mercy Seat,* Mattie engages in much

magical thinking by planning the return trip to Kentucky. In her child's mind, she is capable of hitching and driving mules pulling a wagon filled with her smaller siblings back over the mountainous terrain plus one river crossing, to rejoin her grandmother. Eventually, for Knobowtee and Maritole, the power of the white soldiers and the insensitivity of the American government crushes their hopes of returning home. A parallel event occurs for Mattie when the wagon and its contents are burned by her uncle once the family reaches Indian Territory.

Stage Four is characterized by Compliance & Anger. This is an especially volatile stage as the realization grows that the cause of pain/anger cannot be eliminated. The rage that results cannot be vented appropriately or even at the source of the pain. This is the point at which much violence becomes domestic violence such as Knobowtee acting out his frustration by striking his wife for reasons of "honor." Maritole's offense has been that of attracting the attention of the white soldier Tanner and developing a "friendship" with him. Knobowtee does not recognize the relationship as one between oppressed and oppressor, nor does he see the denial and magical thinking Maritole is engaging in to combat her own pain. Glancy presents the violence as having dual causes as both Knobowtee and Maritole are suffering losses and both are helpless to stop the march. Each reacts to that pain and contributes, however unwittingly, to the outcome of domestic violence.

Askew's exploration of this stage is also one of noting several sufferers. Each contributes stress to the already destabilized family and moves toward the venting of their emotions through violence. John Lodi ignores his wife's legitimate claim to raise

her children in the community of her mother and brothers and dislocates his family. His acts of suppression and emotional withdrawal result in the deaths of his wife, infant daughter and the stunted emotional development in his surviving children. Mattie attempts to reintroduce stability to the family by retaining her mother's identity and history in the form of stories to her siblings. However, Mattie also suffers from PTSD, her version of her mother's identity is distorted and her experience with her mother's history is once removed. She is simply unable to reconstruct the strength of the feminine when she is too young to fully understand it herself. She models herself after her father, rejecting at least two other potential models, both of whom are Choctaw women, and instead, maintains herself in the third stage of PTSD, that of Acceptance/Repression. Thus begins the intergenerational process of perpetuating PTSD and the acts of violence that results in the pattern Mattie indicates "marks the Lodis."

John Lodi can be considered an abuser in that he denied his wife's rights to have control over her life and live in the manner she desired among extended family, but he is also the victim of abuse from his older, manipulative brother. Overall, John's personality is prone to shut down his emotions and stay in Stage One for extended periods of time. When he does finally vent his rage, he does so in violence that is deadly. The first example of this rage is directed at his brother's mule which John simply shoots in the head. The more important act of domestic violence is acted out by John's children motivated by Mattie. Fayette Lodi, the self-centered, insensitive, loud-mouthed brother of John, is simultaneously shot by John, arguably acting out of self-

defense as well as rage, and by Mattie and Jonaphrene, acting out of vengeance, anger and fear.

John Lodi and Knobowtee engage in violence as responses to stress. Each misdirects their hostility for another greater force oppressing the entire family onto the family itself. Subsequently, the intergenerational nature of PTSD creates anger and despair that leads to dissociated personalities and chronic abusers. On this matter, we are not given insight into the Lodi brothers to adequately determine if they were acting out familial violence originating with their parents. However, the killing of Fayette perpetuates more violence as the "Coda" of *The Mercy Seat* reveals:

> . . . there were only two of them, the father and the daughter, in the borrowed wagon traveling west on the old Briartown road toward Eufaula on the cold spring afternoon in 1902 when someone shot John Lodi in the back. (426)

The someone was Fayette's son Fowler, and Mattie is not surprised by the act. She notes "The mark was on us, each Lodi, unto the last one..." (427).

The final stage is that of Trauma Mastery, but it is not as certain as the other stages are in the evolution of PTSD. This is the stage of the healing process, acceptance of responsibility. It is similar to Mihesuah's description of *internalization,* the state when a person achieves a sense of inner security and confidence: "Defensiveness, stress, and anti-white behavior regresses in favor of 'ideological flexibility, psychological openness, and self-confidence'" (Mihesuah 197). This stage is not present among the characters in either Glancy's or Askew's fiction, however, the hope for this step is present in *Pushing the Bear*. The possibility for Knobowtee and

Maritole to reconcile is laid into the conclusion, although the loss of their infant and other family members, infidelity and spousal abuse are still fresh wounds for both of them. Now in Indian Territory, they establish a home with adopted children and cherish the distant hope that they can survive in the new land.

Both internalization and trauma mastery are evident in the paintings of Dorothy Sullivan. Her works provide idealized images of Cherokee family that cannot be simply left to a category of Indian fantasy utopia. In *She Speaks For Her Clan* (Fig. 6), Sullivan depicts seven Honored Women, representing traditional clans and wearing nineteenth-century style dresses. Included among the seven is the twentieth-century leader Wilma Mankiller in the role of the Beloved Woman. Sullivan employs the defamiliarization mode of storytelling to encourage cultural continuity as described by Karl Kroeber and included in Chapter One. The women hold various objects that are associated with Cherokee culture, such as traditional foods, coil-built pots, baskets and the accoutrements for stickball.

In *Selu and White Eagle Corn* (Fig. 7), Sullivan illustrates the combined stories of the making of the Cherokee world and a prophecy about downfall and renewal. Sullivan offers viewers a visual image of hope that is tied to achievable behaviors, particularly those traditional acts such as the planting of corn. Looking across the body of her works, a number of traditional values emerge, such as telling the old stories, dancing, worshipping together (either in traditional or Christian forms), and simply being present with other family members in a quiet and loving way.



Figure 6. Dorothy Sullivan, *She Speaks For Her Clan.*
Print 15 x 27 in.
(*Dorothy: Limited Edition Prints,* Norman, OK: Memory Circle Studio)



Figure 7. Dorothy Sullivan, *Selu and White Eagle Corn.*
Print 11 x 14 in.
(*Dorothy: Limited Edition Prints,* Norman, OK: Memory Circle Studio)

Among Sullivan's most important contributions are her images of Indian families in scenes of pre- and post-removal times in which women figure frequently and prominently. While Sullivan's style may strike viewers as romanticized versions of Southeastern Indian history, they may in fact be offering emotional models in visual form to people who need to relearn cultural values and behaviors. The varying historical settings Sullivan uses also creates a sense of cultural continuity which show strong, confident men and women courting, marrying, teaching children not only in the old country before removal, but through removal, and into the present-day.

Visual clues such as clothing styles that many viewers rely on to date the "scene" actually work against dating a scene thus also working against romanticization of Cherokee people and culture. Several of Sullivan's paintings are temporally ambiguous, thus allowing them to be simultaneously scenes of a hundred years ago and scenes from last week's Pow Wow or Stomp Dance reinforcing concepts of tribal and family continuity into the 21st century. Among other visual motifs Sullivan uses are the Cherokee rose and large blue spheres sometimes appearing as a moon, other times a geometric component of the composition. Sullivan refers to the blue sphere in her artist's publicity packet as a "memory circle" and at times shadowy figures can be seen within the texture, heightening the association with memory. Her choice of this name/image counters the observation of Duran, Duran and other counselors, that much PTSD treatment is designed to overcome a body of symptoms known as "fragmented" or "lack of memories." Sullivan offers images on the behalf of pain to assist healing of cultural and personal loss.

The Cherokee rose motif appears frequently as border design, fabric patterns, background, foreground and two paintings use an enlarged rose in place of the blue memory circle as the visual center of the composition. Sullivan explains the rose motif in her comments to accompany the painting *Legend of the Cherokee Rose* (Fig. 8):

> When the Trail of Tears started in 1838, the mothers of the Cherokee were grieving and crying so much that they would not be able to help their children survive the journey to Oklahoma. One night, the elders prayed for a sign that would lift the mothers [sic] spirits and give them strength. The next day a beautiful rose began to grow where the mothers [sic] tears fell. The rose is white for their tears; a gold center represents the gold taken from Cherokee lands; with seven leaves on each stem for the seven Cherokee clans. The wild Cherokee Rose grows along the route of the Trail of Tears into eastern Oklahoma today. (Sullivan publicity packet)

By including these motifs of blue memory circle and white rose in a large percentage of her works, Sullivan reiterates the experiences of Cherokee people with visual narrative devices. Contemporary scenes recall the historical struggles, which in turn operate as encouragement for the contemporary viewer. In my interpretation, the Cherokee Rose is Sullivan's equivalent to the bear of Glancy's narrative in that it is symbolic of the oppressive march, the physical hardships endured to survive, the emotional struggle to continue even when the will of the self is to give up or abandon the needs of others, and the continuation of the people in the new homeland. Tears turn into roses along the trail, expressing an essential psychological truth that feeling and expressing pain is ultimately healthy in contrast to emotional numbness that is characteristic of PTSD.



Figure 8. Dorothy Sullivan, *Legend of the Cherokee Rose.*
Print 16 x 20 in.
(*Dorothy: Limited Edition Prints,* Norman, OK: Memory Circle Studio)

In summary, if we take another brief look at each of the writers and artists presented in this chapter, but in a different order, we can recreate a progression of domestic violence that illustrates an escalation of such violence in America. Karenne Wood's *For My Ex-Husband* and Diane Glancy's *Pushing the Bear* leave us with no doubt that rape, bodily harm, and enforced relocation are acts of violence. These are direct assaults that result in first phase shocks developing PTSD.

The second phase of injury results from diminishment of another's pain, an act that is required of the oppressor if suppression and removal are to take place. Thus patriarchal systems learn to ignore, suppress and oppress the feminine. Faulkner's novel *Go Down, Moses* illustrates how many so easily ignore the contributions of mothers and even the complete personhood of women. The pain resulting from those acts is also ignored and suppressed. This includes the demeaning of women or the attacking of mothers who are acting on their own or their children's best interests.

We understand that poverty invariably results from dislocation and instability. Therefore, we must acknowledge that homelessness exists because we allow it to. When we look into the faces of women such as Florence Thompson as *Migrant Mother*, it is not enough to recognize the tragedy of her situation. It must be understood as violence.

And finally, the systematic process of suppressing or rationalizing acts of violence is itself a form of violence. Thus Colescott reminds us that appropriation of culture is a contemporary act of violence because it is the continuation of all the previous violent acts described here.

That Native American writers and artists stress the importance of women in a balanced, healthy society should not be surprising or looked upon as a contemporary outgrowth of various women's equity movements. Rather, this is an acknowledgement of and a return to traditional practices that is also shaping the literature for professional counselors and psychologists. As one example, the (re)integration of the feminine is part of the healing process and a return to the Cherokee Harmony Ethic, according to Laurence French and Jim Hornbuckle, counselors working with the Qualla Boundary Cherokee in North Carolina. Their efforts to reintroduce traditional women as teachers of traditional skills, values and stories has been instrumental in regional mental health programs for over twenty years (French et al 77).

Domestic violence is a symptom of previous trauma and it is a cause for further trauma. It is not enough to condemn some people for their individual acts of abuse. Glancy, Askew, Colescott and Sullivan, Wood, and Whitman reveal to us extensive patterns of violent, abusive behavior that are ingrained within our very culture and now we must, each of us, consider the ways in which we perpetuate violence or promote healing.

[1] *Markings on Earth* is the Winner of the 2000 Native Writers Circle of the Americas First Book Award for Poetry and is scheduled for publication by the University of Arizona Press in 2001.

[2] See Charles Hudson *The Southeastern Indians* for a discussion of some of the reasons why whites felt they deserved Indian lands more than the Indians themselves did. (452)

[3] Charles Hudson in *The Southeastern Indians* gives a very good account of how many Indians from these tribes and others were removed.

[4] The metaphorical language of gardening or hunting is not my own. Richard Drinnon in *Facing West* notes that the use of such language in relation to Native Americans had its beginning in the early contact years in the Northeast. "(F)rom (Roger) Williams's day to Andrew Jackson's and beyond: in times of trouble natives were always wild animals that had to be rooted out of their dens, swamps, jungles. (53)

[5] Letter written to Rennard Strickland October 8, 1991 and quoted in essay "Yellow Bird's Song: The Dilemma of an Indian Lawyer and Poet." *Tonto's Revenge.*

[6] Study by T. Shoshan. "Mourning and Longing From Generation to Generation." *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 43(2): 193-207.

[7] Scarry cites Mark Zborowski, "Cultural Components in Response to Pain," *Journal of Social Issues* 8 (1952) 16-30; and M.K. Opler, *Culture and Mental Health* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), and "Ethnic Difference in Behavior and Health Practices," in *The Family: A Focal Point for Health Education*, ed. I. Galdston (New York: New York Academy of Medicine, 1961).

[8] Study conducted by Z. Solomon, M. Kotler, and M. Mikuliner. 1988. "Combat-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among Second-Generation Holocaust Survivors: Preliminary Findings. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 145 (7): 865-68.

[9] Study conducted by S. Moskovitz and R. Krell. "Child Survivors of the Holocaust: Psychological Adaptations to Survival." *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences.* 27(2): 81-91.

[10] There have been related warnings of potential psychological distress. In note 7, Scarry includes a 1959 text *Culture and Mental Health* , edited by Marvin K. Opler. Among the other studies not cited by Scarry are those which refer to Native American cultures such as the Ojibwas, Utes, Iroquois and Peruvian tribes. Opler himself worked with Ute dream material and in his introduction to *Culture and Mental Health*, he offers

this warning. "The shattering effects of migration into the urban scene of the Peruvian Indians, studies by Fried in his account of their psychiatric adjustments in acculturation, provide a warning to American Indian administrators at a time when the government is planning the rapid relocation and detribalization of its oldest American citizens". (Opler 2)

[11] The report was "released" a second time on March 19, 2001 with no changes. The second round of media announcements were apparently part of an effort to take advantage of the public interest in the census reports also being released.

[12] The Bureau of Justice Statistics places Hawaiian Natives and Pacific Islanders in the category of Asians. This would not be in keeping with other organizations that place all American indigenous groups in the category of American Indian.

[13] Karenne Wood, in letter to the author, 28 June, 1999.

[14] The character is Richard Fish on the FOX network series *Allie McBeal.*

[15] Indian Removal was both a concept and an event, taking place over several years. The Indian Removal Act relocated members of some 38 tribes into Indian Territory creating a total of 67 tribes living in the region. Other tribes, or various portions thereof, relocated due to treaty agreements or personal preference. To use the word "enforced" here refers to an act similar to the taking of prisoners of war at gunpoint. There were earlier departures along the Trail of Tears that were performed voluntarily or with some military escorts, but in these cases, the relocated were allowed to take possessions with them.

[16]My thanks to Geary Hobson for sharing these terms with me from his readings and conversations with other Native American writers, scholars and thinkers who are concerned with this process.

[17] To the best of my current research, my own family has been enwhitened. This appears to be a conscious choice by certain ancestors who wanted the freedom of movement and to homestead. Blackstock Walker (b. 1808) left western North Carolina with his father and (step?)mother by 1828 to settle in Illinois. Later, the family, including Blackstock's English wife Hannah Holt, would settle in Iowa. Such movements during the time of Indian Removal would undoubtedly be prohibited to a family of traditional Indians. Still, they managed to live as white people of their time and region also lived but allowed the story of Indian ancestry, although eventually with no tribal name, to be passed along via family narratives into the generations of the 20th and 21st centuries.

[18] *The Grass Harp*, produced by Charles Matthau for Fine Line Films, 1995 and based on novel of same name by Truman Capote.

[19] The same character in Truman Capote's novel claims to be part Creek. Given the history of the Southeast as discussed by Charles Hudson, this is a quite probable genealogy for the character.

[20] Hudson states "after the Yamasee War, we hear very little about Indian slaves, and those who survived enslavement were presumably absorbed among the blacks in subsequent generations, losing their Indian identity. There were, however, several court cases in antebellum Southern courts in which slaves sued for their freedom on the grounds that their mothers were Indians. (447)

[21] Colescott was the first African-American artist to represent the U.S. in a single-artist exhibition at the Venice Biennale.

[22] Colescott is not clear about the General he apparently "quotes" but General Thomas Jesup was the US military commander of the first Seminole War. Hudson states Jesup "mounted a brutally aggressive campaign against the Seminoles in the fall and winter of 1835." By 1838, the Seminoles numbered over one thousand with nearly one third of them blacks who were culturally Seminole. Jesup had to concede in a letter to the secretary of war the campaign against the Seminoles was a costly mistake. He was relieved from duty in July, 1838.

[23] This substitution of a mother's story for a father's is also practiced in my maternal family genealogy. The story of Hannah Holt Walker, also English, has substantial power because there are supporting records and connections are made to significant events in English-American history beginning with the Mayflower. However, her husband's family is sorely lacking in any information except for the general and broad reference to "Indian blood."

Chapter Three
Southwest:
Embracing Nothingness

He died drunk one mornin'
Alone in the land he fought to save
Two inches of water in a lonely ditch
Was a grave for Ira Hayes

Chorus: *Call him drunken Ira Hayes*
He won't answer anymore
Not the whiskey drinkin' Indian
Nor the Marine that went to war

Yeah, call him drunken Ira Hayes
But his land is just as dry
And his ghost is lyin' thirsty
In the ditch where Ira died

from *Ballad of Ira Hayes*
written by Peter LaFarge
recorded by Johnny Cash

This chapter is about addiction. All forms of addictive behavior are products of imbalance and signs of ill health, but some are more destructive of self and community than others. Certainly, alcoholism and other forms of substance abuse are devastating and even fatal, but sex addictions and other compulsive behaviors are also of great concern. Studies into the causes of addictive behavior explore the relationships of certain addictive behaviors, such as alcohol and drug abuse to such consequences as debilitating diseases, accidents, violence, depression and suicide, but prescribing specific behavior modifiers or cures is much more difficult and even seems impossible

for some individuals. Many professionals understand the cause of much addictive behavior as pain and pain avoidance. For example, Dean Ornish, a medical doctor in his book concerning heart health[1]:

> There are many, many ways of numbing pain, killing pain, distracting or distancing (our)selves from emotional pain. Some people smoke cigarettes. Others overeat, abuse drugs and alcohol, channel-surf, work too hard. Our culture provides us lots of ways to avoid pain -- temporarily. (Ornish 14)

However, getting to real cures for the destructive behavior requires a real understanding of the pain involved at the behavior's roots. As has been stated in earlier chapters, pain and the subsequent behaviors are not limited to particular ethnic or racial groups. What is compelling is that certain groups may have a greater predisposition to certain behaviors because they have collectively experienced a history filled with grief, anger, despair and hopelessness that becomes perpetuated via intergenerational PTSD.[2] It should also be stated this notion of predisposition should not in any way connote the theory which still persists in some circles that Native Americans are genetically predisposed to alcoholism in ways unique from any other population. Rather, the persistence of certain living conditions promotes the continuation of certain emotional states and their accompanying behaviors.[3]

"(A)nything that promotes a sense of isolation often leads to illness and suffering. Anything that promotes a sense of love and intimacy, connection and community, is healing" (Ornish 14). The common sense truth of this statement may be apparent to all who read it, except, perhaps, medical practitioners. Once a person exhibits the symptoms of pain or disease, Western biomedicine insists the origins are

physical with corresponding treatments which work on a systemic and biological level. Anthropologist Gary Witherspoon elaborates on the Western thought processes which promote this approach to treating illness:

> To Western thinkers what goes on in the mind is subjective, while that which occurs in the world of matter and energy is objective...thought alone has no impact on the structure and operation of reality, and spoken words have no power to control matter or energy. (Witherspoon 9)

This is in direct contrast to much Native thought which assumes that thought and speech are capable of impacting what happens in the objective world. Therefore, Native American medical practices are more inclusive of an individual's emotional and spiritual states of being as associated with or causal of particular physical symptoms. For medical practitioners from a Western perspective who may also arrive at similar conclusions about the relationship between the subjective and objective worlds, acceptance from the greater medical community has not been immediately forthcoming. The research and writings by heart specialist Dr. Dean Ornish and others concerned with the emotional well-being of patients as a primary cause of heart disease are considered at best "pioneering" within the medical community and typically relegated to a position within the New Age self-help movement. There is also a certain prejudice which views their publications for lay readers as inferior to established medical journals rather than as outreach to enable readers to affect their own health care. Nonetheless, there is a growing number of physicians who accommodate these "divergent" approaches within their own practices. Dr. Lori Arviso Alvord, the first Navajo woman surgeon, states in her recent book, *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear,* that:

> Navajos believe in *hózhó* or *hózhóni* --'Walking in Beauty'[4]-- a worldview in which everything in life is connected and influences everything else. A stone thrown into a pond can influence the life of a deer in the forest, a human voice and a spoken word can influence events around the world, and all things possess spirit and power. So Navajos make every effort to live in harmony and balance with everyone and everything else. Their belief system sees sickness as a result of things falling out of balance, of losing one's way on the path of beauty. In this belief system, religion and medicine are one and the same. (Alvord 14)

In brief, this is the ideal vision for a healthy life. Living in a balanced way promotes health, contentment, intimacy and long-life but also requires commitment, self-control, discipline. For the Navajo, if a person suffers physically or has bad dreams, the cause of the imbalance is identified and one of over sixty major rites or sings[5] is chosen as appropriate to the healing of that individual or family. Thus, balance is again possible. Understanding the nature of imbalance also requires an acceptance of forces from both the objective and subjective worlds, energy and matter combined with thoughts or dreams, wreaking havoc within an individual's body and mind. Like Dr. Alvord's images of a stone thrown into a pond or a voice influencing events around the world, the havoc spreads further and further away from the traumatic start.

For this chapter, I will present the works of several Native American artists and writers whose works explore addictive behavior, especially that of drinking alcohol. Gerald L. Clarke (Cauhilla) and brothers Diego and Mateo Romero (Cochiti Pueblo) each present their perspective on the relationship between being Indian and drinking behavior. For Peruvian-born Kukuli Velarde, the issue of addictive behavior is broader and refers to internalization of the oppressor as a frequent cause. For the writer's perspective, I will concentrate on the works of Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo)

and refer to N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa). Each creates a character who uses alcohol as a treatment for personal loss, isolation and as a connection to war experiences whether positive or negative. An examination of addictive behavior must at some point name that behavior. The challenge for artists is to attach to that name the images that make the disease, the addiction immediately recognizable even at the risk those images are stereotypes. This process can be seen in the works by all of the artists I have chosen for this chapter. Another step involves placing the behavior into a context that includes the consequences for an individual and that individual's community. For Native American artists, this step involves extending or contextualizing the images using icons, language, and historical and cultural references of Native American communities. According to literary scholar John Purdy, these steps are typical to Native American literature, in what he calls the investigation and affirmation stages in his model of Native American textual analysis.[6] Despite the fact Purdy does not include the visual forms in his definition of "text," his premises hold true for visual art. In brief, these stages refer to processes of embedding clues within a given text. These textual elements support Native Americans attempting to understand both problematic behaviors and the person(s) exhibiting those behaviors. These textual clues may also assist anyone attempting to understand this complex dynamic between Native Americans and addictive behaviors. This process suspends judgment much of the time, thus suggesting to many readers/viewers that the Native American artist is somehow promoting a behavior others find problematic. This process can also be considered a form of Indian Intellectualism, which, as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn discusses in her article " American

Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story," is another indigenous sociocultural activity that goes unrecognized by mainstream America.

Once a behavior is named, its presence contextualized and understood, the cause of the disorder, the imbalance, is located and "dealt with" in any one of a number of surprising ways. I use the phrase "dealt with" because there is no simple or single manner by which Native Americans approach the imbalance and formulate a reaction or a treatment. For example, an artist or writer may choose an angry tone, a satirical image or an outright joke, and all for the purpose of increasing awareness of a serious, life-threatening situation. Silko creates characters in *Almanac of the Dead* who are trying to cope with their problems, but who frequently fall into self-destructive behaviors that at best aggravate their problems and at worst lead to their deaths. Silko's approach in this novel has been cause of a certain amount of discomfort for some readers. A critical "backlash" has emerged wherein many Amer-European readers attempt to distance themselves from the text and its characters to express their own anger about being confronted with these characters and situations. However, the impulse of Silko and other Native American artists is to engage the Amer-European reader in the dialogue concerning pain. Duran and Duran describe the necessity of this engagement, especially where Amer-European culture is perceived as the cause of certain traumas leading to PTSD and related disorders among Native Americans. Many of the works presented in this chapter offer ideas of healing which directly challenge Amer-European perceptions of the nature and causes of disease and appropriate treatment. Silko's work in particular raises questions concerning the patient/healer relationship. As theoretical concerns,

Silko explores a number of questions in the context of her short fiction, non-fiction essays, and long fiction. "For whom is the healing ceremony prescribed? Who will benefit or suffer as a result? Is it to be expected that some suffering will result, or is continued suffering the result of a flawed view of healing or ceremony?"

