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The Impact of Native-White Encounters as
Reflected in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and
Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*

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Sabina Redžić

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1. INTRODUCTION

“That is the trickery of the witchcraft,” [Betonie] said. “They want us to believe all evil resides with white people. Then we will look no further to see what is really happening. They want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction.” (*Ceremony* 132)

We also call this way of thinking and of living the way of the Circle, that is to say, [...] the traditional Indigenous practice of recognizing and honouring the universal web of relationships which unites all beings of all natures, or the Great, Sacred Circle of Life. (Sioui, “O Kanatha”)

Humans are no individuals. This is, basically, what is expressed in the two quotes above. Of course, what is not implied here is that human beings are not capable of controlling their own actions and thoughts, but what both Leslie Marmon Silko in her novel *Ceremony*, as well as Georges E. Sioui in his speech “O Kanatha! We Stand on Guard for Thee!” suggest is that humans are continuously and ongoingly interacting with and connected to one another, and, thus, can not (or should not) be seen as separate from other humans, communities, or whole nations or races, for that matter. According to Indigenous views one even cannot be understood as being separate from non-human beings, i.e. animals, plants, natural surroundings, and the whole Earth because the Sacred Circle of Life “unites all beings of all natures”. In other words, it is impossible for any group or single being to be completely isolated, even if one decided to live in a remote place, far away from any human contact, one would still be subject to outside influences of the natural world.

What, consequently, both Silko and Sioui especially try to emphasize with their written as well as oral works is the idea that Indigenous Peoples, Euro-Americans and Euro-Canadians (and, of course, globally seen all other nations) must work and live together in a respectful manner. It is necessary to appreciate one another, and instead of constantly pointing to each other’s differences, stress traits of humanity which all have in common. The reason for such thinking is derived from two issues which currently concern Aboriginal Nations as well as other North-American Peoples (and in a further step also all people on Earth). On the one hand, there is the struggle of Natives to preserve their cultures and traditions, which due to the historical developments involving Indigenous tribes are increasingly harder to maintain and renew. If a tribe wants their culture – with their language, traditions, beliefs and everything else that makes up a culture – to survive, it is essential to carry on the knowledge not only from one generation to the next, but to carry it to as many members of the tribe as possible.

Many Natives are of the opinion that only by sticking to one's own and not merging with different cultures or people in any way, can their own way of life persist. In contrast to that, Silko and Sioui argue that the isolation of a people does not necessarily aid the preservation process, it is rather something which brings a culture one step closer to destruction because there are only so many members who can carry on the knowledge. If, however, that knowledge is brought to other people who are willing to learn and even spread the information of a variety of cultures in an appreciative way, then chances are much higher for the culture to actually survive. Nonetheless, neither Silko nor Sioui intend to say that there are no different nations and cultures, or that there should not be the notion of nation at all, but rather that people from all nations should come together and coexist in a way so as to preserve and not to destroy something that is different.

The second issue Silko and Sioui address in their works is the problem of people acting too much as individuals in the negative sense, i.e. as egocentrics, who do not care about other beings but are only concerned with their own advantage, in whatever field that may be. This causes misery, poverty, aggression and has many other devastating consequences among humans as well as in the natural world, which can, for instance, be seen in phenomena such as global warming with all of its side effects, and in other ecological catastrophes. To abandon mutual destruction in favor of mutual appreciation is what Sioui repeatedly stresses in his writings, lectures and speeches when he argues that "[t]o be Indian is to know that we are all one family" (*Histoires* 84), for it is this way of thinking that is deeply rooted in the Sacred Circle of Life; nonetheless, to live accordingly does not make everybody a Native person automatically, but it creates a starting point for mutual respect which is based on the understanding of the Indigenous idea of living the way of the Circle.

The notion that no being is an isolated individual can also be observed in Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of semeiosis, which describes the human self as a type of sign which is changing and adapting continuously. In accordance with the anthropological view that "[a]ny particular person is a product of the particular culture in which he or she has lived [...]" (Barnard and Spencer, "Culture" 136), Peirce claims that the self, which is also referred to as a person's identity, is uninterruptedly subjected to influences from the surrounding world, especially its human inhabitants. In this sense everybody would not *have* but *be* a mixed identity, i.e. someone can be called to be a mixed identity just like another person with mixed parental heritage can be referred to

as being a mixed-blood, half-blood, or even worse, a half-breed. Nevertheless, it is exactly the idea of mixed identity which establishes the parallel to Silko's and Sioui's argument, namely that there is indeed a connection between people from various backgrounds due to the fact that everybody in a certain way influences an other individual or thing in the material world.

Now the point of this thesis is to show that a person's identity is not something a person is born into and dies with. By analyzing two novels written by Indigenous writers, Silko's *Ceremony*, which has already been mentioned before, and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* I rather want to demonstrate that there are countless possibilities in which an identity mix can come into being and later on change, and that it is this mix which connects people.

What is introduced in chapter 2 are definitions of a variety of terms which are essential in order to prevent misunderstandings when the terms in question are used in the course of this paper. Similarly the background information I provide about the authors and their respective Nations aids a better understanding of both novels, and my analysis of certain parts and themes which can be encountered in the books.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the drastically differing stereotypes Natives had to face in the course of history, from the first contact with the whites (from now on shortened and capitalized to Contact) to the present. Another crucial aspect which is included in this chapter is the question of how and in how far Indigenous ways of life have really changed. As will be presented, the span between keeping one's own culture and abandoning it is wide, hence, the range of possibilities for a person's alteration when it comes to identity is equally diverse. The third part of this chapter will address the sensitive issue which predominates many Native discourses; it is the question who really is Native and who cannot be defined as such, legally. Therefore, it is necessary to take a deeper look into Peirce's theory and see which processes are involved to actually form and change the self. Moreover, this approach will be compared to Fredrik Barth's argument according to which identity can be defined either objectively or subjectively.

The subsequent two chapters, 4 and 5, deal with the two main novels and their respective analyses. In *Ceremony* Tayo, and his female relatives, Auntie Thelma, his mother Laura, and old Grandma, will be of major concern, while in *Three Day Road* the three protagonists which need to be analyzed are Xavier, Elijah, and Auntie Niska. My major points of interest are, obviously, to explain how each of these figures developed and what the outcome of that development was, i.e. how their final mixed identity in the

story can be defined. In order to arrive at a conclusion regarding this analysis, I will consider various aspects, such as the World Wars, Residential Schooling, contact with people from other nations, and so forth, which influenced each of the said characters. My ultimate intention is to show from a predominantly literary point of view that every person, fictitious or not, has a mixed identity, and that it is exactly this mixed self which (should) disallow(s) a solitary and exclusive way of life.

However, before I come to the clarification of the used terminology, it is of utmost importance to stress that at no stage of this paper do I intend to demonize or exaggeratingly praise one culture or another, be it Euro-American, Euro-Canadian, Indigenous, or any other; neither of the present nor of the past. Despite the fact that there are several historical accounts, which will be mentioned in chapter 3, which point to negative historical developments, from a Native perspective, I have tried to remain objective in the analysis proper; for it is not my intention to judge why or how the characters in the novels have changed, nor is it my task to do so when it comes to the developments in the real world. What I want to underline instead is Sioui's idea not to forget the past but rather overcome it, and not separate Natives from other peoples; to live together and appreciate one another no matter which kind of identity one embodies.

2. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1. The Terminology

Before I can go on with the main analysis in the above mentioned way it is essential to explain some of the terms I am going to apply throughout this work. The reason for my doing so is grounded on recent debates – of scholarly and non-scholarly nature – about how to refer to the First Nations¹ of North America², or about terms such as *culture*, *myth*, or (*creation*) *story* when used in two diverging manners, i.e. in a colloquial versus an anthropological one. The definitions given below describe the way in which I understand and use the terminology in this paper.

2.1.1. “American Indians” or “Native Americans”?

When it comes down to the question which terms to use in order to refer to the First Nations of North America without offending anyone, or at least not too many

¹ Despite the fact that the term *First Nations* is only applied when referring to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, in this thesis it will be used in a way as to include Indigenous peoples of both Canada and the U.S. Thus, it can, for instance, be found in the form of *First Nations of North America*.

² For further information on such debates see Michael Yellow Bird's essay “What We Want to Be Called: Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Identity Labels”.

people, there is no universally correct answer. For the purpose of this analysis I have, however, opted for applying Devon Abbot Mihesuah's (xi-xii) and Michael Yellow Bird's (2-9) approaches, according to which the answer to the proposed question – “American Indians” or “Native Americans” – sounds as follows: Neither of them. Both scholars state that the former term, i.e. *Indians*, especially without *American*, is, on the one hand, easily confused with Indian people from India, and on the other hand, it carries the implicit notion of oppression, for it is a name given by the colonizers³. The latter term is currently also used by some non-indigenous Americans who were born in the U.S. and consequently consider themselves natives as well. Hence, “Native American”, especially when spelled with a lower case *n*, can again be misinterpreted.

Yellow Bird enumerates several alternative terms, such as “Indigenous,” “Aboriginal,” “First Nations,” and “Native” in various combination with “Peoples,” “Nations,” or “persons” (10), all of which (apart from *persons*) I will from now on apply interchangeably and in capitalized form⁴, so as to point to the individual tribal group's heterogeneity. Moreover, I will also use specific tribal affiliation labels (in this case *Laguna Pueblo* and *Cree*⁵), since it is the kind of terminology the majority of Indigenous persons uses and, thus, in return wants to be identified most with (Yellow Bird 15). Following Yellow Bird's example, the terms *Native American*, *American Indian*, and *Indian* will, hence, only appear in direct quotations.

2.1.2. Culture

Culture in the sense applied for my purpose leans on the definition as found in Rebecca L. Stein and Philip L. Stein's *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*, in which one can read that culture is the sum of “[h]uman beliefs and behaviors of a society that are *learned*, transmitted from one generation to the next, and shared by a group of people” (280, emphasis added). Clifford Geertz, furthermore, explains that this sum of human beliefs and behaviors is constituted of symbols that embody “pattern[s] of meanings” (“Religion” 89) which are rightly interpreted by the

³ Yellow Bird's statement is based on research he conducted among the Association of American Indian and Alaska Native Professors (AAIANP), in which he posed four questions which elicited the participants' preferences as to what they being Indigenous persons wanted to be called.

⁴ What has been said above about the capitalization of terms referring to Indigenous Peoples conversely also implies that in cases when *people* or *nation* are found to be written with lower case initial letters they do not relate to a specific Aboriginal tribe but are being applied in order to describe a generalized idea of any people or nation.

⁵ In cases when tribal affiliation labels are applied they will only appear in the singular form, such as *the Cree* or *the Laguna Pueblo* and not *the Crees* and *the Laguna Pueblos*. This will be done in order to denote the complete People instead of individuals.

members of a specific cultural group and which, of course, entail said beliefs and behaviors. Hence, twentieth-century anthropology has come to speak of “culture in the plural” in which each culture is a distinct “whole” (Barnard and Spencer, “Culture” 137) that can be told apart from another culture by looking at the differences between the shared concepts of meaning of each group.

What, however, is especially and repeatedly stressed by anthropologists about this definition of culture is the fact that culture is not a genetically inherited phenomenon – even though in some instances it can indeed be confused with a biologically inherited phenomenon because it appears to be an instinct (Hammond 11) – but a learned one. Accordingly this implies that if such a shared system of symbols which defines beliefs and behavior is “man-created” (Geertz, “Revolution” 250), it is also alterable, either slowly and gradually through the generations, or somewhat faster in cases when an individual group comes into contact with other cultures (Stein and Stein 15).

2.1.3. Worldview

The way in which I understand *worldview* in this paper is again an anthropological one as described by Stein and Stein: A worldview is “[t]he way in which societies perceive and interpret their reality” (31). It is the big, all-entailing, all-explaining picture which, firstly, provides a people with knowledge on how their world and all living creatures came into being, and which, secondly, instructs them on how they are supposed to act and think accordingly (31). In her lecture “Witchcraft, Magic and Occult Traditions” Shelley Rabinovitch explained that she prefers the term “cosmology” in order to refer to the same concept as *worldview* does. Moreover, she emphasizes that it is not only peoples who believe in some sort of deity or other supernatural beings that have a cosmology/worldview which explains how the world is put together and how everything else works depending on this idea, but that atheists also have a cosmology, which in this case would be a belief in no God(s) or god-like creatures.

Another notable aspect when it comes to worldviews is that they are not often talked about explicitly because the people who share a certain representation of the world are supposed to already know the principles according to which everything works (Vansina 133). Of course, they are explained to children or people who are actually

supposed to lead their lives by adhering to the principles entailed in the worldview, but who nonetheless are not (yet) familiar with it for one reason or another.

2.1.4. Myth

This type of narrative is defined as a “sacred story that provides the basis for religious beliefs and practices” (Stein and Stein 282). Myths “tell [for example] of the origins and history of the world and the creation of the first human beings” (Stein and Stein 31), or they tell about the deeds of gods and spirits (such as tricksters), as well as of the nature of good and evil, or illness and death (Stein and Stein 34). In comparison to a worldview, a myth does not explain all aspects of the world and the universe, as a worldview would, but it is rather a part of the worldview. Myths are indeed stories which explain certain fragments of a worldview. Rabinovitch, however, points out that one must not confuse this definition with the colloquial understanding in which *myth* denotes a fairytale, or a false story⁶. Instead, she stresses that myths are narratives which are considered to be true by a people who have a certain religion or culture. In this she follows Mircea Eliade’s definition of myth, which underlines that myths are true narratives which tell of a sacred event involving super-natural, i.e. sacred beings that took place in primordial time (qtd. in Thiel 77).

Peter B. Hammond states that another kind of narrative, the legend, is also repeatedly mistaken for a myth⁷, although “legends are usually defined as tales concerning other times and places that *do not* give the same extensive emphasis to supernatural themes. [In addition, l]egends, more often than myths, are retold purely as entertainment” (387, emphasis added), while myths rather focus on being told in order to teach something regarding the world. Nevertheless, myths can in certain cases also be part of story-telling entertainment. Keeping all this in mind, *myth*, as well as *story* and

⁶ In his essay “Mother Earth: An American Myth” Sam Gill, on the one hand, repeatedly emphasizes that the word *myth* was introduced to Indigenous cultures by “Americans of European ancestry”. What he, however, finds even worse is that, on the other hand, in standard English this term implies that the story told is in effect only a story; an untrue account of the world which cannot be really appreciated (130). Despite the fact that Gill suggests a less negative usage of myth, he is still stuck himself with the more demeaning definition of *myth*, for he argues that the figure of the trickster is a creation of European and American writers who “have been creating their own mythology” (140). However, he does not regard the fact that certain themes, such as origins of the world/universe, floods, tricksters, and heroes, which are written about by those authors, are common to a great number of peoples. For further reference see also Stein and Stein’s discussion of common themes in myths (46-52).

⁷ Donald A. Grinde, Jr. gives the example that the story of Jesus Christ’s walking on water is considered to be true and part of a religion, whereas trickster myths, such as those of Coyote, are put down as legends (204).

narrative will, for my purpose, be used in the non-derogatory way according to which they are sacred bearers of true meaning to a people.

2.1.5. Creation story

In order to define what a creation story is it has to be noted that Stein and Stein refer to these stories also as “origin myths” (46). This in return implies that creation stories actually are a type of myth and are, consequently, considered to be true just as every other myth. Taking into account the *origin* part of the term *origin myth* it seems, furthermore, evident that for every people it constitutes the most important of all their respective myths, for these “cosmogonic stories” (Ludwig 13) address some of humanity’s most essential and yet basic questions about who a people are and what their purpose in life is.

In contrasting an origin myth to a worldview, the same distinction has to be made as with other myths, i.e. cosmogonic stories are myths which in the form of a narrative tell of the events due to which the world was created. Since origin myths tell of events from a “mythical past [that] serve believers as a sort of allegorical code” which defines their values and instructs them on good and bad behavior (Hammond 320) it seems rather self-explanatory, as well, that “[a]ll other narratives ultimately build on the groundwork laid down in origin myths” (Stein and Stein 46).

In the form of narratives these allegorical codes can then be carried on to those members of the group who are not yet acquainted with them. When, however, the stories are known, they construct a specific worldview in a person’s mind. While, as has already been pointed out above, cosmologies are usually not talked about anymore because they are supposed to be self-evident at some point (Vansina 133), myths, and especially origin myths, are retold on specific occasions in order to keep the stories alive.

Typically there is a variety of possibilities on what caused the creation of the world. Sometimes there is “a battle between divine forces, and humans get caught up in the conflict;” in other cases, which most often can be observed in monotheistic cultures, every form of life “results from the one creator God;” while some Aboriginal cultures’ creation myths “teach that the world [was built and] is controlled by many divine forces [and their divine helpers], expressing their wills in the functioning of nature” (Ludwig 13). The latter version will, naturally, be of major interest to this paper regarding the focus of the analysis.