In this exploration of illness, its causes and treatment, there must be a moment of naming, of identifying the disease and its causes. I have heard anecdotes in which a person plagued by seemingly unrelated symptoms of unknown causes suddenly has a profound moment of insight wherein the disease or trauma is named, or "speaks" its name. Even when that name portends tremendous suffering, i.e. cancer, Alzheimer's disease, AIDS, child abuse, abandonment, or rape, the act of naming contains both fear and relief, worry and hope, and much power. This moment is so profound it could be argued that there is no potential for healing without first naming that which causes the ill health. Duran and Duran concur by stating:

> ...in any type of therapy or healing, there first needs to be awareness of the trauma before any long-term healing can occur. Ideally we should be able to bring the perpetrator into the therapeutic encounter, thus beginning his healing as well..." (*Postcolonial* 87)

However important the naming process may be in beginning the healing process, it must also be noted that cultural differences exist in how to best undertake the treatment. A number of doctors, counselors and scholars are coming to acknowledge in their writings what Native Americans have understood for some time -- that is, Western culture celebrates individualism and treats an individual as extensions of that

preference, whereas Native American cultures see a community and thus a group that must be integrated into a treatment plan:

> (T)he collective treatment of psychologically troubled individuals in tribal groups not only serves to heal the individual but also to reaffirm the norms of the entire group. The goal of therapy is not to strengthen the client's ego but to encourage the client to transcend the ego by experiencing the self as embedded in and expressive of community.
>
> The Euro-American tradition, on which contemporary psychology is based, espouses an Aristotelian worldview that promotes dualisms, weakens community, and diminishes a sense of rootedness in time and place. The dominant cultural emphasis on personal agency has fostered material prosperity, freedom, and autonomy for the privileged classes. However, the consequences include alienation and narcissistic self-absorption. (LaFromboise 146 - 148)

So it is that Gerald L. Clarke takes this important first step in naming the cause of much imbalance in Native American life. In his 1997 ready-made sculpture: *Monumental Series: Tradition Addiction, Addiction Tradition* (Fig. 9), Clarke calls attention to the fact there is more going on here than having a drink. Using plastic Indian warrior toys to decorate a pedestal for a beer mug being filled from a mysterious floating hand, Clarke calls up a number of stereotypes about Indians as drinkers. The cupids at the base of the pedestal suggest a heavenly interpretation as if alcohol were divinely bestowed upon Indians who in turn dance around the giant mug. For the Heard Museum's 7th Native American Fine Art Invitational held in Phoenix, Arizona in 1997 where this piece was exhibited, Clarke wrote the following:

> My ultimate goal as an artist is to give Indian culture back the humanity which had been taken from it by stereotypes created over the past centuries. Neither the super-shaman nor the drunken-Indian do anything to convey what we as a people felt. (Archuleta 30)

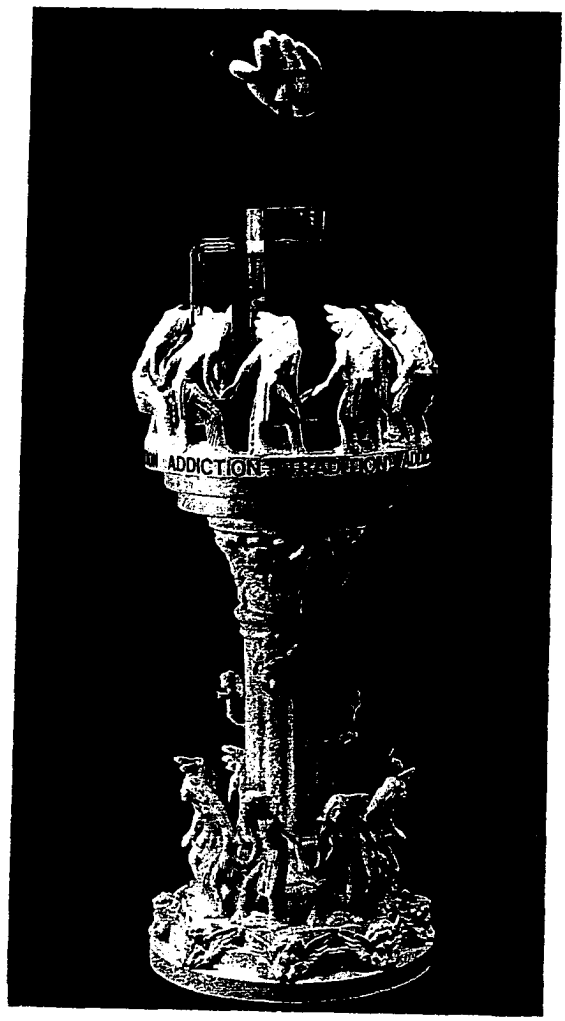


Figure 9. Gerald L. Clarke.
Monumental Series: Tradition Addiction, Addiction Tradition, 1997.
Ready-made sculpture, 28 x 11 x 11 in.
Heard Museum, Phoenix, Cat. No. 3703-1.
American Indian Art, 24:2 (1999) 32.

Clarke's ready-made not only names alcohol as an addiction, but names tradition as a form of addiction as well. The piece raises the distressing possibility that Native American culture is somehow inherently bound up with the behavior of drinking alcohol. This is not to indict only non-Indians who are quick to elevate their notions of authentic Indian culture, usually in the form of the Plains warrior, to the pedestal of romanticism and glorified warfare while knocking down the real individuals who suffer from alcoholism, but also, possibly, those Native Americans who have come to accept this distorted image of warrior life as correct. However, as we shall see from the debate among scholars and Native American artists, there is an intertwining of identity and addictive behavior where alcohol is concerned.

Clarke's juxtaposition of Indian warriors with angels and alcohol invokes at least one common stereotype of Native Americans as alcoholics through the dichotomy of Noble Savages (the potentially "good" Indians) versus the Red Devils (the "bad" Indians). According to Berkhofer, "the good Indian appears friendly, courteous, and hospitable . . . Modest in attitude if not always in dress, the noble Indian exhibited great calm and dignity in bearing, conversation, and even under torture" (Berkhofer 28). On the other hand, the bad Indian exhibited all those traits contradictory to those of the good Indian, or which were distasteful to Amer-Europeans in general: "Cannibalism and human sacrifice were the worst sins, but cruelty to captives and incessant warfare ranked not far behind in the estimation of Whites" (28).

For now, I will set aside any judgments of good and bad and examine the role of alcohol in the lives of Native Americans. Simply put, the percentage of Indians who drink is significant. In a typical report on the problems of alcohol and drug abuse, the following statistics and description create a bleak picture of life on any given reservation:

> Alcoholism among Native Americans has reached epidemic proportions and has been described as the number one health problem among Indians. The federal government reports that the Indian alcoholism death rate is more than five times greater than that reported for all U.S. races (U.S. DHHS, 1995a). Of the 10 leading causes of death for American Indians and Alaska Natives, four are alcohol related. The death rate from cirrhosis is five times higher among American Indians and Alaska Native ages 25 to 44 than for the general population. (Hodge and Fredericks 283)

The 1999 Bureau of Justice Statistics report also reveals a higher than average rate of alcohol related behaviors among Native Americans, particularly among young males:

> American Indians have a rate of arrest for alcohol violations (DUI, liquor law violations, and public drunkenness) more than double the national rate. Arrests of American Indians under age 18 for alcohol-related violations are also twice the national average." (Greenfeld and Smith 25)

The numbers indicate that for every 100,000 resident population, 1,079 are arrested of all races for total alcohol violations (DUI, Liquor laws, and drunkenness). For American Indians, that number jumps to 2,545 per 100,000. The numbers for youth (age 10 – 17) are 649 per 100,000 for total alcohol violations and for American Indian youth, 1,341 per 100,000 (Greenfeld and Smith 25).

Various researchers categorize styles of drinking described as patterns, two of which cause few or no alcohol-related problems: abstinence and moderated social drinking. Another two patterns are problematic: anxiety and recreational drinking.[7] Unlike moderated social drinking which is often in response to positive feelings or events, anxiety drinking is often in response to emotional upset. Both anxiety and recreational drinking can become habituated where higher and higher levels of consumption are reached. With more frequent and higher levels of consumption, risks for accidents increase as well as increasing the probability of alcohol addiction.

Philip May describes the typical member of the problematic groups in his article offering an alternative take on the nature of alcohol abuse among Native Americans:

> Recreational drinkers are predominately young (age 15-35) males who are students or relatively new participants in the work world; they drink sporadically for special occasions, at night and on weekends, away from home, and in celebration or party manner [. . .] Indian recreational drinkers are at very high risk for alcohol-related injury, arrest, and death because of the emphasis on high blood alcohol levels for a "blitzed" experience. . . Anxiety drinkers, on the other hand, are more typical of the chronic alcoholic. They are downwardly mobile, unemployed, and socially marginal to both Indian and non-Indian society [. . . .] The recreational drinkers produce many of the accident and suicide deaths, while the anxiety drinkers produce the alcoholism deaths (e.g. cirrhosis of the liver) and a preponderance of the pedestrian-vehicle collision deaths. (May 127-128)

Understanding the causes of drinking behavior is, of course, essential to any response, including treatment. May characterizes anxiety drinking but does not offer insight into the causes of that anxiety which results in the behaviors so described. Duran and Duran note from their practice with Native American men in therapeutic situations that disenfranchisement has serious ramifications for those men who were

raised with the ideas of themselves as protectors and providers, as coming from a long warrior tradition. Loss of the land that was to be protected is thus a constant reminder of that failure and the devastation of traditional economies. The male role within those economies (also tribal or reservation economies) is another painful reminder in addition to serving as a constant barrier to any significant employment that could provide some amelioration: "Once a warrior is defeated and his ability to protect the community destroyed, a deep psychological trauma of identity loss occurs" (*Postcolonial* 36). Silko allows the character Betonie to describe this trauma further in *Ceremony*:

> Indians wake up every morning of their lives to see the land which was stolen, still there, within reach, its theft being flaunted. And the desire is strong to make things right, to take back what was stolen and to stop them from destroying what they have taken. (127-128)

As has been discussed in previous chapters, the soul wound and PTSD open the door to self-destructive behaviors, including alcohol abuse. Duran and Duran go on to describe how this crisis of identity for many men becomes a full-blown problem for entire Native American communities:

> When the colonization process is perpetuated in such a savage fashion as was done in the Western Hemisphere, there occurs a splitting of the personality that is consistent with the level of trauma. The feelings of helplessness and hopelessness are compounded to such a degree as to make the choice complete psychosis or splitting of the ego into at least two fragments. The split ego, then, will keep one aspect of the person in touch with the pain and one aspect identifying with the aggressor. . . the problem is compounded by the colonizers being a constant reminder of the defeat. The warrior is further split into yet another double bind -- being Native American and also living as a white person. The imposing of yet another double bind requires the strongest of medications in order to keep complete dissociation from occurring. Within the medical model, phenothiazines are presently used to sedate the patient; Native Americans have long been using the nonprescription drug alcohol as a

> way of ensuring survival. Alcohol has become such an integral part of life that many Native Americans no longer dissociate alcohol from what used to be the traditional way of life. The warrior has become someone who can only function within the ceremony of alcohol. The nurturing male has become destructive to the sacred trust that was given to him -- the family, community, and relationship with the sacred. (*Postcolonial* 37-39)

With this passage in mind, we can return to Clarke's *Monumental Series: Tradition Addiction, Addiction Tradition* with a broader understanding of the "ceremony" being performed around the filled mug. While Clarke does not specifically look at the destructive potential, he clearly names alcohol as a disease of identity. The lower circle of warriors, in their crouched stances, appear protective of the pillar behind them. In contrast, the upper circle faces inward towards the filled mug. Is the stance, weapon in hand, a moment of praise, dance, attack, caution, curiosity? The questions we might ask of Clarke's message echo those we might also ask those Native Americans who drink.

Leslie Marmon Silko's early works of short fiction take another approach in the examination of the role alcohol has taken in everyday Indian life. Her short story "Lullaby" follows the lives of a Navajo couple, as told by wife and mother Ayah, whose children have been taken away and whose husband is emotionally lost to her. The story itself is largely composed of her memories, most of them painful. In one short piece, Silko presents an unflinching list of family heartaches where Amer-European culture is undeniably at the root cause of each event. Ayah and Chato's oldest son dies in war[8], the younger children are taken away by white social workers to a tuberculosis sanitarium and school in Colorado. The white rancher who is Chato's

employer turns the family out of their poor shack of a home when Chato's job-related injuries and old age slow his work. All that remains for Ayah and Chato is a monthly government check which buys Chato's wine as his mind slowly decays. Ayah's story is filled with the traumas listed in the literature pertaining to the treatment of Native Americans for PTSD. What may not be mentioned in that literature, however, is the fact that one family or person can experience multiple PTSD-causing traumas. In "Lullaby" she says of her children:

> It was worse than if they had died: to lose the children and to know that somewhere, in a place called Colorado, in a place full of sick and dying strangers, her children were without her. (Silko, *Storyteller* 47)

Later, she recalls the difficulty of accepting her husband, refusing to sleep next to him:

> . . .because she blamed him for teaching her how to write her name -- the act which doomed her to lose her children when she signed the papers the social workers thrust at her without interpretation. She did not lie down beside Chato again until many years later, when he was sick and shivering and only her body could keep him warm. The illness came after the white rancher told Chato he was too old to work for him anymore, and Chato and his old woman should be out of the shack by the next afternoon because the rancher had hired new people to work there. That had satisfied her. To see how the white man repaid Chato's years of loyalty and work. All of Chato's fine-sounding English talk didn't change things. (*Storyteller* 47)

Through Ayah's eyes, we have the devastating loss of children, then of home and its accompanying loss of security, however meager. Silko's approach of using Ayah to project anger or blame onto Chato for events which neither could have controlled offers another sense of the victimization for Chato. Even within his family he is isolated. Clearly, both are suffering tremendously, but the suffering does not unite

them or redeem them in a narrative act of moral rightness. Rather, their suffering becomes a wedge between them. Ayah holds her anger against Chato, possibly because it is all she has to fill her own void of loss, and only when it appears to simply "wear out" over the years, along with Chato's body, does she lift her sentence of isolation against him.

Silko's "Lullaby" is a death song. Certainly the destructive qualities of alcohol are present, but more apparent are the losses perpetrated by Amer-European ideologies imposed on every aspect of their lives. After a lifetime of fighting those ideologies and repeatedly losing, what else is there to do, but to die according to the expectations? So Chato and Ayah drink, and Ayah soothes Chato as he slips into a sleep that will result in his freezing to death. A 1998 Associated Press article confirms what we already fear after reading "Lullaby," that Silko's image of drunk and freezing Indians is not unusual:

> People are dying of exposure in New Mexico at a much higher rate than in the rest of the country -- and most of the deaths are connected to alcohol. There were 188 exposure deaths verified in the state from July 1990 through June 1997 -- an average of nearly 27 a year...the vast majority of exposure deaths in New Mexico are tied to alcohol. The high plateau country of McKinley County near the vast Navajo reservation has borne the brunt of the problem. A 1992 medical study found Indians were 30 times more likely than others to die of hypothermia than other New Mexicans. (Holmes)

Storyteller was published in 1981, which might suggest that Silko was writing "Lullaby" in a time when substance-related deaths in northern New Mexico were many times higher than for the rest of the state. For the city of Gallup, a trading center for Navajos, Zuni, Acoma and Laguna Pueblos and non-Indians in

McKinley County, "the area's alcohol-related death rate -- including such things as drunken driving, exposure and cirrhosis of the liver -- was six times the U.S. average from 1975 to 1979" and in 1974, "McKinley County residents were 225 times more likely to die of substance-related causes than other New Mexicans" (Holmes).

Silko is also among the first to clearly identify alcohol in her fiction as medicinal for the emotional states created by soul wounds as experienced by Native Americans. The protagonist Tayo in Silko's first novel *Ceremony* speaks to the role of alcohol as medicine for many Native American men, particularly those who return from combat. Tayo and his comrades found a certain measure of respect within the ranks of the US military, as long as the war[9] was in progress. After the war, the return to rural reservations and diminished respect took its toll. At an off-reservation bar, Tayo and his "friends" repeat their ritual of drinking:

> Tayo pushed a ten dollar bill across the table. "More beer," he said. Emo was getting drunk on whiskey; his face was flushed and his forehead sweaty. Tayo watched Harley and Leroy flip quarters to see who was buying the next round, and he swallowed the beer in big mouthfuls like medicine. He could feel something loosening up inside. He had heard Auntie talk about the veterans – drunk all the time, she said. But he knew why. It was something the old people could not understand. Liquor was medicine for the anger that made them hurt, for the pain of the loss, medicine for tight bellies and choked-up throats. He was beginning to feel a comfortable place inside himself, close to his own beating heart, near his own warm belly; he crawled inside and watched the storm swirling on the outside and he was safe there; the winds of rage could not touch him. (40)

While Tayo is not acting on his rage in this passage, he knows he carries the potential for it in recalling the time he nearly killed Emo during one of their drinking

rituals. The statistical truth of the destructive Native American male is borne out in the numbers of Native American men behind bars. In studies of incarcerated Indians, alcohol is frequently cited as a contributor to the acts of theft, destruction or violence that resulted in the prison sentence. But even with such impressive statistics from a variety of sources and studies, the causes of alcoholism among Native Americans remains only partially understood. Elizabeth Grobsmith's *Indians in Prison* addresses this issue:

> No single explanation can account for the epidemic of alcoholism among Native Americans or the endemic nature of reservation alcoholism. Certainly getting drunk faster contributes to overall intoxication; however, the widespread alcoholism prevalent on America's reservations can only be attributed to the culturally learned and accepted behaviors (norms) of drinking, for recreation and general and social activity. Most explanatory theories point to stress as an inducer of alcohol consumption and drinking behaviors as attempts to escape from stress. But such explanations do not account for the addiction rates so characteristic of Indian children, many of whom are addicts before they truly know the stresses of adult life such as poverty and unemployment. It may be that individual Indians drink because of stress; but I believe it is more likely that drinking induces stress and results in crises that undermine life's normal flow. Drinking is a behavior pattern children learn on their parents' knees; from the earliest ages, children learn that many activities are responded to with excessive drinking, and the stigma of overconsumption and its legal consequences become accepted hazards of daily life. Consequently, Indian youth do not regard early alcohol consumption as especially dangerous or deviant, but more as routine, the culturally appropriate response. Those not wishing to participate in drinking activities are ridiculed and excluded and are considered by peers to be "too good" for the rest of the crowd. (Grobsmith 96)

Unlike Duran and Duran, who see drinking as a result of oppressive colonialism, Grobsmith locates the causes of addictive drinking within the individuals themselves, followed by a negative spiraling of events that destabilizes all other aspects of their

families and lives. In yet another view, Vine Deloria Jr. leaves no doubt as to how he perceives the relationship of Amer-European culture and the Native American drinking pattern. His syllogism places identity in the direct line of fire: "Young Indians were sold the notion by anthropologists that Indians live in two worlds; people who live in two worlds drink; therefore, to be real Indians they must drink" (qtd. in Duran and Duran 115). So, alcoholism is not only a state of being that needs to be named before it can be treated (healed), but a state where all the possible causes must be understood before the appropriate treatment process is undertaken.

In Grobsmith's concluding chapter, the acknowledgment is made that as important as recovery and rehabilitation are for addicted individuals, the correctional system may not be willing or able to provide many services. In addition to conflicting perceptions of the role of corrections and funding limitations for any offered services, there is an additional hurdle for Native American prisoners:

> (Prison administrators) may recognize their lack of success with Native American clients, but they fail to see that their inability to attract Indians into therapy or deeply involve them once they get there is not a matter of plain stubbornness or resistance on the part of the Indian prisoners -- it is a matter of perceived irrelevance to their lives [. . .] the need to tailor intervention programs to make them culturally acceptable remains legitimate. As has been pointed out by every Indian-oriented treatment program, treating Native Americans requires intimate familiarity with the uniquely Indian cultural milieu -- their family life, culture, kinship, religion, and tradition. (Grobsmith 184)

There remain, then, very legitimate questions concerning how one becomes "intimately familiar" with Native American culture in order to assist in the process of recovery and rehabilitation for Native American alcoholics. What keeps many programs from being

relevant? Why do Native Americans feel reluctant to get involved in programs that are available to them? Duran and Duran are decidedly blunt about this. As long as Western medical institutions are unwilling to acknowledge the significant viability of non-Western approaches to health and healing, large numbers of Native Americans are not going to find the treatment programs offered by Amer-European culture relevant or helpful. Alcohol abuse and alcoholism *per se*, stated as the major problem within Native American communities, serve as an explanation which shifts the focus from more problematic associations:

> Alcoholism as a disease entity reduces the economic and social problems within Native American communities to medical ones with responsibility for amelioration in the hands of the medical establishment. Alcohol's correlation to suicide, homicide, and injuries is a spurious relationship that preoccupies and distracts us from the multifactorial and structural analysis of the problem. (Duran and Duran, *Postcolonial* 104)

To review briefly, Duran and Duran conceive the true cause of alcoholism to be the violent colonial relationship between Indians and non-Indians. This contrasts with Grobsmith's assertion that "widespread alcoholism prevalent on America's reservations *can only* be attributed to the culturally learned and accepted behaviors of drinking..." (Grobsmith 96; italics mine). Unfortunately, these assumptions of alcoholism and Native American culture are not entirely wrong either. Duran and Duran explain:

> The images and identities of tribal people and the meaning and significance of alcohol in those constructions is the site of half a millennium of struggle between natives and others. The focus of the struggle is not the indisputable fact of excess alcohol-related problems or the necessity of intervention, issues in which tribal people have more concern and interest than any others.[10] Rather, the struggle is over the sign "Indian" as a signifier of ethnicity, cultural traditions, a similar historical experience, or certain aesthetic preferences versus a stage in a

> social evolutionary ladder, the embodiment of a genetic wholism or degeneracy, a psychological archetype, or a shadow projection of an entire continent. This overdetermined and overloaded sign was and is always more and less than real tribal people could ever hope or dread to be. Within American popular and expert culture, Indianness is more than an ethnic assignment (like Italian or Irish) and to be a real Indian one must fit one of the binary oppositions or cease to be. . .It is our contention that alcohol-related behavior for many Native Americans is determined, in part, by the need to ascribe to this overloaded sign in all of its negative and positive associations in order to be recognized as Indian. (*Postcolonial* 108)

What Grobsmith refers to as "culturally learned norms" may also have the earmarks of a long grinding-down of the individual human spirit. Native American young people must somehow reconcile their own ideas of their identities with those ideas of the dominant American society. Refusing to give up longstanding conceptions of what an Indian is pervades the thinking of Indians and non-Indians, experts and citizens-at-large. Even Grobsmith makes the naïve conclusion that drinking to relieve stress could not be the reason Indian children consume alcohol. She claims many children are addicts "before they truly know the stresses of adult life such as poverty and unemployment" (96) and completely misses the intergenerational effects of PTSD. Even accounting for the differing perspectives between adults and children on a number of experiences, Grobsmith's suggestion that children are unaware of the struggles of their parents or of stress seems uninformed. Given the issues discussed here in previous chapters of how trauma leads to PTSD, how subsequent traumas worsen the impact of PTSD, how PTSD is passed to the successive generations along with the aggravating traumas of domestic abuse, *as well as* unemployment and poverty, children are indeed very familiar with stress at exceptionally young ages. Then there is the additional

struggle to accommodate the "overdetermined and overloaded sign" that is "Indian" which Native American people struggle with daily.[11]

But this is still not the last word on what causes Native Americans to drink. Duran and Duran also offer the following theory by summarizing the literature devoted to Native Americans and alcohol:

> Most of the academic literature on the prevalence of alcoholism in the Native American community and on Native American treatment programs has focused on the sociocultural etiologies of use and barriers to recovery, psychopathology, personality characteristics, treatment outcomes, and on peyote as a treatment alternative. Articles focusing on sociocultural etiologies almost universally include poverty, poor housing, relative ill-health, academic failures, cultural conflict with the majority society, and racism as some of the main predisposing factors for Native American alcoholism. Most of these articles lead the reader to believe that poverty, academic failure, and cultural conflict are Native American problems that exist in an acontextual fashion. These articles usually do not make mention that these problems are a direct result of the policies of the U.S. government toward Native American people. (95)

For researcher Nancy Lurie, the relationship between identity and alcohol use is not quite so direct. Instead, she sees a correlation between Indian drinking and the involvement of African Americans in the violent protests of the Civil Rights era:

> Black violence, like Indian drinking, communicates in mutually understood terms in the respective intergroup confrontations. The negative stereotype of the black, like the "drunken Indian," becomes a virtue or useful weapon to the in-group so stereotyped, at least up to the point of demanding attention and getting action. "Internalization" of the negative stereotype -- that is, accepting it and even acting it out -- does not, as [Bernard] James would have it, lead the Indian person "to conclude that he is, in fact, an 'inferior' person." Quite the contrary. Indian people appear to have long understood what blacks have recently discovered: the value of the negative stereotype as a form of communication and protest demonstration to register opposition and hold the line against what they do not want until they can get what they do want. (Lurie 130)

Lurie's comparison of drinking to violence as a protest act raises the issue of equity, and since 1979, when her article was published, it has provided an opportunity for a comparison of the inroads African Americans have achieved to those achieved by Native Americans. From 1979 to 1999, African Americans have certainly celebrated a large number of successes, contributed to improvements in racial understanding and equity and mourned a number of racist, violent acts that hark back to attitudes of previous centuries. On the other hand, it seems Native Americans are struggling even harder than ever to maintain their issues in the public eye. It does seem that where equity is lacking for African Americans, there is still a generalized sense on the part of mainstream America there should be equity and more steps taken to achieve it. For Native Americans, however, it seems more than ever that they are the "Vanishing Americans." It is difficult to prove an impression, but despite reports such as the 1990 census[12] that the numbers of Native Americans are growing, Indians are simply disappearing from mainstream consciousness as anything but members of nineteenth-century enclaves where alcohol is used to numb their realizations of an inability to live alongside more "advanced races." The issue has much to do with how Americans see (or rather, fail to see) Native Americans and the only apparent exceptions are casino tribes, especially the successful ones. As Elizabeth Cook-Lynn states, "It is as though the American Indian has no intellectual voice with which to enter into America's important dialogues...It is as though the American Indian does not exist except in *faux* history or corrupt myth" (Cook-Lynn 57). As Vine Deloria Jr. remarks in his updated

edition of *God is Red*, "Americans simply refuse to give up their longstanding conceptions of what an Indian is. It was this fact more than any other that inhibited any solution of the Indian problems [in the 1970s] and projected the impossibility of their solution anytime in the future" (32).

Since President Clinton's visit to the Pine Ridge reservation in July, 1999, it seemed there was a little more coverage of Native American issues in the popular media during and immediately afterwards. The Sunday, July 18, 1999 issue of *Parade* presented "We Are Our Destiny" as the cover story. Perhaps more telling than the statistics of what it is like to actually live with these conditions, the *Parade* article includes a quote from Gary Ten Bear [Crow], a recovering alcoholic who now works as a drug and alcohol counselor.[13] "I carry my ancestors' pain in my own DNA. If we continue our educational journey and seeking our legal rights, we'll take over our own destinies" (Winik 7). Ten Bear's comment is a cogent summary of the dual causes of addictive drinking. The first half references his ancestors' pain and is a beautiful mixture of metaphor and science that gets to the crux of intergenerational PTSD. The second half is a line from a potential protest speech stating conviction and commitment to a course of continued protest against colonial oppression and hegemony. However, media coverage of Indian issues is typically limited and of short duration following a national news story. Therefore, one has to wonder how Ten Bear's comments are read by non-Indian readers. While Ten Bear himself speaks of an acceptance of a perceived situation, with an accompanying plan for greater autonomy, it is also possible that non-Indian readers will see Ten Bear and Native Americans in general as hopelessly mired

in problems related to alcohol, still struggling for control after years and years of similar stories and interviews.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the use of alcohol may be a real attempt at survival in the face of ego-splitting psychosis. However, Native Americans are frequently thought of as more deviant in their drinking behavior than non-Indians partly because of long standing stereotypes of savagery and drunkenness dating back to Colonial times. Peter C. Mancall relates in his article "The Bewitching Tyranny of Custom; The Social Costs of Indian Drinking in Colonial America," there were a number of misconceptions and observations that allowed colonists to conclude that Indians suffered as a result of the alcohol trade. Mancall states that, "Missionaries and colonial officials generally believed that drinking led to the decay of Indian communities and that sexual excess, violent death, domestic strife, and poverty all followed in the wake of drinking" (198). There also exists the assumption that the path to sobriety or abuse prevention is the path of assimilation to the dominant culture. Thus, where Indian drinkers are classified as deviant drinkers, this is frequently based upon white middle-class norms and behaviors serving as the validating criteria. Using such middle-class norms can serve to reinforce the Native American drinker's feelings of failure and domination and the cycle of drinking itself. Because of the persistent idea that alcoholics are prone to deny their situation rather than make significant changes to it, any criticism of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) methods or precepts as irrelevant to the Native American experience is thrown back to the individual as denial of a drinking problem. "AA is a system that places Native American people in a double bind by

discounting much of what is culturally valid for Native Americans through the denial-labeling system" (Duran and Duran, *Postcolonial* 102). The perceptions of Native Americans that are frequently denied in this manner are those related to experiences of racism. For Amer-European counselors or fellow addicts, it is difficult to think in terms of community health as part and parcel with the individual's health and behavior. For the hypothetical young Indian man who began drinking to alleviate his identity conflicts and his anxiety for the racist comments/treatment in his school, treating the racism in the community will have an impact on his need to drink. However, the Native American client is told such excuses will only prevent the realization that it is the self who must take complete responsibility for drinking and sobriety (aside from the medical expert, also probably non-Indian, who has the professional knowledge about the appropriate ways to treat such situations).[14]

It is difficult not to think of that old expression, "Damned if you do, damned if you don't" when it comes to many situations involving Native Americans and their relationships with American governmental bodies, institutions and just other Americans, but when writing about alcohol, it seems especially well-suited to the occasion. Thus, it should not be surprising that a certain amount of sarcasm and black humor should creep into the artistic works that display back to us the realities of Indian drinking. The relaxed familiarity with the posture and the manner of drinking as depicted by Mateo Romero in *Broken Circle* (1994 acrylic on foam-board), or by Diego Romero's *The Drinker* (1993), are even calming after the strident voices of statisticians and reformists, however, these artists are no less earnest in their commentary.

Brothers Diego and Mateo Romero share a concern for contemporary Native American culture as influenced by tribal history. They also share notes and collaborate on some projects but they maintain separate studios (Bowman 62). Their approaches vary however, in terms of medium and style. As a painter, Mateo's working surface is typically the canvas or board, although he also does large installation paintings such as the "Painted Caves" installation for the exhibit *Reservation X*[15]. His imagery includes scenes of modern-day reservation life juxtaposed with mainstream American life. "Painted Caves" and other of his canvas paintings place the traditional, the ceremonial, and the technological in relation to each other. Diego creates clay bowls and vases to serve as functional-looking surfaces for his decorations consisting of Mimbres-inspired designs fused with figures and styles resembling those of comic books, pop art, and advertising.

Mateo's *Broken Circle* (Fig. 10) depicts a lone Indian man reclining in the driver's seat of a red convertible, holding a bottle of alcohol. His physical condition appears relaxed. The background appears as a chaotic frenzy of yellows, adobe browns and reds in brushstrokes that flatten any sense of perspective. The lack of recognizable background effectively isolates the man from a sense of connection to a particular place or to other people. Like Gerald Clarke's ready-made, Mateo's image is full of ambiguity and likely raises more questions than viewers knew they had. Is this person relaxed and enjoying this moment or are we to read into this scene the clues of despair and futility? Given that viewers maintain the right to "see" and interpret how they wish, Mateo gives us the opportunity to see ourselves, or rather, our own attitudes about

Indians and alcohol. Perhaps the only substantial clue to Mateo's own thoughts about drinking is the title *Broken Circle,* which perhaps suggests an end to some form of continuity.

In a biographical sketch published in *Native Peoples*, Diego Romero is labeled an "artist of change" and the following description of his work appears:

> [Diego] Romero's work utilizes the time-honored techniques set forth by tradition, from the gathering of raw clay to the final step of firing, yet often presents a much more universal portrayal of the human experience through powerful, expository imagery. Pottery has never before been used to convey stances on issues of social and political import to the extent seen in Romero's creations. (Abbott et al 52)

Diego's decorated clay bowl, *The Drinker* (Fig. 11), the conventions of Pueblo pottery and the designs of Mimbres pottery are used to seemingly place alcohol in the ancient past. The image is stark in black and white with a Mimbres-style geometric border circling a scene in which a man, seated on the ground, tips back a bottle for a drink. Part of Diego's Chongo Brother series, the artist plays down any autobiographical interpretations. In a recent interview, Diego recalls telling a curator of his characters: "They're a mixture of a lot of individuals, but beyond that, they're disenfranchised" (Bowman 63). The typical Chongo Brother character in Diego's work recalls Mimbres-style depictions of human figures with little clothing, the clubbed hairstyle of the Southwestern region and almost stick-like anatomy. The character depicted as the Drinker seems inherently unstable even while sitting on the ground. His legs and arms are so composed as to create two complete triangles and a broken third but even though we understand the triangle to be a stable form, he appears to be on the

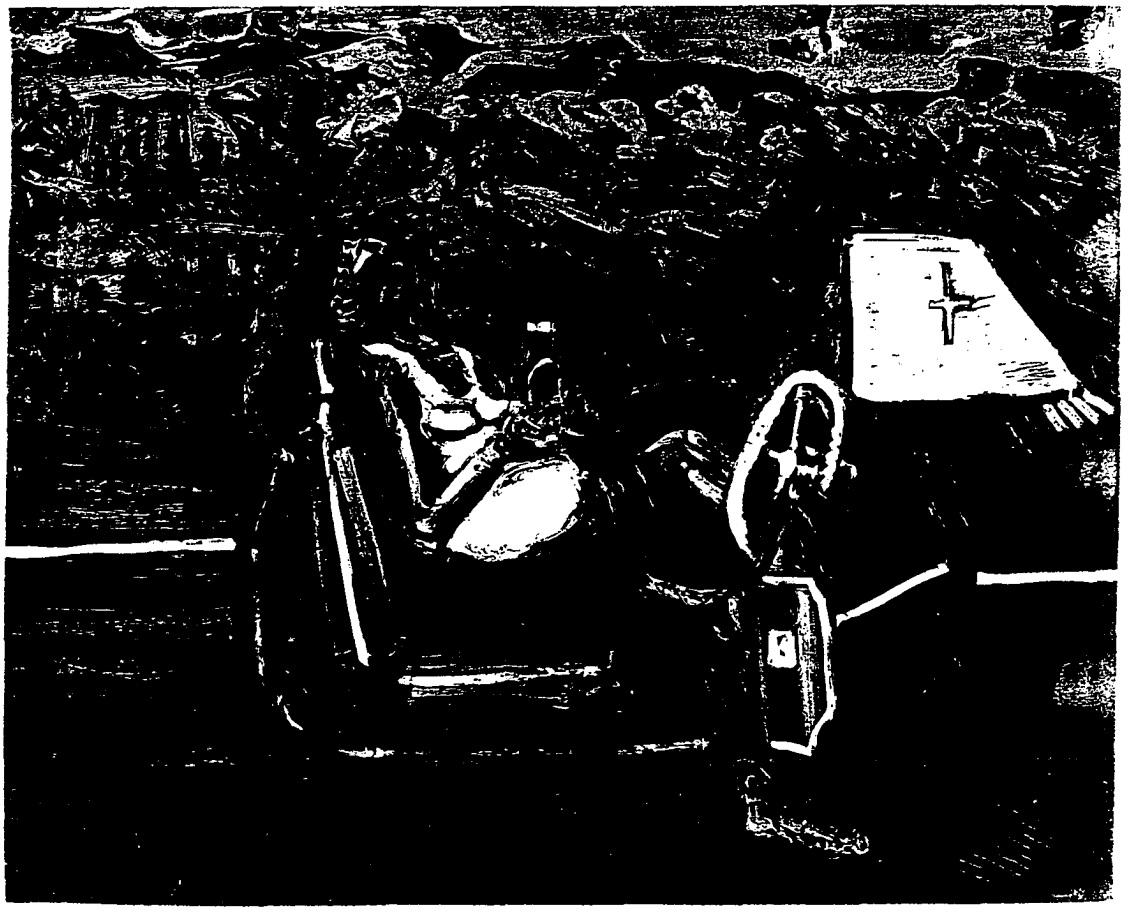


Figure 10. Mateo Romero, *Broken Circle*, 1994.
Acrylic paint on foamboard.
Collection of the artist.
Gifts of the Spirit. (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 1996) 224.

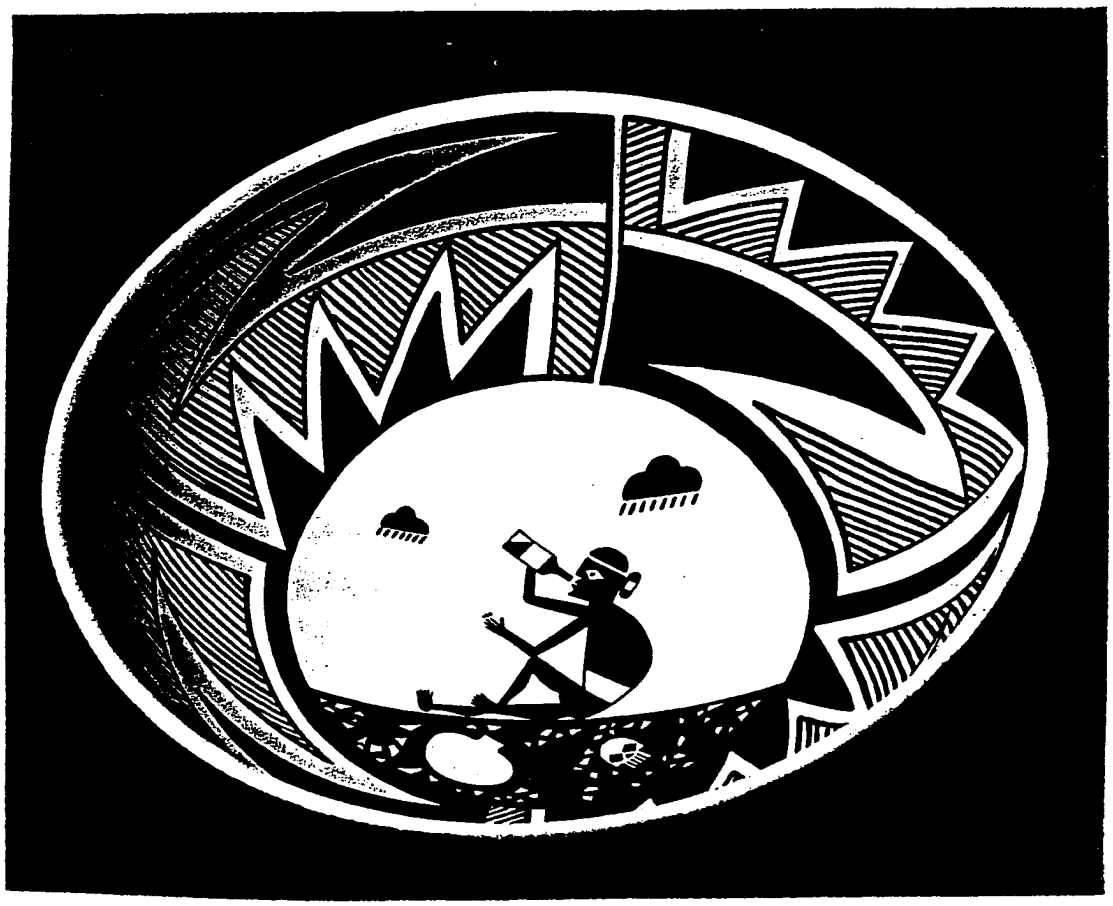


Figure 11. Diego Romero, *The Drinker*, 1993.
Ceramic.
Denver Art Museum.
Gifts of the Spirit. (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 1996) 223.

verge of tipping backward onto his highly rounded back in a comic book suggestion of rocking to and from the bottle. Two small clouds appear over head and beneath him, within the very soil itself, are a whole pot and human skull to serve as additional reminders of ancient ancestors. These works, together with Clarke's piece, are ironic in that alcohol as presented in these works *seems* to be an important element of Native American culture. This has been accomplished by creating works that build a sense of history around alcohol which in turn helps to shock us as viewers to remember that, with rare and ritualized exceptions[16], alcohol was not a feature of traditional Native American culture prior to European contact. Recalling Mateo's painting, there is no sense of connection to place or other persons as the figures are seated, alone, on the earth, but disconnected from any real sense of place.

This ironic remaking of Native American history to include alcohol highlights the contradictions of a traditional life and a drinking life. Silko comments on this contradiction in *Ceremony* where she examines the role of alcohol in the lives of Indian veterans and their relationships to their traditional upbringings. Silko's approach is to create competing ceremonies for her characters to choose between. There is the ritual of drinking, storytelling, inebriation and violence as depicted in the bar scenes with Tayo, Emo, Harley and Pinkie. Then there is the ritual of healing, storytelling, and community that is tradition. By making the drinking ceremony similar with the elements of gathering and storytelling, Silko reveals how a destructive process takes on a pleasing, familiar mask. Duran and Duran offer the following on the relationship of individual, community, tradition and alcohol:

> Alcohol also has had an effect on the way spiritual power and traditional medicine are used in a community. Traditionally, for the medicine to work there had to be an adherence to a traditional way of life on the part of the medicine person and the patient. Since alcohol is a violation of tradition, the use of traditional healing practices can place the medicine person, the client, and the community in jeopardy. Disrespect of tradition can be manifested in negative consequences, which are due to discord within the cosmology. No longer will the healing occur within the context of the seventh sacred direction. Instead, the whole community has shifted into an attitude that is out of balance, and in order to restore balance the community members must live according to traditional rules. (Duran and Duran, *Postcolonial* 140)

The isolated and drinking figures in the Romero brothers's works could be acknowledgments of the jeopardy the Durans describe. The title *Broken Circle* conveys even more weight with this in mind. Certainly the deaths of many of Tayo's drinking buddies bears this out.

Overall, *Ceremony* is Silko's story of an individual returning to a community and a tradition, thus bringing himself and his community into balance. The positive outcome of his return to traditional practices is the return of the rain and the potential new life that rain represents. Silko teaches us it is possible to offer one member the necessary assistance to regain balance and health when the greater community is living according to its traditional values and rules. However, when an entire community has set-aside, or forgotten ,or is somehow disallowed from practicing those traditional systems, a much greater problem of imbalance results.

The work of Kukuli Velarde, particularly the collection of pieces created between 1990 – 1992 known collectively as *We, The Colonized Ones* (Fig. 12),[17] serves here to remind of internalized oppression discussed at length in previous chapters.



Figure 12. Kukuli Velarde, *We, The Colonized Ones*, 1990 – 1992.
Ceramic.
Carla Stellweg Gallery, New York.
Art In America. 82: 3 (1994) 103.

Velarde is currently working in the United States but her presence in this discussion raises important issues concerning borders and identity. Essentially, Velarde echoes Silko in the opinion that political borders are arbitrary constructs that ignore indigenous ideas of land and a people's relationship to the land. Furthermore, each is aware of the fact that colonization of South America, Mexico and the southwest of North America began with the Spanish conquistadors and thus share similar experiences.[18] Velarde's own ancestry is complex as she addresses in an interview conducted by Ivor Miller:

> I was born in Cuzco, and my father's father is from another state called Tacna, and my mother's mother is from Ancash, another state. We come from different parts of Peru. In Peru people have always belonged to one clan or nation or confederation, but now that we have been mixing for five hundred years, how can you really know if you are coming from one specific group?
>
> I don't speak Quechua because my father never taught it to us; I grew up in a middle-class urban setting in Lima. But there was always something floating. My mother, instead of telling us tales like Snow White, told us Indian legends from different places in Peru. My family has always been extremely proud of our Indian ancestors. I thank them very much for this. (Miller 2)

For her piece titled "In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I Colonize You," Velarde offers the following description and her interpretation of internalized oppression:

> In the belly of the sculpture is the white man that lives in every colonized person. I try to make it clear that I don't have anything against "white people," because one thing is white people outside of my body, and another thing is the white man who is inside my body, who is telling me that he is superior to me[. . .]He is the one who doesn't let us be what we are, because he's eating our self-esteem and always trying to surface when we fight to hold on to our own reality[. . .]The white man is our spiritual parasite, and the snake represents the lies that he says through

> his mouth. We don't have our own voice, because things that come out of our own mouth are often him, what he thinks, and what he wants us to believe we are. (Miller 5)

Velarde's clay figures of this collection are characterized by their construction limited to red and white clay with all decorative painting done in the contrasting engobe: "I decided I was not going to use any glaze, because glaze was a creation brought by the conquistadors" (Miller 3). Rather than address alcoholism specifically, Velarde explores symptoms of pain collectively and links them back to colonialism. Where internalized oppression begins, there follows any number of potentially self- and community-destroying behaviors.

Duran and Duran cite other studies asserting that susceptibility of various Native American groups correlates with the degree of social disintegration of culture: "Tribes with high traditional integration and low acculturation stress experience much lower levels of alcohol - and drug-related problems than tribes with high acculturation stress and low traditional integrations" (*Postcolonial* 105).

This acculturation difference can be understood by examining the communities Silko and N. Scott Momaday create for their novels. Tayo of *Ceremony* could be said to belong to a community where traditional integration is still high, although arguably it is undergoing significant change at the narrative time of the novel. Tayo comes home suffering from a variety of symptoms that Western medicine fails to treat and even resists the efforts of Ku'oosh, the Laguna healer. As we come to understand in the course of the novel, there must be two healing ceremonies for Tayo because there are two distinct causes of his illness(es). Ku'oosh assists Tayo with some of his more

immediate physical symptoms of vomiting and with Tayo's re-integration into the community as a returning soldier by conducting the Scalp Ceremony. Silko does not describe any of the features of this ceremony except to infer that a scalp is dropped into a particular cave where bats emerge on summer nights and snakes go to rejuvenate on hot summer days. Gladys Reichard describes a similar Navajo ceremony:

> An example of disease resulting from an external cause is an encounter with a foreigner. In the old days this might have been in war, but contacts with outsiders were of different kinds, and even today too much influence or contact with whites may cause one to fail. The cure for this is a performance of the War Dance in which foreign influence is violently exorcised by the use of a scalp, mock battle and triumphant victory. (Reichard 19)

This was the first step in Tayo's healing, the second requiring a much more elaborate ritual to enable Tayo to overcome the effects of witchcraft, or the Destroyers in Silko's lexicon. This time Betonie, the mixed-blood Navajo medicine man, conducts the ceremony, conscious of the fact he is working within a time-honored tradition while still accommodating necessary changes to ritual because the world itself was changing under the influence of the Destroyers.

Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* presents Abel, who suffers from high acculturation stress and who drinks heavily in the patterns of anxiety and recreational drinking as described by Phillip May. As a combat veteran, ex-convict and unemployed participant in the urban relocation program, Abel has a variety of experiences, any of which could have caused PTSD. He falls into the habitual pattern of self-medicating with alcohol and we see him undergo several relapses before his emotional and psychological break-through near the novel's conclusion. However, there is no

certainty that Abel will be able to maintain his sobriety as Momaday simply does not reveal how successful Abel's attempts are to reintegrate himself into his community after his grandfather's death.

Tayo's drinking habit is not as clearly defined as Abel's. It appears he engages in some anxiety drinking, but primarily it is recreational drinking with a small group of local veterans. It also appears that he is able to stop drinking easily once he is drawn back into the traditional, and ritual healing ceremonies. There is also the difference from *House,* that *Ceremony* explores the consequences of witchery or the power of the Destroyers. In this case, alcohol abuse is also a symptom of Tayo having been "witched," or drawn into a self-destructive pattern of living that uses isolation and its consequences to convince Tayo he is not wanted by the traditional and integrated community. Thus, Tayo could be "tricked" into his own self-fulfilling and life-ending prophecy.

In contrast to Laguna of the 1940s and 50s as depicted in *Ceremony*, America in the 1990s as depicted in *Almanac of the Dead* is suffering from a host of problems and addictions. The native peoples of this novel are generally more aware of the causes of their suffering than are the non-Indian characters, and many of the native communities show signs they are maintaining varying degrees of traditional integration. Still, given the degree of alcohol and drug abuse among the characters, a sense of what is meant by "high acculturation stress" can be ascertained. In this novel, however, it is the non-Indian communities that are suffering. Silko simply assumes that any society can become fragmented into isolated individuals left uncertain of their role, identity and

direction, and that these individuals will attempt to treat their pain with the medicine available to them. Some drink alcohol, others do cocaine or heroin, still others distract themselves in mind-games where others are manipulated to bad ends. The concept that whites are deteriorating at a faster rate than Indians is established in *Ceremony* and is broadly explored in *Almanac.* Rather than making Native Americans the broken-down, destitute characters so often seen in other novels exploring drug and alcohol addictions, Silko creates Indian characters who are coping pretty well, all things considered, and it is the non-Indian populations that are self-destructing. The larger issue here is, again, one of imbalance. In *Ceremony*, where a small number of community members suffer imbalance, there is hope for correction, re-integration and balance. Furthermore, in a native world view that accepts all beings as related, a part of a greater whole, the sickness found even in non-Indian communities is of great concern. However, in *Almanac*, so many people are completely estranged from themselves and others one wonders how any ceremony could heal it all. Thus the repeated prophecy in the novel that all that is Western or European, will disappear and indigenous peoples will go on has logical underpinnings. "The white man didn't seem to understand he had no future here because he had no past, no spirits of ancestors here" (*Almanac* 313). In a different expression with largely the same outcome, historian John Mohawk describes a transformative process:

> The biological and cultural exchanges between the indigenous peoples of the Americas and the rest of the world was not a one-way street. The cultures of the peoples of Europe were transformed dramatically from the moment of contact and continue to be transformed. Since 1492, new cultures have evolved. The modern United States culture is properly a creole culture, a blend of many cultures from all over the world, and the

> population may soon reflect a new reality. With current trends, sometime during the next century the majority of Americans will have a non-European ancestry. (Mohawk 63)

The behaviors of many of the characters in *Almanac of the Dead* are not limited to the drinking of alcohol, problematic or otherwise. They are, nonetheless, the behaviors of a community, a global community, seriously out of balance. Reading *Ceremony* and *Almanac* as related works exploring Silko's philosophical perspectives offers insight into *Almanac*, especially for those who found the more recent novel shocking in its differences from *Ceremony* and in presenting a troubling view of modern life. Silko uses Tayo to express the foundations of this philosophy:

> He wanted to scream at Indians like Harley and Helen Jean and Emo that the white things they admired and desired so much -- the bright city lights and loud music, the soft sweet food and the cars -- all these things had been stolen, torn out of Indian land: raw living materials for their ck'o'yo manipulation. The people had been taught to despise themselves because they were left with barren land and dry rivers. But they were wrong. It was the white people who had nothing; it was the white people who were suffering as thieves do, never able to forget that their pride was wrapped in something stolen, something that had never been, and could never be, theirs. The destroyers had tricked the Indians, and now only a few people understood how the filthy deception worked; only a few people knew the lie was destroying white people faster than it was destroying Indian people. But the effects were hidden, evident only in the sterility of their art, which continued to feed off the vitality of other cultures, and in the dissolution of their consciousness into dead objects: the plastic and neon, the concrete and steel. Hollow and lifeless as a witchery clay figure. And what little still remained to white people was shriveled like a seed hoarded too long, shrunken past its time, and split open now, to expose a fragile, pale leaf stem, perfectly formed and dead. (*Ceremony* 204)

In *Almanac,* Silko takes up the logical extension of a culture that in the aftermath of the second "great war," still fails to understand the consequences of a chosen direction. If indeed, white people have been tricked as well, then their suffering would increase as the manipulations increased. Again, in *Ceremony:*

> The Liars had fooled everyone, white people and Indians alike; as long as people believed the lies, they would never be able to see what had been done to them or what they were doing to each other. . . . If the white people never looked beyond the lie, to see theirs was a nation built on stolen land, then they would never be able to understand how they had been used by the witchery; they would never know that they were still being manipulated by those who knew how to stir the ingredients together [. . .] the lies devoured white hearts, and for more than two hundred years white people had worked to fill their emptiness; they tried to glut the hollowness with patriotic wars and with great technology and the wealth it brought. And always they had been fooling themselves, and they knew it. (191)

With this worldview in mind, Silko leaves no stone unturned to reveal the real spirit-crushing consequences of drug and alcohol addiction, sexual addictions, greed, violence, oppression, acts of malicious power, and pain. In fact, any behavior in which someone selfishly engages for a titillating, voyeuristic, orgasmic or dominating experience, is explored with the assumption the reader is capable of such behaviors. The reader is not only capable, but susceptible if caught in the self-deception at the heart of Silko's philosophy. In order to be convincing on this point, Silko is systematic, including many characters in familiar cultural contexts. In addition, Silko layers in historical narratives as reminders of shared history and cultural contexts:

> Slavery as practiced legally in the early United States was technically illegal in Spanish-controlled lands, but Spanish administrators devised cunning ways of overcoming this legal restriction. After the conquest of Acoma in January 1599, the Spaniards sentenced males and females

> above the age of twelve to twenty years of personal servitude. Males above the age of twenty-five endured the additional punishment of having one foot amputated by a Spanish sword before beginning their servitude. (Forbes in Weatherford 44)

This is one example but a relevant one here in light of a more recent response that proves Silko's point. Charlene Teters offers the following commentary in her column of the now defunct *Indian Artist* magazine that sets the stage for one well-considered response to history:

> History is very powerful. The manner in which it is presented has the ability to inspire or deflate, to move nations to love, joy, anger or hatred. The vast majority of Americans know very little about how this continent -- originally peopled by thousands of diverse Indian nations -- came to be what is now the United States. . . .Art also has a history of effective use in social activism. As the nation celebrates numerous anniversaries -- the Quincentennial of Columbus' landing in America, the Oklahoma Land Rush, the California Gold Rush, and the Cuartocentenario -- the question is: how do we Indians find appropriate ways to mark these events in our collective history? How do we reconcile that some of America's heroes are not *our* heroes? Glorifying Indian killers feels to us like glorifying Hitler. (14-15)

Knowledge of such history becomes the basis of painful enlightenment and encourages understanding of indigenous issues and events such as a recent event near Albuquerque, New Mexico, where a statue was "vandalized" in 1998 during Cuartocentenario celebrations in northern New Mexico. A year of activities was planned for the 400th anniversary of the incursion of Don Juan de Oñate into the area that is now the southwestern United States. A statue of the Spanish conquistador on horseback stands at the Oñate Monument and Visitor Center in Alcade, New Mexico. In January of 1998, an "unknown" group cut off the right foot of the bronze

representation of Oñate. An anonymous letter was sent to the *Albuquerque Journal* and published January 8, 1998: "We took the liberty of removing Don Juan de Oñate's right foot on behalf of our brothers and sisters at Acoma Pueblo" (Teters 14).