2.1.6. The Mixed-Blood

In literature one can find many terms which have been applied through the centuries when referring to individuals who descend from parents and/or grandparents of different nations, especially when this involves First Nations people and American and Canadian settlers of British, French or Spanish (or later on Mexican, if we consider the American South) origin. In his research on the representation of “half-breeds” in American fiction of the nineteenth century, William J. Scheick identifies the following terminology: half-breed, half-Indian, half-white, half-blood, and mixed-blood (ix). Scheick explains that throughout his work he does not use the term *half-breed* because it carries a very negative implication. Instead he applies *half-blood*, because according to him this term “is descriptive without conveying any pejorative implication of the sort sometimes associated with the term half-breed” (ix). (He does not explain why he excludes the remaining terms, however.)

In spite of myself agreeing with Scheick when it comes to *half-breed*, I have nevertheless decided to act differently and thus use neither *half-Indian* or *half-white* because of their obvious racial implications, nor will I say *half-blood* or *mixed-blood*⁸, hyphenated or not, for they can both be associated with the calculation of Native blood quantum, which is employed in order to define whether a person can be a legal member of a certain First Nations tribe of North America (a concept that will receive further elaboration in chapter 3.3.). Instead I opted for two longer terms, *person of/with mixed heritage* and *person of/with mixed roots* which rather hints at the multitude of cultural backgrounds and diversity of worldviews from which a person can draw their experiences and ideas, especially when the topic of identity is concerned.

2.2. The Authors

2.2.1. Leslie Marmon Silko

Leslie Marmon Silko – born in Albuquerque, NM on March 5, 1948 – is a renowned First Nations writer who was raised at the Laguna Pueblo, NM, and is of Laguna, Mexican, and white ancestry. She grew up next to her grandmother Lillie and her aunt who influenced Silko immensely by passing on to her numerous oral stories about the Laguna culture. Another essential influence, which is also reflected in her novel *Ceremony*, is the Laguna landscape.

⁸ As it is the case with the terminology on Native Peoples, *half-Indian*, *half-white*, *half-blood*, *half-breed*, and *mixed-blood* will only be applied in direct quotations.

From kindergarten until the start of fifth grade Silko attended the local Bureau of Indian Affairs day school, after which her parents rather opted for sending their daughter to a Catholic Indian boarding school in Albuquerque as a commuter than to let her endure the terrifying treatment in the former Indian boarding school in Laguna. After 1969, when she received a BA in English at the University of New Mexico, she enrolled in the American Indian Law Program, a program which was supposed to provide Indigenous persons with their own lawyers. However, after three semesters of studying law Silko decided that the American legal system could not provide her with the kind of justice she had envisioned for her People. Therefore she chose writing over being a lawyer.

Before she started her two-year career as a teacher at the Navajo Community College at Tsaile, AZ, she published *Laguna Woman*, a book of poetry, in 1974, for which she received the Chicago Review Poetry Award. Then she spent two more years in Ketchikan, AK, during which she wrote her highly-praised first novel, *Ceremony*, which was published in 1977. Following that success Silko returned to New Mexico where she started teaching at the University of New Mexico, as well as at the University of Arizona.

In order to complete her novel *Almanac of the Dead*, which had been a work in progress since 1981, that is for ten years, Silko received two awards, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and a MacArthur Foundation grant. In 1991 *Almanac of the Dead* appeared. Two years later she self-published her autobiography, *Sacred Water*, in which she experimented with the effect images, especially photographs, have on the reading process. In her latest publication, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, Silko got herself immersed in yet another genre, essay writing.

Currently she lives in Tucson, AZ, where she is still writing⁹.

One more thing becomes necessary to mention for the context of this analysis, namely how Silko herself views her writing. She identifies “the attempt to identify what it is to be a half-breed, or mixed-blooded person; what it is to grow up neither white nor fully traditional Indian” as the central element around which she patterns her stories (qtd. in Whitson, “Silko” 207).

⁹ All information about Silko given in ch. 2.2.1. has been taken from Coltelli 135-37; Juricek and Morgan 218-19; Colonnese and Owens 80; and Whitson, “Silko” 207-09.

2.2.2. Joseph Boyden

Joseph Boyden – born in Willowdale, ONT (today part of the city of Toronto) on October 31, 1966 – is an award-winning writer of short stories and novels, who grew up in a very strict Irish Catholic household as the third youngest of eleven siblings in a family of mixed Irish, Scottish and Métis heritage. In spite of the fact that Joseph Boyden's father, Raymond Wilfrid Boyden, died when he was only eight years old leaving his mother – a teacher who worked full-time to be able to sustain her children – alone, he does vividly remember how his father took the family to Georgian Bay (a large bay on Lake Huron) by boat thereby introducing his son to and teaching him respect for the natural world.

Boyden attended the Jesuit Brebeuf College School in Toronto. During his high school years Boyden discovered his passion for traveling, which established a certain parallel to his father's older brother Erl, since his uncle– after having taken part in World War I – lived a traditional Native life near Algonquin park where he stayed in a tepee fabricating his own clothing and making just enough money by selling tourist items. Given the fact that Boyden's uncle had died even three years before his father had, Boyden was not really aware of these similarities. During his summer breaks he explored both, the streets of Toronto, as well as the Deep South of the U.S., especially Carolina and Louisiana, to which he started feeling a certain attachment.

Another of Boyden's passions was writing, which is the reason why he enrolled in creative writing courses at York University and later on in the MFA program for creative writing at the University of New Orleans. After this experience he returned to Ontario in 1996 where he took up a two-year teaching career in Aboriginal programs at the Northern College in Moosonee, ONT, in which the courses he taught comprised communication and general arts. Part of his work included traveling along the west coast of James Bay which brought him to reserves such as Moose Factory, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, and Attawapiskat, and accordingly, into contact with many Aboriginal students.

Today he lives in Louisiana where he works as a professor of creative writing and Canadian literature at the University of New Orleans. Nevertheless, several times a year Boyden travels between the American South and his Canadian home, for he still feels “[his] heart is part Irish, part Ojibwe. [He is] a Canadian in America” (Boyden, “Bio”).

Regarding the kind and amount of stories that surrounded him in his childhood and, of course, also later on, Boyden explains that one source of stories naturally were his close relatives, that is his father and his uncle Erl, but his mother's father as well, all three of which had taken part in either World War I (the latter two) or in World War II (his father). His father was "proclaimed [by King George VI] the most highly decorated medical officer in the British Empire" (Boyden, "Bio"). Despite his father's not telling his children about his war experiences, Joseph Boyden investigated his father's past as a doctor, in which he found Toronto Telegram news stories which explained how Raymond Wilfrid Boyden had been rescuing wounded soldiers in spite of being under fire in Italy and Holland. A further kind of stories, of course, involved his uncle Erl's traditionalist Anishinabe ways of life, which explains why Boyden says of himself that he is a very spiritual person, deeply rooted in the Ojibwe faith. The collection of tribal accounts was, on the one hand, further expanded by his childhood friends from the Christian Island and Perry Island reserves located near Georgian Bay. One of those stories Boyden learned tells, for instance, about Francis Pegahmagabow¹⁰, a renowned Aboriginal sniper of World War I. On the other hand, his connection to people from James Bay still provides a possibility to dive into Native surroundings which continuously enriches Boyden's experiences in and accounts of Indigenous life.

The first of this author's publications was *Born with a Tooth*, a short story collection which was published in 2001 and was shortlisted for the Upper Canada Writer's Craft Award. *Three Day Road* (from now on shortened to *TDR*), his first novel, appeared in 2005, and was, for example, awarded with the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, it was the CBA Libris Fiction Book of the Year, and the 2005 McNally Robinson Aboriginal Book of the Year, as well as the winner of the 2007–2008 London Reads Competition, and the CBC Canada Reads Selection, and so forth. Boyden says that unconsciously he was inspired by the stories about Pegahmagabow from his Ojibwe friends, and about his father and relatives, whose voices were added to the book (Boyden, Podcast Interview). Interestingly enough, one of *TDR*'s protagonists, Xavier Bird, is a member of a family which Boyden had introduced to the readers already in several stories from *Born with a Tooth*; the same family that is also featured in Boyden's latest Scotiabank Giller Prize winning novel *Through Black Spruce* –

¹⁰ Since Francis Pegahmagabow is an important influence for Boyden's *Three Day Road*, further information about this figure will be given in ch. 5.3.

published in 2008 – which is the second after *TDR* in a trilogy of novels, and which again revolves around issues of loss, identity and the importance of family.

Moreover, one of Boyden's lectures, in which he "[drew] parallels between disenfranchised [P]eoples of the First Nations tribes and the sufferings of the poor Hispanic and black populations of New Orleans during and after Hurricane Katrina" (Harvey), has been published in 2008 under the title *From Mushkegowuk to New Orleans: A Mixed Blood Highway*¹¹.

What can be read from Boyden's biographical facts underlines one significant parallel to Silko, namely the fact that both authors come from a mixed family background which enables them to touch on the delicate topics of mixed ancestry and the difficulties average people have to cope with every day in the communities they live in. Boyden, nonetheless, points out, no matter how minimal the proportion of Native blood may be in him, that "[p]art of [him] is [N]ative [...] and it's a very important part". Yet he feels strong ties to his Irish and Scottish roots as well (qtd. in Nurse). Accordingly, Boyden identifies to a great extent with both, the Irish Catholic religion he was raised with, as well as the Anishinabe faith, which in return lets his works focus on the issue of "social and familial cohesion, mutual support and friendship, [...] [and the] crucial value of the collective memory of living off the land and the importance of respect and understanding for it" which are the strengths as portrayed among marginalized groups (Harvey).

2.3. The Nations

A great deal of things I will look at in *Ceremony* and *TDR* are connected to the history, religion, and culture of the Laguna Pueblo and the Cree of Moose Factory, a band of the Swampy Cree. Therefore, this part is supposed to explain in a concise way what was and still is important for the members of these two tribes, since this description will prove to be a necessary tool for my interpretational deductions on specific developments of the novels' characters in regard to their respective tribal histories and traditions. However, I have to emphasize that giving two complete accounts of these two Indigenous Nations will hardly be possible, since there is only so much information that can be brought to attention here without exceeding the scope of this work. Hence the bits and pieces presented here only go as far as necessary as to

¹¹ All information about Boyden given in ch. 2.2.2. has been taken from Boyden, "Bio"; Boyden, Podcast Interview; Boyden and Shackleton; Harvey; "Joseph Boyden"; Nurse; "Reading Guides"; and "*Three Day Road*".

include certain topics which, according to my subjective perception, can provide an in-depth account of *Ceremony* and *TDR* and which, in consequence, are of relevance to my subsequent analysis. Hence, aspects like the following will unfortunately have to be omitted: specific ceremonies, rituals, and customs; religious organization within the bands; technology; and political organization¹².

2.3.1. The Laguna Pueblo¹³

Laguna is situated about 72.4 kilometers west of Albuquerque, NM, and is one of six pueblos – Encinal, Mesita, Pagate, Paraje, Seama, and Laguna – which make up the Laguna Pueblo community with a total population of nearly 8,000 people who speak a Keresan¹⁴ dialect. Laguna (Spanish for “lake”), which is also called *Ka-waik* or *Kawaika* by its people, is named after a large pond that can be found near the village. *Pueblo*, on the other hand – apart from meaning “village” in Spanish – refers to the special type of two-story adobe houses which was very typical of that region. More recently the dwellings were modernized, that is they were still built according to the same style, except that one story was added to the terraced system in order to get courtyards for the upper levels. Only in the 1970s two hundred houses built in a modern style were constructed due to a building program.

Traditionally the Laguna Pueblo lived from agriculture, in which the main crops were corn, squash, beans, tobacco and cotton. This changed after Spanish expeditions first arrived at the end of the sixteenth century. Not only did the Spanish introduce the Laguna Pueblo to new crops, but also to new animals, which brought about the effect that herding became a more frequently adopted practice.

Another effect caused by the Spanish was an active attempt of colonization and a concurrent Christianization. In 1680 this culminated in the first Pueblo revolt, in which the Laguna Pueblo partook as well, and during which most Catholic priests were

¹² For further information about religious organizations of the clans or families; other ceremonies, rituals, or customs (e.g. for birth, death, naming, puberty, etc.); subsistence, clothing and garment, technology; political organization; treaties; and more detailed contemporary issues see, for example, Malinowski and Sheets's *The Gale Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, Sturtevant's *Handbook of North American Indians*, or Pritzker's *A Native American Encyclopedia*.

¹³ Unless otherwise indicated, the information about the Laguna Pueblo presented in ch. 2.3.1. is taken from Eggan, *Perspectives* 112-135; Eggan, “Pueblos”; Ellis, “Laguna Pueblo”; Hall, “Laguna Pueblo”; and Pritzker, “Laguna Pueblo”.

¹⁴ Generally four linguistic stocks can be identified among all the Pueblo Peoples: 1) The Hopi villages in the west belong to the Uto-Aztekan language group, 2) the Zuni are closest to California Penutian, 3) the Acoma and Laguna in the west, and a part of the Rio Grande valley speak Keresan dialects, while 4) the Kiowa-Tanoan family, which can be found in the Rio Grande valley, form three subgroups, the Tewa, Tiwa and Towa dialects (Eggan, “Pueblos” 226-27).

killed and numerous colonist soldiers were driven away and out of New Mexico. In 1692 the Spanish reconquered the pueblos, which led to the total submission of the Pueblo bands. A further Tewa Pueblo uprising followed in 1696 with the result of a better accommodation between the Spanish settlers and the Pueblo people, as well as a reduction of religious and political pressure. However, after the reoccupation by the Spanish colonizers four years earlier not all people stayed to endure the hardships of the colonization. About a hundred people fled to the Acoma Pueblo from where they moved on to the northeast where they settled to establish Laguna Pueblo in 1697.

Despite the fact that from 1821, when New Mexico came under the legislation of the Republic of Mexico, no real alterations could be noticed in the Pueblos' legal status, one change was yet extremely tangible. In the twenty-five years between 1821 and 1846 – 1846 being the year in which the U.S. once again came to control parts of Arizona and the state of New Mexico (Martinez, et al.) – many mixed marriages between Mexicans and Natives brought about generations of persons of mixed heritage.

The 1870s were a time when the combination of Spanish and Anglo settlements led to a significant number of converts¹⁵, to both Catholicism and Protestantism (especially Presbyterianism), which in return created tensions between the rival religious groups. This situation escalated when three Anglo men married into the tribe and made each of themselves governor for one period by writing a new constitution for the Laguna Pueblo. During these days two Pueblo religious buildings (termed kiva) were torn down, while the Catholic church was only saved by a traditionalist.

On the Laguna Pueblo territory coal, natural gas, oil and uranium resources can be found, the latter of which had an enormous effect on the local economy. From 1953 to 1982 “[twelve] shafts and quarries, including the world’s largest open-pit uranium mine, near Paguate” (Hall 170) operated by the Anaconda Mineral Company provided numerous jobs and much money to the Laguna. According to Florence Hawley Ellis, the Laguna were one of the wealthiest Native societies in New Mexico during the 1970s (448). However, after the mines were closed, the unemployment rate rose to 75%, and dropped back to 25% only in 1991 after the Laguna had founded Laguna Industries, a manufacturing company. Another downside of the uranium mining are severe health problems related to radiation. Various kinds of cancer (especially lung cancer and

¹⁵ Like in many other Aboriginal Nations not all people converted, or at least not all converted in the same way. Many tribes adapted either their own traditional view or the Catholic belief, or even both, so as to blend the two systems (Hall 171). This topic will, however, be explained in more detail in ch. 3.2.

leukemia) and birth-defects are caused by contaminated groundwater, on the one hand, and roads and houses that were built with ore and crushed rock from the mines, on the other.

As for the religious views of the Laguna Pueblo, they are best understood by having a look at their creation story. They say that after their ancestors had climbed up through a chamber from their previous home in one of the four underworlds to the fifth world, which is where people live now, they were told by the Great Spirit to wander off into all four cardinal directions, but were also reminded never to forget their customs, beliefs, and the original home they were coming from¹⁶. So the Kátsina (or Katsina) people – the people to become the Laguna – moved south as they were instructed. For many years they were wandering, moving from one place to another, all of which the Laguna still know by name. When they finally came to the lake region they decided to settle, and since there was a lake close by they named the place Ka-waik (i.e. “large pond”, as mentioned above).

This origin myth and, actually, Laguna sacred narratives on the whole belong to oral literature, which in turn is an integral part of all First Nations Peoples of North America. In this tradition sacred stories were memorized and transmitted orally¹⁷ – usually on specific occasions – which is the essence of “oral sacred literature” (Ludwig 32) because the Pueblo believe that only by actively retelling these myths does the sacred aspect of them work¹⁸ (Rabinovitch, “Witchcraft”). Nevertheless “it is important to note that [I]ndigenous [P]eoples do not consider their oral tradition to be lacking or inferior simply because they are not written” (Ludwig 33). In this respect Jarich Oosten claims that in the last decennia of the twentieth century the study of oral literatures has turned to accept to draw a “distinction between literate and oral” instead of “literate and non-literate” (5). Nonetheless, in the 1990s the idea still existed that orality could not be as highly valued as the written tradition, as can be seen from the following:

¹⁶ Jerry H. Gill explains that not rarely does a people put itself at the center of the/its world, for it is what their creation story, which very often involves the four cardinal directions, tells them. “The territory of a given group, whether it be a village or a vast plain, is invariably seen as the axis around which all else orbits” (78). The structure of Pueblo villages can be taken as an example for this belief, because the adobe houses were built around a “central plaza” (Hall 172), which was the spiritual focal point of the pueblo, a center where “all the balanced forces of the world c[a]me together” (Pritzker, “Laguna” 45).

¹⁷ Keeping in mind that First Nations’ stories are based on oral tradition, few myths have actually been written down, although one can increasingly find compendia of Indigenous stories. A limited list of suggestions of such works includes, for instance, Erdoes and Ortiz’s selection of *American Indian Trickster Tales*, or Paula Gunn Allen’s *Spider Woman’s Granddaughters*, a work for which Allen collected a number of traditional tales and other writings, part of which are contemporary short-stories.

¹⁸ Further details on oral story-telling will be provided in ch. 4.2.

Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche. Nevertheless, without writing, human consciousness cannot achieve its fuller potentials, cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations. In this sense, orality needs to produce and is destined to produce writing (Ong qtd. in Oosten 5)

To return to the actual Laguna origin myth noted above, one element that has to be mentioned, for it constitutes an essential fact of the people's lives, is the hole in the ground from which the ancestors emerged. The underworld and the emergence from it are represented by kivas, which are ceremonial dwellings above ground that are situated within the individual pueblos. They can be square or round, but they need to have either an opening in the middle of the roof ("Kiva" 136) or a small hole in the floor, that is an "earth navel" which symbolizes the very hole from the myth (Hirschfelder and Molin, "Kiva" 149).

A further aspect of Pueblo life style can be deduced from that part of their creation story in which the ancestors are told to keep their customs and beliefs, both of which involved keeping up a balanced and reciprocal relationship with other creatures, nature, and the self. For this purpose the Laguna Pueblo had shamans (also called medicine men and women) who could be either male or female and who conducted ceremonies revolving, for example, around the weather (for rain was indispensable for the local agriculture), hunting success, or curing¹⁹.

Considering that the four cardinal directions are usually an essential part of many Indigenous creation stories, it is a logical consequence that the number four becomes a crucial part of ceremonies, rituals and other myths. This might, for instance, involve three underworlds and the earth as the fourth world, or an element in a ritual, story, or traditional custom that has to be repeated four times or has to last for four days in order to have the desired effect (Gill, J. 75).

Sioui points out that the medicine wheel, or "sacred circle of life", is one more concept in which the number four can be seen, since it is "divided into four quarters" (*Amerindian* 10). This wheel is an essential part of the way many Aboriginal Peoples²⁰, including the Cree, view the world (Sioui, "Spirituality"). Basically, it suggests "[l]ife's

¹⁹ For a more detailed description of shamans and their duties in both nations, the Laguna Pueblo as well as the Swampy Cree see ch. 4.2. and 5.4., respectively.

²⁰ How crucial the idea of the circle of life is to various Indigenous Peoples can, for instance, be derived from the fact that Black Elk already at the very beginning of his famous account of his life, as told to and written down by John G. Neihardt in *Black Elk Speaks*, tries to explain how the Lakota view the "four quarters of the universe", as he refers to it (2).

circularity, or inclusiveness,” on all levels (Sioui, “Canada” 51). According to Sioui the meaning of this concept is that most First Nations of North America, on the one hand, believe that all beings are connected to each other because the circle consists of numerous composers, i.e. beings (“Spirituality”), and that “the place of humans is equal to that of other creatures” (*Amerindian* 10), on the other. There are several important things which are described by the four parts of the circle: the “four sacred directions, four sacred colours [(red, yellow, blue or black, and white)], four races of humans, each with its own sacred vision, as well as four ages of human life (childhood, adulthood, old age, then childhood again), four seasons, and four times of day which are also sacred” (*Amerindian* 10). Furthermore, the circle includes four sacred animals, which however vary from Nation to Nation, the four sacred medicines or herbs (tobacco, sweetgrass, sage, and cedar), and the four sacred elements (Sioui, “Spirituality”). As will become clear in the analysis proper, the sacred circle is also an integral part of *Ceremony* and *TDR*.

2.3.2. The Swampy Cree – Moose Factory²¹

The Cree are the largest Native group in Canada, counting 120,000 in the 1990s. Being such a big Nation one can distinguish between the Plains Cree, the Woodland (or Western Woods) Cree, and the Swampy (or West Main) Cree, of which only the latter is of interest for *TDR*.

The Swampy Cree include several bands which are the Abitibi, Albany, Attawapiskat, Monsoni, Moose River, Nipigon, Piscotagami, Severn, Winisk, and Winnipeg²², all of which speak Algonquian dialects. Their territory spreads over a considerable area east of James Bay and south of Hudson Bay. Moose Factory in particular is an island that is located on Moose River, about 5 kilometers southeast of the mouth of James Bay and which at the end of the twentieth century, according to the “Moose Factory: Community Profile”, counted a total of about 2,458, of which more than 1,007 lived off reserve, while 1,451 lived in Moose Factory. In December, 2005, according to the “Community Profile”, the Moose Cree counted a total number of declared Native members of 3,798, with 2,192 living off reserve, and the remaining 1,606 having their homes on reserve on the island.

²¹ Unless otherwise indicated the information about the Swampy Cree given in ch. 2.3.2. is adapted from Eggen, *Perspectives* 78-94; Honigmann, “West Main Cree”; Pritzker, “Cree”; and Schrecengost, “Cree”.

²² I will try in this context to focus on the Moose River Cree. Since, however, most reference books speak of the Swampy Cree as one group due to the fact that its bands mostly have very similar customs and beliefs a complete distinction is not possible.

Traditionally the Swampy Cree were nomadic hunters and gatherers who lived in conical or dome-shaped lodges with poles which held them up. On the outside this form of dwellings was covered with various materials, from bark to skins, depending on the season. The lodges typically had a central fire place and were built and owned by the women. Throughout the whole year the bands had to cope with the very harsh conditions of nature and climate in this region. One method by which they coped with the natural surroundings was building and using birch-bark canoes and snowshoes, which allowed them to transport their families or food over long distances on water ways, and to move more easily across snow-covered woods and fields.

Going from harsh winters to warm summers was, nonetheless, only one of the challenges this Nation had to face. The first non-aboriginal contact was established in 1610 when the French started coming to this region. The relationship²³ consisted primarily of trading beaver fur for goods on which the Natives increasingly grew dependent. After the French, the British arrived as well, which only let the demands for furs grow. In 1668 the first Hudson Bay trading post was formed east of the Moose River at Rupert House. Moose Factory was founded only three years later, in 1671, which had the consequence that more posts were established at the mouths of the Moose and Albany Rivers until 1688. Since the Moose Factory Cree now had easier access to the posts by traveling by canoe with which they could transport huge numbers of beaver pelts they, along with other Swampy Cree bands, turned into major trading partners for the Hudson Bay Company. Slowly the Swampy Cree started to feel the consequences of overtrapping. The decimated number of animals they used to hunt for both trade and subsistence caused starvation and fewer possibilities to receive European goods, such as cloth (especially wool), blankets, but also new kinds of food (sugar, flour, alcohol, tobacco) which by then they had incorporated into their lives. Around 1821 many Swampy Cree began to exchange their nomadic existence for the life style of settlers and moved near the trading forts, partly because of overtrapping and starvation, partly because in the 1780s another devastating event happened and was repeated in 1838, namely a smallpox epidemic that killed an enormous number of Natives.

Another notable development, albeit one of a different nature, is connected to the many French and Scottish men who, from the moment trading posts were

²³ For an extensive description of the historical relationships between European traders and settlers and the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada refer to Olive Patricia Dickason's *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* or J.R. Miller's *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*.

established, married Cree women. The descendants of such intermarriages formed a new people, the Métis, who have a distinct culture of their own, as well as a new language, Métchif or Mitchif.

A certain alteration of the Swampy Cree's daily routines (e.g. their clothing and diet) had already happened due to the repeated trading contact with the Europeans. Such a change was only possible because of the adaptive nature of the local Aboriginals. Concerning religious conversion there was a short time span during the late seventeenth century in which Jesuit missionaries tried to convert the Natives of James and Hudson Bay. It was not until 1823 when the first Church of England was built that missionaries were once more stationed there. From the mid-nineteenth century on intense missionary attempts could be detected in the fact that most Swampy Cree people became Christians, at least nominally. Although in comparison to other Indigenous Peoples the Swampy Cree were a nation which substituted a great many of their traditional routines and beliefs with new ones, there were still people who altered only superficial things but mainly held on to their original culture. In which way and in how far said change happened will be the topic of discussion in the next chapter.

In respect of conversions of any kind Boarding Schools, where the biggest part of cultural substitution had happened, must be mentioned. Typically Boarding Schools were religious institutions – either Anglican or Catholic considering the territory in question – which followed the main goal of “implanting an entire new belief system and eradicating practically all adherence to the old one” (Honigmann 224). Generally seen they did succeed in that effort, for the majority of children stayed in school over the whole year and were sent home to their tribes only during summer break. Therefore they had little or no contact to their Native relatives of whom they could learn the Aboriginal beliefs and ways²⁴.

Regarding Native rights the 1870s were crucial. These years are best described as the treaty and reserve period, during which the local Cree slowly settled into all-native log-cabin communities. In 1905 Moose Factory even saw the day on which the tribe had to accept a treaty saying that every Moose Factory Cree was giving up all their rights. Only after World War II did many of the Swampy Cree begin to partake in the modern world by working in local cities, using non-native medicine, and so on. Today this Nation has gained more control of their own administrative affairs, such as schools,

²⁴ How the children were treated in Residential Schools and what the consequent impacts on their mental, physical, as well as their spiritual health were will be matter of discussion in ch. 5.2. and 5.3.

health care, and so forth, nevertheless there are still downsides, because contemporary on-reserve life is characterized by a severe lack of jobs, which makes more and more people leave their home for a larger center.

The way in which the Swampy Cree view their universe is that Keché Manitoo (also, kitchi manitou), the powerful creator or rather “the Great Power” (Sioui, *Autohistory* 10), for that matter, formed the world in all of its facets but was at the same time present in all living beings. This force had helping spirits (manito, manitoo, or manitou) which could appear in people’s dreams and visions and could thereby become their guardian spirits. Such visions could, for example, be obtained in a vision quest, i.e. an important rite of initiation. Generally boys were sent on these quests, during which they had to go away from the tribe to find a place where they could feast and pray, usually for a period of four days. After the boy had seen his vision and his guardian spirit he returned home, but did not tell the other tribe members (at least not immediately; this varies from People to People) what he had seen or who his guardian helper was. Other ceremonial or story-telling practices very frequently involve the fourfold division, as well. This can take various forms, such as a fourfold repetition of a certain step in a rite or myth, or the usage of four sacred items in a ceremony, and so on. What is more, the sacred circle of life with its four quarters and concept of “cyclical thinking” (Jaimes 279) is as big a part of the Cree Nation as of the Laguna Pueblo, and can be understood in the same way as has already been described above.

Another kind of ceremony, for instance, is conducted in sweat lodges, which are special dwellings similar to Swampy Cree housing. The reason for sweatbaths is either a ritualistic one, that is to say for the purification of the self, or even for mere pleasure and can, thus, be carried out by both shamans and other tribe members. Sweetgrass, a sacred herb that is very frequently braided and used in various ceremonies, also plays a very important role in sweatbaths. By burning a piece of the braid one gets sweet smoke which has cleansing powers. Consequently, this sweet-smelling herb is used in sweatbaths so as to support the desired effect of purification.

Spirits about which a huge number of myths exist include, for instance, the trickster Wesucechak (or Weesageechak), which is a figure known for his ability to change shape, his proneness to lies, but also agility and quick thinking, as well as his jumping back and forth between being a good character at one, and a bad character at another time (Gill and Sullivan 334). Furthermore this Nation believes in the witiko (or windigo), an evil, cannibalistic spirit. Basically anyone who is human can turn witiko

after having eaten human flesh. In the whole Cree Nation accounts of such terrifying creatures exist²⁵. There is also a non-human form of the witiko, the figure of the witiko giant, which is a malignant spirit that has a heart of ice and can transform humans into cannibals (Gill and Sullivan 345).

Similar to what has briefly been stated on oral literature among the Laguna Pueblo, the Swampy Cree also apply this mode of story-telling to transmit their narratives about the world's creation, deeds of spirits, and so on. They too believe that telling a story orally is necessary in order to repeat not the mere story but the events that happen in the story, i.e. by reiteration the allegoric meaning of the myth can "work". Furthermore, telling stories which are not of mythical origin but accounts of one's life, was important in order to preserve one's own spiritual and physical health, especially when those stories involve painful events (Deleary, Lecture).

A central idea of Swampy Cree belief is that the Great Power had created everything to be in balance. Consequently, everything had to be kept in that state, for which a certain way of behavior, for instance, in regard to hunting animals or a spiritually healthy lifestyle, was essential. If, however, a certain aspect of traditional life – daily routine was not separate from spiritual life but was an integral part of it; the two aspects were interdependent (Ludwig 31) – was perceived as having lost its balance, for example when the weather was too harsh or when not enough game was available, then special ceremonies had to be conducted to get everything back into its original and healthy state. Ceremonies were usually directed by shamans, who could again be both, men and women, just as with the Laguna Pueblo, and who took care of the physical and mental²⁶ well-being of the tribe's members. The before-mentioned sweat lodge ceremony is, for example, a possibility for curing a sick person, i.e. the balance in relation to nature, to the tribe, and especially to and with oneself (mentally and/or physically) can be reestablished.

²⁵ Morton Irving Teicher has done extensive research among Native Peoples of the Subarctic in which he collected accounts of witiko transformations in which people became witikos because of starvation which forced them to a cannibalistic existence. The volume, *Windigo Psychosis*, contains seventy such cases of which the majority are stories from the Ojibwa, and the Cree. Both Wesucechak and the witiko will be discussed in further detail in ch. 5.3.

²⁶ Just as there is no distinction between religious and non-religious daily life, there is also no separation of a person's mental well-being and the corporeal one. Jerry Gill says that this idea refers to the notion of holistic health (180), a concept which also involves "keeping one's balance on the path [of life] by honoring the traditional teachings and practices of one's people. It is believed that such a life is full of harmony and health, and enables a person to be useful to his or her family and community" (137). Hence, one's own well-being is directly connected to nature and to one's people. The notion of holistic health will also be of importance for a considerably big part of the analysis proper.

3. NATIVE IDENTITIES – I’M PART WHITE, BUT I CAN’T PROVE IT

The sarcastic statement “I’m part white, but I can’t prove it”²⁷ is used by both Paul Chaat Smith, an Indigenous writer and holder of a Comanche ID card (Morris, “Spotlight”), as well as by Eva Marie Garrouette; only that in Garrouette’s *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* this sentence is a bit extended and reads: “I’m part white, but I don’t have the papers to prove it” (29). What this comment implies, or rather criticizes about Native identity and the legal processes that, unfortunately, go with it, is that many Aboriginals are dissatisfied with the situation in which Natives are the only group of people which has to prove their ethnic identity and tribal membership by producing specific documentation. Most often the criteria which have to be fulfilled are not required of other ethnic groups, and if they were, the people of these other groups would not be able to meet the standards either (29).

Thus, “I’m part white, but I can’t prove it” can be, for example, understood as a critique which evokes an mental picture in which a white person is asked to prove his/her (rather clear) identity by producing documents which have to meet almost absurd requirements, but cannot do so for one reason or another. Numerous individuals who were or are clearly Natives, who either have strong Native family ties or are otherwise definitely identifiable as Indigenous persons, have been denied Aboriginal membership, usually due to “the lack of official documentation of some crucial birth or marriage in their family history” (Jackson 16). A second possible implication of this statement is that persons of mixed roots who were indeed able to prove their Native affiliation, would not be able, if ever asked, to do the same when it comes to their European heritage, because the papers to prove this simply do not exist.

However, before it is possible to say more about the mid- and late-twentieth-century and the contemporary situation of how First Nations Peoples and persons define themselves, it is necessary to focus on how they were perceived before.

²⁷ “I’m part white, but I can’t prove it” is the running commentary on T-shirts which can be purchased at gift shops in various American airports, such as Denver, and on several internet web pages. “Homeland Security: Fighting Terrorism Since 1492” is another famous slogan on shirts, however the design of this is much more profound: it displays indigenous warriors, “Winchestered Apache warriors including Geronimo” (Smith 64-65) to be exact, holding weapons.

3.1. Stereotypes – Noble Savages, Savage Nobles²⁸

[W]hen I say, for example, that the Americas are built on the invasion and destruction of a populated land with hundreds of distinct, complex societies, and a centuries-long slave trade involving millions of Africans, I offer this as an observation that is the minimum requirement for making sense of the history of our countries. This unpleasant truth is why Indians have been erased from the master narrative of this country and replaced by the cartoon images that all of us know and most of us believe. At different times the narrative has said we didn't exist and the land was empty; then it was mostly empty and populated by fearsome savages; then populated by noble savages who couldn't get with the program; and on and on. Today the equation is Indian equals spiritualism and environmentalism. In twenty years it will probably be something else. (Paul Chaat Smith 20)²⁹

What Smith addresses in this quote can be understood as a brief summary of the issue I want to address in this section, namely the stereotypical representations of First Nations through the centuries.