The past lives in the living, in the present, and becomes a part of the behaviors, the choices, the addictions of the people today. Addiction is itself a type of slavery. When one is addicted, the level of control is complete and any individual can become enslaved to addictive cravings. The power of this control is illustrated in *Almanac* in several instances, but the following example is relevant for the additional levels of irony as it takes on some of the character of tabloid newspaper stories where sensationalism is valued over historical context. This is also one of Silko's representations in *Almanac* of a tribal community suffering from acculturation stress. From the first sentence, there are clues of traditional cultural patterns being abandoned:

> The little children had been left alone many times before. The parents were across the river at the bootlegger's house. Sometimes the parents stayed over there for days. All the money went to the bootlegger. The children got cold. The house was only plywood and tar paper covered with tin. There was no stove. Only half of a steel oil drum where they burned kerosene. The oldest child had been a girl of nine. In the dark she went outside for the red fuel can by the father's snowmobile. But the can she had picked up was full of gasoline, not fuel oil. The explosion had blown the plywood and tin shack apart. The village people saw the six children running. Through the dark in a line along the riverbank the children ran in halos of yellow flame that flared higher each time another limb or article of clothing caught fire. "These are your angels of fire!" Rose had interjected. But the children did not quite reach the river. They fell in the snow, drowning in the fluid of their seared lungs. (*Almanac* 150-151)

In this scene, Silko ironically juxtaposes the morbid with the beautiful recalling the brilliant flames against the dark sky, the halos of six small children whose lives are

sacrificed to their parent's need for alcohol. What concern for their children must a parent set aside in order to pursue such an addiction? What force is powerful enough to demand such obedience? What sets into place the need for using substances that eventually become such all-consuming addictions? The discussion thus far has implicated trauma, the need to treat pain, especially as they threaten to become disassociative disorders, but Silko is never one content with revealing how a single individual suffers. Her story of the six children challenges readers with the reverberations of trauma. The event was an accident. The oldest girl took the wrong can into the house pouring gasoline into the heater. It could just as easily had happened if the parents were at the trader's buying food or down the road visiting a friend. This is the questioning process we undertake that Silko recognizes as making us susceptible to the witchery, to passively accepting the Liar's story. By continuously failing to see the connections between past and present, our actions and far-flung consequences, we fail to see our own self-destructive path. The back-story to the above episode titled "Tundra Spirits" is one of colonial disregard for tribal relationships with the land. Amer-Europeans enter an area, see resources to be developed, manipulate tribal people and their governmental bodies until those resources are made available for white consumption. Tribal people attempt to fight back, become disillusioned, disenfranchised, ill, addicted and self-destructive.

Among Velarde's most poignant works are her dead baby figures and "Malinche's Curse." All these figures refer back, in some way, to the idea that colonization not only caused death, violent deaths as well as accidental as in the deaths

of the burned children, it prevented life. Velarde states: "All my babies are dead. They were never born. They represent babies that never had the opportunity to come to life because of history" (Velarde qtd. in Miller 16). The life-sized babies in fired clay with engobe decorations and script written in both Spanish and English, are used by Velarde in performances:

> In one performance I cover the baby with Peruvian fabric, and then put flowers on it. . . .I have a ceramic cross places in the middle of the candles, and I sing a song that talks about how people are dying because of the war between the army and the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso). . . . I then put my baby as an offering to the cross, and walk away. I am performing as myself, myself not only as an individual, but as a cultural and historical result. (Ivor 8)

Silko offers a similar scene to that of Velarde's performances:

> Seese could feel the weight rising up in her chest, but the old woman's eyes continued; in villages in Mexico and Guatemala they lay out little children and babies everyday. Their little white dresses and gowns are trimmed in blue satin ribbon. Seese was crying, but like the television, she seemed to make no sound. (*Almanac* 47)

Also related to the issues of history and trauma as events that damage tribal communities, is an issue of individual survival. Counselors working with Native American clients in a variety of substance-abuse counseling centers are describing a group of symptoms and behaviors generally known as "tough-mindedness." This general quality, useful as a survival mechanism, is brought about by the series of feelings, histories, traumas, and attempted healing that have been under discussion thus far. This concept of tough-mindedness is crucial here, for in its positive and negative

manifestations, it sets the stage for interpersonal relationships and establishes the individual's ability to negotiate intimacy and isolation.

Intimacy is characterized by feelings of connection with family, friends and can also be a connection to a place. For health and balance to occur, respect is practiced within these relationships at all levels. While there is certainly a wide range of behaviors that express and celebrate intimacy, sexuality is one form of expression that I will devote some attention to here. Sexuality with respect is one form of communication and intimate expression.

Isolation is characterized by poor or no connectedness to others. Rootlessness may be the cause, or another symptom. In relationships characterized by poor connectedness, such as estranged or violent couples, respect is not present and as a result, the relationship is unbalanced with at least one member displaying overbearing and controlling behaviors. Perhaps fear is involved. An overbearing or even abusive person goes unchallenged when the family members fear triggering a physical assault. Sexual intercourse, like a number of other behaviors, becomes a means of controlling another person and for one's personal gratification only.

These basic differences are also present in the positive and negative versions of tough-mindedness as described by counselors. The Na'nizhoozhi Center website offers a clear and concise description of the two models[19]:

> Our PWTM [Positive Warrior-tough-mindedness] program emphases (sic) self-sufficiency, self-esteem, coping skills, spiritual and psychological inner-power, stress resiliency, life appreciation, alternatives to drinking, family values, cultural identity, and personal pride. These experiences are already present in the traditional Dine' "Beauty-Way" philosophy.

> Most of these clients [those who have been failed by normal treatment models] are currently trapped in a destructive pattern which we call Negative Warrior tough-mindedness; a pattern characterize (sic) by callousness, unresponsiveness, isolation, and ultimately self-destruction. As an essential survival mechanism, these clients have been forced to 'close down" emotionally. (NCI-HBS website)

An excellent example of the Negative-WTM is Emo in *Ceremony.* He demonstrates his callousness by taunting Tayo into violence, abusing his cohorts, and showing amusement at the dismay of others for the bag of Japanese teeth he carries with him as war souvenirs.

I suspect that every tribe has some form of ritual and thoughtful gesture which serves to reflect that people's concern for fertility and abundance. The roots of these rituals and gestures are most likely found in the creation stories of the people telling, practicing, living their culture. As has been mentioned before in this text, simply because I focus on a concept in a particular chapter which is narrowed to a particular region and tribes, does not mean that those are the people who practice certain ideas or rituals exclusively. Sexuality and fertility are of concern to humans everywhere, and this is no less true in the desert regions of the Southwest, where water is especially precious. There is a close symbolic connection between water and fertility, especially human reproduction since we are so aware of the fetus developing in a water-filled womb before being born to our environment of air. In this region, one's sexual activities can become an indicator of one's personal and/or spiritual balance or imbalance. The relationship between water, air, land and movement is essential, *healthy.* Maintaining this balance is also of great concern for the people who place the

symbolic images of these four elements within their visual and oral arts. For contemporary writers, the sexual relationship between couples becomes another form of that symbol representing balance. When a couple is estranged, their lack of intimacy becomes a profound symptom of the imbalance in one or both persons. Just a few examples include Frank Waters' (Cheyenne ancestry), *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, (1942) in which Martiniano becomes estranged from his wife over a period of time as his spiritual and identity crisis deepens. In Silko's *Ceremony* and N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, Indian veterans are estranged from their families, as well as from themselves, spiritually and personally. For these men, sex is an opportunistic encounter, usually with women they hardly know who are also suffering their own estrangements. Instead, their primary relationship for much of each novel is with alcohol. While we can assume there are varying degrees of negative tough-mindedness, the characteristic attitudes are intended to be self-protective, a survival mechanism. However, these same attitudes encourage isolation even where loved ones are involved.

The healing process for a number of the characters in these works also relates to their intimate (and sexual) relationships. For Martiniano, his return to traditional practices and greater inclusion into his community allows him to reconcile his spiritual and identity crisis. We understand he is on his way to achieving balance in his life when his wife, Flowers Playing gives birth to their first child. In the works by Silko and Momaday, critics have noted the large number of similarities between Tayo and Abel, the isolated and drinking veterans of *Ceremony* and *House* respectively. Each undergoes a difficult process of re-establishing a place for themselves in their

communities. Each must undergo the process of making their fundamental tribal myths relevant to their lives as returning war veterans. Part of that relevance is making a real connection to the earth and choosing to live that particular intimate relationship. Both Silko and Momaday find a way of demonstrating that relationship through physical movement. Abel runs in the day-long race just as his grandfather did years before, and he recalls a traditional understanding of life as the dual forces of female and male, earth and movement. Tayo encounters Ts'eh and engages in an emotional and sexual relationship. Abel finds his place in the footsteps of his grandfather, Tayo opens himself to love and the life-giving properties of rain return to his mesas. For both characters, it is the choosing of an intimate, loving relationship that is the point, no matter how it comes to be expressed. The result is dynamic balance, reproductive movement.

The most direct assault on intimacy is rape. Therefore, the metaphor of rape is used frequently in Native American texts to describe the degree of emotional intensity that Native Americans feel concerning how Europeans and Amer-Europeans have treated their people and the very land they lived on from the Colonial Period right up to the present. For this reason, I will repeat a section from Duran and Duran that I referred to in Chapter Two:

> The Western masculine cosmology literally raped the New World. The rape occurred at all levels of the Native American experience; rape was done to the Earth as well at to the people who were in close harmony with the Earth spirits. The Western way of being in the world has been systematically forced on Native American people in such brutal and genocidal proportions that there has been a wound severing their connectedness with the Earth. (Duran and Duran *Postcolonial* 82)

While *Almanac* presents a number of violations to land and beings as forms of metaphorical rape, Velarde offers "Malinche's Curse" (Fig. 13) to recall the historical event of Cortés taking an Indian woman for his translator and lover. We will never know if that relationship was a willing one or not, but her story in folklore has been clear over the years:

> (S)he served as a loyal and invaluable informant and advisor of the Spaniards throughout the Conquest. As the Malintzin, or Malinche, she is known by the people she betrayed; and it is her voice they hear mourning by the rivers and in the mountains. (Waters, *Mexico* 11)

In more recent feminist configurations of the Malinche story, she is seen as another rape victim who suffers the additional victimization of being isolated from her community.[20]

Diego Romero's approach is literal. One of his recent works (untitled, Fig. 14) is another Mimbres-style bowl with an interior scene of two conquistadors restraining a Pueblo woman. One of the men holds his penis as he penetrates her. Nearby, a Catholic priest hides his own eyes in another act of violation -- refusal to see a human's pain. Following in the footsteps of Silko and Velarde, Diego Romero presents a brutal scene without flinching. Art of this type causes the audience to recoil and then grapple with the knowledge they have recoiled. The question is raised; "Would I, another witness to this scene, also turn away?"

With so many works before us, alcoholism seems lost, a point forgotten. However, because we have so many works before us, perhaps it is now possible to see that the real addiction involved here is the one from which the colonizer suffers. The

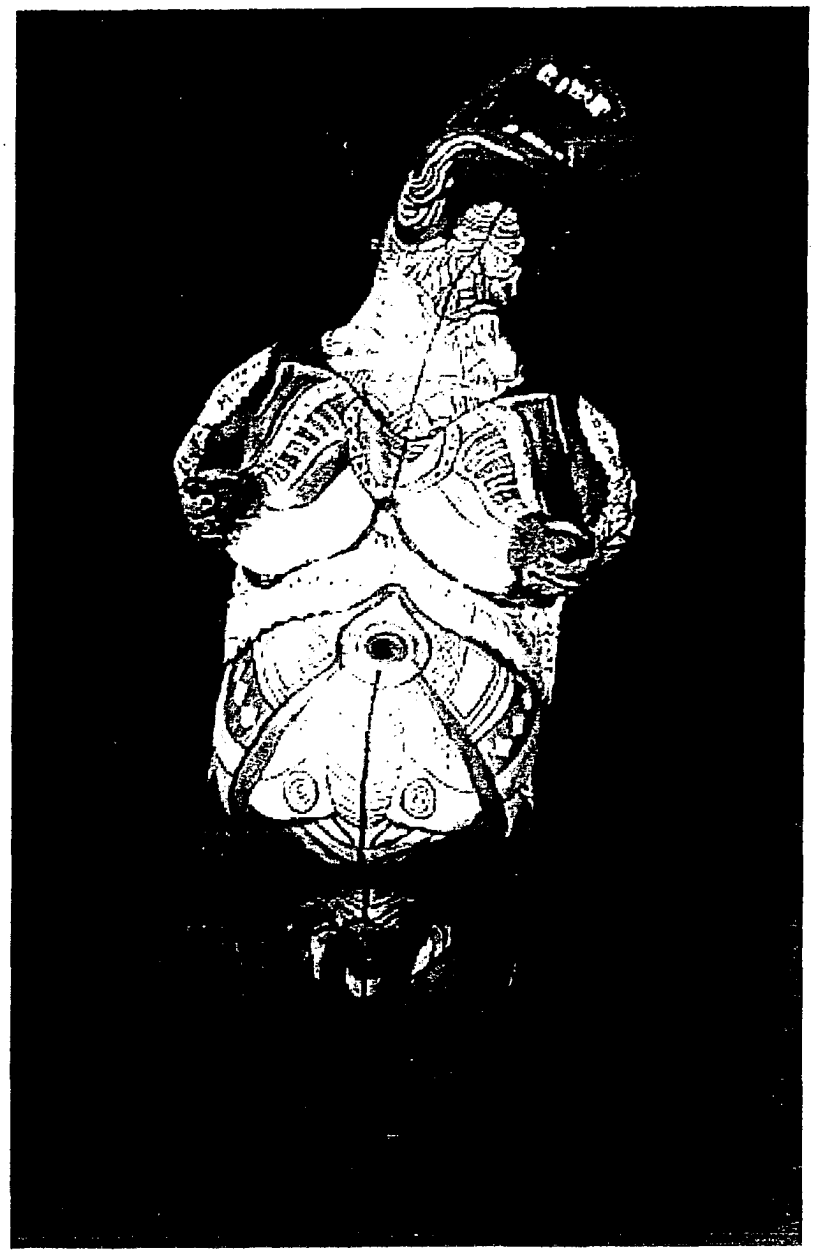


Figure 13. Kukuli Velarde, "Malinche's Curse"
We, The Colonized Ones. 1990 – 1992.
Ceramic.
Carla Stellweg Gallery, New York.
American Indian Culture and Research Journal. 20:1 (1996) 17.



Figure 14. Diego Romero. Untitled Bowl, 1999.
Ceramic, metallic paint.
Gallery 10, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
American Indian Art. 24: 4 (1999) Back cover.

intense need to control, to suppress, to possess, to destroy and always to deny the pain of such behaviors, is the real addiction here and the impulse that causes soul wounds in generation after generation of native peoples who must confront it. This is the behavior Silko deftly summarizes as "the Destroyer" and is an impulse within all of us that we must constantly guard against.

The combined works of Silko, Velarde and the Romero brothers raise several ideas that deserve more discussion. One is the use of the term "moral" premise, borrowed from John Gardner's *On Moral Fiction*:

> True art is *by its nature* moral. We recognize true art by its careful, thoroughly honest search for and analysis of values. It is not didactic because, instead of teaching by authority and force, it explores, open-mindedly, to learn what it should teach. It clarifies, like an experiment in a chemistry lab, and confirms. As a chemist's experiment tests the laws of nature and dramatically reveals the truth or falsity of scientific hypotheses, moral art tests values and rouses trustworthy feelings about the better and the worse in human action. (19)
> Moral action is action that affirms life. (23)

I first read *Almanac* shortly after its publication in 1991 and was made physically ill on several occasions just trying to complete it. Many of the stories are distressing, some of the characters deeply disturbing. A comprehensive discussion of all the characters would be impossible here more than seventy[21] characters are presented in more than 700 pages. Now, as a teacher of literature, I watch my students struggle with the novel and lash out at the book, at Silko, or at me. It could well be that Cook-Lynn's concerns for this novel stem from similar experiences. She hints that Silko may be writing fantasy or escapist literature, two forms of which she and Gardner criticize as the products of authors who have failed to pursue a moral exploration:

> As cynicism, despair, greed, sadism, and nihilism becomes increasingly chic, more and more meanness creeps into escapist fiction. Partly because, in reaction against stultifying conformity, we have learned not only to scorn the moral freak but to praise him as somehow superior to ourselves, and partly because we have fallen into a commitment to sincerity rather than honesty (the one based on the moment's emotion, the other based on careful thought) -- so that we admire more a poem which boldly faces and celebrates thoughts of suicide than we do a poem which makes up some convincing, life-supporting fiction -- civilization has lost control of serious art. (Gardner 43)

Cook-Lynn is also concerned with any Native writer who may be following in the direction of the mixed-blood voices. While she does not directly make this criticism of *Almanac,* the painful process of reading many of its characters and events could suggest Silko has fallen into the habit of writing what Cook-Lynn calls "an aesthetic that is pathetic or critical." To my reading, this would be an erroneous interpretation and Gardner supplies us with the corrective position:

> True art is too complex to reflect the party line. Art that tries hard to tell the truth unretouched is difficult and often offensive. It tears down our heroes and heart-warming convictions, violates canons of politeness and humane compromise. (Gardner 15)

> Gardner clarifies what he views as the significant problems with much writing: Too often we find in contemporary fiction not true morality, which requires sympathy and responsible judgement, but some fierce ethic which, under closer inspection, turns out to be some parochial group's manners and habitual prejudices elevated to the status of ethical imperatives, axioms for which bigotry or hate, not love, is the premise. (74)

While it is perhaps attractive to believe that our national or cultural histories are the products of objective research and careful narration of events, the reality is most often a process of power-struggle, public relations-style "spinning" of some events, and

the outright suppression of others in an elaborate creation of fiction treated as the product of objective research and careful narration of events. As Elizabeth Cook-Lynn notes, the lack of recognition for Indian intellectuals means that it is that much more difficult for tribal histories and Native American perceptions of history overall to be heard by mainstream Americans:

> It is unfortunate that, in spite of the burgeoning body of works by Native writers, the greatest body of acceptable telling of the Indian story is still in the hands of non-Natives. (Cook-Lynn 58)

> If stories are to have any meaning, Indian intellectuals must ask what it means to be an Indian in tribal America. If we don't attempt to answer that question, nothing else will matter, and we won't have to ask ourselves whether there is such a thing as Native American intellectualism because there will no longer be evidence of it. (66)

Cook-Lynn also comments that the Indian intellectualism that does get acknowledgment is from mixed-blood voices who seem to be accommodating Western colonialism in ways damaging to the interests of tribal communities. This has resulted in three intellectual characteristics in fiction, non-fiction and poetry: "an aesthetic that is pathetic or cynical, a tacit notion of the failure of tribal governments as Native institutions and of sovereignty as a concept, and an Indian identity which focuses on individuality rather than First Nations ideology" (67). With this in mind, Cook-Lynn is critical of several contemporary writers of mixed ancestry for their works of fiction that fail for one or more of the above reasons.

For all of the discomfort the works by Silko, Velarde or the Romero brothers cause us as we engage in the artistic dialogue, I believe each artist meets the criteria set

out by Cook-Lynn for an Indian Intellectual and by Gardner for an artist of moral fiction. These writers and artists are concerned with telling the truth and in re-establishing respect and love, even where that process requires painful examination of history, individual and group behavior, and all the other forces that compose contemporary American societies.

The second of Cook-Lynn's mixed-blood characteristics that she finds damaging to tribal communities and Indian intellectualism in general is "a tacit notion of the failure of tribal governments as Native institutions and of sovereignty as a concept." *Almanac* takes us to many "battlefronts" where this is a feature of the exchanges between indigenous peoples and colonizers. Silko disregards the reader's expectations for a sense of chronological time that moves through and within history and the present. Thus, in *Almanac*, Geronimo is as contemporary to us as readers as are Seese, Sterling, Lecha and Zeta. Unlike "flashback" along a chronological time line, Silko allows the impression all events could be happening simultaneously, hence the spirit and other voices that speak to each other throughout the novel.

The right to determine self is the concept at the heart of the fictional battles in *Almanac,* just as it is (and has been) for the very real tribes and governments in the US, Canada, Mexico and elsewhere in the Americas and among other indigenous peoples. Sovereignty is a complex of ideas, actions, beliefs -- a process to be practiced and continually rediscovered. The characters of *Almanac* are acting out those processes and, in some cases, they explore ever deeper, more intimate ways in which one person/group can violate another. While the indigenous peoples continually recall the teachings, and

warnings, offered them by their ancestral spirits, those who choose to ignore the past and their ancestors (who consider them dead, for example) continue to act in ways that violate the sanctity of the earth herself through tree cutting, mining operations, pollution, re-routing waterways to satisfy needs of urbanites while ecosystems go dry and allowing subsistence farmers to abandon their lands for lives of wandering in urban wastelands.

The third of Cook-Lynn's three characteristics of mixed-blood voices is "an Indian identity which focuses on individuality rather than First Nations ideology." As *Almanac* is an exploration of addiction, it is a collection of narratives that focuses on individuality. However, in refutation that the entire novel celebrates individuality over First Nations ideology, we can examine the life of Sterling. As one of the first characters introduced in *Almanac*, Sterling begins the novel as the "ultimate Indian individual." He is lonely, isolated by his work for Zeta and Lecha, banished from his pueblo, and he engages in self-help as promoted by the magazines to which he subscribes. By the novel's conclusion, however, he has undergone profound changes in attitude that enable him to return home to the pueblo that angrily banished him and to quietly reintegrate himself into it. He cancels his magazines, visits the stone snake shrine and understands that he is waiting for the arrival of the army from the south. He is at peace with himself and knows he has come back to his place, his home. All that remains is the arrival of the people's army to reclaim the land and heal the earth.

Almanac is a catalog of isolated individuals practicing a wide variety of addictive and self-destructive behaviors. Silko does not celebrate any of these

behaviors, and in fact, her indigenous characters offer commentary on the short-sightedness, the tragedy, of many of these behaviors. However, the presentation of isolation as a range of behaviors that can be cataloged is part of Silko's approach in this book that disturbs so many readers. Gardner tells us:

> We study people carefully for two main reasons: in order to understand them and fully experience our exchange with them, or in order to feel ourselves superior. The first purpose can contribute to art and is natural to art, since the soul of art is celebration and discovery through imitation. The second, perhaps more common purpose, is a mark of petty-mindedness, insecurity, or vice and is the foundation of art that has no value. Both artistic acts, the real and the fraudulent, are obviously egoistic: the true artist is after "glory," as Faulkner said -- that is, the pleasure of noble achievement and good people's praise. The false artist is after power and the yawping flattery of his carnivore pack. (120)

Silko works in a way that undermines both of these points. We sometimes find we cannot understand the characters or we may find ourselves threatened by them. Therefore, we may want to distance ourselves from them, but a sense of superiority is also denied us by Silko's persistence that these people *are* us. We are the real estate agents making fundamental changes to the land. We are prone to satisfying our own basic desires and are very good at denying that behaviors have negative consequences – at least, until we find ourselves in a marriage that is breaking apart, taking advantage of people to get "an edge," or damaging someone's self-esteem to protect our own. Silko's questions to all of us are, "So, what are you going to do? How are you going to live in relation to the earth and her children?" Consumer culture teaches us to worry only about self-gratification. If someone is going without, it must be because they didn't work hard enough for it, and therefore, they don't deserve it -- in short, the

Protestant work ethic. The anger that many feel while reading *Almanac* is partly the result of facing suppressed history. This history must be revealed to all Americans if we are ever to see a genuine acceptance of Indian Intellectualism, and of course, understanding of Indian story. For all the pain that Silko, Velarde, the Romero brothers, and others may cause us while we engage their works, there is another purpose to their works. Wallowing in pain and a sense of victimization can be another form of self-destructive, addictive behavior. Therefore, the purpose to presenting pain must ultimately be about hope. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn states:

"While it is true that any indigenous story tells of death and blood, it also tells of indigenous rebirth and hope, not as Americans nor as some new ersatz race but as the indigenes of this continent" (Cook-Lynn 74).

Thus, I make my final claim. *Almanac of the Dead* is a hopeful book. It is a novel requiring much contemplation and a willingness to stay in the confrontation -- as one does with an intimate partner when issues need to be resolved, and harmony and balance restored.

Native American artists and writers have engaged the first important step of healing themselves by identifying the disorder alcoholism, not as a medical disease, but as a crisis of spirit and identity. This is in keeping with traditional wisdom as noted by Duran and Duran who note that traditional people see alcohol as a spiritual entity, one which can tempt and cause destruction in lifeways, family and community. "The alcohol 'spirits' continually wage war within a spiritual arena and it is in the spiritual arena that the struggle continues" (*Postcolonial* 139).

Alcoholism is indeed a logical reaction to the horrors of violent colonialism, but it is not the complete problem, whole unto itself. This is also a situation in which the dominant culture needs to accept the validity of Native American intellectualism where Native Americans tell their own stories, present their own history, uphold their own concepts, world views, religions and appropriate treatments for disorders and imbalances of all kinds. This is about allowing for intimacy -- the most profound acts of healing. In Silko's *Almanac*, there is one story that comes to us through the voices of several Indian generations. Old Yoeme relates the story of the "Journey of the Ancient Almanac" to the girls Lecha and Zeta. It is through Lecha's memories that we come to know it. The story is of a persecuted people who make a decision for the survival of the generations to come:

> They argued whether they should send the strongest to make a run for it, or whether they should give up and all simply die together. Because they were the very last of their tribe, strong cases were made for their dying together and allowing the almanac to die with them. After all, the almanac was what told them who they were and where they had come from in the stories. Since their kind would no longer be, they argued the manuscript should rightly die with them. Finally, the stubborn voices prevailed, and three young girls and a small boy were chosen to carry the almanac North. The pages were divided four ways. This way, if only one of the children reached safety far in the North, at least one part of the book would be safe. The people knew if even one part of their almanac survived, they as a people would return someday. (246)

The children travel for days and are starving when they meet an old hunchbacked woman living alone in an otherwise abandoned village. She is cooking a thin, watery stew and the starving children have nothing to offer in exchange for sharing it with her. The oldest girl adds one page of the horse-stomach parchment that makes

up the almanac. There are several consequences to this act. The most immediate is that all are able to eat nourishing food. Later, the children quarrel over the loss of the page they were directed to protect. Still, their desperation causes them to eat more pages. The stews literally save them, not only physically, but spiritually as well. The children ingest the stories by memorizing each page before they eat it. Eventually, they come to realize this is improper and decide to leave the old woman to continue their journey. Before they can leave, however, one of the girls is killed and eaten by the old woman. The oldest child is not surprised by this outcome for she was warned by the elders: "During the epoch of Death-Eye Dog, human beings, especially the alien invaders, would become obsessed with hungers and impulses commonly seen in wild dogs" (251). The dead girl's pages are retrieved and the journey continued:

> Old Yoeme had paused and looked them both in the eye before she had continued. "You see, it had been the almanac that had saved them. The first night, if the eldest had not sacrificed a page from the book, that crippled woman would have murdered them all right then, while the children were weak from hunger and the longer journey.
>
> "As long as all our days belong to Death-Eye Dog, we will continue to see such things. That woman had been left behind by the others. The reign of Death-Eye Dog is marked by people like her. She did not start out that way. In the days that belong to Death-Eye Dog, the possibility of becoming like her trails each one of us." (252-253)

What Cook-Lynn calls Indian Intellectualism is Silko's *Almanac*. It is Indian history with a warning to each of us concerning our vulnerabilities. We not only can become victims, but victimizers as well, intent only on filling our emptiness, our growing sense of isolation. Silko has given us an impressive text that is carefully instructive of how and how not to live, and of moral behavior. The task remains for us

to decide, "How will we choose to live in relation to the earth and her children?" Just as Silko challenges us with this question, she also offers an answer: "And as the old people say, 'If you can remember the stories, you will be all right. Just remember the stories'" (*Yellow Woman* 58).

[1] While it may seem odd to include cardiology in this essay, heart disease is the number one killer of Americans in the late 20th century. There are many potential causes for heart disease, but drug and alcohol abuse are uncontested contributors to the risk of developing heart disease.

[2] PTSD or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. The intergenerational properties are described in Chapter 2.

[3] For a historical overview of the differing cultural approaches to consuming alcohol, see the first chapter of Laurence A. French's *Counseling American Indians*. Lanham & New York: University Press of America, 1997. A brief discussion of the myth of genetic predisposition is offered by Matthew Kelley of the (NCI) Na'nizhoozhi Center in Gallup, New Mexico. "It is a common idea among both non-Native American and Native American people that "Indians" have both a genetic metabolism and cultural heritage which pre-disposes them to substance-use-disorders [. . .] others [have] argued that, although there are some unique and special differences, in general, Native Americans react to alcohol much like other people."
http://www.cnetco.com/~nci/myth.htm

[4] For a more complete discussion of the translation and interpretation of these terms as central to Navajo thought see Gary Witherspoon's *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe* from University of Michigan Press, 1977.

[5] Witherspoon

[6] The complete model as used by Purdy to introduce Native American texts can be found in " 'No One Ever Did This To Me Before': Contemporary American Indian Texts in the Classroom." *American Indian Quarterly.* 62:3 (1992) 53-61.

[7] Philip May offers these names as a result of several studies done among both tribal and rural populations. The term "anxiety" drinking is attributed directly to Frances Ferguson.

[8] Silko does not specify which war Ayah and Chato's son dies in, but clues in the story indicate the Korean War would be a viable guess.

[9] Silko places the action of *Ceremony* during and after WWII. The characters Tayo and Rocky are sent to the Philippines probably about 1941. According to William Manchester in *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880 – 1964*, MacArthur withdrew his troops in 1941 to Bataan and Corregidor under Japanese pressure. He left the area in March of 1942 at which time General Jonathan M. Wainright took command.

The troops who remained in the Philippines suffered at the hands of the Japanese as prisoners of war undergoing the Bataan Death March and other atrocities. Among these American prisoners, many were New Mexico National Guardsmen who had been activated for Army service shortly before the fall of Corregidor, and many of these New Mexicans were Pueblo Indians and Hispanics.

[10] Here it is interesting to note the struggles on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota beginning in June 1999. The deaths of two Lakota men have led to civil protests among Pine Ridge residents, AIM members and others calling for the closure of the four beer-only sales establishments in White Clay, Nebraska, two miles south of the dry reservation. While Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns argues for retaining the beer sales, it is the tribal people who call for their closure in an effort to deter temptation. Their demands include making acquisition of alcohol more difficult and calling for greater attention to the larger problems of poverty, unemployment, a severe housing shortage, lack of medical care facilitates and lack of educational opportunities. *Omaha World Tribune* for months June-July, 1999.

[11] For one current example of the "overdetermined and overloaded sign" that may have such an impact on young Indians today, one need look no further than the mascot issue as it is playing out in schools and professional sports teams across the United States and Canada. A full range of opinion is being publicly expressed with the poles stating no team should bear the name of an ethnic minority to teams should not have to change their mascot name because no insult has been intended. A few Native Americans who are actively involved in this issue of mascot names include Suzann Shown Harjo; Vine Deloria, Jr.; Norbert S. Hill; Mateo Romeo and Charlene Teeters.

[12] According to David Word, a statistician and demographer with the Census Bureau, the 1990 census for American Indians is about 10 percent higher and the 1980 census about 35 percent higher than estimates based on natural fluctuations in populations (Lochhead 20).

[13] A somewhat ironic situation, in light of Cook-Lynn's article, is that her discussion of essentialism includes the following: "Even as we speak, though, there is the idea that to talk about something, you have to have had special *experience*...It's sad but true that to run an alcoholism treatment center on any Indian Reservation in the country (as an example of furthering this "been there-done-that" notion of authenticity) your own years of alcohol-abuse are your major credential" (60).

[14] In another article by Eduardo and Bonnie Duran, "logic models" are supplied for alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention programs for Native American youths. Throughout the models, racism is indicated as a risk factor and strategies are suggested for reducing racism, such as in school settings, as one means of increasing coping and sobriety skills. "Assessment, Program Planning, and Evaluation in Indian Country."

Promoting Health in Multicultural Populations: A Handbook for Practitioners. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 1999.

[15] The installation and an interview with Mateo Romero about the piece can be found in Gerald Masterson's *Reservation X: The Power of Place in Aboriginal Contemporary Art*, 1998.

[16] See French *Counseling American Indians.*

[17] I presented a much earlier version of this draft to a non-fiction writing workshop in Oklahoma. One of the participants told me he had a problem with the title of Velarde's collected works. The comment left me speechless for a number of reasons. Since it was certainly beyond my control to change the title, I had to wonder if what he was really expressing was incredulity to the possibility Native Americans are aware of their colonized state, understand it and comment on it directly to both colonized and colonizer audiences.

[18] Judith Nies offers a brief description of this explorer movement in her timeline *Native American History.* "Europeans invaded from every direction at once. The Spanish came up from the south, conquering Florida and Mexico and then moving into the American Southwest by 1540. They invaded the Pueblo peoples of what is now New Mexico and founded their regional capital in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1609." (109)

[19] This same website also offers an overview of their treatment program and the instruments used for intake and Eagle Plume program evaluations. www.cnetco.com/~nci/publications.htm

[20] See article by Tiffani Lopez, "Turn-of-the-Century La Malinche and Other Tales of Cultural (Re) Construction."

[21] The character count was not conducted by me but by University of Nebraska – Omaha graduate student Monica Kershner whose own interests in Native American literature have led to her begin a "character map" for *Almanac of the Dead.*

Chapter Four
Northwest
Entering Dangerous Worlds

Indian boy takes a drink of everything that killed his brother
Indian Boy drives his car through the rail, over the shoulder
Off the road, on the rez, where survivors are forced to gather
All his bones, all his blood, while the dead watch the world shatter

Chorus:
But it's a small world
You don't have to pay attention
It's the reservation
The news don't give it a mention
Yeah, it's a small world
Getting smaller and smaller and smaller

Indian girl disappeared while hitchhiking on the old highway
Indian girl left the road and some white wolf ate her heart away
Indian girl found naked by the river, shot twice in the head
One more gone, one more gone, and our world fills with all of our dead

Lyrics by Sherman Alexie
Performed by Jim Boyd & Sherman Alexie

To complete the cycle of prayer that began in the Northeast, the current chapter focuses on the Northwest region and on violence -- notably, torture, murder, and suicide. In one sense, we can consider these acts of finality. In another sense, they are also acts of the most profound change for an individual, community or a particular situation. In order to place these acts of violence into a discussion of intentional, voluntary change, rather than the involuntary change of consequence, we need to consider the process of the imagination. This is a process of creation in the abstract, a commitment to that concept, and the undertaking of the actions that are perceived as

directly supportive of that concept. Therefore, the greater theme of this chapter is the power of transformation. To the degree that I am able, I hope to discuss the concept of transformation as understood by traditional practitioners, such as medicine people. Transformation at this level of conceptual understanding requires specialized training and initiation, neither of which I have received, and so therefore my discussion will necessarily be limited and speculative. Creative change, however, is not limited to those who are highly trained, and many so-called "everyday people" engage in creative, transformative acts seeking positive change in their own lives. In other words, where a new situation can be imagined, individuals, or collectives of individuals, may choose to actively create that new situation as an improvement over current states of being. The first step of imagining, then, cannot be overstated, and places creative people of all types in positions of prominence where this process is involved, as in cases where artists are called upon to create a new cultural or national identity.

The relationship between violence and transformation will be explored throughout this chapter as a relationship that is continuously imagined. For many, acts of violence are only seen as destructive acts requiring prevention or punishment. I will not go so far as to advocate acts of violence, but I will consider the possibility that there are others who see violence as their only means of expressing change, either positively or negatively.

Given the widely disseminated statistics concerning the high rates of suicide and violent deaths among Native Americans, a discussion of those topics here should not be surprising. Both events are widely recognized as problems, and that they are particular problems for Indian people. The subject of torture will likely require more explanation.

My discussion of torture will address two arenas of pain for Native Americans. The first is the physical reality of what torture does to the human body. This is torture in its most immediate and apparent form, and examples of its use are easily found in the historical record where Indians and Europeans have interacted. While atrocities are easily found in this shared history, I do not intend to examine these acts except insofar as they may be directly related to more recent acts of violence. This chapter relies on the presumption that torture was indeed widely engaged in throughout the Americas by both indigenous and colonial peoples.

The second arena of torture relies on an understanding of what can become "tortuous" to a group of people. This form of torture may not be physical in nature, but is instead morally and even physically destructive. In this form, violent acts are committed on paper as institutional policies, in which the perpetrators are cloaked in ambiguity and the means of deniability. These elusive examples can be found in the bureaucracies that exist for the purpose of supporting Native Americans, but actually under that guise, do much to undermine tribal practices.

There are a number of keywords that are interrelated and important to this chapter's discussion. In all the previous chapters, my approach has been to document physical and mental pain. In this final chapter, I will continue to document pain's existence and to clarify how pain is similar to and different from suffering. For instance, Scarry defines pain as all-encompassing. The body becomes incapable of recognizing a world beyond the body's own pain, of articulating that experience through language or of remembering an individual existence with all the richness of family, memories, joys, personal goals and so on. Where the only awareness is that of

pain, a person in pain cannot imagine any other form of existence except for a condition of "not pain." Someone in a state of pain has limited ability to imagine any transformative act beyond this basic recognition -- the desire for pain to end. Suffering, on the other hand, can become the basis for intentional change. Suffering can become the creative spark, and the process itself of imaginative transformation, whether positive or negative. In other words, an individual can choose to imagine an entirely new existence that changes the nature of or prescence of suffering. The relationship between pain and suffering is at the heart of this chapter since every individual has the right to choose, on some conscious or unconscious level, their individual path from pain through suffering to an imagined goal. (This "right" does not connote ability, however, as severe restrictions may prevent this process.) Whether that goal is being imagined by the individual, or imposed from some outside source, has a bearing on the outcome including the potential continuance of pain, suffering, or both. In addition, for some individuals, their own pain is transformed into action that results in pain for others. This becomes the cycle of abuse, torture and death that traps some families, communities and governing bodies. Scarry introduces the kind of logic that fosters some to believe the inflicting of pain is not only necessary, as in the achieving of patriotic goals, but it also expresses and sustains the appearance of the torturer's power.

To discuss these concepts of pain and suffering as understood by Native American artists, I will refer to the literary work of Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur D'Alene), in particular his novel *Indian Killer*. The visual arts will be represented by the sculptural works of John Hoover (Aleut) and the mixed-media easel arts of Rick

Bartow (Yurok). All of these artists know something about personal and cultural pain and have chosen to address some of those circumstances in their works.

As stated earlier, there are some forms of violence which are simply and comprehensively understood as contemporary social problems. Suicide is one such form. Suicide is categorized as a problem to be avoided, solved, or treated. In our cultural rhetoric, suicides are called tragedies, and in our contentious national debates, the "right" to die.[1] Statistics concerning suicide among Native Americans appear frequently in studies concerning conditions on reservations and in mental health publications. The following statistics are from *Promoting Health in Multicultural Populations: A Handbook for Practitioners,* edited by Robert Huff and Michael Kline:

> Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Indian adolescents. In 1992, 21% of females and 12% of males reported ever having attempted suicide. Suicidal attempts and ideation were strongly associated with emotional stress, history of abuse, chemical use, and family problems, particularly violence and suicide by other family members. Nearly half (44.6%) of emotionally distressed adolescents have attempted suicide, compared to 16.9% of youth in general. (qtd in Hodge and Fredericks 281)

> Accidents and violence, often a consequence of alcohol or substance abuse, accounted for 21% of all Indian deaths during the period 1990 to 1992, almost three times the national figure. Accidents and violence are also a leading cause of inpatient and outpatient care for Indians (U.S. DHHS, 1992). (qtd in Hodge and Fredericks 283)

The above statistics are typical of research done for and about Native American communities and the social ills found within. Without diminishing the importance of such studies and reports, there is to some degree some reality to the adage "we find what we go looking for." Going in search of something we don't yet know exists seems illogical and unscientific, but is in fact quite often an established means of creative

breakthrough. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, researcher and author of several books on the creative process, writes on the nature of creativity and the human condition:

> The creative process starts with a sense that there is a puzzle somewhere, or a task to be accomplished. Perhaps something is not right, somewhere there is a conflict, a tension, a need to be satisfied. The problematic issue can be triggered by a personal experience, by a lack of fit in the symbolic system, by the stimulation of colleagues, or by public needs. In any case, without such a felt tension that attracts the psychic energy of the person, there is no need for a new response. Therefore, without a stimulus of this sort, the creative process is unlikely to start. (*Creativity* 95)

This quick look at creative process helps to explain how psychologist Eduardo Duran began working in one direction that he considered appropriate to his field and thereby changed the nature of his research in a surprising manner. As a mental health researcher, Duran set out to interact directly with clients, in his case, a native community,[2] by conducting a basic needs assessment. That assessment resulted in community members identifying alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide and family dysfunction as main concerns for the community. During this same time, Duran asked people if they dreamed and if they would share their dreams with him:

> Soon he was inundated with dream material and his prescence in the community automatically involved dream talk. E.D. took these dreams and applied phenomenological reduction methods in order to do a content analysis. He was able to reduce the dreams to approximately eight hundred themes that actually had basic meaning. The results were interesting, and he found that the problems mentioned during the conventional needs assessment were expressed in dreams only eight times. The overwhelming majority of themes were of "hostile environment or hostile world -- either natural or artificial." The hostility theme occurred in about 70 percent of the theme material, thus making a statement as to what the community psyche saw as the important issue. (*Postcolonial* 195)

The Durans came to understand the "hostile world" as a fundamental concept for many Native Americans that promotes and maintains the despair accompanying the experience of a soul wound. To accept a concept of a soul wound is to include a greater understanding of physical pain, fear of a hostile world, suffering, and a perceived inability to escape because one condition is reinforced, or triggered, by another. The legacy of the hostile world phenomena is a process that perpetuates itself, unless those self-perpetuating processes are examined, actively challenged and transformed.

Within their domain of psychological research, the Durans identified the existence of fear widely felt among Native Americans who perceive themselves living in a hostile world. Depicting such a place outside of personal dreams is arguably the realm of artists. Sherman Alexie creates his vision of a hostile world in his 1996 novel, *Indian Killer.* In doing so, Alexie includes a large cast of characters to explore the various levels of pain and suffering. In this work, we can see the nature of acute physical and mental pain with its debilitating effects, including the inability to articulate the experience, as well as chronic suffering that allows for some articulation of experience and hope for achievable change. In a 1998 interview for *Indian Artist Magazine*, Alexie acknowledges the presence of pain in his novel:

> In my books, which are based on personal experiences and history, I get accused of exaggerating the despair on the reservation. But in the face of tremendous social problems, there is a great deal of denial there. (Teters 33)

Indian Killer distresses readers for its emphasis on violence, a hostile world in which characters seem to appear simply for the purpose of killing or being killed. The Seattle of Alexie's novel is populated with victims and

victimizers at different rungs of the economic and class ladder of contemporary society. These characters do not stay true to the reader's expectations and some appear to be intentionally blurring the line between victim and victimizer status. Therefore, the reader is given the task of resolving much ambiguity throughout the novel, ambiguity requiring multiple perspectives to understand and which resists control or resolution.

Through the character of John Smith, Alexie illustrates the hostile world concept. The troubled dreams and distorted fantasies of a young Indian man adopted at birth by a white urban Seattle couple become the most direct challenge to definitions of what it is to be a victim and a victimizer. John is afflicted with physical and mental disorders and he struggles throughout the novel with fundamental identity issues. He has been denied all knowledge of who his parents are and even the place they come from. John, as a fictional character, also presents some interesting challenges. From the discussions between other characters concerning John, the reader is led to conclude that he is mentally ill, probably suffering from schizophrenia. His adoptive parents worry he will never take his medication again and the night workers at John's favorite donut shop habitually taste-test his coffee and donuts for poisons to ease John's mind and prevent an "episode." However, the only character to directly label John's behavior as schizophrenic is a Seattle beat cop, who does so after seeing John singing and wailing at the site of one of the many Indian beatings in the novel. In this context, the label is dismissive and a racist lumping of all the Indians of Seattle into the few (and often overlapping) categories of homeless, alcoholic,

mentally ill and failures. John's behaviors may indeed be the result of illness, but his medical situation is not one that is openly identified in the novel by any other character, thus establishing one layer of ambiguity that fits within the novel's overall shape as one revealing just as much as it obscures important clues to the mysterious characters and violent acts that are the story.

John's understanding of the world is that of a dangerous or hostile place from the moment of his birth. He frequently dreams and fantasizes about his birth parents, to whom he has been denied any access by a court adoption process which sealed the adoption records. John knows only two things: his mother was Indian and fourteen when she gave birth to him:

> The Indian woman on the table in the delivery room is very young, just a child herself. She is beautiful, even in the pain of labor, the contractions, the sudden tearing. When John imagines his birth, his mother is sometimes Navajo. Other times she is Lakota. Often she is from the same tribe as the last Indian woman he has seen on television. (*Indian* 4)

For John, then, the act of his being taken from his birth mother is the profound and ultimate proof he lives in a hostile world. He "knows" this in other ways as well and we see him perpetually worried about the poisons in food and water, the manner in which others approach him, and general fears that he is being watched or is in some form of danger. The fantasies about his birth are also violent. He imagines his mother bleeds excessively and screams in pain during his birth. Then, the infant John is hurriedly taken by a nurse to a man in a jumpsuit who immediately departs with the baby in a helicopter to deliver him to his white parents in a foreign world:

> Suddenly this is a war. The jumpsuit man holds John close to his chest as the helicopter rises. The helicopter gunman locks and loads, strafes the reservation with explosive shells. Indians hit the ground, drive their cars off roads, dive under flimsy kitchen tables. A few Indians, two women and one young man, continue their slow walk down the reservation road, unperturbed by the gunfire. They have been through much worse. The *whomp-whomp* of the helicopter blades. John is hungry and cries uselessly. He cannot be heard over the roar of the gun, the chopper. He cries anyway. This is all he knows how to do. (*Indian* 6)

Through John's own imagination, his life becomes characterized by these feeling of helplessness and violence as part of his efforts to understand and /or create his basic identity. The power of his imagination, fueled by the impact of having been denied his birth family, has laid the foundation for John's experiencing several symptoms of chronic PTSD -- in particular, responses to intense fear, helplessness and hypervigilance (*DSM-IV* 428). Some of the details of John's life appear to be directly inspired by Alexie's own growing up. Like Alexie in his youth, John is tall, smart and the only Indian in an otherwise all-white school playing on an all-white basketball team. Alexie's seizures that occurred for years after surgery for hydrocephalus could well be the creative basis for the seizures John sometimes has, albeit they stem from different biological or emotional causes.[3] Other of John's behaviors remain ambiguous and of unknown origin. However, given the conditions of his life, even with the comforts of a middle-class white upbringing, John provokes questions concerning the meaning, the shape, and the emotional feel of a hostile world. In other words, are John's sometimes erratic behavior and deep sadness really illogical for someone denied basic knowledge of his own identity? Should

John's self-isolation and paranoia necessarily require a diagnosis of chemical imbalance or debilitating mental illness? However, Alexie plants the clues that at least one person believes John is mentally ill and in need of medical treatment. At several places in the text, mentions of medication are made, but it is also clear that John refuses, and probably fears, taking any such medication. Overall, John's behaviors match a definition of schizophrenia as given in a basic psychology dictionary:

> . . .withdrawal, disturbances in emotional and affective life, and depending on the type, the prescence of hallucinations, delusions, negativistic behavior, and progressive deterioration. (Chaplin 409)

However, a short passage in the *DSM-IV: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* states: "There is some evidence that clinicians have a tendency to overdiagnose Schizophrenia (instead of Bipolar Disorder) in some ethnic groups" (281)[4]. Such a qualifier in a primary diagnostic tool of the psychological profession should caution us that one, *non*professional opinion (the Seattle police officer) does not make for a credible diagnosis of John's personality difficulties.

A second examination of John's world in the novel reveals that John lives within two realities. The more tangible Seattle world is composed of his white middle-class parents and his schizophrenia. His alternative world revolves around his biological mother, an acceptance of the likelihood of poverty, rich emotional connections to people in his imagined tribal community and an absence of schizophrenia. This second world evolves, shifts under the

creative force that is John's imagination -- an imagination made necessary by his suffering. He needs this alternative world and home where he sees a mother sacrifice, give, love, and protect, and John can see himself responding in kind to her. Alexie does not reveal to us what makes John's adoptive mother, Olivia Smith, inadequate in any of these regards, and perhaps she is not inadequate at all, but only so in John's imagination. It could be that John cannot allow himself to see Olivia as a good mother out of a sense of love and loyalty for his birth mother. However, for all her good intentions and good actions, Olivia is not able to dispel for John the sense that the world is a dangerous place for him.

In the article "Culture Tales: A Narrative Approach to Thinking, Cross-Cultural Psychology, and Psychotherapy," George S. Howard suggests that "science [is] another form of storytelling, and thus of the same genus as fairy tales, although undoubtedly of a very different species" (187). By examining the need for different types of story and the criteria used for evaluating their effectiveness in their respective contexts, Howard proposes "that cultural differences might be rooted in the preferred stories habitually entertained by ethnic, class, racial and cultural groups" (187). Howard's points are relevant here for the description of two distinct human needs that we see John struggle to meet over the course of his life. The first is for story itself:

> Stories are habitations. We live in and through stories. They conjure worlds. We do not know the world other than as story world. Stories inform life. They hold us together and keep us apart. We inhabit the great stories of our culture. We live through stories. We are *lived* by the stories of our race and place. It is this enveloping and constituting function of stories that is especially important to sense more fully. We

> are, each of us, locations where the stories of our place and time become partially tellable.
> (qtd. in Howard 192)

Throughout *Indian Killer*, John lives his stories and attempts to become the loved and loving being he imagines himself to be. The conflicts with his adoptive parents cannot be separated from this process. Again, Howard states:

> ...struggles for independence by adolescents and young adults represent cross-cultural struggles as much as do misunderstandings and conflicts among members of different religions, races, nationalities, and the like. The stories advocated by the subjective cultures of adolescents often clash with the storied perspectives held near and dear by their parents. (192)

John's second need is for a healing of the hostile world. Given Howard's assertion that we live within story, the hostile world is also one such story. This does not mean the hostile world is somehow less -- less profound, less real, less important. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of the various ways of knowing that can exist through story.

> [I]f science itself can be understood as instances of storytelling and story refinement, then the claim that other nonscientific forms of knowing might also represent instances of narrative knowing becomes quite plausible. . . . So scientific and humanistic thought do represent separate and noncomparable modes of knowing because they have evolved to fit different intellectual, ecological niches. (Howard 189)

The problem that occurs, then, is a "mismatch" in terms of story, storyteller, and audience. For Howard, the problem of mismatch occurs in the therapeutic situation where client and therapist fail to make positive gains on behalf of the client. "[P]art of the work between client and therapist can be seen

as life-story elaboration, adjustment, or repair" (Howard 194), but as Howard also notes, well-meaning efforts do not always succeed. A form of congruence is required between therapist and client in order for the therapist to understand elements of pain from the subtext of the client's stories. This may be the pain the client cannot otherwise articulate and which the therapist may miss entirely if the two are of differing worldviews. Howard refers to a number of studies which state the importance of the client/therapist match, and yet, it remains largely a mystery why some relationships fail to connect. There is some evidence that the match must occur at the level of the story itself. "Empathic experiencing is perhaps the psychotherapist's greatest aid in escaping our inevitable limitations in understanding people from different cultures, races, belief systems, sexes, places, and times" (Howard 196).