The reason why a section about this type of images is included in this paper is that stereotypes are a crucial factor when it comes to the difficult task of defining one's self/identity, or even group identity, for, as Michael K. Green states, such "externally assigned identities can be internalized by many members of the subordinate culture and thus can estrange them from their own cultural heritage" (8). Basically, the imagined identities assigned by the Europeans through the centuries have taken three forms: the "civilizable savage", the "bloodthirsty savage", and the "noble savage" (8-9).

Which of the stereotypes listed below influences the characters of the novels, and how these images do that, will be shown in the analysis proper.

3.1.1. The Civilizable Savage

The first image of Natives from Smith's above-quoted excerpt is the "fearsome savage". Actually the first description of Natives by some early colonists was not entirely negative, although the positive attributes were not exactly numerous or of any real cultural significance, either, because they mostly regarded physical aspects of handsomeness. Nonetheless, the main notion was that some people(s) were inferior to culturally superior others – in this case, of course, the Natives were the ones to be

²⁸ The concept of "noble savages – savage nobles" is inspired by Thomas C. Fiddick's essay "Noble Savages, Savage Nobles: Revolutionary Implications of European Images of Amerindians" and will be explained at a later stage in this chapter.

²⁹ It is essential that one should not misinterpret my intentions about quoting Smith's extract. I need to stress again that it is not my intention to demonize the Euro-American or Euro-Canadian people, neither of the past nor of the present, but I want to emphasize a possible reason, as seen by Smith, as to why stereotypical images of American Indians actually emerged.

considered the inferior kind – and who could, thus, come in handy as servants, or worse yet, slaves.

One example of such thinking can be extracted from John Dyson's research on Christopher Columbus's voyages. During his first exploration of the New World Columbus did indeed state that he marveled that the Taino, the Natives of the island he and his crew had landed on, were so extremely welcoming (182-83). He also described their physical condition as very healthy, and their physique even as pleasing. Yet, Columbus decided to kidnap six of them because "[t]hey ought to be good servants and of good skill" (Dyson 162), for "[t]hey [were] completely defenseless and of no skill at arms [...] and so they [were] fit to be ordered about and made to work, to sow and to do all else that may be needed" (183). This entirely un-Christian attitude of the European colonizers was derived from their even more spectacular assumption that Indigenous persons were no human beings. Since they "question[ed] the humanity of the Indians, seeing them [...] as a species of "Wild-men" (Carr 28) and even claimed the Natives were cannibals and heathens, it was legitimate, and not at all un-Christian to them to take the Aborigines as slaves. "[B]ut that view [about the Natives being cannibalistic and heathen creatures instead of humans] had little intellectual support, although a great deal of imagistic power" (Carr 28), which is why it prevailed so long.

Nonetheless there were countless missionary attempts, just in case the heathens did have a soul. Thus, the sixteenth century already saw extensive work of Christianization among the First Nations of North America because of the Europeans' idea that Natives could at least "move from barbarity to civilisation" (Carr 29) by becoming Christians, which in turn would bring them one step closer to being human-like³⁰. Green, however, points out that it was thought that Aboriginal persons were not able to reach a civilized state on their own because they were perceived as child-like beings who needed the guiding hand of members of the already civilized society (8).

Around the seventeenth century in which it was already a given to define Native persons as "Salvages (sic), [...] Wild-men, [...] Pagans, Barbarians, [or] Heathens"

³⁰ Of course it was not the case that each and every single settler was intolerant towards the Native population they encountered. Even though the majority of Europeans had a barbaric picture of Aborigines in mind, there was a minority, very often missionaries, that recognized the numerous injustices committed by the colonizers and, hence, opted for helping the Natives as far as they could. This open-minded stance also involved that minority's interest in the cultures, languages and knowledge of the First Nations. And yet, many missionaries were still of the opinion that Christianity should remain the ultimate goal for the Indigenous Peoples. For further details on this topic see Celia Haig-Brown and David A. Nocks's collection of essays *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada*, which portrays some accounts of missionaries, authors, etc. who had a positive view of First Nations people.

(Williams qtd. in Carr 24), which pointed to the fact that Natives could not have the same rights as Christians. This tradition of thought which denied Aboriginals equal rights was carried on well into the eighteenth century, because “even when orthodoxy still made it impossible to deny that Native Americans were descended from Adam, they were undoubtedly degenerate sons” (Carr 25). This made it legitimate, for example, to dispossess Natives, for even if they were “God’s people”, they could not be as good as the settlers. This means their position changed from non-human heathens to human, but degenerate ones with a supposed potential for civilization. In Jeffrey R. Hanson and Linda P. Rouse’s words, Aboriginal persons were considered to be “deficient in intellect, accomplishment, and culture.” To the European settlers they were basically “the zero point of human society” (qtd. in Green 6).

“Thus, there was a confusion between having a different order and having no order” (Green 6). This “confusion” can also be traced back to times of anthropological research in which anthropologists were concerned with the stages of evolution and what these stages meant for the cultural development of various peoples, as can be read in Adam Kuper’s research on the illusion of “primitive societies”. He has shown that in the 1860s and 1870s there were two theories on how humankind progressed from one stage of evolution and development to the next higher level. One notion was formulated by Charles R. Darwin whose argument read that “evolution did not imply direction or *progress*, that it did not follow any plan” (Kuper 2, emphasis added), which again meant that “history was not unilinear” because in spite of “environmental changes [being] of decisive importance, they were unpredictable” and, thus, “there was no way of predicting [a group’s] future path. It was [consequently] also very difficult, if not impossible, to assess ‘progress’” (2).

Such an idea of a society’s evolutionary progress was contrasted with Herbert Spencer’s, Edward Burnett Tylor’s, or Lewis Henry Morgan’s classic evolutionary studies which “assumed a direct progression from primitive society through various intermediate *stages* to modern society” (Kuper 2, emphasis added). In other words “human history was a history of progress [in which] all living societies could be ranked on a single *evolutionary scale*” (2, emphasis added). It is exactly with this second theory that anthropologists and colonizers of that time tried to explain the differences between the Aboriginal Peoples they encountered and their own society, and which strengthened the thought that European cultures were superior to the Indigenous ones due to a more advanced stage in social evolution. They simply believed in their having progressed

much more throughout history than the Natives had. In fact in his *Ancient Society* from 1877 (Claessen 213), Morgan defined seven distinct stages, i.e. “ethnical periods” (qtd. in Kuper 66) which were described in terms of (change in) social organization, subsistence, inventions/growth of ideas and property (Kuper 66; Vincent 381). The first three periods were stages of savagery, namely a “lower status of savagery”, a “middle status of savagery”, and an “upper status of savagery”. The following three levels were defined as stages of barbarism, i.e. a “lower”, a “middle”, and an “upper” status, respectively, while the seventh stage was the period at which a society reached the “status of civilization” (qtd. in Kuper 66). Morgan, furthermore, argued that since societies were developing towards the highest stage of civilization the other two divisions of savagery and barbarism would disappear at some point in history. The effect of such a development would be that there would be no more primitive peoples left in the world (qtd. in Carr 156)³¹. The idea that the culture of primitive peoples or even primitive peoples as a whole could vanish was very common, and, consequently, turned into active “campaigning for the preservation of [Aboriginal] culture” by some intellectuals (Carr 199).

Such classical views on evolutionary and, especially, social progress of humankind that entailed the image of “primitive societies” are hardly supported by contemporary anthropologists, since “the term implies some historical point of reference” at which societies were most primitive, less primitive, advanced, more advanced, and so on. Given the fact that such a point in time does not exist, or at least cannot be traced, one cannot give a detailed description of what a “primitive society” actually is, or ever was, either (Kuper 7).

3.1.2. The Bloodthirsty Savage

After the image of savages which showed some potential to reach a certain state of civilization Aboriginals had to face another demeaning stereotype that had its origins

³¹ Nevertheless, Morgan also emphasized traits of some Native Peoples, such as the Iroquois, which he regarded to be positive, for he wrote that considering the Iroquoian social organization and their religion one could observe well-structured systems. The ability to create such a coherent belief system, for example, should speak for a better and more just treatment of Aboriginal peoples, since their religion and worldview was not, as previously supposed, a “jumble of superstitions” but promoted an “understanding of the value of their culture” (Carr 158). Morgan’s dilemma was, however, that, on the one hand, he believed in the process of civilization which brought superiority to one group while imposing an inferior status to another, but that the Iroquois and other Indigenous societies had a “fatal deficiency [namely the] non-existence of the progressive spirit” (qtd. in Carr 159), on the other. The consequence of this thought was a two-fold one – the inevitable disappearance of any people who were not willing to evolve to the next stage of human progress, and the “urge [to gather] their traditions before it [was] too late” (Carr 159).

in the bloody conflicts which took place between the colonizers and Indigenous Peoples. Green puts this image into very sharp words: Natives were identified as

predatory animals that kill aimlessly and wantonly, that probably [practice] cannibalism, and that rape, pillage, and plunder for no other reason than the pure joy of destruction. From this perspective, the Native American is portrayed as the ultimate killing machine. He comes decorated with war paint, he carries a tomahawk, and he is always ready to scalp, torture, murder, and menace innocent individuals.(9)

What needs to be mentioned is that several of these features, such as scalping, were introduced by the French and the British, who paid Indigenous men certain sums (payment could also take the form of items which Natives needed) if they killed a specific number of enemies and brought their scalps as proof that they were actually dead. So scalping was indeed a brutal method applied in times of war, but it was not only Aborigines who were involved in it but settlers from Europe as well, and yet it was used afterwards as a proof of bloodthirstiness only against members of First Nations (Dickason 136, 141; Sioui, “Lecture”).

Green adds that it is exactly this stereotypical idea of Native identity which was quite frequently adopted in sports, in which Indigenous Peoples have served as emblems of teams, for this implied the team’s ruthlessness and preparedness to fight as hard as possible (9). Still during the 1980s there were professional teams such as the Washington Redskins, or the Cleveland Indians; or high school and college teams which were called “‘Chiefs’, ‘Warriors,’ or ‘Indians’” (Velie 322).

Only after “the threat of the Native Americans to the dominant culture decreased” due to rising numbers of deaths of Aborigines and because more and more Natives adapted to the new way of life of the settlers by very often adopting their religion as well, did the negative image of the fearsome savage change into a less negative variant, namely the “tragic warrior” who was doomed to be extinguished by civilized society, but who in this manner took over the function of a symbol of “heroic resistance and tragic defeat (Green 9).

3.1.3. The Noble Savage

The Enlightenment brought a new notion according to which “‘nature’ was no longer the world of the sinful flesh [...]. So as ‘natural’ man the Indian’s distance from the civilised world was not necessarily any longer a mark of his fallen, bestial and brutish nature. His way of life could now be seen as commendably closer to the truths of the laws of Nature than were the corrupt regimes of Europe” (Carr 31). The

consequence of that thought was that the image of the noble savage³² was introduced to describe the essentially good nature of Natives.

Thomas C. Fiddick adds that this idea of the noble savage – although not defined yet in this exact term – might have already gained extremely in popularity in the sixteenth century through Montaigne’s positive representations of Native Peoples, which consisted, on the one hand, in negating the “image of [Aboriginals] as agents of Satan” and, thus, “calling for cultural tolerance,” but also in rejecting European values, customs, and policies as applied on the new continent as well as in Europe, on the other (40). As was noted about Columbus’s statement about the Taino, there were certainly aspects of Native character and behavior which were considered to be positive already by early colonizers and which were also recorded as such. However, most positive accounts³³ can be dated to the mid-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which one could encounter descriptions as the following: “These people of any upon the earth seem blessed [...] here is health and joy, peace and plenty while care and anxiety, ambition and love of gold [...] seem banished from this happy region” (Rogers qtd. in Fiddick 43); or: “They all are equal, without recognizing any sort of superiority or any sort of servitude [...] Neither is richer or poorer than his companion, and all unanimously limit their desires to that which is useful [...] and are contemptuous of all [...] superfluous things as not being worth to be possessed” (anon. qtd. in Fiddick 43).

Green argues that this idealized picture of Aboriginal Peoples was and is not so much reflecting the real way of life Natives were leading as it was underlining the “yearnings and dissatisfactions” of the people who had come up with this stereotype that defined members of Indigenous Nations as innocent creatures who were only trying to live simple lives by keeping up an absolute harmony with nature (9). Moreover, this image went hand in hand with Morgan’s above-stated theory of the progress of human civilization, which “made it possible to argue that the Indians could, under the tutelage of the Americans, attain an equal level of civilisation” (Carr 32). In other words, it implied that any Indian could be elevated from a noble savage to a savage noble, i.e. he could become a civilized person who originated from savage surroundings.

³² The term *noble savage* was in fact first mentioned by John Dryden in his play *The Conquest of Granada* from 1672. It, nevertheless, acquired the implication of a Native living as a natural gentleman only during the period of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, although the actual idea of the “gentle savage” has its roots in the “Classical and Renaissance [topos]” (Carr 31).

³³ What this image of the noble savage also embodied was the notion that the New World shared certain similarities to “the Biblical Garden Eden or the classical belief in a primordial Golden Age” which were imagined as idyllic places where the corrupt tendencies of civilization were left behind and where everybody and everything was totally innocent (Fiddick 44).

Only the twentieth century brought a definite anthropological change of the paradigm that had prevailed for so many centuries. Franz Boas “had begun to argue against the theories of cultural evolution [...]. He refused to accept that ‘primitive’ societies presented earlier stages of evolution, which the white man had left far behind” (Carr 230) because this kind of thought would depreciate an individual culture’s “particularity and integrity” (Sanjek 73). What this, moreover, meant for the image of both, the primitive and fearsome savage, as well as the noble savage was that, firstly, they did not have to undergo a process of cultural and social evolution, because they were not less civilized than the European settlers. Secondly, they and their respective People were no more a part of the “rigid hierarchy of cultures” (Carr 230) since there was no such thing; and thirdly, Boas’s statement negated the actual image of the “primitive” and the “noble savage” because now culture was understood as an entity which “included customs, rituals, artefacts, myths, songs, as well as some life histories, to create a full and sympathetic picture” (230), and this picture did and does not show that the noble savage was or is part of any Indigenous culture.

And yet “recent anthropological and historical studies have noted that [the] two distinct images of Indians predominate in white American culture from colonial times *through the present*” (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 52, emphasis added). On the one hand, the picture of the nature-loving Aboriginal who lives in harmony with the universe but still stays true to his savage (which by no means implies culturally traditional and, thus, positive) ways of life persists in the minds of many people, while on the other side of the coin one can still encounter the notion of the Native as being “culturally and often mentally deficient and incapable of what white society considered civilization and progress”, or “[s]imply put [...] a barbarian” (52). Deborah Davis Jackson furthermore notes that today’s image of First Nations members unfortunately is biased as well and includes predominantly negative character traits such as laziness, and alcohol and other kinds of substance dependencies (10) – a picture which will be further explored in the analysis proper. These traits are perceived to be in some way a continuation of the barbaric savage and the result of how he developed; and what is more, these negative aspects are also understood by a big part of Euro-American and Euro-Canadian society as an indication as to why Aboriginal Peoples are doomed to extinction. Curiously, such ideas exist in spite of the fact that the numbers of Native individuals and Native communities are constantly increasing (10).

3.2. The Symmetry of Conversion

According to Green, “[a] culture is a fabric of meaning that has arisen as a result of a historical process of interpretation and re-interpretation. When two cultures meet, alternative systems of meaning are juxtaposed. Where one sees meaning the other sees meaninglessness; where one sees the sacred the other sees the profane” (25).

It is exactly the meeting of two (or even more) cultures which is of interest at this stage because in the case of the encounter between European colonizers and First Nations inhabitants the cultures of both parties have been influenced in one way or another thereby transforming the existing cultural systems and from time to time even creating totally new ones, i.e. the cultural fabrics were interpreted and re-interpreted due to the mutual juxtaposition of cultural meaning. Marin Trenk refers to this process (whether it included religious aspects or not) as “crossing cultural boundaries” or “transculturation” (69), which in other words can be described as the “complex processes of *adjustment and re-creation* – cultural, literary, linguistic, and personal [...]” (Spitta 3, emphasis added)³⁴.

Green argues that during the what is now over five centuries of colonization European settlers have always thought of themselves as bringing

civilization to the many non-Europeans of the world. [They] claimed to possess the universal perspective of humanity in general in contrast to the more limited and particularistic perspective of the other peoples of the world. From this universal perspective, all particularities were destined to disappear into the melting pot of a cosmopolitan civilization in which each person would give up his/her own particular cultural identity and take his/her place as a member of a new world order in which all cultural differences would disappear. (1)

³⁴ In this definition Silvia Spitta follows Fernando Ortiz, a Cuban anthropologist, who understands transculturation as “a three-fold process: the partial loss of culture [...], the concomitant assimilation of elements from other cultures [...], and finally, the creation of a new [...] culture” (qtd. in Spitta 4). His definition is actually very similar to Ralph Linton’s definition of acculturation which reads as follows: Acculturation “comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous firsthand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or *both* groups” (qtd. in Jackson 75; qtd. in Spitta 3; emphasis added). The reason why Ortiz introduced a new term (transculturation) – which essentially covers the same definition of an already existing term (acculturation) – is that he had noticed that due to colonization and the manner in which it had proceeded anthropologists were frequently concentrating almost exclusively on the influence of the dominant groups on the colonized ones, despite the fact that Linton’s acculturation explicitly says that both, the subordinate and the dominant culture can be affected. Stein and Stein’s definition of acculturation supports Ortiz’s concern about the asymmetry of the term: Acculturation is “[t]he process whereby a culture accepts traits from a dominant society” (279). Since, however, Ortiz “insisted on understanding intercultural dynamics as a two-way” road he introduced *transculturation* which implied the “three-fold process” of “partial loss of culture [...], assimilation of [foreign] elements [...], and [...] creation of a new [...] culture” (Spitta 4), as already explained above.