We can apply this scenario to John's life with minor adjustments. Rather than a client, he is the son to well-meaning parents Daniel and Olivia Smith, whose life stories fail to meet John's needs to create his own identity. Furthermore, as his own stories suffer under the influence of the hostile world story, he is in need of story-repair and adjustment. This is the mismatch of parents to son that prevents John from making healthy repairs to his life story thus accounting for the feelings of helplessness in the entire family. At every turn, John and the Smiths differ in ethnicity, in age, in all the ways that an adolescent struggles to create himself, and even the fact that John grew up with these people does not erase the essential character of his stories as those of longing for what he can never have.

John approaches every social setting as one also characterized by his difference -- his outsider status. He is an outsider as result of an early but imperfect transformation. This first profound transformation for John was the one that took place at his birth when an Indian baby flew through the air to become the son of white parents. Through much of the novel, John compares himself to the groups of people that form around him sharing like experiences or interests. At his job, he repeatedly refuses the invitations of his fellow construction workers, feeling "too Indian" to fit in with them and their misongynistic drinking humor. In the company of other Indians, he feels fake, shallow, not Indian enough. Eventually, John comes to realize the barriers to his undertaking personal transformative change to end his suffering. Ultimately, John can imagine only one truly transformative change for himself. In the rhetoric typically used, John "tragically" ended his life. In this alternative context, however, it is possible to understand that John transforms his life through suicide.

There is a linkage between transformation and enlightenment here that is foreshadowed for John by Father Duncan. He is an Indian priest who gradually loses his ability to reconcile the ideological role of his life as a priest, because he knows that so many of his order have made the world a hostile place for many Indian people. During John's early years, Father Duncan served as John's mentor and only Indian role model. Father Duncan is described as an eccentric, a man who had taken great interest in John, told him secrets, and then had "abandoned" him, presumably to seek his own enlightenment. During their time

together, each struggles with the victim/victimizer relationship inherent in Indian/White history. Had Father Duncan been able to resolve his own internal conflicts with dual identity as a Spokane Indian and a Catholic priest, he might have been able to assist John more significantly. However, their times together seem to result in a triggering of the identity issues and uncertainty of belonging in each of them:

> On a gray day when John was six years old, Father Duncan took him to see the Chapel of the North American Martyrs in downtown Seattle. John found himself surrounded by vivid stained glass reproductions of Jesuits being martyred by Indians. Bright white Jesuits with bright white suns at their necks. A Jesuit, tied to a post, burning alive as Indians dance around him. Another pierced with dozens of arrows. A third, with his cassock torn from his body, crawling away from an especially evil-looking Indian. The fourth being drowned in a blue river. The fifth, sixth, and seventh being scalped. An eighth and ninth praying together as a small church burns behind them. And more and more. John stared up at so much red glass.
> "Beautiful, isn't it?" asked Father Duncan.
> John did not understand. He was not sure if Father Duncan thought the artwork was beautiful, or if the murder of the Jesuits was beautiful. Or both. (*Indian Killer* 13 – 14)

The visit to the chapel seems profound for the both of them. For the young John, it was an early encounter with the inarticulation of experiencing discordance. He asks the priest, "Did those priests die like Jesus?"

> Father Duncan did not reply. He knew that Jesus was killed because he was dangerous, because he wanted to change the world in a good way. He also knew that the Jesuits were killed because they were dangerous to the Indians who didn't want their world to change at all. Duncan knew those Jesuits thought they were changing the Indians in a good way.
> "Did they die like Jesus?" John asked again.
> Duncan was afraid to answer the question. As a Jesuit, he knew those priests were martyred just like Jesus. As a Spokane Indian, he knew those Jesuits deserved to die for their crimes against the Indians.

> "John," Duncan said after a long silence. "You see these windows? You see all of this? It's what's happening inside me right now." (*Indian Killer* 15)

The role of murder in Alexie's novel is central to the plot, but unlike other murder mysteries, if one can label *Indian Killer* as such, Alexie retains the ambiguity of the whole by violating the reader's expectation that the murders will be solved by the book's conclusion. Despite whole chapters devoted to the "killer's" frame of reference, there are insufficient clues to clearly identify any single character as the murderer, and a host of clues exist to raise suspicion about the killing capabilities of several characters.

Most of the characters of *Indian Killer* are angry about real or imagined insults and injuries. Realistically, it is probably within normal human processes to consider and even fantasize about killing another human being, but it is also unlikely that most people will ever do so. This becomes another tension within the text. It is not clear who among the characters in *Indian Killer* has the will to overcome their socialization and fears about killing another human being to actually engage in the act. Early in the novel, an unidentified insomniac dreams of knives until he comes into possession of the beautiful blade with three small turquoise gems inlaid in the handle. Gradually, he comes to realize the knife has a purpose:

> Hiding that beautiful knife in the sheath beneath a jacket, the killer followed white men, selected at random. The killer simply picked any one of the men in gray suits and followed him from office building to cash machine, from lunchtime restaurant back to office building. Those gray suits were not happy, yet showed their unhappiness only during moments of weakness. . .The men in gray suits wanted to escape, but their hatred and anger trapped them. The killer first saw that particular white man in the University District. . .Then, without reason or warning, the killer suddenly understood that the knife had a specific purpose. But the killer had to be careful. There were rules for hunting. (Alexie 51)

The first killing of a "particular white man," is that of Justin Summers, and in the days to follow a general sense of panic is whipped up by what turns out to be several marginally related, or, perhaps even unrelated events. In the example of David Rogers' disappearance during the investigation of the first murder, radio talk jock Truck Schultz incites violence through ultra right-wing rhetoric and a bent for creative tale-telling that creates guilt by association. For Schultz, the situation is simple. There exists a killer who leaves feathers on his victims and who takes scalps, so therefore the killer is Indian. People are (assumed) killed, so therefore they were killed by the Indian Killer. David Rogers' death is revealed to the reader through Alexie's omniscient voice as a killing motivated by opportunistic greed carried out by a pair of petty criminals who quickly leave the area. However, Rogers' disappearance nonetheless becomes the cause of more violence as carried out by his brother and friends. These angry and hurting white men in turn act out their fear of Indians by seeking out homeless men and women and beat them senseless in the name of revenge and justice. Many of the violent acts portrayed in *Indian Killer* are ironic for being random acts of violence connected in the minds of community members by acts of story presented by Schultz. In Schultz's view, Indians are the slackers and losers who haven't figured out what a good deal they have in America and are thus acting out of racial hatred for whites. His broadcasted theories in turn incite a violent backlash in which whites attack Indians for the presumed reason that Indians are ungrateful and unappreciative of the good intentions of whites towards Indians.

At least one character presents the possibility the killings are a form of protection. Marie Polatkin suggests that a serial killer who displays at least some knowledge of Indian gestures in the use of owl feathers as sort of calling card is a sign of ancestral revenge. Marie suggests the killer's arrival is predictable, the end result of so many Indian ancestors dancing, singing, praying for help in turning the tide of white aggression and oppression. The Indian Killer is a hero, a champion, come to protect the people from cultural annihilation. Her theory is revealed in conversation with Drs. Mather and Faulkner:

> "You think you know about the Indian Killer, huh? Well, do you know about the Ghost Dance?"
> "Of course."
> "Yeah, and you know that Wovoka said if all Indians Ghost Danced, then all the Europeans would disappear, right? [. . . .] So, maybe this Indian Killer is a product of the Ghost Dance. Maybe ten Indians are Ghost Dancing. Maybe a hundred. It's just a theory. How many Indians would have to dance to create the Indian Killer? A thousand? Ten thousand? Maybe this is how the Ghost Dance works."
> "Ms. Polatkin, the Ghost Dance was not about violence or murder. It was about peace and beauty."
> "Peace and beauty? You think Indians are worried about peace and beauty? You really think that? You're so full of shit. If Wovoka came back to life, he'd be so pissed off. If the real Pocahontas came back, you think she'd be happy about being a cartoon? If Crazy Horse, or Geronimo, or Sitting Bull came back, they'd see what you white people have done to Indians, and they would start a war. They'd see the homeless Indians staggering around downtown. They'd see the fetal-alcohol-syndrome babies. They'd see the sorry-ass reservations. They'd learn about Indian suicide and infant-mortality rates. They'd listen to some dumb-shit Disney song and feel like hurting somebody. They'd read books by assholes like Wilson, and they would start killing themselves some white people, and then kill some asshole Indians, too."
> "Dr. Mather, if the Ghost Dance worked, there would be no exceptions. All you white people would disappear. All of you. If those dead Indians came back to life, they wouldn't crawl into a sweathouse with you. They wouldn't smoke the pipe with you. They wouldn't go to the movies and munch popcorn with you. They'd kill you. They'd gut you out and eat your heart." (*Indian* 314)

Alexie explores murderous intentions by using several characters, both white and Indian. Early on in the novel, John decides that what must be done is the killing of a white man. After feeling embarrassed by his boss on his high-rise construction job, John imagines revenge:

> John knew if were a real Indian, he could have called the wind. He could have called a crosscutting wind that would've sliced through the fortieth floor, pulled the foreman out of the elevator, and sent over the edge of the building. But he's strong, that foreman, and he would catch himself. He'd be hanging from the edge by his fingertips. (24)

John's fantasy continues as he sees himself reaching for the dangling foreman's arms to hold the man away from the building. The foreman would think that John meant to save him:

> "Jesus!" the foreman would shout. "Pull me up!"
> John would look down to see the foreman's blue eyes wide with fear. That's what I need to see, that's what will feed me, thought John. Fear in blue eyes. He would hold onto the foreman as long as possible and stare down into those terrified blue eyes. Then he'd let him fall. (25)

The moment is a profound one for John. Nowhere else in the novel do we experience with him a clear decisive moment that requires John act proactively rather than finding himself doing something and then altering his actions to avoid contact with others. In the prescence of his fellow construction workers, John watches a man with a hammer and "sees" his own future:

> Chuck, a white man with a huge moustache, was pounding a nail into place. He raised a hammer and brought it down on the head of the nail. He raised the hammer, brought it down again. Metal against metal. John saw sparks. Sparks. Sparks. He rubbed his eyes. The sparks were large enough and of long enough duration to turn to flame. The foreman didn't

> see it. Chuck raised the hammer again and paused at the top of his swing. As the hammer began its next descent, John could see it happening in segments, as in a series of still photographs. In that last frozen moment, in that brief instant before the hammer struck again its explosion of flame, John knew exactly what to do with his life.
>
> John needed to kill a white man. (25)

John is the only character who actually states his intent to kill, but in the context of this discussion of several types of violence, one should be cautious in drawing the conclusion he is indeed the killer. For example, fantasizing about killing as the means to ease personal suffering does not make John capable of committing such an act. Additionally, he is never seen committing any acts of murder, although he commits other violent acts. John's final acts are those of torture and suicide, both transformative in the sense that they alter identity, according to John's stories:

> "What is it?" Wilson asked. "What do you want from me?"
> "Please," John whispered. "Let me, let us have our own pain."
> With a right hand made strong by years of construction work, with a blade that was much stronger than it looked, John slashed Wilson's face, from just above his right eye, down through the eye and cheekbone, past the shelf of the chin, and a few inches down the neck. Blood, bread.
> "No matter where you go," John said to a screaming Wilson, "people will know you by that mark. They'll know what you did." (*Indian* 411)

In another context, engaging in torture as part of fantasy can often lead directly to murder. Such is the possible case for Wilson as the killer. Within the memory of the retired cop Jack Wilson lie painful recollections of unsympathetic foster parents who punished him for bedwetting:

> As a teenager, Wilson had learned to control his bladder on most nights. But when he did wet his bed, he woke up early and washed the sheets. During sleep-overs with friends, he stayed awake all night, terrified to fall asleep. While living with the Lambeers, he'd once fallen asleep on

> the floor during an overnight birthday party and stained a shag carpet. His new friends had promptly and completely ostracized him after that. Alone and frightened, he made friends with family pets, and if those family pets sometimes ignored him, Wilson kicked them. Their yelps of pain made him feel better. Or he led the dogs and cats miles away from the houses, tied them to traffic signs and walked away. They came back, or they didn't. Wilson had once set a bowl of antifreeze in front of a family dog and watched happily as the dog lapped it up. (226)

Child and medical experts today advise against punishment for bedwetting since it is not only an indication of bladder muscles developing more slowly than normal, but also that the child might be developing bladder infections. There is also the possibility the child is suffering emotional distress.[5] The foster parents Wilson lived with were apparently not informed of the medical reasons for his bedwetting and chose to believe he was lazy or intentionally committing such acts to punish his caregivers. Nonetheless, the type of abusive behavior towards animals by Wilson is presented as a reaction to his punishments for bedwetting and is frequently understood by child psychologists as a step in the direction of abusing and even murdering humans:

> In spite of the widely recognized difficulties with psychodynamic explanations, the debate does lead onto a fairly consistent finding of serial killer research, the presence of the "MacDonald Triad" in serial killers. MacDonald (1963) found early childhood behaviours such as enuresis, firesetting and torturing animals to be common in the background histories of multiple sadistic killers. (Mitchell np)

To give Wilson killing opportunities, Alexie creates him as a street cop in Seattle who often worked the beats where Seattle's homeless wandered. Many of these homeless were Indians, including one woman Wilson came to know more personally:

> One evening, Beautiful Mary pushed Wilson into a dark doorway, unzipped his pants, pushed her hand inside, and stroked his penis. Wilson's knees went weak. He leaned against the door for support. He

> tried to kiss Mary but, still stroking him, she turned her face away. Then, without warning, she released Wilson and stepped back.
>
> "What's wrong?" Wilson asked, his face read and sweaty.
>
> Beautiful Mary shook her head. Wilson grabbed her arm with more force than he'd planned. He could see the pain in Mary's eyes. She twisted away from him and ran away. (159)

The encounter with Beautiful Mary had shocked Wilson as rookie beat cop, and later, when she was discovered murdered, he remembered being angry and insistent that someone solve her murder. If we assume that Wilson's memory is "selective" in the psychological sense that he must protect himself from an awareness of his own brutal behavior, it seems more than coincidental that after Beautiful Mary initiates an encounter with Wilson, and then suddenly rejects him, she is discovered by Wilson "wedged between a Dumpster and the back wall of a parking garage beneath the Viaduct, she had been raped, then stabbed repeatedly with a broken bottle" (159). Assuming a selective memory on the part of Wilson may allow for the benefit of doubt, but it may also be overlooking that Wilson is similar to many serial killers who maintain jobs and quiet public lives while engaging in elaborate fantasies of sex, torture and murder. Academic sources are cautious in their compiling of characteristic traits of serial killers, acknowledging that the studies of captive killers could create a personality profile vastly different from those killers who remain anonymous. However, there also exists a popular understanding of serial killers and their motives that is derived to some degree from academic sources. One website devoted to ranking the worst of the known serial killers offers this brief serial killer profile:

> Serial killers tend to be white, heterosexual, males in their twenties and thirties. Their methodical rampages are almost always sexually motivated. Their killings tend to be of an elaborate sexual fantasy that

> builds up to a climax at the moment of their murderous outburst. They usually kill strangers with cooling off periods between each crime. Many enjoy cannibalism, necrophilia and keep trophy-like body parts as reminder of their work. Their violent behavior is mostly directed toward women and children. However some homosexual killers like to hunt gay men. Prostitutes, drifters, male hustlers and hitchhikers seem to be their victims of choice. Most serial killers lived in violent households, tortured animals and where (sic) bedwetters when they were young. As adults, most killers have some sort of brain damage and are addicted to alcohol or drugs. But you can't spot one by looking. He could be the guy behind you in the darkened car-park or the stranger at your door. (*Torture Zone* np)

Certainly not every abused child becomes a serial killer, but it is also not uncommon for abused children to continue in their adult years the same kind of abuse of others they themselves received. For Reggie Polatkin, the anger that began in childhood becomes the basis for his transformative suffering. The second of Alexie's torturers, his childhood is similar to Wilson's in that he has also experienced punishment for what others perceived as inadequacies. Reggie's experience included a demanding father who grilled Reggie on matters of Indian history:

> "Come on, you little shit," Bird had whispered. "You want to be a dirty Indian your whole life? What's the answer?"
> "Dad, I don't know."
> "What?"
> "I don't know, I'm sorry."
> Bird had slapped Reggie across the face.
> "Okay, now for the second question. What year did the Pilgrims arrive in Massachusetts, and what was the name of the Indian who helped them survive?"
> "Sixteen twenty," Reggie had whispered. "And his name was Squanto."
> "And what happened to him?"
> "He was sold into slavery in Europe. But he escaped and made his way back to his village. But everybody was dead from smallpox."
> "And was the smallpox good or bad?"
> "Bad."

> "Wrong," Bird had said and slapped Reggie again. "The smallpox was God's revenge. It killed all the hostile Indians. You want to be a hostile Indian?"
> "No," Reggie had said. (*Indian* 91)

On the matter of torture, Scarry informs:

> The goal of the torturer is to make the one, the body, emphatically and crushingly *present* by destroying it, and to make the other, the voice, *absent* by destroying it. It is in part this combination that makes torture, like any experience of great physical pain, mimetic of death; for in death the body is emphatically present while that more elusive part represented by the voice is so alarmingly absent that heavens are created to explain its whereabouts. (49)

Scarry's investigation into the structure of torture describes the objectification of "world dissolution." The torturer uses his weapons, his acts and his words to reveal to the captive his engagement with the world. They are ploys to show the captive where power and control resides. "In each of the three realms, [. . .] the torturer dramatizes the disintegration of the world, the obliteration of consciousness that is happening within the prisoner himself" (Scarry 38). Furthermore, what the captive thought of as civilization, of home and self, is destroyed within himself, and this is the process the torturer desires the captive to understand. By destroying the captive's world, and his or her ability to articulate an individual experience of the world, the torturer creates the illusion of having control over the captive's world and thus power. The process of torture typically entails a line of questioning, a rationale for the questioning that is fiction, and assigned roles for captive and torturer that are to be interpreted as power. Scarry demonstrates:

> Hence there are four sets of oppositions. The pain is hugely present to the prisoner and absent to the torturer; the question is, within the political

> fiction, hugely significant to the torturer and insignificant to the prisoner; for the prisoner, the body and its pain are overwhelmingly present and voice, world, and self are absent; for the torturer, voice, world, and self are overwhelmingly present and the body and pain are absent. These multiple sets of oppositions at every moment announce and magnify the distance between torturer and prisoner and thereby dramatize the former's power, for power is in its fraudulent as in its legitimate forms always based on distance from the body. [. . .] the torturer luxuriates in the privilege or absurdity of having a world that the other has ceased to have.[. . .] The question, whatever its content, is an act of wounding; the answer, whatever its content, is a scream. (Scarry 46)

Reggie is motivated by painful memories, his anger, his helplessness, and his desire to be powerful and in control where he is otherwise powerless. These desires culminate in the torturing of a white man found sleeping in a park. His transformation, albeit a negative one, is another cycle of the torture inflicted on him by his father. Reggie moves from victim, college student, passive receiver of colonialism, to victimizer:

> "What's my name?"
> "Ira Hayes."
> Another slap.
> "Wrong. What's my name?"
> "Ira Hayes, Ira Hayes." The white man was pleading now. Reggie slapped him twice.
> "What's my name?"
> "I don't know."
> "Do it," Reggie said to Ty, and he twisted the white man's arm until something popped. The white man screamed into the tape recorder. (*Indian* 257)

In one more reference to Scarry, it is particularly interesting to note Alexie's description of the torture of the found white man in that his screams are taped recorded. Given that the torturer's power is a fiction itself built upon the objectification of the captive's pain, the only proof of such power must be a form of the pain itself. Scarry describes:

> The written or tape-recorded confession that can be carried away on a piece of paper or on a tape is only the most concrete exhibition of the torturer's attempt to induce sounds so that they can be broken off from their speaker so that they can then be taken off and made the property of the regime. (Scarry 49)

Alexie uses extreme forms of violence to illustrate how hostile the world has become, although there is great deal of irony in his approach. Contrary to the statistics of poverty, crime and victimizations of many types explored as the experiences of Indian people in this text, Alexie does not continue to place Native Americans exclusively as victims. Reggie demonstrates that the world can be a hostile place for non-Indians, too. Of course, this is also within the greater context of violence being necessary when direct threat is perceived and that some victimizers are having difficulty breaking away from intergenerational PTSD and such as symptoms hypervigilance and anger.

According to William Bevis, the realities of survival sometimes requires violence, especially when a threat is perceived to one's home and well-being. In his critical article, "Native American Novels: Homing In," Bevis describes the "homing in" plot that characterizes much Native American fiction:

> In Native American novels, coming home, staying put, contracting, even what we call "regressing" to a place, a past where one has been before, is

> not only the primary story, it is a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good. (Bevis 582)

In this regard, Alexie steps away from his literary predecessors such as Momaday, Silko, Welch, and McNickle by creating a character who is incapable of returning home. The act of regressing is something John can't engage in because he is completely cut off from any clue of where home is. Bevis continues in a comparison of individualism as it is understood differently by white Americans and Native Americans. For whites, "the individual is often the ultimate reality, that therefore individual consciousness is the medium, repository, and arbiter of knowledge, and that our 'freedom' can be hard to distinguish from isolation" (590). This is in striking contrast to the protagonists of six Native American authored novels that Bevis reviewed for his article. In these works, "the protagonist seeks an identity that he can find *only* in his society, past, and place...Individuality is not even the scene of success or failure; it is nothing" (Bevis 591). In this regard, Alexie follows his predecessors. John lives alone in most of the narrative, except where circumstances seem to sweep him up into social contacts he can't avoid.

Another of Bevis's observations of Native American novels features an alternative view of nature, a redefinition of what nature stands for. Bevis notes that for white readers, nature in the context of Native American literature calls up primitivist expectations of the earth as a sacred entity that is in direct contrast to notions of "civilization." It is a response that relies on an assumption "that the 'natural' is the opposite of the 'civilized'" (598). These assumptions are perhaps the cause of white

readers overlooking or misunderstanding the texts where animals are treated as equals to humans and are able to converse on the state of their own existence:

> Native American nature is urban. The connotation to us of "urban," suggesting a dense complex of human variety, is closer to Native American "nature" than is our word "natural." The woods, birds, animals, and humans are all "downtown," meaning at the center of action and power, in complex and unpredictable and various relationships. You never know whom you'll bump into on the street. (Bevis 601)

This alternative view of nature changes our understanding of two elements within Alexie's story. The first is the disappearance of Father Duncan, who wandered off into the desert -- that other coded word for wilderness and dangerous nature. This environment is the certain death of the Spokane priest, or is it instead his coming home? However, John is cut off from imagining this possibility for his friend. The savagery of the desert is frightening to John who is like his white parents, fearful of what they perceive is not civilization. With this alternative view of nature and the importance of living within as an "urban," tribal being, Bevis examines the role of violence:

> The presentation of violence in both white and Indian novels reflects each culture's view of nature and civilization. . .in the Indian novels, murder after murder of humans is political, historical, premeditated, "in cold blood," and therefore benign. Only crimes of passion are inexcusable. To whites, murder and violence are part of uncivilized "nature," while to Native Americans they are part of civilization. There is plenty of room in tribal custom for violence as policy and entertainment, best carried out by the comrades of bluebirds and chickadees. Hence, we find in these novels the remarkable combination -- not juxtaposition -- of delicacy and violence, brotherhood and murder. Both the natural characters whom American whites think of as "other" and the power and violence which Americans would so like to believe could be alien to their institutions are, in the Native American novel, part of sacredness, part of tribe. (Bevis 607-608)

Accepting the urban-ness of nature or violence as part of tribe and civilization allows us to re-visualize Alexie's wandering, homeless Indians on the streets of Seattle

as part of a busy urban community. These are wretched souls to many readers, characters incapable of living within the context of civilization, however, for Native American readers, these people could be seen as maintaining a tribal past, present and future in a traditional homeland even as another culture has created its own structures and sensibilities around them. They exist simultaneously, and it is only in the minds of the whites within and without the text that these particular Indians are seen as "homeless."

This sacredness of violence also affirms Marie's assertion that the harm caused by whites to Indian people would be dealt with by re-animated ancestral dead in swift and decisive means. Finally, the appropriateness of killing informs John Smith's decision to kill a white man. The difficulty for John was choosing a particular white man to kill. John set for himself a goal -- killing the one white man that makes all the difference. This results in an intellectual question we as readers may participate in to consider John' world as well as our own. Is this person living now? Can we time travel? Who in our collective history could have made such an impact on the lives of Native Americans today that his death would change everything?

Ward Churchill sees American fiction as a significant source for the ideas that perpetuate violence against American Indians and thus offers some potential targets in the search for the "one white man." In his chapter, "Literature as a Weapon in the Colonization of the American Indian," Churchill considers how fiction created about the lives and cultures of Native Americans became accepted and promulgated as fact:

> An examination of several recent works in American letters tends to reveal that not only is the Indian-in-American-literature genre alive and well, but also that it has undergone something of an arithmetic progression, assuming a position

> occupying simultaneously both fictional and nonfictional frames of reference. Works secretly composed of pure imagination and conjecture are presented as serious factual writing; works of acknowledged fictive content are presented as authentic accounting of the true story. . .Viewed from the perspective of colonial analysis, the handling of the American Indian in literature ceases to be an enigma. With literature as a component part of a colonial system, within which Native America still constitutes expropriated and subjugated peoples, the reworking of fact into convenient or expedient fantasies by the colonizer is a logical process rather than an inexplicable aberration. (Churchill 18-19)

The process that Churchill describes is chilling when one considers the structure of torture as described by Scarry. The Being (body) of Indians are made "emphatically and crushingly *present*" in the controlled images of Indians preferred by mainstream America as in the stereotypes of brave, princess, noble savage, drunken Indian, spiritual environmentalist and many more that can be listed here. At the same time, the voice of Native Americans is made absent in the denial of tribal histories, stories, world views. Churchill presents the works of four early writers in America he believes have contributed some important concept or precedent to make the transformation of fiction into fact possible. The four writers are Captain John Smith, Alexander Whitaker, Thomas Morton, and Edward Johnson. The preoccupation with all things Indian begins with Captain Smith:

> Smith's writing played upon the persistent image of the Indian as a sort of subhuman, animal-like creature who was a danger to hardy Anglo frontiersmen. Whitaker reinforced an already pervasive European notion of the Indian as godless heathen subject to the redemption through the "civilizing" ministrations of Christian missionaries. Morton's often confused prattle went far in developing the "noble savage" mythology in the Americas. Johnson mined the vein of a militaristic insistence that the native was an incorrigible (even criminal) hindrance to European "progress" in North America, a miscreant behavior to be overcome only through the most liberal applications of fire and cold steel. (Churchill 22)

Beginning with these writers, Churchill sees a progression of writing using emotionalism, stereotype, and misinformation to shape the growing demand for captivity narratives, histories -- especially those of the Indian Wars, and novels about the American experience. Churchill includes a long list of early nineteenth-century works, including those by James Fenimore Cooper, William Gilmore Simms, John Greenleaf Whittier and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and states, ". . .none possessed the slightest concrete relationship to the actualities of native culture(s) they portrayed. Hence, each amounted to the imaginative invention of the authors, authors who by virtue of their medium were alien to the context (oral tradition) of which they presumed to write" (Churchill 25). He also asserts that these works of fiction, while within an author's creative right to fabricate story, derive from previously published, and equally European, non-fiction sources that ignored the indigenous accounts of the events and people portrayed. The overall process is one of European colonial power stripping the native peoples of their past and present "through creation of a surrogate literary reality, defined to the convenience of the colonizer" (Churchill 33). Finally, the native peoples lose any sense of their own history or "national culture" as it becomes "trapped within the definitional power of the oppressor. . . The national identity of the colonizer is created and maintained through the usurpation of the national identity of the colonized, a causal relationship""(Churchill 33).

Part of the task of this chapter has been to define torture, or more precisely, what is torturous to contemporary Native American people. There are still direct acts of physical violence, collaborated by the documentation of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, but what about the everyday acts that may never leave a bruise, and yet cause the anger

and frustration for the insensitive, oppressive acts being repeated over and over? To offer an example, I considered the persistence of the criticism Native Americans have directed towards anthropologists and related museum curatorial professionals and how insensitive many of these same professionals continue to be in light of so much attention given to more culturally sensitive approaches. One anonymous Native person stated: "If an Indian dug up a white person's bones and put them on display, he would be jailed; if a white person digs up an Indian's bones and puts them on display they get a Ph.D." (qtd. in Lippard 115). Among those who first made me aware of this particular criticism was Vine Deloria Jr. in his groundbreaking work, *God is Red.* Deloria includes a chapter describing the so-called "love" Americans have for Indians:

> In early June 1971 an Indian skeleton was uncovered on the Cemetery Road near Lowville, New York. It was promptly taken in tow by the Lewis County Historical Society as an artifact. Sakokwenonk, a Mohawk chief, asked for the skeleton back. "Many times the people of the sciences do not respect the dead," Sakokwenonk wrote to Arthur Einhorn, curator of the Lewis County Historical Society, "and instead of making matters right, cause further difficulties by taking the bones into their own houses and places of work and storing them there, or bothering them further." (Deloria 30)

As Deloria relates the story, the skeleton in question was returned to the Mohawk people and received proper reburial. The reaction to this event was, however, curious. Whites took to looking for and intentionally digging up the bones of other deceased Indians. Deloria continues by stating, "Believers in a collective unconscious could not have had a better indication of a supraindividual mind than the apparently spontaneous movement across the nation by whites to desecrate Indian gravesites" (Deloria 30).[6]

The issue of human remains in museum and other research collections continued to controversial and led to the United States Congress passing the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act in 1990. NAGPRA has required federal agencies and museums to return Indian skeletons and other objects to the appropriate tribes. In an update of the process, ABC News reported online that, as of 2000, "the remains of only 19,000 individuals, or about 10 percent of the Indian remains held in collections, have been returned" (Lawson np). Part of the problem has been finding the appropriate tribes and in some cases, the inability or the unwillingness of the tribes to accept the remains. Gerald White, who is repatriation coordinator for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, stated that tribal elders do not want tribal members handling the bones as the disturbed spirits of the dead can "wreak havoc on the living" (Lawson np). Other tribes have similar concerns, all of which raises the issue at the heart of it all, "Why was it deemed necessary for so many skeletons to be collected at all, except as another show of colonial power and control over the captive Native American populations?"

Fortunately, Deloria himself has instigated improvements in the field of anthropology, especially where cultural sensitivity, historical and cultural awareness and research ethics are concerned. Elizabeth Grobsmith, in her contribution to *Indians and Anthropology: Vine Deloria and the Critique of Anthropology*, describes how Deloria's *Custer Died For Your Sins* demands a new code of ethics and behavior from anthropologists:

> It made us defensive, in the true sense of the term: we continually had to defend and justify our existence and practice self-reflection and introspection -- tasks of self-evaluation critical to good social science.

> We could not advocate outside control or be party to schemes of exploitation, top-down development, or paternalistic imposition; rather, we applauded the self-determination policies and attitudes of the Nixon era, and saw our role as facilitating indigenously defined agendas. After all, we "knew the system" and could enhance people's movement through it. (Grobsmith "Growing Up" 37)

Through Grobsmith's description of how anthropologists found themselves avoiding exploitative research methods of Indian people, a picture is gained of how tribes were treated prior to Deloria's writing and how much awareness has risen since 1969 when *Custer Died For Your Sins* was published. Still, there appears to be room for improvement. Gloria Cranmer Webster includes a comment on anthropologists in her description of contemporary potlatches:

> In earlier times, only those who had received proper names were permitted to enter a big house for a potlatch. Today, anyone may attend. There may be quite a number of white people, some of whom have been invited, others who have not. A few of the white people are anthropologists, who are friends of the host family. There is an old joke about families not having their own anthropologist, who must order one from the "rent-an-anthro" agency, because every potlatch should have one. (Webster 232)

In light of this of this discussion is a character in *Indian Killer* who seems largely unaware of Deloria and these concerns for appropriate treatment. Dr. Clarence Mather is the university scholar who fancies himself an expert on Indian cultures and repeatedly conflicts with the Native American characters. He harbors a series of tapes recorded by an anthropologist in 1926, when some Pacific Northwest Indian elders had shared some of their family stories. Mather shares them with Reggie Polatkin, who indicates the tapes should be destroyed, citing insufficient use-disclosure was given to the elders. Mathers is horrified:

> "This is a very valuable anthropological find," Mather had said. "I mean, nobody even tells these stories anymore. Not even Indians. We have to save them."
>
> "Stories die because they're supposed to die," Reggie had said. (*Indian* 137)

Mathers refuses to destroy the tapes and the disagreement leads to the falling-out between the two men. Mather's possessiveness for the tapes is Alexie's illustration of colonial power, which must control the past of Native Americans while disregarding any consequence for the subjects themselves. One such consequence is chronic anger for the manipulation, the disregard of one's personal and cultural past. Neither Mathers nor Jack Wilson understands the significance of his actions in regard to Native people. Wilson writes detective novels that borrow from his experiences as a Seattle policeman and relocates them into the character of his full-blood Indian detective. "Both of Wilson's books starred Aristotle Little Hawk, the very last Shilshomish Indian, who was a practicing medicine man and private detective in Seattle" (*Indian* 162). Wilson is aware of the ridiculousness of his "emotionally distant and troubled" character who, nonetheless, attracts beautiful white women, but Wilson seems equally unaware of other elements in his creation, namely, *last* Shilshomish Indian, *practicing* medicine man, *troubled.* The connections between these words that suggest a personal history for Little Hawk are lost even on his creator. John Gardner calls into question the use of details a writer may choose to include in his work, and states: "No one can achieve profound characterization of a person (or place) without appealing to semi-unconscious associations" (Gardner 119). In other words, "to what moral purpose does Wilson hope to accomplish in supplying his Indian character with portions of a past and

psychological state of being?" Gardner's discussion of fiction's honesty also calls up tradition. "No writer imagines he exists in a literary void. . . . The medium of literary art is not language but language plus the writer's experience and imagination and, above all, the whole of the literary tradition he knows" (Gardner 124). Of, course, Wilson is intent only on satisfying his own personal needs for fantasy, fame and fortune, and thereby perpetuates stereotypes for purposes of meeting those needs. He laps up the local attention his novels receive and places a vanity plate on his new pickup that reads, "Shaman" (*Indian* 162). Alexie offers us Wilson, the writer of fiction within a work of fiction, to lay bare the torturous results that such immoral fiction has. Wilson starts out small, but soon catches the eye of a New York literary agent:

> "Indians are big right now," Said Rupert, the agent. "Publishers are looking for that shaman thing, you know? The New Age stuff, after-death experiences, the healing arts, talking animals, sacred vortexes, that kind of thing. And after you've got all that, plus a murder mystery. That's perfect." (*Indian* 162-163).

> Appropriation, like myth, as Barthes explains, is a distortion, not a negation of the prior semiotic assemblage. When successful, it maintains but shifts the former connotation to create new sign and accomplishes all this covertly, making the process appear ordinary or natural. (Nelson 119)

Wilson freely appropriates Indian culture for his personal gain, and Reggie and Marie Polatkin, two young Spokane Indians, take Wilson to task for it. The issue of literary appropriation of culture is linked hand-in-hand with another phenomena often referred to as White Shamanism. Alexie sees similar roots for each of these American reactions to Native American culture. In a lecture given to a University of Washington class in Spring of 1999, Alexie stated:

> Liberalism is the biggest threat to Indians. You would never see Ollie North in a sweat lodge or Ronald Reagan wearing crystals. It's over for Native Americans when the colonizers completely absorb the culture of the colonized. The last act of warfare against the Indians is being led by white liberals. (Hull)

With his tongue firmly in his cheek, cartoonist John Miller echoes Alexie in a *Narin* strip published in 1995 (Fig. 15). Miller offers entire lists of specific acts of liberal appropriation including turning ".00001 % Native Heritage into genuine ethnicity! 1 easy step!" [7]

The White Shaman was defined by Geary Hobson in an essay entitled, "The Rise of the White Shaman as a New Version of Cultural Imperialism," which he included in his 1979 anthology *The Remembered Earth.* According to Hobson, White Shamans are:

> . . .the apparently growing number of small-press poets of generally white, Euro-Christian American background, who in their poems assume the persona of the shaman, usually in the guise of an American Indian medicine man. To be a poet is simply not enough; they must claim a power from higher sources. (Hobson 102)

Using this definition, it appears Alexie is casting Wilson accordingly as the white writer who seeks another power "beyond" that of writing story. The White Shaman movement has not limited itself to literary expression, however, and a number of "shamanistic experiences" can be found. Depending on one's economic means, there are printed or recorded resources for sale all the way to lost weekends of drumming and meditating under the direct instruction of someone "trained in the traditional ways of (place tribal name here) people." While I indulge in a bit of sarcasm here, it is not difficult to find such White Shamans, especially with the internet as a research tool. My



Figure15. Josh Miller, *Narin*, 1995.
Pen and Ink cartoon.
The Oklahoma Daily. (29 Sept. 1995) 4.

own search led me to the website of anthropologist Michael Harner of The Foundation for Shamanic Studies. Such websites are difficult at best to evaluate, because they may have many of the features criticized as being appropriations of culture, while still advocating the protection of indigenous rights. Harner's site encourages membership in his foundation to continue the study of shamans and the protection of healing rituals. In addition, anyone can purchase one of Harner's books, such as his *The Way of the Shaman,* touted by the website advertising as the text "credited by many for pioneering the modern shamanic renaissance," tapes or "beginner's kits," which include the *Mindfold®* , a type of blindfold used by Certified Shamanic Counselors®. The Mindfold is described as "comfortable as it is effective, it really lets you experience why shamans have eternally been known as 'those who see in the dark'" (Harner np). For membership fees of five hundred dollars, "Council Members" receive a video of healing rituals, a cotton T-shirt, a published personal account of a journey to Brazil to witness a famous healer, and an invitation to join Harner and other Foundation leaders in northern California, "in an intimate setting" (Harner np).

The desire to end suffering, the desire to "become," to transform becomes a drive to recreate the self and is widely regarded as a legitimate concern. Anthropologist Bonnie Glass-Coffin writing on the risks and challenges of anthropologists conducting studies of tribal belief systems, addresses this issue:

> American Indians' critiques of New Age tracts do not condemn whites for attempting to fill cultural or spiritual vacuums in their own lives. But they do resent attempts by outsiders to annex Indian cultural symbols. They admonish outsiders to look for spirituality in their own histories and cultures. But often, whites respond that their society has no valid spiritual traditions left. (Glass-Coffin A48) [8]

Glass-Coffin acknowledges there are two different views concerning the acts of borrowing versus appropriating:

> On one hand, New Age aficionados look to studies of shamanism as a means of recovering a "holistic" view of humankind's place in the world. They typically claim that wisdom lost to the modern world but still accessible to shamans in "traditional" cultures is necessary for our survival. [. . .] What the New Ages seekers view as borrowing, some American Indian leaders view as appropriation or downright thievery. (A48)

Glass-Coffin sees anthropologists drawn into this debate in a number of ways and the lack of consensus makes the terrain tricky at best. She sees some anthropologists serving as gatekeepers, pressed for introductions by members of New Age seekers, and used as guards by tribal people hoping to protect rituals. "Readers of our work often cloak anthropologists who study shamans with the mantle of spiritual authority that properly belongs to our informants themselves" (A48). However, the temptation to profit from their contacts and learned wisdom leads some anthropologists to conduct themselves as Michael Harner:

> In some cases, anthropologists have even become practicing shamans. They, not the shamans who were their teachers, profit from commercializing and marketing shamanic wisdom through books, audio and video tapes, workshops, seminars, and even shamanic tours. (Glass-Coffin A48)

The bottom-line continues to be that people suffer and seek the means to alleviate pain or to heal it. Against this backdrop of appropriated ritual and healing practice, Eduardo and Bonnie Duran see a viable comparison between Western therapy and shamanism. They see a number of effective components that are integral parts of both processes. These shared methods may include ways of suggesting to the patient,

the treatment at hand is indeed healing and has significant value; prognostic expectation, or the client has heard of the healer's reputation and is willing to seek him/her out; emotional arousal, a collection of techniques including dancing, drumming, guided imagery and others; countertransference, wherein the therapist/shaman is vigilant over their own unconscious processes as protection of the patient; and a therapist-centered process wherein the patient is allowed to experience death and rebirth as part of the treatment. These similarities address needs of patients to trust in the process as a healing one, to be able to share in a new vision of themselves as healed and able to behave in an appropriate manner, and to participate in what could be a terrifying process with the confidence of an experienced guide. There is an important difference on this last step. The Durans note that shamans guide, and even control, the patient through the death and rebirth process. Western therapists take a more observational role. In any event, the importance of the death and rebirth myth experience is an important one. The Durans refer to this description by John Perry:

> . . .death also signifies the coming to the end of a phase in development, and the killing off of a self-image, that is, the sacrifice of the leading image of the central archetype, thus allowing its transformation into a new image. (qtd. in *Postcolonial* 64)

Appropriated culture, distorted and returned to Native Americans within a context of suppressed tribal history and national identity, cripples this transformative process for all involved. In addition, the realities of internalizing the oppressor becomes a process of cultural killing within the self and the psychological trauma caused can become part of a suicidal thought process. The Durans describe some of the conflicts at work:

> Prevention strategies aimed at ameliorating Native American alcoholism and substance abuse are inconsistent with the etiology of the problem suggested in the scientific literature. While academicians and health care providers profess to understand the historical, social and economic factors in alcohol use for Native American populations, most prevention programs aim to fit individuals into middle-class socially prescribed roles. Interventions based on social learning theory define the needs of participants as competency skills to function better in society. What is not recognized is that alcohol use and even suicide may be functional behavioral adaptations within a hostile and hopeless social context. (Duran and Duran *Postcolonial* 103)

The discussion of the death and rebirth experience, and the consequences of denied or appropriated and distorted ritual, sheds a great deal of light on Alexie's John Smith as a character in search of a meaningful identity and the possibility of a transformative experience. In Eduardo Duran's practice with suicidal patients, he frequently uses an image, such as that of the kernel of corn, to suggest that the ending of pain requires a transformation much like that of corn sprouting new life. This allows the Native client to avoid a psychological trap that requires some explanation here. The Durans begin with an illustration of Carl Jung's types, a compass diagram with each of the four labeled with one type. They are, Thinking opposite of Feeling and Intuition opposite Sensation[9] (*Postcolonial* 71). For Native American clients, the Durans found that a modification of this diagram was necessary and they placed Intuition together with Sensation on one side opposite to a "hole," a sense of nothingness. Their reasoning for this goes back to the Native American view of psyche as "an integral part of the actual life that holds the Earth itself as an organism" (*Postcolonial* 75). This alteration recognizes that:

> The Earth spirit gives the person an instant reality or sensation, which allows for the emergence of what the Westerner knows as intuition.

> According to a Native American way of interpretation, the individual is actually in synchronization with Earth forces that already have the awareness of all things. The individual has merely placed him/herself in a place in which s/he can be permeated by that awareness, i.e., within the *axis mundi*. (*Postcolonial* 76)

There is balance to this model when one finds oneself at this metaphorical "center." When an individual thus falls out of balance, a discussion of the client's pain can be related back to the six cardinal directions and the "hole" opposite of feeling/sensation. Such discussion reveals the wounded person is seeking to find the center, but is mistaking the "hole" and physical death with the process of reconnecting with the earth. Duran's image transformation allows the corn to stay alive once integrated with the earth physically.

> By talking in images the therapist is literally planting seeds in the unconscious of the client so that s/he can come up with his/her own healing images that will emerge spontaneously through dreams, art, pottery, poetry, etc. [. . .] By engaging with traditional practices the client can begin to make sense of his/her pain and realize that it has a purpose and lessons may be learned from it. It is not enough to tell the client that all will be fine once s/he has achieved a transforming process. The client must realize that the very essence of being alive involves some type of suffering, and through traditional practices the client can begin to make sense of the suffering and the lessons which must be learned through the suffering process. (Duran and Duran *Postcolonial* 180)

This is not an image to which John Smith has access and he is therefore left with the idea that only through death can he transform himself. If one uses the Duran's modified model, one can see that John has confused his relationship with the earth as one that can only occur with his death. This conclusion is more profound for John when we remember his search for the one white man to kill, the one white man whose

death will make a difference. That one white man is doubly John Smith -- the Captain John Smith who established the precedents in American writing and American colonizing for denial of Indian history, culture, and humanity, and the John Smith of Seattle who can make a difference for himself only by marking Wilson and committing suicide.

The death of John Smith is another example of Alexie's ambiguity, or more properly, his duality in the novel structure and with its characters. Lucy Lippard acknowledges this aspect as a feature common to Native American art. "Because Native American artists live today in two places at once, in a mysterious synchronicity, or "extended present," their art is far more complex than is realized by [the] public. . ." (Lippard 106). Like John Smith, Native Americans, as members of a Fourth World, are not powerless, but struggle with a form of internal exile:

> In the process of asserting a new identity or reclaiming an old identity, Indian artists in particular are haunted by invisible boundaries and dangers. As they search for their lost lands, they often find that someone else has built there -- actually and metaphorically -- and they run the risk of reinventing themselves not on their own terms, but on those that history has inserted between their loss and their roots. (Lippard 106)

On the manner of the synchronous or extended present, the lack of a name for the Indian Killer should also be addressed as this form of ambiguity. Certainly, as both referent for a character and the title of the novel, the phrase "Indian Killer" evokes questions of intent. Is the killer Indian or is it Indians who are to be killed? The otherwise nameless killer carries traits of a popular culture "superhero," even as he can also be understood as a sort of dual being like Setman in Momaday's *Ancient Child*, the Snake/Man in Mabel McKay's that stories Greg Sarris relates in his essays, or

characters from the oral traditions of many tribes in which animals change into human form at will. With these precedents in mind, I have decided to refer to the Indian Killer as Owlman. The final chapter, entitled "A Creation Story," presents a few more clues as to the kind of being the killer is:

> The killer sings louder now, then stands. The killer's mouth is dry, tastes of blood and sweat. The killer carriers a pack filled with a change of clothes, a few books, dozens of owl feathers, a scrapbook, and two bloody scalps in a plastic bag. Beneath the killer's jacket, the beautiful knife, with three turquoise gems inlaid in the handle, sits comfortably in its homemade sheath. The killer has no money, but feels no thirst or hunger. The killer finds bread and blood in other ways. The killer spins in circles and, with each revolution, another owl floats in from the darkness and takes its place in the tree. Dark blossom after dark blossom. The killer sings and dances for hours, days. Other Indians arrive and quickly learn the song. A dozen Indians, then hundreds, and more, all learning the same song, the exact dance. The killer dances and will not tire. The killer believes in all masks, in this wooden mask. The killer gazes skyward and screeches. With this mask, with this mystery, the killer can dance forever. The killer plans on dancing forever. The killer never falls. The moon never falls. The tree grows heavy with owls. (419-420)

There are images of the psyche in a scene like this one. A dancer who speaks to owls, who kills for the necessity of it. Perhaps this is the result of the seeds in Alexie's unconscious emerging before our eyes in language. It is certainly Alexie's literary attempt to find balance in the Indian/White power struggle. The visual artists selected for this chapter are perhaps not so overt in their approaches. For the images of Rick Bartow and John Hoover, it is good to keep in mind the relationship of the centered-self who stands within the axis mundi. It is also good to keep in mind the relationship of language to power and how the structure of torture emphasizes the body while destroying the voice. Where a people suffer, and thus lose their voice, it requires

imagination, often assisted by a shaman or therapist, to guide the sufferer to a new understanding of the self. Old images are let go and replaced by newer, stronger, positive ones. Such is the case of the Haida who felt the need to change their unbalanced relationship with the colonialist Catholic Church. Charlotte Townsend-Gault describes:

> When the Haida carver Robert Davidson was commissioned to carve a talking stick for Pope John Paul II, it was for a Papal audience of one. But it was also made for those who want to mark the maintenance of relations with the Catholic Church and to do so by shifting the balance of power. The Haida confer on the Pope the power to speak so the latter can no longer claim that his exercise of power is superior and fore-ordained. (in Lippard 50-51)

The Haida re-invisioned their relationship with the church and through the empathic skills of carver Robert Davidson, found greater stability. Townsend-Gault also looks at the works of Sherman Alexie, whom she compares to the visual works of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun. His paintings include images titled, *Alcoholics on the Reservation*, and *The Universe Is So Big the White Man Keeps Me on a Reservation.* Yuxweluptun states "To deal with the contemporary problems that interest me I have to have a contemporary language" (qtd. in Lippard 45).

> There may be something of community therapy in their work, but there is more than that. If the indigenous inhabitants of the land are always pictured as the victims of colonization, of alcohol, of malnutrition, their contributions to culture, their own or anyone else's, will always need special pleading. Alexie's characters belong to a place where more is allowed for than is dreamt of in stereotyping. (Townsend-Gault/Lippard 45)

In *Shared Visions*, Margaret Archuleta and Rennard Strickland elaborate on John Hoover's own description of his work as "'shamanistic' because it symbolizes

man's fear of the unknown" (97). Perhaps this is reminiscent of the fears described by Bevis as expressed by white Americans for the dangers associated with nature. In contrast, the Native American perception is one of nature as civilized, home, an urban center brimming with life and possibilities. Bevis frequently chooses the word "delicate" to sharpen the contrast between Native American and Amer-European perceptions, actions. It is a word choice that seems especially relevant to the works of Hoover [Aleut] who on the one hand can create in imposing scale, can also create a sense of delicate, graceful and erotic movement. His wood sculpture, *Winter Loon Dance* (Fig. 16), is monumental and yet retains that sense of delicacy and grace even while it imposes. At a height of eight feet, the swaying figures are part bird, part human woman. Their faces are serene, unconcerned. Hoover's images of transformation recall movements of dance and story, two key components of the shaman's healing techniques involved with arousal. Such images as *Winter Loon Dance*, or *Shaman In Form Of An Eagle* easily place strong transformative images before us to consider. In each case, humans are superimposed with birds. In these images we find strength, imagination, journey, rhythm, new identities, and alternative realities. Hoover's use of blended bird and human images recalls traditional stories of shamans who fly and one particular story in which two shamans from two continents, one from Alaska and the other from Siberia, meet in flight. *Shaman In Form Of An Eagle* (Fig.17) has several similarities to a pair of wooden *puguqs* carved by Point Hope artist Agaveskina in 1940 to illustrate the story. Pale colored wood is shaped into human form with the exception of wings instead of arms. The heads are smooth and without hair, the features serene.

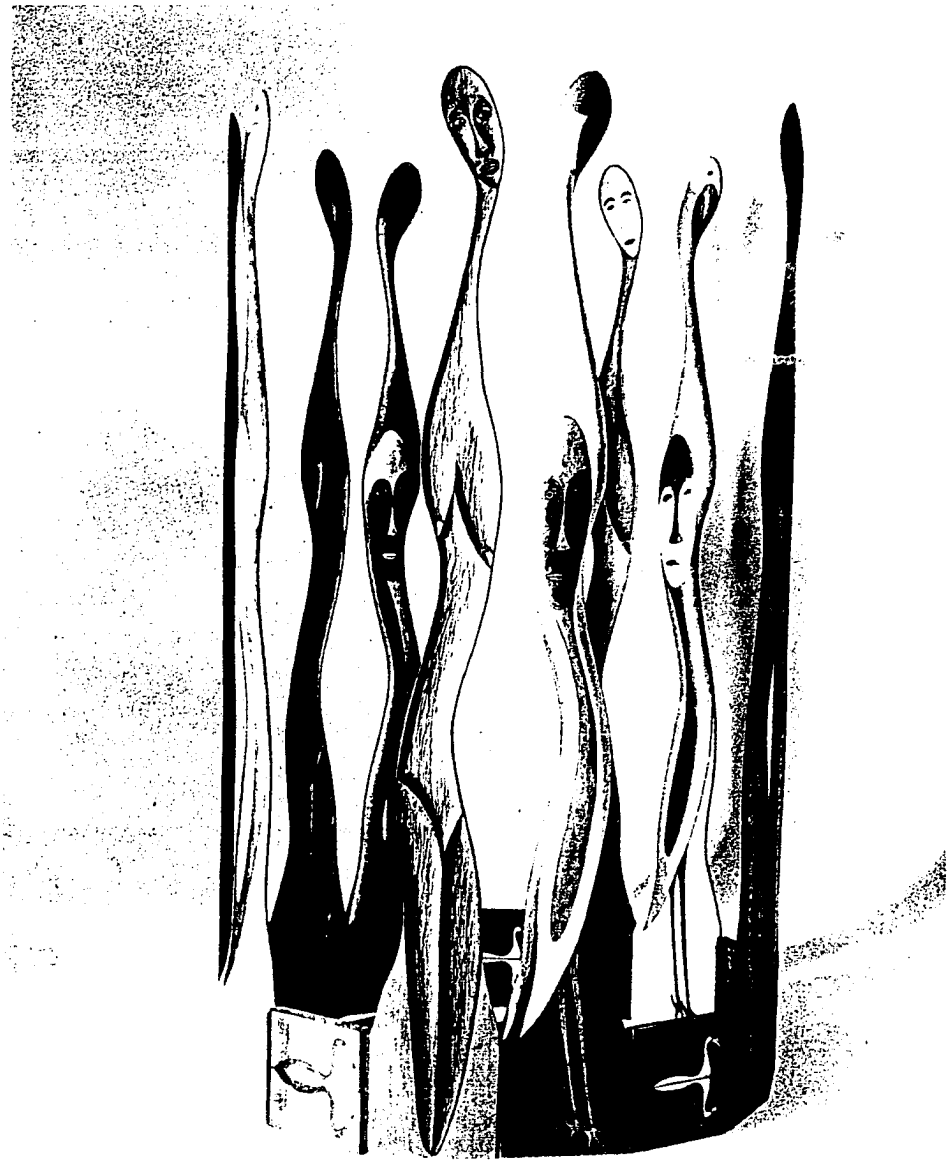


Figure 16. John Hoover, *Winter Loon Dance.*
Polychromed and carved cedar, 97.5 x 57.5 in.
Daybreak Star Arts Gallery, Seattle.
Wade, *The Arts of the North American Indian.*
(New York: Hudson Hills, 1986) 300.