Undoubtedly, many Natives seceded from their original culture to adopt the new one of the colonizers, a thing they sometimes did voluntarily and sometimes involuntarily. Nevertheless, there were far more possibilities on how the influence of the dominant culture worked.

3.2.1. Types of Cultural and Religious Conversions

William Pencak writes that the influence of white society did not make Indigenous Peoples passive objects which just absorbed the new culture without participating in any sense apart from passively adopting it. Natives rather took an active part in that situation, i.e. they had to reformulate what they identified as their respective original cultural tradition in order to arrive at something which allowed them to survive and even strengthen their position either as individual or as a group in the face of the dominant culture. In this manner new identities were created which could take various forms (qtd. in Green 21).

These forms heavily depended on the before-noted concept of transculturation which, according to A. Irving Hallowell, can be divided into three types: Firstly, there could be people whose transculturation took the form a complete change of culture which led to a permanent identification with the new customs. This process is usually called assimilation and implies “the loss, by an individual, of [all] the markers that served to distinguish him or her as a member of one social group, and the acquisition of traits that allow that person to blend in with, and succeed in, a different social group” (Jackson 74). Secondly, cultural alterations could touch merely the surface, that is only few aspects of one’s original culture were changed while the most important customs and habits persisted; and thirdly, a person could act in a culturally dual way, which means that depending on the situation or the surroundings (e.g. family, church, etc.) an individual could apply either the values of one culture which he/she was following or of another (qtd. in Trenk 69-70). However, Christian F. Feest expands this list consisting of three types to one which has, as he says, at least five different options on how a First Nations person could deal with the situation of two cultures meeting³⁵. These

³⁵ Feest’s essay actually focuses on Christianity and in how far this belief system was adopted by Indigenous people, i.e. whether the form Christianity would take when applied by Natives would “result in a form of baptized paganism, in true Christianity, or some sort of hybrid belief and practice” (109). Since, however, religion is a crucial part of culture – as is explicitly stated by Green when he distinguishes between internal and external culture (7), and which is self-evident when one looks at the definition of culture provided above – and is, consequently, a part of identity as well, Feest’s list of possible forms of taking a new religious system can equally be transferred to how, or rather in how far, a whole culture is adopted.

possibilities can be identified as “rejection”, “substitution”, “fusion” or “syncretism”, “compartmentalization”, and “pluralism” or “factionalism” (109-16).

A total rejection of a new culture usually occurred when an Aboriginal People was of the opinion that there was no need for an adaptation of their own belief and value system. Obviously, negative experiences regarding health problems such as various types of substance dependencies, imported diseases, and so forth, did not really support Christian missionaries who tried to influence Natives, either; and what is more, conservative tribal members frequently found enough aspects of European culture which they used as reasons in order to reject the same. What Feest nonetheless stresses is that today it cannot be denied that every single Indigenous Nation has in some way or another been influenced by the colonizers’ culture(s), but that, on the other hand, there are indeed tribes which show only minor traces of Christianization (109-10).

Substitution is understood as a process in which a Native culture or belief system was completely “submerged by new forms” (Feest 113). In this sense substitution comes close to what above was defined as assimilation. The difference between substitution and assimilation is, however, that the latter always refers to the complete loss a “minority group, or a colonized people” has to deal with (75), while substitution can also be a phenomenon that occurs in a dominant culture or happens to a single member of a dominant culture. Since substitution is the exact opposite of rejection, the reasons for adopting a new culture run parallel to those of why a different culture is rejected. Hence, generally there is some kind of “major social, economic, or spiritual problem” a People is facing. If the tribe finds certain features of the new culture which are perceived as “compatible or [...] which fitted the needs of the Native community”, then missionaries were far more successful in converting their target group (Feest 114-15). Nonetheless, as Green notes, it turns into a different situation when “one group uses force against another in order to eliminate it or to force its assimilation, [then] cultural exchange becomes replaced by cultural imperialism” (26).

As to fusion (also termed syncretism), this concept of cultural change happens by the blending of features of two cultures (or of two religious systems, when one refers to it as syncretism). In this manner completely new religions and, as a consequence, also new ways of life can be and, in fact, were created. Two examples of such new systems are the Peyote and the Handsome Lake religions, both of which took several aspects from some Christian as well as from some Indigenous belief. In the case of the Peyote religion the Kiowa and the Comanche took a Mexican ritual and merged it with

“Southern Plains and Christian features”, which was later on “spread across the Plains” and successfully introduced to the Navajo (Feest 111-12). Whereas Handsome Lake, a prophet, who in addition was a Seneca chief, claimed to be a messenger of God who was sent to “tell the Iroquois they would be destroyed unless they changed their ways”, which consequently brought about a new form of Christianity, for which the “word of the deity as revealed to Handsome Lake became the bible” (Hammond 338).

Cultural compartmentalization means that a tribe’s original culture is kept in its most important aspects and is identified as separate from the European one(s). However, the culture of the colonizers is adopted as a second option, the advantage of this being that both systems can be used interchangeably, i.e. depending on the situation either one cultural behavior or the other is “activated”. Most clearly this process can be observed when it comes to religious compartmentalization as in the case of the Pueblo of the Rio Grande Valley. A big percentage of this Nation was converted by force (Feest 112-13). Thus, they “had little choice but to accept Catholicism. At the same time, they retained their traditional beliefs and practices which were important for their economic activities and political organization” (112). Today going to church is an integral part of Pueblo society, although there is, of course, no more “external force” applied in order to make people attend mass or other church functions (113).

What Feest defines as the fifth form of cultural change is called pluralism (or factionalism), which is especially connected to religious conversion, but which also involves the adoption of a totally new culture. In contrast to compartmentalization, pluralism refers to an alteration in which not all members of a Nation convert at the same time. Instead, usually a marginal group is the one to accept conversion, which is the reason why suddenly two (or even more) different groups can exist next to each other, although some can have a rather competing attitude towards each other (115).

It has already been mentioned that First Nations people were very adaptive in the sense that voluntary borrowing certain elements from other cultures (rather than taking the new culture as a whole) and sometimes altering them in certain ways so as to make them a new part of their own traditional culture was an integral part of life. Such behavior comes close to fusion, although the crucial difference is, of course, that no new belief system is created but that a People retains their traditional culture and beliefs while only certain elements are added or exchanged with new ones. From this point of view this can be seen as a sixth process of transculturation, which in this paper will be referred to as adaptation.

In spite of the possibilities which have been enumerated Hallowell noted that in the context of the interplay between European and Native cultures in colonial North America transculturation was not only something that touched the First Nations but it was rather a “symmetrical process” (qtd. in Trenk 70), which brought about, as Trenk terms it, “White Captives,” “Renegades,” French-Canadian “Commuters,” and “Red Euro-Americans”. Since, however, the main focus of this analysis is directed towards cultural conversions and change in the identity of Natives, this part will be kept short, but cannot be omitted entirely for it does in certain ways, which will be mentioned in chapters 4 and 5, influence the development of Native conversion of the characters in *Ceremony* and *TDR*.

3.2.2. White Captives – Lov’d the Indian style of life³⁶

Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier stated that “[f]rom the beginnings of European exploration and settlement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through the end of the nineteenth century, Indian captivity was very much a historical reality for countless explorers and settlers” (1-2), i.e. many European settlers were taken captive by various Aboriginal tribes; many captives did return to their previous homes, however, there was also a considerable number of whites who decided not to and stay with the respective tribe (Trenk 67). It is people like these, returned or not, who could provide white society with adventurous accounts about the dreaded topic of Indian captivity – combined with moral and biblical lessons (which usually were added by the editors of the stories) – which the masses still loved to read, hear and talk about (Wyss, *Indians* 12).

Trenk points out that, interestingly enough, stories about white captives who turned to a Native way of life have always fascinated Euro-American and Euro-Canadian society, whereas a change of life-style which involved Native persons has in most cases remained ignored³⁷. The reason for that was that it was not considered to be

³⁶ Mary Jemison is a widely-known example of a white person who was adopted by the Seneca when she was twelve years old and who grew to highly value the Aboriginal culture of this People. “An elegy written in her honor and published in 1844 records that Jemison “lov’d the Indian style of life”” (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 6). For a critical view of Mary Jemison’s captivity narrative refer to Hilary E. Wyss’s essay “Captivity and Conversion: William Apess, Mary Jemison, and Narratives of Racial Identity.”

³⁷ It is not as if stories involving a cultural alteration in Aboriginal individuals were not published at all. In fact there was complete type of narrative dedicated to it, the conversion narrative, which generally featured Natives who had to separate themselves from their families and tribes in order to be able to leave the Indigenous way of life behind and rise to a more noble one, that is they adopted Christianity because

an as interesting phenomenon, for it was, of course, understandable that an Indigenous person wanted to exchange traditional ways for “civilized” ones (68-69).

In accordance with the diverging stereotypes of good and bad Natives, captivity narratives showed Indigenous Peoples in two almost diametrically opposed ways as well, although accounts which contained positive views were rare in relation to the negative ones. Derounian-Stodola and Levernier explain this fact by arguing that a considerable number of white captives did not return to their previous homes. “Precisely because many of these captives chose to disassociate themselves from white culture, most of their captivities went unrecorded [partly also d]ue to illiteracy or a lack of interest or opportunity [...]” (73). Moreover, the two researchers have found out that both captives and editors in the middle of the nineteenth century simply did not think that the readers would actually believe or even accept positive comments about the First Nations captors (74-75). In addition to the reluctance that was shown towards good images of Indigenous peoples there was a certain proneness to anti-Native propaganda of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which was mainly caused by the colonizers’ desire for land, as well as by the need to prove their own superiority (63). This is why such negative accounts told of, as an anonymous editor wrote, “the dreadful cruelties exercised by the Indians on persons so unfortunate as to fall into their hands” (qtd. in Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 35). However, in many cases neither those terrible deeds nor the existence of the featured captive can be proven (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 35).

There were four reasons for Natives taking captives: The first motive was revenge: “Angry at Europeans who stole their lands and massacred them in wars, Indians sometimes retaliated by subjecting enemy captives to ritualistic ceremonies of torture and death” (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 2-3). Secondly, ransom was another reason, as can be seen, for instance, in the case of Mary Rowlandson³⁸ and many other captives, while taking slaves was a third motivation. Lastly, captives were also held in order to replace tribal members who either had been killed in fights with

they had grown aware of the sinfulness of their previous life styles. Yet this kind of stories was not as successful as the captivity narrative (Wyss, *Indian* 13-14).

³⁸ Mary Rowlandson’s “The Sovereignty and Goodness of God” of 1682, which can be read in Gordon M. Sayre’s collection of *American Captivity Narratives*, is one of the most famous accounts of a European who was held captive by First Nations. Due to its popularity it was reprinted “a dozen times in the eighteenth century, several dozen in the nineteenth, and a dozen or so in [the last] century” and later on anthologized (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 94), as can be seen from Sayre’s collection of narratives of that kind. Other famous examples of white captives include Frances Slocum, Eunice Williams, Cynthia Ann Parker, and John Tanner.

Europeans or who had died of diseases. In this way many captives were adopted who during their stays frequently learned to appreciate if not even love their new Indian families and surroundings. In this manner John Tanner³⁹, just as many other children, was captured at a young age and adopted. It has to be mentioned that with children the process of assimilation was generally speaking less problematic than with older captives, since children usually had less culturally biased views and adopted new ways of life more easily (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 4-8).

Tanner's narrative tells of his "life as hunter and trapper among the Indians [such as the Ojibwe] along the Minnesota and Canadian border" (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 7) both of which, the way of life and the tribe, he had grown very fond of. Tanner even refused to go back to the European settlers, for he was sure that his life among the Natives was far better while a life with the whites would be "intolerable" (qtd. in Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 77-79).

3.2.3. Renegades – Despicable Traitors

Despite the frequency of captivities of white settlers and their subsequent more or less voluntary conversion (since in certain cases the captives did not exactly have options other than to accept the culture of their captors), there were also individuals who opted for a Native life style and therefore joined some tribe out of free will "without undergoing a period of captivity" (Trenk 74). People who did so were referred to as renegades by white society.

Especially for Anglophone settlers it was unthinkable that anybody could voluntarily choose a life among Aborigines. A very radical view on Natives and their way of life could be observed with Puritans according to whom "the [N]atives were unstructured and lawless. Contacts between the two groups could cause the Puritans to 'grow wild'" (Smits qtd. in Green 6). It was equally a mystery to most whites how someone could opt for putting oneself "in the way of the grand march of civilization" (Trenk 74). Individuals who in spite of "common sense" chose to leave civilization and thus become an enemy were despised, even more than some captives who changed cultures voluntarily. "Some of [those cultural converts] are remembered as arch-

³⁹ John Tanner's narrative *Dreißig Jahre unter den Indianern Nordamerikas: 1789-1822*, as included in the list of works cited, was originally published in 1830 under the very detailed title of *A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner, (U.S. Interpreter at the Saut de Ste. Marie) during Thirty Years Residence among the Indians in the Interior of North America*, which was edited by Edwin James.

scoundrels, like, for instance, Simon Girty at the time of the American Revolution, whose name was for a long time synonymous with the vilest of treason” (74).

3.2.4. French-Canadian Commuters – Cultural Fusion

In contrast to British settlers, many French traders had rather close contact with various First Nations Peoples, the consequences of which were numerous marriages between the traders and Indigenous women. (As has been mentioned above, such intermarriages brought about a new Nation, the Métis.) In this manner the settlers frequently moved in with their spouses, became an acknowledged part of the tribe and thereby adopted the respective Native ways (Trenk 70).

Nevertheless, generally speaking the French did not cut their connections to their previous homes. This allowed them to commute between two identities, i.e. they went through a voluntary process of cultural fusion. “Since such cultural metamorphoses were relatively unproblematic in New France, there was hardly an incentive, nor pressure, to cross over to the other side completely” (Trenk 71).

3.2.5. Red Euro-Americans – The Cultural Limbo

It is unnecessary to mention that conversion was also happening on the side of the First Nations. Similarly to what has been stated about white conversion, Natives also altered their value and belief systems in accordance to how they were influenced by the colonizers’ culture. The possibilities of the outcome of cultural adaptations have also been sufficiently explained. What is left to say is that Aboriginals who did change their way of life – whether they had done it voluntarily or involuntarily, as captives of the settlers or as free persons – very often found themselves in a certain limbo state (Trenk 75-77).

This was the result of two ideas about Native culture-crossing which the Europeans held: On the one hand, Aboriginal individuals were in a certain respect accepted by the white settlers due to the fact that they strongly approved of Indigenous persons’ converting. Furthermore, such behavior “elicited no particular surprise either from their French or their English contemporaries” (Trenk 76), on the contrary, they perceived it as the logical thing to do if a Native realized the very same fact. On the other hand, the colonizers did not completely accept converts as full new members of white society because they simply were no real Europeans but still Aboriginals who acted European. Therefore Native culture-crossers were always on the margins of colonial society. What added to this difficult situation was the remaining tribal

members' attitude which was very much the same as the one of the colonizers when one of their people turned Native, i.e. the person in question was seen as a traitor of one's own culture and people. Accordingly, First Nations cultural converts were frequently part of neither their new society nor their original tribe (76-77).

"And yet it made a difference from which side the frontier was crossed." As has been demonstrated "not all cultures [were and] are equally receptive to the assimilation of foreigners" (Trenk 84). While white converts to a Native way of life were frequently adopted by their new family, Aboriginals who had undergone the process of transculturation were merely marginally embedded into Euro-American and Euro-Canadian society. On the other hand, in both cases the convert's group of origin regarded the act of giving up one's own culture in favor of a different one as behavior only a renegade could show.

Another point which deserves mentioning at this point is the similar problem persons of mixed heritage had and still have to face. They too are very often caught in the limbo between two or even more cultures, belonging to each a bit but to none really. As will be seen in the analysis proper, several of the characters in *Ceremony* and *TDR* share this cultural in-betweenness. Before I, however, turn to the novels, one final point of background theory needs to be presented, namely the crucial question of how one defines his/her own self.

3.3. Defining Identity – The Self is a Sign

This part is based on Deborah Davis Jackson's *Our Elders Lived It: American Indian Identity in the City* and her observation concerning a situation which happened during a potluck at the Birmingham County Indian Association. Jackson describes that during this event the two groups of people which attended it got into a heated discussion about the validity of their respective Native identities. After various arguments concerning where some of the people had grown up – i.e. on or off reserve, or with or without an Aboriginal family and its surroundings, – whether they knew the Native language and ways, or whether someone did or did not look Native, the situation came to an abrupt halt when

someone [...] held a small rectangular piece of cardboard up in the air. Then another person [...] did the same, and one by one other members of this group followed suit – without any discussion among themselves, people were reaching into their wallets, taking out the cards, and holding them aloft. Within a couple of minutes, virtually everyone [of this group] [...] – including both the younger and elder generations – was sitting silently, holding up one of these cards. As the

others, [from the other group] [...] became aware of this extraordinary demonstration, they fell silent as well, and a hush came over the crowd. It took a few moments before I realized what [the card-holding people] [...] were doing: as their final rejoinder in the battle over who was Indian and who was not, the Anishinaabe people had no need for words – they simply held up their “Indian cards”. (Jackson 5-6)

From this point onward Jackson juxtaposes Fredrik Barth’s and Charles Sanders Peirce’s theories about ethnic and cultural identity and the self so as to get to an explanation why the card-holding group acted the way they did, why the other group went numb and accepted those cards as proof, and how tribal affiliation and one’s identity are defined legally as well as socially, the latter aspect of which is, obviously, why I regard it as necessary to include these two theories in this paper: They will be the main basis on which I will ground my analysis concerning how the characters in Silko’s and Boyden’s novels define themselves.

3.3.1. Doing the Splits over Objectivism and Subjectivism

Fredrik Barth’s introductory chapter to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* challenges ideas concerning ethnicity which were current at his time. One of them says that “the classification of persons and local groups as members of an ethnic group must depend on their exhibiting the particular *traits* of the culture. This is something that can be judged *objectively* by the ethnographic observer” or a legal institution (12, emphases added). Barth criticizes the notion that ethnicity’s determining factors are “the overt cultural forms which can be itemized as traits” (12). His motive to do so was that cultural traits of this type cannot be perceived as a valid indicator of ethnicity, race, or culture due to their invariability, i.e. “they do not allow for change (through both time and space) [...]” (Jackson 7). Instead of those traits Barth introduced the notion of an ethnic “boundary” which separates ethnic groups (14-15). He furthermore enriched this field of research by adding the concept of “subjectivity” which implies that ethnic and cultural differences which determine identity (and, of course, separate from other identities) “are not the sum of ‘objective’ differences, but only [of] those which the actors themselves regard as significant” (14).

Jackson argues that when Barth’s objectivist and subjectivist concepts are applied to the cultures of First Nations – whose members, or outside persons who want to become acknowledged members by law, are constantly taking part in the process in which cultural or ethnic identity is defined – the objectivist view comes close to claims that can be observed in works which elaborate on the sensitive matter of the increasing

numbers of people in want of federal recognition as legal members of tribal communities. Such works call for historical authenticity concerning Native identity because they have identified “romanticized myths of Indianness” as one of the main reasons why more and more people seek to be accepted as Aboriginals (11-12). Moreover, there are numerous scholars, such as James A. Clifton, who criticize the current situation in which the last twenty years have shown immense numbers of people who only recently have discovered that they had some Indigenous ancestor(s) and who, thus, “swapped their ethnic identities for Indian” (qtd. in Jackson 5) especially in times when “it became [economically] profitable to do so” (Jackson 5). Therefore advocates of the objectivist perspective try to “establish a documentable, historical reality in which the Native American identity of an individual or group is seen as an empirical question to be determined by empirical (i.e. objective) means”. The exclusively subjective way of defining cultural identity, on the other hand, supports the idea that someone is an Indigenous person if he/she identifies himself/herself as such (Jackson 12).

From this point of view no one who did not speak a Native language, who was of Christian belief, who did not use practices of subsistence from pre-contact times, or whose dress and hairstyle did not match the respective Nation one claimed to belong to could, objectively seen, be an Aboriginal member. From the subjectivist perspective this was, however, indeed possible. Every person who in spite of a merely “distant genetic link to an American Indian ancestor” perceived himself/herself as Native due to a personal connection should also have the right to be accepted as Native (Jackson 12-13).

A further point which Jackson notes is that before contact Indigenous Peoples did not really focus on ancestral ties in order to accept an individual as one of their own, a fact which was already pointed out during the discussion of captivity narratives, i.e. individuals who due to captivity or, in the cases of many Natives, normal marriage moved from one cultural group to an other were adopted as full members of the family and tribe (13-14). Nevertheless, what can be observed today is that the criterion of Native blood-quantum is one of the most frequently used means to decide whether a person can be a legal tribal member and, hence, be issued an identity card (called CDIB – Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood – in the U.S., and Indian status card in Canada) which proves this status (Garrouette 38; Jackson 14). Garrouette notes that “about two-thirds of all federally recognized tribes⁴⁰ of the [...] United States specify a minimum

⁴⁰ Garrouette adds that about a third of First Nations tribes does not apply the criterion of degree of Native blood. Instead they frequently want documents which prove that “any new enrollee be a lineal (direct)

blood quantum in their legal citizenship criteria, with one quarter blood degree being the most frequent minimum requirement” (15). This means that in order for a person to be officially recognized as a tribal member and, accordingly, become a “card-carrying Indian” (38) by being issued a CDIB/Indian status card, the person has to have at least one grandparent who is of purely Native descent⁴¹. Despite the common belief that such criteria for recognition are determined by the American or Canadian governments, it is in fact the tribes themselves which set which criteria have to be fulfilled, and to this there are no restrictions.

Nonetheless, many Aboriginals – even individuals which have met the legal requirements of federal and tribal institutions – are strongly against standards based on blood degree (Garrouette 34). They justify their argument by explaining that criteria which concentrate on biology (i.e. genealogical research and blood-quanta) as definite marker of ethnicity originate in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century thought of Euro-Americans and are, consequently, no part whatsoever of Native history, ideas or traditions (42). Such standards were simply “never employed by Native people before [European] contact” (Kathleen W. qtd. in Garrouette 34). The extent to which many Indigenous persons are outraged at this kind of situation can be felt in the words of Julie M., which can be read in Garrouette’s work:

[F]or people like us, who are just *here*, who grew up in this [Cherokee community], it’s kind of like, at least for me [...] that whole idea of having to *document* who we are – well, I *know* who I am! It was an insult to me to *have* to get a CDIB [...]. I felt like, why do I need the federal government to tell me what the definition of Indian is? Why do I have to be the one to go out and get a card that says I’m Indian to meet *their* requirements? Because *I* don’t have any requirements in my community. Or if there *are* requirements, I meet ’em. And I don’t have to have the federal government saying [...] that I’m Cherokee to *know* who I am. (34)

What in the eyes of First Nation members seems to enjoy much more significance than blood quanta is to have “lived it”, i.e. those individuals who were familiar with the values, customs and beliefs of Native ways; whose family histories entailed “hardships of the past” such as “poverty, racism, the punitive boarding school, and the pressures to conform that characterized American Indian life during the first

descendant of another tribal member” (15), which varies from tribe to tribe in whether maternal or paternal descent is required (20).

⁴¹ Of course, this is a very simplistic demonstration of how the degree of Native blood can be calculated. On page 44-45 Garrouette’s work *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* features a complete table taken from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Tribal Enrollment) which helps to determine the amount of Native blood of a person has. According to this table, if one parent is 3/16 Native blood and the other parent is 3/8, then their child has a degree of 9/32 Native blood.

half of the twentieth century”; and whose family members did not have “the luxury of putting on an Indian identity and then taking it off as suited their mood and circumstances [...]”, those people were identified as Native (Jackson 17).

Nevertheless it is necessary to note that in cases in which either a purely subjective or a completely objective approach was applied, various people were given CDIBs/Indians status cards despite not having “lived it”. Hence, it can be argued that an approach which is neither entirely subjective nor totally objective is better for people who, for example, were adopted, who do not have enough Native blood or none at all, or who are not lineal descendants of acknowledged tribal members, and consequently cannot be listed as such by law⁴². In this way people who have actually spent either all their life or a big part of it in Native surroundings, have lived according to Native ways, and who, thus, perceive themselves as Native as well, should have the right to be a legal member. But neither the law nor a minority of full-blood Aboriginals (among them also a Hopi geneticist) agree with this view. Accordingly, utterances saying that non-Native blood is “watering down” the Native blood, or claiming that (referring to a “mixed-blood individual”) “[i]f he got a nosebleed, he’d turn into a white man” can be heard sometimes (Garrouette 41). A similar conception shared by white as well as Native persons is that “[p]eople with more Indian blood [...] also have more rights to inherit what their ancestors, the former Indians, have left behind. In addition, full blood Indians are more authentic⁴³ than half-breeds” (Roosens qtd. in Garrouette 41).

In contrast, Garrouette presents numerous accounts of First Nations persons (whose last names she only indicates by giving the initial letter) about what defines Nativeness to them, the outcome of which is that the majority of Natives support the thought that “what people actually and ongoingly do” is a much more Aboriginal oriented view than the current legal criteria focusing on biology (73). Joyce J.’s puts this

⁴² Garrouette enumerates many cases of people who applied for a CDIB/Indian status card and who either did or did not get it. Among these there are accounts of persons who were not given the Native ID in spite of the fact that they were indeed direct descendants, but unfortunately from the wrong (either paternal or maternal, depending on the tribe) side. In some reported cases of that kind did whole families of people, direct descendants, leave their communities, and some families were even dissolved by force and expelled from reserve because a family member was not assigned a Native status (19-25). Furthermore, there were children in the U.S. which were “only” adopted and, in consequence, could not be enlisted, while in Canada there is a regulation which does indeed allow adopted individuals to be accepted as legal tribal members (39).

⁴³ An idea which goes hand in hand with the theory that full-blood Indigenous persons are more authentic than persons of mixed heritage is derived from a further cultural definition. According to this definition, culture is separate from “human activity”, that is culture and, in consequence, cultural identity “cannot be *chosen*; it can only be *given* – at the time of birth, or very close to it”, because the somewhat absurd assumption goes that humans can “never be socialized except at a particular moment in time, [their] childhood” (Garrouette 69).

as follows: “[W]hat makes an Indian has nothing to do with amount of blood [...]. I think it’s their thinking, their mind, their soul, and their heart” (qtd. in Garrouette 77). Or as Julie M. expresses it: “Those of us who are Cherokee, who grew up in the Cherokee way, in the Cherokee tradition, in the Cherokee language – and just *being* Cherokee – we don’t really *think* about it, you know? You just *live* it. You just *are*” (qtd. in Garrouette 73). Melvin B. also finds very clear words in which to stress the idea of the importance of continuous and ongoing cultural participation:

I’ve seen some full-blooded Indians, that I *know* are full-blooded Indians, that are *not* Indians. They don’t care about the Indian culture, they don’t attend Indian functions. [...] So I would say no, even though he’s a full blood, he’s not a real Indian [...]. I see a blonde-headed person, blue-eyed, that attends ceremonial things and goes to different tribal affairs and things like that. And they try to uphold the Indian tradition. To me, that’s a real Indian. But that’s again, that’s *my* way of lookin’ and seein’. (qtd. in Garrouette 76)

What Jackson concludes from all the statements above is that “the ultimate bottom line seems to be family connection. [...] [It is] social relations (and more specifically, kinship relations) that really count [...]” (150), i.e. it is not enough that someone is a “self-identified Indian”, who perceives himself/herself as Native but can not fulfill the legal standards (Garrouette 82), but in many tribes it is common usage that the family has to accept a person as well.

Theories which allow each person only one ethnic (or racial) category are, nonetheless, slowly losing validity; more and more individuals “claim [their rights to] more than one racial identity” (Garrouette 7), something that is not only supported by Barth’s subjectivist notion, in which a person can choose on his/her own which identity he/she wants to live by, but to a certain degree also by the subsequent approach to defining one’s self, termed *semeiosis*.

3.3.2. Semeiosis as Alternative to Subjectivism

In contrast to Barth’s subjectivist approach to identity Charles Sanders Peirce⁴⁴ offers his theory of *semeiosis*⁴⁵, i.e. sign-interpretation of which one rather important

⁴⁴ Peirce was developing his theory of signs from the 1860s to the 1890s, in which he created an “Early Account” as well as an “Interim Account”. A “Final Account”, which however remained incomplete, was even “developed between 1906 and 1910” (Atkin, “Peirce”). His manuscripts were, however, only collected, edited and published after his death, for example, in the 1930s, when the first six volumes of *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* appeared, and in the mid-1950s, when undiscovered manuscripts – which the Department of Philosophy at Harvard University had bought from Peirce’s widow, but had stored them in the basement of Harvard’s Widener Library for decades – were published as two further volumes of Peirce’s collection. “His published works run to about 12,000 printed pages and his known unpublished manuscripts run to about 80,000 handwritten pages. The topics on which he wrote

aspect is grounded on the assumptions that, on the one hand, anything can be a sign, including identity, or the self, as he referred to it, and that, on the other hand, every human is connected⁴⁶ to other humans, i.e. the community around them.

The first assumption is best explained by Peirce's idea on what human consciousness sees as a symbol, or rather as a sign of something else⁴⁷. He argues that "whenever we think, we have present to the consciousness some feeling, image, conception, or other representation which serves as a sign" (qtd. in Colapietro 68), and since we can even imagine the concept of consciousness as a sign Peirce inferred that everything could be a sign, in fact "the self itself is a sign" (Colapietro 68).

The basis for the second afore-mentioned assumption is that Peirce does not view humans as "absolute" but rather as "relational beings", which means that no individual is a real individual, since it could only be truly subjective, if it was living completely alone (with no other living beings surrounding it). He thus stresses that every being builds an "association with other selves"⁴⁸ which is crucial for any developing self (Colapietro 78). In other words, "[t]he most basic fact about the human person is that he or she is a being *in communication with* other beings or, more accurately, a being who possesses the capacity to be in communication with others" (Colapietro 37). As a consequence, Peirce's theory can in a certain way be described as an "intersubjectivist approach" which, when it comes to the origins and influences of defining a person's self (i.e. one's identity), centers on human community instead of "disembodied human subjects" as in subjectivism (Colapietro 27).

have an immense range, from mathematics and the physical sciences at one extreme, to economics and the social sciences at the other extreme" (Burch, "Peirce").

⁴⁵ Peirce's motive to change the previously existing term of sign-interpretation, *semiosis*, to *semeiosis* was that he criticized that the former term embodied a static description of meaning of a sign to which Peirce did not agree. He rather understood sign-interpretation as an active and ongoing process, which is why he introduced a new form of the term, i.e. *semeiosis*.

⁴⁶ Peirce does not entirely deny subjectivism, i.e. a person can indeed act independently, but he rather offered his *semeiosis* as an "alternative to the subjectivist approach" to the self (Colapietro 104). For a more detailed discussion of the topic of autonomy of individuals see Colapietro 99-118.

⁴⁷ Before Peirce developed the concept of *semeiosis* another of his theories was well-known, namely his distinction between three types of signs. This trichotomy described "icons", "indices" (or "signs"), and "symbols", each of which referred to a certain type of relation to a certain object, that is they indicated whether the relationship between the real object and its "representation", as Peirce used to call it before he opted for the term *sign*, was either based on 1) an actual resemblance of some kind, 2) a real relation which connected the two, or 3) on an installed convention which exists despite no immediately perceivable similarity (qtd. in Colapietro 16; qtd. in Skagestad 246).

⁴⁸ Colapietro points out that community itself can never be seen as a stable whole which contains only individual, autonomous, subjective selves. Rather one can say that it is "a living union of integrated selves", which in return implies that a community is a changeable object as well, for it is constantly reshaped by the selves which it holds (78).

One of the prerequisites that are necessary in order to understand how a person is actually able to define his/her identity is to “distinguish between [the concept of] the self as an interpreting subject and the self as an interpreted object” (Colapietro 66) because the self that is being interpreted is never the same as the self/the person which interprets. Secondly, Peirce explains that sign-activity must not be understood as “dynamical⁴⁹ action” (qtd. in Colapietro 1, emphasis added), i.e.

all dynamical action, or action of brute force, physical or psychical, either takes place between two subjects [...]. But by “semiosis” I mean, on the contrary, an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of *three* subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs. (qtd. in Colapietro 1)

It is precisely this “[t]riadic” relation – sign, object, interpretant (Colapietro 4-5; Short 214) – which distinguishes Peirce’s theory from Ferdinand de Saussure’s dyadic definition, which only correlated a signified (“signifié”) to a signifier (“signifiant”) (Colapietro 5).

According to Peirce’s definition “a sign [is] anything that stands for something (its object) to something else (its interpretant)” (qtd. in Colapietro 2). A clearer version which definitely points to the diverging nature of the interpretant and the sign-interpreter sounds as follows: “[R]epresentation is something that *stands for* something *to* someone who so interprets it – more precisely, *to* the ‘interpretant’, which that person *forms* in response to the sign and which is a *second representation* of the same thing” (qtd. in Short 214, emphases added). This means that “[s]ignificance is not a direct relation of sign to object; instead, the significance of a sign is determined *by the interpretant* which that sign elicits” (Short 215, emphasis added).