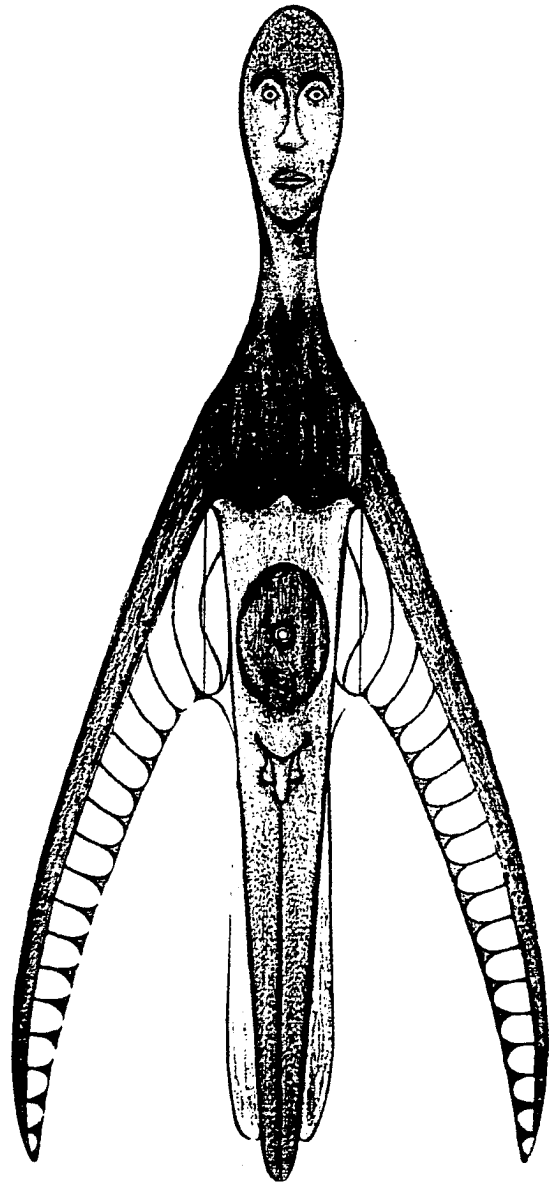


Figure 17. John Hoover, *Shaman In Form Of An Eagle*, 1973.
Polychrome wood, 223 x 100 x 20 cm.
Heard Museum, Phoenix. HM.IAC532
Archuleta and Strickland, *Shared Visions*
(New York: New Press, 1991) 60.

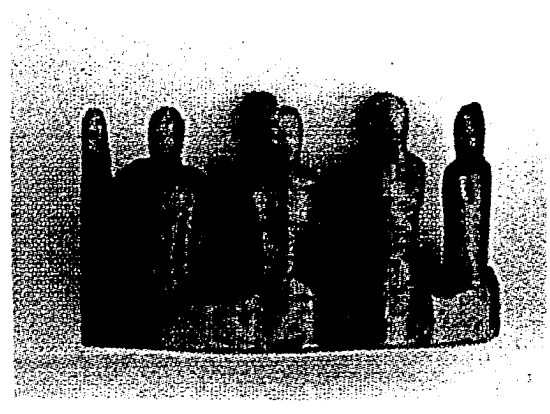


Figure 18. Miniature Ivory Carving, Thule Period AD 700 – 1700.
Ivory
University of Alaska Museum, Fairbanks.
Lee, *Not Just a Pretty Face*
(Fairbanks: U of Alaska Museum, 1999) 37.

Winter Loon Dance also recalls a tradition of figure carving even though much of the impetus for such carvings is no longer known. The native peoples of Alaska are known for their figure carvings and dolls in stylized and realistic forms that serve a wide variety of functions within the cultures. Some are for children's play, others for adult play much like theatrical re-enactments of important myths and legendary events. Still others have protective roles and are directly related to spirit worlds. In the exhibit catalog for the University of Alaska Museum, one small archeological piece (Fig. 18) is of several stylized human figures carved standing in a ring. The piece resembles a crown and perhaps recall a ring of dancers. The similarity to *Winter Loon Dance* is striking and also startling, for where the ancient piece is miniature, Hoover's work towers over the heads of viewers. The old piece is static in its representation of movement, whereas Hoover's is graceful and seems to sway even in photographs of it. Such comparisons, while mechanical, also indicate vitality of culture, continuance not only of image and design but in reverence for a position of health and balance.

Where Hoover presents us grace in the image of transformation, Rick Bartow presents us with power and even perhaps, fear. There is no road map for a discussion of visual arts in the context of therapeutic transformation, only mentions in various texts by critics and artist themselves that transformation is somehow involved. In an *Indian Artist* article describing Bartow's work, this uncertain terrain is addressed:

> Bartow draws images from myth, memory, and the natural landscape. Animals figure significantly as metaphors and symbols. Bound to human forms by lines that move in and out of focus, melodramatic representations of crows, deer, and bear suggest unspeakable emotions and primordial links to nature. Through these so-called transformational images, Bartow explores what critic Kristin Potter has described as the

> profound and redemptive relationship between the human and animal realms. (Dubin 40)

A fitting and articulate description of the work Bartow himself has found healing within. As a tormented Vietnam veteran and recovering alcoholic, Bartow speaks often of the therapeutic value of his art making. Many of his images also include birds blended with human bodies such as *The Crow* (Fig. 19) and *Old Crow at Sunset* (Fig. 20). While this discussion could just as easily have examined images that combine other animals with human forms, my choice of all bird figures resonates with Alexie's choice of creating an Owlman being at the center of a hostile world. Bartow also engages in dualities both in his technique and in his subjects. Delicate charcoal lines sketch a rough image or shape and intense color is used to define aspects of that image in greater detail. In *Old Crow at Sunset,* the human half of the body is a mere sketch and appears to bow slightly under the weight of the heavy, black crow that now serves as the head. The wings blend into arms as though this is transformation still in progress and at some point in time, this new being will take flight.

Bartow's *Old Crow* is more fragile in appearance. The charcoal lines are blurred in places and the features of the face indistinct. The most powerful element in the image is that of a dark gray hand pressed against the figure's chest. This transformation seems unstable. Perhaps, by naming this crow "old," Bartow is suggesting the transformation all living beings undergo as part of aging and dying. Both images convey an ability to fly. That in of itself is a significant component of understanding, of imagining change, as in the metaphors of flight to characterize the human mind in creative activity. Like the Inupiaq story of two shamans who meet in



Figure 19. Rick Bartow, *The Crow*, 1998.
Pastel on paper, 40 x 26 in.
Indian Artist 5:1 (1999) 41.



Figure 20. Rick Bartow, *Old Crow at Sunset,* 1998.
Pastel on paper, 44 x 30 in.
Indian Artist 5:1 (1999) 38.

flight, the human mind frequently imagines the human body flying, over vast distances, to achieve certain goals, to escape suffering, to undertake positive changes.

Like Alexie, Bartow does not consider himself a "traditional" Indian. Bartow's work has been described as transformational in the sense that shamanistic sensibilities are provoked, yet Bartow resists the labeling that also goes along with being an artist in America with ethnic roots. Part Yurok, Bartow did not grow up in an Indian community or learn traditional tribal practices. Still, he has nurtured an intellectual and artistic interest in Yurok tribal stories:

> For me, who has never been in a reservation situation, it would be foolish to try to do tribal art...I do some traditional things, but it wasn't passed on to me. That's why I turn to Chagall, who said, "Let's find something authentic in our lives." (Dubin 40)

The "something authentic" could be what many Native American writers and artists are looking to, their relationship to the land within the larger context of the land as earth spirit, the center, the source of psyche and balance. Lippard elaborates:

> When understood in the context of transformation as well as oppression, art about place and displacement may include an overt or covert religious or spiritual aspect. The relationship between religion and land is often forgotten in modern belief systems. Yet, even those religions that have been carried across oceans and around the world bear the imprint of their original places -- not necessarily in traceable iconography, but in the submerged rhythmus and patterns that served the land itself and the spirits that inhabit it. This seems particularly true of indigenous and African religions in the Americas, which evoke the land and water where they were born through their rites and cultures. Since religion is integrated with daily life in many societies in ways unsuspected (and suspect) in the West, traces of earlier religious beliefs survived even after their institutional apparatus disappeared. (Lippard 108)

So it is that even urban artists cautious and respectful of their relationships to old traditional forms of their cultures can create images of spiritual and transformational importance. Referring again to the Native American as client, the Durans instruct:

> When working with Native American people it is imperative that the therapist realize that working on balance is crucial; the therapist should refer to or consult with traditionalists at all levels of intervention (*Postcolonial* 183).

Artists and writers are the new traditionalists offering language and images that allow for story repair, integration of the individual into community and the healing experience of death and rebirth through transformational imagery. As with the image of corn, the living seed, unlike the human body, when "planted" in the ground transforms into another living being. The healing properties of story and image are those of the corn seed, living entities that take root in our own imaginations and reveal balanced approaches to both resolving and accepting the suffering we experience in life. Rick Bartow shares the following:

> One of my favorite analogies of living is about [how] somebody takes a poop on the trail, and then every day they step in it. Then someone says to them, "Do you need to step in it everyday?" For me, as a recovering alcoholic and as crazy artist and a Nam vet, it's also something to be aware of because we can allow things to happen to us by dragging it to us repeatedly. So, you talk about those things, and after a period of time, move on. But they're always with me. It's like poop on the trail -- it's there, and I can either step in it, or hop around it, or make a new trail. (Caldwell 33)

The healing of pain and/or suffering is a process. A process that may continue a lifetime and thus requires certain perspective. An honest assessment of one's situation may be required as in Bartow's analogy of choosing to stepping in, or around the poop

in the trail. For Sherman Alexie, it is choosing to be candid about who he is an individual:

> Let me say that there is a lot of posing out there. I think a lot of Native writers are pretending, writing about the kind of Indians they wish they were, not the kind of Indians they are. They're posing as something they're not. And then they have to construct a personal history that coincides with that. I write about the kind of Indian I am: kind of mixed up, kind of odd, not traditional. I'm a rez kid who's gone urban, and that's what I write about. I've never pretended to be otherwise. (Teters 35)

> Alexie also cautions other writers on the role of being a native and a writer: We have a serious responsibility as writer to tell the truth. [. . .] We are more than just writers. We are storytellers. We are spokespeople. We are cultural ambassadors. We are politicians. We are activists. [. . .] If you write about pain, you can end up inevitably searching for more pain to write about, that kind of thing. That self-destructive route. We need to get away from that. We can write about pain and anger without having to let it consume us, and we have to learn how to do that in our lives as individuals before we can start doing it as writers. (Caldwell 58-59)

The images and words of healing are gifts we give to each other. When we know pain destroys our voice and the ability to articulate our experience of our world, we need to be willing to speak on behalf of pain, to offer the images that can transform suffering. Rick Bartow states:

> Art is like medicine -- good medicine because it helps you as you create it, and it helps others as they experience it. And it can go way beyond your lifetime. [. . .] If you're creating art and taking responsibility for your art, you will be protected and taken care of it. (Caldwell 39)

[1] There are several organizations and individuals who advocate assisted suicide or euthanasia, such as the Right to Die movement, Hemlock Society, and Dr. Kevorkian.

[2] E. Duran and B. Duran never identity the location of the Native American community where their research took place for reasons of confidentiality and ethics concerning human research subjects. These are choices that must be respected even if in my text, the research seems incomplete and less credible.

[3] Alexie discusses his childhood in an interview with Russ Spencer for *Book: The Magazine for the Reading Life*, July/August 2000.

[4] This quote concerning ethnicity from the *DSM-IV* should not be interpreted to mean cultural differences. There are separate comments that address this issue, all of which suggests there are concerns in the field for diagnosis involving stereotypes and possibly racism.

[5] General information on cause and treatment of bedwetting, or Enuresis, is easily found on a variety of medical websites such as the site for the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, http://www.aacap.org or WebMD, http://webmd.lycos.com.

[6] A photograph of desecrated graves taken in 1987 is included in a recent text by Arlene Hirschfelder. The photo was taken in Kentucky where pothunters dug over 350 holes on farmland outside Uniontown, KY desecrating the graves of over 1,000 Indian people. Some of the holes were made with mining equipment to blow the remains out of the ground. *Native Americans: A History in Pictures*.

[7] Josh Miller was also a student at the University of Oklahoma during this time and we were in Edgar Heap of Bird's art history discussion class together. After the publication of this *Narin* strip in the OU student newspaper, a flurry of angry letter to the editor were received and there seemed to be a great deal of discussion on the issue of mixed ethnicities and culture overall. It would likely be a very interesting and productive project to collect all of the letters that responded to Miller's cartoon to document the range of opinion.

[8] For a troubling example to consider within this debate, see the poster collected by the author on the campus of New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico about 1992 for Faith Presbyterian Church (Fig. 21).

[9] There is more discussion of Jung and his types that may be helpful to understanding concepts of masculine and feminine world views.

Chapter Five
Uwodahi:
The Balance of Healing

This is the story of how we begin to remember
This is the powerful pulsing of love through the vein
After the dreaming of falling and calling your name out
These are the roots of rhythm
And the roots of rhythm remain

Under African Skies by Paul Simon
Performed by Paul Simon and Linda Ronstadt

"I think this is a time when we (Indians) are healing ourselves."

Linda Hogan [1]

I have attempted to discuss the works of contemporary Native American artists and writers as participating in various forms of understanding, diagnosing and treating pain, for other Native Americans in particular, and for anyone who chooses to participate in a respectful and honest manner. There has been no single approach among the artists, the writers, or among the works themselves. The diversity itself is meaningful because it allows inclusion, embraces difference and variety of human experience. For example:

> (Jolene) Rickard takes the unequivocal position that Native consciousness is different from non-Native, that there are culturally distinct epistemologies and distinct constructions of reality. "We may not have words for *art* [in Native languages] but we do have words for the things that we make." According to Rickard, the site of indigenous renewal lies in "visual thought," since Western art has separated word from object, "leaving both mute." The ways of discerning this, she says, are that there are no indigenous ways of critiquing Native by Native, and

> that placing borders around intellectual property is not possible. (Townsend-Gault/Lippard 49)

"Indigenous renewal lies in visual thought." Rickard challenges us to imagine how it is possible to recombine that which has been separated by Western thought and art. This is just one of the many acts of renewal and healing that are required as we enter into another new century of cohabitation on this "Turtle Island." For much of the last five hundred or so years, there has been conflict and the infliction of pain both coincidental and intentional. Even though our individual experiences of pain may be under unique circumstances, the impact of pain upon the body and an individual's inability to describe that pain are universal. Scarry again instructs on the experience of pain as part of who we are as humans:

> An act of human contact and concern, whether occurring here or in private contexts of sympathy, provides the hurt person with worldly self-extension: in acknowledging and expressing another person's pain, or in articulating one of his nonbodily concerns while he is unable to, one human being who is well and free willingly turns himself into an image of the other's psychic or sentient claims, an image existing in the space outside the sufferer's body, projected out into the world and held there intact by that person's powers until the sufferer himself regains his own powers of self-extension. By holding that world in place, or by giving the pain a place in the world, sympathy lessens the power of sickness and pain, counteracts the force with which a person in great pain or sickness can be swallowed alive by the body. (Scarry 50)

This role of assisting someone in pain, even when the assistant may be experiencing some form of pain, is a very important healing act. To my mind, this is the empathic imagination creating a place, a means, a time, for healing. Understanding another's pain, that experience that Scarry has so emphatically described as beyond our ability to describe in language, and then offering the means for understanding and

healing that pain, is simply phenomenal. This is the task tribal healers and shamans undertook for the well-being of their communities. Even today, with so much of this traditional knowledge damaged and lost, there remains the desire to heal using the cultural knowledge that is still available. This is the task contemporary writers and artists have undertaken.

In this final discussion, there is one more artist deserving of attention for his attempts at using his art as a form of sympathy, an articulation of pain given on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves. Edgar Heap of Birds [Southern Cheyenne], whose works often include "drawings" of words, offers a large vocabulary to those still identifying the source of their pain. His "historical markers" set in public places invite the oppressor to become involved with the healing process as well as by accepting their role in the oppression and victimization of Native Americans. His "posters" placed on the sides of public transportation buses reminds passerby of their relationship to the earth spirits and the necessity for centeredness, for balance in one's life.

The power of pain is such that a person's world can be literally destroyed in the face of it. Pain demands such focus that it becomes impossible to think about pain, to articulate what the pain feels like; the only recourse is simply to feel. Thus, a growing number of therapists, doctors, counselors, shamans, and others, are seeing the importance of offering words as part of treating and healing. Some programs develop "talking circles" where groups of individuals assist each other in the acts of sympathy, as described by Scarry above. For Native Americans, these circles frequently value traditional stories and find cultural continuance is a necessary component of an individual's healing -- and vice versa. For author Gerald Vizenor, the trickster stories

are of the utmost importance. "The trickster does no less in literature to heal and balance the world" (Vizenor 203). For children, Eduardo Duran uses the sandtray as a prop for the elaborate fantasies that hurting children tell themselves in the context of play. Greg Sarris discusses the importance of stories in the classroom as a means to "promote critical discourse about texts" and, presumably, about issues of history and culture (Sarris 152).

In some regions, the continuance of culture and thus healing, is being practiced by a return to traditional rituals, practices, ceremonies. Some ceremonies, like the Sun Dance of the northern plains tribes, are finding contemporary expressions.[2] Some of these ceremonies recognize pain as an aspect of the human condition with many roles to play. This is possible because of its nature:

> Physical pain is able to obliterate psychological pain because it obliterates all psychological content, painful, pleasurable, and neutral. Our recognition of its power to end madness is one of the ways in which, knowingly or unknowingly, we acknowledge its power to end all aspects of self and world. (Scarry 34)

With this passage in mind, it is not difficult to understand the traditional practices found among many tribes of self-inflicted pain, especially those mourning practices that involve self-mutilation. Physical pain is substituted for the deep psychological pain of loss. The physical pain demands certain things from the body such as blood replacement, rest, recuperation, all of which are more tangible than the endless sense of loss that accompanies grief. To engage in the intense, but "limited" act of physical pain and bodily healing, the grief of loss becomes manageable.

In the context of contemporary writing and visual art, pain may have still other roles as has been explored in the works by Leslie Silko, Kukuli Velarde, Diego and Mateo Romero, Louise Erdrich, Rilla Askew, Diane Glancy, Dorothy Sullivan, Richard Ray Whitman, Ric Glazer Danay, Robert Colescott, Rick Bartow, John Hoover, and Sherman Alexie. These writers and artists give a name and shape to a wide variety of pain understood to have been caused by colonial forces. Some seek to cause discomfort as part of their process to draw attention to larger issues of pain for Native Americans. Others seek resolution, healing, a sense of balance in an otherwise off-kilter world where many are no longer focused on the sacredness of the earth. I have tried to explore and understand the unique approach each artist or writer has undertaken in their work and express my understanding clearly here. The works of Edgar Heap of Birds seem to me unique from all of those previously mentioned because of his ability to combine language and image. If language replaces the world that is lost to a person in pain, and the image offers transformative possibility for the sufferer, then the work of Heap of Birds presents a new position from which to explore these healing acts:

> The distinction between Heap of Birds' language art and that of most mainstream conceptual artists is precisely that the insurgent messages, rather than existing primarily as isolated linguistic references or mixed signals of alienation and anger, have a specific social and communal purpose. Heap of Birds feels that the most serious problem facing Native peoples today is "misrepresentation and the lack of opportunities. . . to comment on their own condition themselves." So, in his art, he uses the language in which he has been forced to think to force people in turn to think about how that language has been used as a social weapon. At times he uses his own language to remind the dominant culture that there are thoughts it cannot manipulate. (Lippard 215)

Heap of Birds challenges all of us with images that force us to consider how honest we are willing to be with ourselves. For instance, his commissioned billboard design mimics, using distortion, the logo for the Cleveland Indians Baseball team. The grimacing, cartoon-y face of an already distorted idea about Indians is set off with a short expression asking us to "Smile for Racism." I have taken many opportunities to present this image in my classrooms to discuss issues of race, the mascot issue in general, but mostly as a discussion of pain. Frequently, my students express the dominant party line that Indian mascot names were meant to be respectful of Indian culture and therefore they are respectful. Heap of Birds offers an articulate, concise image that jolts such students into seeing the possibility that maybe, as members of the dominant society, they don't have the right to express what is or isn't respectful, what is or isn't painful, to another culture. This is a large step in the direction of empathy for many, many people. Speaking about the reaction to the Cleveland billboards, Heap of Birds stated:

> Addressing something topical in the place is really important. . .you can't just plop something down in an art museum and expect it to resonate. You've got to address something important in the community. That's how I always work. (Putre)

Elizabeth Cook-Lynn challenges our perspective of contemporary writings by Native Americans in her article "American Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story" by raising some difficult questions about the lack of Indian Intellectuals acknowledged by mainstream American culture and even by Indians themselves. She asks the following:

> Does the Indian story as it is told now end in rebirth of Native nations as it did in the past? Does it help in the development of worthy ideas, prophecies for a future in which we continue as tribal people who maintain the legacies of the past and a sense of optimism? [...]Are our poets and novelists articulating the real and the marvelous in celebration of the past or are they the doomsayers of the future? Are they presenting ideas, moving through those ideas and beyond? Are they the ones who recapture the past and preserve it? Are they thinkers who are capable of supplying principles which may be used to develop further ideas? Are they capable of the critical analysis of cause and effect? Or, are our poets and novelists just people who glibly use the English language to entertain us, to keep us amused and preoccupied so that we are no longer capable of making the distinction between the poet and the stand-up comedian? Does that distinction matter anymore? Does it matter how one uses language and for what purpose? (Cook-Lynn 74)

The works of Heap of Birds are relevant to this discussion as well. As part of the *16 Songs* exhibit, a series of "poem posters" (Fig. 22) were placed on the sides of public transportation buses in two cities and then found their way to the internet. Each poem consists of four lines, typically with one word per line. To imagine the contrast of words describing nature and values of life and growth in the noisy urban setting is a bit exhilarating, and immediately healing, offering a brief moment of calm and positive thought.

His *Native Hosts* (Fig. 23) series recapture the past and remind current residents they still occupy traditional tribal lands. Lippard describes the series of signs placed in New York:

> These signs reminded New York's current inhabitants whose land they occupy: Shinnecock, Seneca, Tuscarora, Mohawk, Werpoe, and Manhattan. New York, written backwards, reversed the post-Colombian claims and forced viewers to face back into the past. Layered and effective, accessible to a fast reading, yet signifying more than most passersby would immediately comprehend, *Native Hosts* serves as a companion piece to an earlier textual work (from 1986) titled *Oh!/ Those South African/ Homelands/ You Impose/ U.S. Indian Reservations*, with



Figure 22. Edgar Heap of Birds, "Poem Posters" from *16 Songs*, 1995-96.
http://www.uam.ucsb.edu/Pages/posters.html



Figure 23. Edgar Heap of Birds, *Native Hosts*
Six aluminum signs in New York City parks, 18 x 24 in. each.
Lippard, *Mixed Blessings.*
(New York: New Press, 1990) 217.

> its accompanying text telling the history of the twenty-nine Indian tribes relocated in 1866 to "Indian Territory" (Oklahoma) from as far away as New York and Florida. Heap of Birds recommends to everyone that they be "familiar with the Native tribal communities which are hosting the city in which one lives. . ." (Lippard 217)

Finally, as we review the concerns of Scarry, Eduardo and Bonnie Duran, and other professional care-givers cited here, to "speak on behalf of pain," being willing and able to supply the proper words that convey a hurting person's experience, is a healing act. Heap of Birds creates the potential for such healing in his huge "drawings," canvases filled with drawn words that cluster around a theme of Native American experience. These images bring together the visual and the verbal to fill space dramatically. As Scarry noted above, "an image. . .projected out into the world and held there intact by that person's powers until the sufferer himself regains his own powers of self-extension [is healing]" (50). This is Heap of Bird's talent that gives us reason to expect that healing can indeed take place.

There is one more issue that should be noted. Much art and some literature is available in limited forms or at places that requires one's physical presence. Heap of Birds finds opportunities to place his works in public places to increase the sheer numbers of people who may have access. He continues to do this with internet access and many of his word drawings may be found in various sites there, as opposed to publication in textbooks.

This journey through pain has been itself a long and arduous one at times, but ultimately, I hope, a productive one. I know that I have been transformed by many of the images and writings that I have considered and discussed within these pages. I am

unable and unwilling to return to the person I was when I began this journey. Now that I have reached what is merely a resting spot, for no conclusion is truly possible, I will hope this effort brings some measure of relief for others and I will continue on in a new direction as the spirits reveal.

[1] Given in her address to the Native Writer's Circle of the Americas gathering on the occasion of awarding her the 1998 Lifetime Achievement Ward held at the University of Oklahoma campus in Norman, Oklahoma. June 17, 1998.

[2] Dale Stover's forthcoming essay on contemporary Sun Dancing on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota is one worthwhile example.

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Figure 21. Faith Presbyterian Church advertisement, ca. 1995. Photocopy on lavender paper, 8.5 x 11 in. (Collection of the author, Omaha, NE.)