Furthermore, “[i]t is essential to note that the interpretant of the sign is not identical to the interpreter; i.e. the individual mind interpreting the sign is *not* one of the three references that constitute signhood. [However t]he interpretant may, and perhaps normally does, arise in the consciousness of the individual subject [...]” (Skagestad 244). Even if the interpreter as individual subject is not an integral part of Peirce’s definition, the “sign-interpreter” can indeed be found in some longer definitions which try to state more precisely what Peirce understands by a sign (Skagestad 244), as the following version demonstrates: “A sign [...] is something which stands to somebody

⁴⁹ Peirce alters the original etymological sense of *dynamical* by understanding the two initial letters, dy-, as a separate prefix and, hence, using it in the same sense as one would apply the prefix di-, namely as a combining form meaning “two”. For further reference on the synonymous relation between dy- and di- see Ernest Klein’s *Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary*, “di-“ and “dy-“.

for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign” (qtd. in Skagestad 244).

What still has to be clarified at this point is the nature of the relationship between the sign and its object is. A helpful explanation was given by David Savan:

[T]he object of a sign might be defined as the specific item *within its context* to which all interpretants of that sign are collaterally related. [...] [Because of the object’s relation to a surrounding context, every sign, too, entails] a context which is tacit and unexpressed by the community within which the sign operates. The context is the medium through which something, the object, which makes the sign true or false, correct or incorrect, is identified. (qtd. in Colapietro 10-11, emphasis added)

Basically the above-stated says that the object does indeed determine the sign; nevertheless the object itself is influenced by the context, the community into which it is embedded. Hence, the self as a sign always carries the implications provided by the object’s community, i.e. the society that surrounds the self of a person (the object) has a significant amount of influence on what the interpreter (the actual person) can infer from the self as a sign. This idea only reemphasizes Peirce’s assumption that no human being is an island but that he/she is always related to other beings, i.e. the community.

Peirce’s definition of sign-interpretation has one more notable aspect, namely that due to the triadic structure in which the sign has to be actively interpreted, Peirce does not perceive active sign-interpretation, *semeiosis*, as purely happening for no good reason, but rather as “end-directed”, i.e. every single time a sign is interpreted there must be a goal, a purpose to the whole process. Without that goal no interpretational process would be initiated in the first place (qtd. in Short 230) and what is more, the purpose drives the interpretant into specific directions, that is the interpretant of a sign can vary but remains always in accordance with the goal. Although one must not forget that the possibility of range for the interpretant’s variation is, on the other hand, again limited by what surrounded the self as object and, in a further step, the self as a sign (Short 233).

The characters in *Ceremony* and *TDR* (just as people in the real world) are constantly trying, for various reasons, to find a self, or rather an identity with which they feel they can master their lives. Due to encounters with other cultures their way of life, their culture is also changing more rapidly than before contact. Hence, they are in a position of having to interpret and reinterpret their selves according to what the surrounding circumstances impose as new meanings on the sign of the self. In other

words, the need to actually interpret the sign of the self/identity is given because the existing interpretant of the self is not valid anymore or can not fulfill its purpose of understanding oneself due to certain changes in the surrounding society. Consequently, the interpreters (i.e. the characters of the two novels) interpret the sign of the self/identity in accordance with the implied meanings it carries, albeit the possibilities for the interpretant are limited since they are influenced by the surroundings. As a final step in the process of semeiosis, the interpretant (the more developed equivalent of the sign which was created by adding meaning to it), which usually does arise in the consciousness of the subject (the interpreter), becomes an actual part of the interpreter. This means that out of a mix of previous interpretants of the self, and influences of society on the (ever-changing) sign of the self the interpreter has created by himself/herself a new identity which he/she from that moment on embodies.

For the before-mentioned concept of subjective and objective identity this theory obviously confirms the idea that identity is indeed subjective, although never entirely but only to a certain degree, since the community which is part of an individual's daily life heavily influences the ways in which that person can define his/her own self. At the same time Peirce's assumptions imply that in the search for self-identification – or rather “self”-identification – objective identity merely plays a minor role. Nonetheless, objective identity still remains the crucial factor as to whether a person is officially an ID-ed member of a Native People. In short, a person's identity which an individual embodies at a certain point of time is a matter of subjective perception as well as surrounding influence.

To conclude this philosophically inspired chapter I propose N. Scott Momaday's words: “We are what we imagine. [...] An Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself” (qtd. in Owens, *Destinies* 5). Of course, according to Peirce's theory one is never truly subjective but each person is a sum of the influences stemming from one's surroundings and past experiences which slip into the meaning deduced by active sign-interpretation. In connection with semeiosis Jackson makes a very interesting proposition; she “suggest[s] that a generally sem[e]iotic approach to the self, or identity, is consistent with the traditional Anishinaabe worldview, [...] [because it is] based on continuity and change over time, and most importantly [it is] about community” (16-18). She goes on to explain that Peirce's approach “recognizes the connection between, on the one hand, the past experiences alluded to or implied in the phrase ‘our elders lived it’ and, on the other hand, one's present identity as an Indian” (18). Certainly,

Momaday's proposition is very much on the subjectivist side, while Jackson moves towards a mix of a constantly changing (almost circular) inter-subjective self and a subjectively defined one. What cannot be denied is that subjectivity indeed is an essential element in "self"-definition because in the end it is the individual who creates a meaning for his/her sign of the self. Consequently, we are what we imagine. We mix our own identity cocktail. Or in the wording of my initial thesis: We are our own mixed identity.

Having a look at which of all of the above-stated concepts (stereotypes, conversions past or present, or one's own community with their inherent worldview) influence the characters of Silko's and Boyden's novels, and how they respectively interpret their identities from there, is the next step of this analysis.

4. LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S *CEREMONY*

4.1. Plot Summary

Ceremony is the "chronicle of [a] recovery" (Beidler, Review 357), namely of the recovery of Tayo, a Native with mixed heritage, who after having fought for several years at the Pacific front in WWII returns to his home on the Laguna Pueblo reserve. However, he is not able to actually lead a happy and healthy life because the horrifying experiences of the war have left him with a posttraumatic stress disorder (also termed shell shock or battle fatigue), which disallows Tayo's coming to terms with the past.

In order to get over the shock of the deaths of many soldiers and of his cousin Rocky, who has fallen in the war, and especially of his uncle Josiah, who died while Tayo was overseas, he has to go through a healing ceremony in which he is guided by several characters, but mostly by the Navajo medicine man, Betonie. However, it is not only Tayo's nightmares about his dead relatives and the other horrors of war which haunt him. It is also the state of being torn between his Laguna Pueblo and his Mexican identity, the lack of a mother or other caring motherly figures, and the guilt he feels for believing to have brought a devastating drought onto his whole people that Tayo has to deal with so as to be able to recover. In the end he manages to accept both his deeds of the past, and the present state of relations among the white, Mexican and Native cultures, and in this way finds peace in the Indigenous way of life and its cyclical, non-static, and inclusive thinking.

4.2. Tayo: A *Hybrid* Person – Yet an Indian Nonetheless

The phrase “a ‘mixed-blood’ individual, [...] a *hybrid* person – yet an Indian nonetheless,” stems from the preface to Arnold Krupat’s *Red Matters* (xii) and refers to the author’s depiction of the first novel written in the twentieth century⁵⁰ that sheds light on the issue of Aborigines with mixed heritage, namely Mourning Dove’s *Cogewea, the Half-Blood*, which was published in 1927. What Krupat intends to discuss by introducing this work is the notion that “Cogewea’s dilemma” is leading the existence of “a mixed race person” (xi), or a person of mixed heritage, for that matter. Krupat furthermore argues that if we are to grasp the meaning of the dilemma of persons of mixed origin we must

consider some of the work of the foremost Native intellectuals of the years just before and after the First World War on the subject of Indian identity and compare it to W. E. B. DuBois’s conceptualization of what, for African American identity, DuBois called “double consciousness.” Just as DuBois theorizes the attempt of the black person to be both a Negro and an American, so, too, does the “half-blood” Cogewea encounter the difficulty of one who would live a life of both/and – to be both an Indian and a “civilized” member of the dominant society – in a time that insists upon either/or. (*Red* xi)

What Krupat suggests here is, on the one hand, that even if full-blooded Natives tried to adapt and become completely whitened by forgetting everything which their traditional ways of life teach, the biased views of the European colonizers would still not let them feel totally integrated in and accepted by the Euro-American society. This problematic situation was already defined above as the cultural limbo of “red Euro-Americans”. On the other hand, Krupat implies that individuals of mixed origin, such as Cogewea (and Tayo, as will be presented), cannot be accepted at all in the mixed state of heritage they were born with, i.e. at the time in which Cogewea’s and Tayo’s stories are set, people with mixed roots had to opt for either one society or the other, depending on which one they rather wanted to become a full member of, because society did not accept hybrids, that is people who insisted on living with both their heritage cultures.

⁵⁰ Scheick explains that before the nineteenth century there were only rare depictions of persons of mixed heritage to be detected in fiction. Those which can be found are, however, “unaesthetic” portraits. On the other hand, for nineteenth-century authors it was practically a must to include such characters “because during this [time] the half-blood emerged as a very real feature of the American frontier” (x), since it was assumed that “[h]alf-bloods [were] a new and vigorous (despite biological theories to the contrary) hybrid race [...]” (2). The threat of the full-blood Native could be overcome because they were regarded to be doomed to extinction anyhow, while “the half-blood represented a new force, perhaps even a new race on the frontier” (2). This is why “most authors, many unwittingly but several consciously, wrestled most immediately and vitally with the social and literary problems posed by the half-blood” (x).

In this regard Scheick, interestingly enough, stresses that persons of mixed heritage were even less accepted than full-blood Aboriginals and Native converts, for they brought about the idea that the First Nations of America and Canada might in fact survive, albeit in a mixed version. Furthermore, it was difficult to decide into which stereotypical category these new mixtures of people were to be put.

Although related to the Indian, the half-blood possessed certain unique characteristics and provided nineteenth-century American authors with several different literary problems and possibilities. The fictional half-blood, like the fictional Indian, embodied both fact and myth, but in contrast to the Indian, he was not so readily depicted as either a “noble savage” or the barbaric antithesis to civilization. By his very nature the half-blood epitomized the integration (whether successful or unsuccessful) of the red and the white races, provided a dramatic symbol of the benign possibilities or *malign probabilities* inherent in this encounter. (Scheick ix, emphasis added)

The reason why the discussion of crossing cultures is essential is that the three main themes in *Ceremony* are the sense of loss (of relatives, of culture, and of identity), conflicts (with others and with oneself) due to cultural heritage, and alienation. The protagonist of Silko’s novel has to face each of these three problems, and in his case each one is in some sense connected to his mixed – Laguna and white – ancestry. I do not say that the problems are caused by Tayo’s mixed origins, even though his aunt Thelma and his supposed full-blood friends, Emo, Harley, Leroy and Pinkie, repeatedly suggest the contrary. Towards the climax of the novel, at which Tayo manages to find a solution to his problems, his mixed ancestry, however, turns out to be one of the distinctive markers of Tayo’s existence by shaping his actions actually in a positive way and, consequently, aids the healing process which Tayo has to go through.

4.2.1. The Sense of Loss – Relatives, Culture and Identity

Silko builds the story upon the traditional Native belief in the concept of holistic health, the basis of which is the idea that there is no clear dividing line when it comes to physical or mental states (Trigger qtd. in Gill, J.H. 131). Hence, a person is healthy if he/she is physically, mentally and spiritually healthy. Jerry H. Gill (17; 137; 180) furthermore notes that the concept of health itself is best described as living in balance with oneself by following the proper path, which is constructed along the teachings and traditions of a People. Only if one does not get off this path of balance, can a harmonious, natural and healthy relationship with one’s family and community be ensured. However, if someone does take a wrong turn, this harmony is endangered. The consequences of this would be symptomatic illnesses of both physical and mental

nature, and the necessity to bring the balance back with the help of ritualistic ceremonies and healing medicines. Usually it is shamans⁵¹ or medicine men/women⁵² who set such a curing ceremony into motion, since it is their communal duty to conduct rituals and treatments which ensure the health of the whole tribe (Hirschfelder and Molin, "Medicine" 177). If we now consider the fact that Tayo feels constantly sick after returning from the battlefields of the Second World War, it is only obvious that for some reason he is out of balance with himself, his family, his tribe, and with nature, and that, consequently, this balance has to be restored.

Tayo's aunt, however, is of the conviction that his abominable state of health is caused by his feelings of guilt for having let his cousin Rocky, Auntie's beloved son, die. What is more, she believes that only his mixed heritage is to blame for his failing to bring back Rocky alive, because he is lacking the strength of being integrated into one culture or the other completely. In this way Auntie's behavior fits exactly into the notion depicted in nineteenth-century fiction, i.e. she does not accept him as a full member of her family, for he is not really Native; but on the other hand, his merely part-white heritage, instead of a full-blooded one, forbids her as a devout Christian and assimilated convert to Euro-American lifeways to appreciate him as part of the colonizers' culture as well.

She does not fail to humiliate him by making repeated remarks about her sister Laura's sexually promiscuous way of leading her life, her drinking too much, her wandering off with a white man, her bringing shame to the whole family, and especially her failure to be a mother to Tayo and leaving him at Auntie's place for her to raise. Moreover, she lets Tayo feel that she expects him to turn to be just the same as his mother, even though she wishes that he would behave like Rocky and adopt a white style of life. Tayo, however, prefers the Laguna traditions his uncle Josiah has taught him from early childhood on and realizes the need inside of himself to be accepted by the People of his closest relatives, Josiah and Rocky. Peter Hulme argues that individuals who tried to cross cultures, whether they were White or Native, were in a particularly vulnerable position," since in the process of attempting to adapt oneself to

⁵¹ The term shaman is originally derived from the Tungus of Siberia, in whose language a *saman* (pronounced like *shaman*) carries the meaning of "one who is excited, moved, raised". This concept of raised consciousness is derived from the fact that a shaman has an inborn sensitivity to the spirits of the world and to all living as well as dead beings, such as persons, plants and animals (Casanowicz qtd. in Lyon 278; Hirschfelder and Molin, "Shaman" 260).

⁵² Pritzker states that since the 1970s Indian Health Service hospitals have opted for a cooperation with Aboriginal medicine men, due to the numerous health issues, such as drug and alcohol addiction, which are still very frequent and, thus, need to be dealt with ("Laguna" 46).

another culture “[t]hey became, as it were, *cultural* half-breeds, inhabiting that dangerous no-man’s-land between identifiable cultural positions [...]” (qtd. in Wyss, *Indians* 50, my emphasis). This implies that Tayo, in addition to having mixed heritage and being stigmatized for that, is also in the no-win situation, in which, as a cultural convert, he will never be totally accepted by the society whose culture he has adopted – no matter whether his parents and grandparents had already belonged to this very culture before he took it over.

That Tayo does indeed favor the Pueblo traditions over the Euro-American ones can be, for example, observed in the fact that “[b]eing a half-breed never kept [Tayo] from listening to his elders of both sexes, from living with his mind open to the natural world, or from wondering about the sacred manner of life” (Evasdaughter 87). Already before going to war he listened to old Grandma’s, Josiah’s and even Auntie’s stories, no matter how hurtful the accounts given by the latter sometimes were. If one follows old Betonie’s argument stated in the introduction, one can even infer that being a person of mixed origin might have even made it easier for Tayo to see all the various aspects of this world, be they good or bad. In other words, he can even draw an advantage out of his mixed ancestry; this might be one of the benign possibilities, mentioned above. Only during the horrors of war Tayo is negatively influenced by the rejection of life he witnesses and, hence, begins to reject both life and his own self. He suddenly turns to destructive powers and feelings instead of life-affirming ones, of which “his own tongue”, which felt “dry and dead, the carcass of a tiny rodent” (15), gives evidence.

Nevertheless, Susan J. Scarberry (21) argues that, despite the negative impact of the events in the war – which definitely must be counted among the influences which can and, in fact, did reshape Tayo’s original “sign of the self”, if we reconsider Peirce’s terminology – Tayo believed in the power of stories. He did so even at an extremely frustrating point in time, namely when he and his fellow soldiers had to carry the wounded Rocky through the Philippine jungle. Tayo believes in the magic of the stories even so much as to believe that telling the soldiers a story would “give them strength” (*Ceremony* 12). This means that not even such destructive surroundings could pull Tayo entirely away from the Laguna teachings; still there was a considerable part he was alienated from.

Tayo’s feeling of guilt which originated in WWII is not exclusively related to Rocky’s death. He also feels at fault as he believes to have brought the drought upon the Pueblos after he had cursed the jungle rain. As already noted, weather is a crucial

element in Pueblo societies (Pritzker, "Laguna" 45). Expressing concern, though, about one's own people's misery in relation to bad weather conditions shows again that the Native knowledge and way of thinking is not completely lost in Tayo. He does still identify to a certain extent with his tribe, but Tayo's entire balance has to be restored so as to relieve him from his problems of loss of identity and alienation brought about by the war.

Louis Owens states that it was part of Josiah's responsibility as his relative to explain to Tayo the circular concept of life and to make him "see the necessity for every thread in the web of the universe, even the maddening jungle rains" ("Essence" 99). Josiah's words sound as follows:

These dry years you hear some people complaining, you know, about the dust and the wind, and how dry it is. But the wind and the dust, they are part of life too, like the sun and the sky. You don't swear at them. It's people, see. They're the ones. The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave. (*Ceremony* 46)

In swearing at the rain, in cursing it, Tayo misbehaves because in his confused vision he has forgotten that balance is essential for the health of himself, as well as of the universe. "To be in harmony with all of nature is the Pueblo ideal way of life," though (Pritzker, "Laguna" 45), and it is this, what Tayo has to rediscover.

What furthermore exemplifies Tayo's loss of balance, of not knowing where to go or whom to follow, are Harley's black burro and Tayo's gray mule, as Elizabeth N. Evasdaughter notices (85). At the beginning of the novel the reader is very briefly introduced to the two animals, which Harley and Tayo use to ride on in order to move from one place to another. In Harley's case we learn that he owns a black burro (Spanish for "donkey"), which "was veering hard to the right, attempting to turn around and go in the opposite direction" (*Ceremony* 19-20) to the one Harley wanted to go. Tayo, on the other hand, rides on a blind, gray mule, which obviously cannot choose a direction on its own, for it does not know where to head; but as soon as the mule feels the presence of the black donkey, it "follow[s] the burro without any trouble" (26). Tayo does not even have to hold the reins because he knows the mule would be on the same path as the black burro.

The symbolism contained in the colors of the two animals, namely black and gray, is also worth mentioning. Since the black burro is walking steadily to the left and finally "[leaves] the road entirely" (26), it can be inferred that its black skin also implicates the dark and evil forces of the universe, or of witchcraft, as Betonie's

introductory quote reads (Evasdaughter 85). In this respect Harley, too, is surrounded by blackness, for Tayo notices that there was something that frightened him about Harley's laugh. "Somehow Harley didn't seem to feel anything at all, and he masked it with smart talk and laughter" (*Ceremony* 23). Harley even falls asleep and thereby lets the donkey take him off the road. Contrastingly, the mule does not know which direction to take; its gray skin implies that it is somehow in between darkness and light, and that it is susceptible to either of the two forces. Naturally, in riding on the gray mule and even letting loose the reins, Tayo blindly follows the black burro on the path of darkness.

Through the traumatizing experiences which Tayo has lived through, he cannot endure light. He tells the Army doctors that even the light coming in from the windows "makes [him] vomit" (31). He is indeed caught in the liminal zone between light and dark, good and evil. For all of the above-mentioned problems, or rather the symptoms of the actual problems, it takes old Betonie's help to gradually bring Tayo back on a healthy path.

4.2.2. Regaining the Balance – Changing Ceremonies

Betonie, in comparison to old Ku'oosh, is not a completely traditional medicine man. He has learned that changing times need changing ceremonies; thus, he can be described as rather unconventional in his curing methods. He is

more "progressive" than others in that, having traveled and gone to school in the [W]hite world, he adjusts to the changes around him and keeps samples of [W]hite culture in his hogan alongside the traditional paraphernalia. (Seyersted, 28)

At first glance it might appear quite weird that his ceremonies include items like "newspapers, old calendars, and piles of telephone books from cities all over the United States" (Whitson, "Betonie" 27), but one has to keep in mind that already in times before contact, the tribes of North American could be described as highly adaptive. There was a considerable amount of "borrowing and reworking of aspects of one culture" going on, which were then reconfigured so as to make them useful and meaningful for one's own cultural life (Green 26). Betonie's proneness to adapt the old ceremonies and stories is mistrusted by many traditional members of the tribe. Among them we can also count the traditionalist and medicine man Ku'oosh, who is first called to try to heal Tayo. He performs the rituals and tells the stories in the same way they have always been performed and told. "He spoke softly using the old dialect full of sentences that were involuted with explanations of their own origins, as if nothing the

old man said were his own but all had been said before and he was only there to repeat it" (*Ceremony* 34). His way of healing Tayo does not work because what Tayo has witnessed on the Philippines "was all too alien [for Ku'oosh] to comprehend" (36). The old ceremonies were not made for the atrocities of the WWII period.

Betonie's mode of dealing with more modern problems can be explained by taking another look at the extract from the introduction to this paper. In the context of that quote it was stated that Silko, through the voice of Betonie, emphasizes that humans, communities, and so forth, are not supposed to be alone, i.e. nobody is meant to be an isolated individual in a negative sense because the consequence would be individual or tribal death (of traditions): "They want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction" (132). In fact, Betonie would rather prefer a "separation between good and evil, starlight and blackness, than between Indian and white", as Evasdaughter points out (91). The idea about not separating one people from another has been noticed as well by David L. Moore, who writes that Betonie's words "deny autonomous cultures and autonomous individuals" (376). He, too, uses *autonomous* in the negative sense of being an isolated being and rejecting any contact with the outside world, or in the case of *Ceremony*, rejecting any contact with non-Pueblo cultures. The tragic aspect of being a loner is that a person or a whole society might miss opportunities to learn something about possibly interesting and useful subjects, for "at least sometimes, [interconnectedness] allows for the introduction of new resources into tribal communities – resources ranging from the professional, intellectual, and financial, to the cultural, emotional, and spiritual (Nagel qtd. in Garrouette 97).

What can be seen from the following extract is that Betonie, however, does not only worry about missing some opportunities to learn, but to virtually miss the opportunity to ensure one's future existence, because "identities of individuals and communities [can] survive [only] by their very interaction" (Moore 376).

The people nowadays have an idea about the ceremonies. They think the ceremonies must be performed exactly as they have always been done. [...] But long ago when the people were given these ceremonies, the changing began, [...] if only in the different voices from generation to generation, singing the chants. You see, in many ways, the ceremonies have always been changing. [...] At one time, the ceremonies as they had been performed were enough for the way the world was then. But after the white people came, elements in this world began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies. I have made changes in the rituals. The people mistrust this greatly, but only this growth keeps the

ceremonies strong, [...] things which don't shift and grow are dead things.
(*Ceremony* 126)

Moreover, in this passage Betonie argues that in former times there were problems and difficulties, different from those issues which have to be dealt with today. Consequently, the ceremonies also had to be appropriate for the problem in question. This change of issues resulted, of course, from the interaction with the white colonizers. In this respect, it is absolutely indispensable for the ceremonies to change and adapt too; otherwise they would not have any effect on current problems, if they were maintained in the form which was suitable for the difficulties in the past.

This means that the reason why Betonie's (modified) ceremonies, in contrast to Ku'oosh's unchanged ones, have an actual effect on Tayo is that a modifiable story is better suited for solving "practical personal (sic), social, and political contemporary problems" (Kroeber qtd. in Gruber 36). Hence, Tayo's "self-transformation and self-renewal" (Gruber 36) put him into a position in which he is not opposing the world's development, but moving alongside with it. Nonetheless, the concepts of self-transformation and self-renewal do not indicate a loss of traditional values and stories. It is rather the opposite, for he strengthens the old ways of life by adding to them the necessary adaptability to change in certain details and still keep the core of their being. If that were not the case, if there was no potential for their adaptation, then the ceremonies, stories, songs and traditions would become useless at some point of time and would, thus, be left behind and forgotten by the people.

This brings us to another aspect which is part of Tayo's sickness. In fact it can even be identified as one of the reasons for his problems, which old Betonie also perceives as such: Tayo represses and denies his past.

The novel opens with the protagonist being described as suffering from "shell shock", or battle fatigue, which makes him vomit every time he thinks about his experiences in the war, his killed cousin Rocky (who in fact was more like a brother to him than merely a cousin), his beloved uncle Josiah, or when anything else comes to his mind that is somehow connected to destructive actions. The white doctors, however, merely sedate him by repeatedly giving him pills. This makes Tayo forget the past, his "life experiences are temporarily lost to him" (Scarberry 21). Tayo does not get better, nor is he in the least healed. Here one can see the difference between white healing methods of that time, which dealt with psychosomatic diseases by merely treating the symptoms instead of the causes, on the one hand, and Indian ceremonies which try to

help Tayo cope with his actual problems and do not want to make him forget, on the other. Again the concept of holistic health comes to mind, because curing Tayo would mean to consider everything that might have an impact on him, positive or negative. The Army doctors, though, treat only part of his being, that is the recurrent vomiting. In the long run, however, repression and denial are the recipe for the destruction of one's (communal) history. So Betonie realizes that one of the healing methods he has to apply in Tayo's case involves countering that repression.

Nevertheless, Tayo does not fully realize the bad side of forgetting and denying the past until very late in the story. Shortly before he meets Ts'eh, he takes a ride with Harley, Leroy and Helen Jean, which at first he does not want to go on, though, for the positive effect of Betonie's ceremony is already beginning to influence him. "He didn't want any more rides. He wanted to walk until he recognized himself again" (154). Despite these feelings he joins them and decides to drink alcohol again so as not to remember the past. Suddenly Tayo does not want to feel anything else but the ride in the truck and wishes it would last forever. Controversially, he does so in spite of having seen the medicine man before, having listened to the story of Betonie's grandfather Descheeny and Mexican grandmother, and having learned that recollections from the past are vital for one's development. This counterinfluence to Betonie's ceremony draws Tayo back to a state in which he does not want to engage with any kind of memories. Shortly after, however, Tayo realizes that the influence of his veteran friends is part of his sickness so he "vomited out everything he had drunk with them, and when that was gone, he was still kneeling on the road beside the truck, holding his heaving belly, trying to vomit out everything – all the past, all his life" (168). Nevertheless, he still has not come to grasp the importance of memories in general.

So far it has been argued that Betonie's help comprised the use of non-traditional paraphernalia and oral storytelling. The second step of the big ceremony, which Tayo has to go through in order to become part of the Sacred Circle of Life again, is to follow Betonie's vision, in which he says that there is still a part of the ceremony that has to be completed: "[T]he ceremony isn't finished yet.' He was drawing in the dirt with his finger. 'Remember these stars,' he said. 'I've seen them and I've seen the spotted cattle; I've seen a mountain and I've seen a woman'" (152).

To find his way back to the path of balance, Betonie indicates to Tayo a star constellation which had to be visible when Tayo was in the mountains. The fact that the old medicine man sends Tayo into the mountains is only one more feature which can

reconnect the protagonist to his People's traditions, since "sacred mountains in each direction, plus the sun above and the earth below, define and balance the Pueblo world" (Pritzker "Laguna" 45). This is why Tayo decides to go to Mt. Taylor where he indeed meets Ts'eh, the supposed Mountain Spirit Woman and the woman indicated in Betonie's vision, by whose help Tayo eventually gets better.

4.2.3. The Lack of a Mother Figure – Finding a Feminine Principle

Judith A. Antell has identified a further problem Tayo has, namely his "estranged relationships with Indian women" (213). In her analysis of *Ceremony*⁵³, Antell focuses on the "feminine principle", which, as a concept, was originally introduced by Paula Gunn Allen. According to this principle Native women are respected in their tribes for the "ancient powers" they have (213). In fact, "[i]n all the pueblos except Hopi, the generative force of earth is female" (Hirschfelder and Molin, "Pueblo Spirits" 231). Hence, contact with female persons, especially female relatives, is considered to be crucial for a balanced life.

Antell emphasizes that Tayo, however, due to having lost his mother, has only contact to his aunt and his grandmother, both of which favor Rocky over Tayo. So he has virtually no healthy relationship to any close female relative (217), although his relationship to old Grandma is still better than the one he has with Auntie Thelma, since it is actually the grandmother who worries about Tayo's health and makes the suggestion to call for Ku'oosh, whereas Auntie just wants to get rid of Tayo and nourishes his feelings of guilt for her son Rocky's falling in the war. Despite the rather cold atmosphere between Tayo and Auntie, it has to be pointed out that it was Auntie who agreed to raise Tayo when he was a little boy and Laura could not take care of him. Even though Thelma did not really want to raise Laura's half-Laguna, half-white son, she did not refuse to accept her responsibility as a sister.

Additionally Antell argues that Tayo has no connection whatsoever to his mother (217). As little boy he does have an old photograph of Laura which Auntie "grabbed [...] away from him" (*Ceremony* 71) at a certain point when Tayo was not watching, but apart from that he has no memory of what she looked like. Nonetheless,

⁵³ *Ceremony* is only one of three novels Antell analyzes in her essay "Momaday, Welch, and Silko: Expressing the Feminine Principle through Male Alienation"; the other two novels are N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney*. Antell states that, interestingly enough, an alienation from the female characters can be observed when looking at the male protagonists from *all* three works, which is the reason for her comparison of the three characters in question, Tayo, Abel and Loney.

even though Laura appears only rarely throughout the novel, she is of major importance to Tayo. Because of Auntie he knows only bad stories about her and thinks that in being her son he is destined to have these negative traits as well.

[M]aternity establishes lineage for all tribal members. “Who is your mother?” is a serious question in Indian Country, and the answer enables the questioner to place the respondent correctly within the web of life, in each of its dimensions: cultural, spiritual, personal, historical. Failure to know one’s mother is failure to know one’s significance, one’s reality, one’s relationship to earth and society. It is being lost. (Allen qtd. in Antell 215)

What is furthermore explained in Antell’s essay is that the alienation from his mother or other caring female figures is a symbol of an even bigger alienation (although alienation from one’s own mother is already big in Native terms, as can be inferred from the quote above), namely that Tayo is alienated from his whole culture (218) – or even two cultures, if one also counts his father’s culture, because he has no contact whatsoever with that side, either. Still mothers take a more central position in *Ceremony*. Thus, it is only logical to assume that Tayo’s return to a healthy relationship with figures that (should) embody the feminine principle must be part of his cure.

Where Betonie has sent Tayo to look for the spotted cattle, he encounters a woman in the mountains, just as Betonie had predicted. Moreover, Tayo notices that the star constellation at that point of time is the same as the one the old medicine man had drawn in the sand. Both aspects show Tayo that he has come to the right place at the right time. Tayo falls in love with the woman and is immersed in a sea of good feelings just by being close to her and dreaming of her repeatedly, yet he never asks her name until at a later stage of the story. ““You never told me your name,” [Tayo] said. ‘I’m a Montaña,’ she said. ‘You can call me Ts’eh. That’s my nickname because my Indian name is so long’” (223). Ts’eh does not explicitly say that her surname is Montaña (Spanish for “mountain”), but that she *is* a Montaña. She thereby identifies with her supposed family’s name, which shows that she identifies with, or is at least related to the mountains which are so sacred to Pueblo traditions. Thus, Ts’eh can be seen as the Mountain Spirit (Woman), which is related to all other surrounding Native spirits and is even part of the surrounding earth (Nelson 32). In this aspect Ts’eh underlines the Aboriginal idea of being part of the Circle by belonging, in Sioui’s words, to one big family. ““You have brother and sisters,’ [Tayo] said, wanting to find out about her. ‘Yes,’ she said, looking off into the distance, toward the Black Mountains in the south. ‘We are all very close, a very close family’” (*Ceremony* 223).

After the first encounter with Ts'eh Tayo is happy to find himself dreaming of her almost each night. They are always good dreams, unlike the nightmares about death and destruction which had troubled him earlier. He even feels that he is left filled with love when he wakes up. "The terror of the dreaming he had done on this bed was gone, uprooted from his belly; and the woman had filled the hollow spaces with new dreams" (*Ceremony* 219). The nightmares which were haunting him are substituted by good dreams of Ts'eh. Tayo now comes to the stage in which he realizes that memories are vital, and even enjoys the memories of the past, as can be seen, for instance, when he remembers "how one spring when a late snow fell he had helped Josiah and Rocky shake the budded apple trees" (208).

According to Andrew Wiget, dreams are an extremely powerful means of reshaping one's own identity by learning to interpret and by following the vision which one's unconsciousness shaped. In that sense dreams can be "badges of identity" or at least "source[s] of wisdom and creativity" (38). Consequently, Tayo's "nights of soft dreaming of her [which are] suddenly locked tight in his chest" (*Ceremony* 221) represent the inner development of his growing love for her as a woman, and, what is more, for everything she personifies. His dreams, originating in his unconsciousness, are what influences him and, in a further step, directs him towards the solution for his main problem, namely the lack of love for all of earth's creation.

Regaining the idea that recollections are vital is one issue where Ts'eh helps Tayo. Identifying the lack of love and respect for all of nature and working on the restoration of the two absent feelings is the second element in which the woman supports the protagonist. Interestingly, Tayo's description of making love to Ts'eh includes images of landscape and nature which indicate that Tayo is moving in the right direction, i.e. towards rediscovering love and respect, as Robert M. Nelson (21) observes.

He eased himself deeper within her and felt the warmth close around him like river sand, softly giving way under foot, then closing firmly around the ankle in cloudy warm water. [...] When it came, it was the edge of a steep riverbank crumbling under the downpour until suddenly it all broke loose and collapsed into itself. (*Ceremony* 181).

Of course, this extract can be understood as a metaphor for the intense closeness Tayo feels while making love to Ts'eh. Nevertheless, one must not forget that Ts'eh is the embodiment of Mountain Spirit Woman; she is not only part of the earth, she is earth. Consequently, Nelson argues that the images of the river sand, the warm water,

and the riverbank imply his symbolic joining with the land (21), for his alienation did not only comprise a loss of love for earth's creation, but even for earth itself. Later in the novel one can read that Tayo "pulled off his boots and socks and dug his toes deep into the dump sand" (221). Through this sentence one can feel that Tayo is becoming part of the earth again (Nelson 31), a state which he was only able to reach by previously making love to Ts'eh; by showing her his love, he shows his love for earth.

Another aspect comes to be of significance when taking a closer look at this focal female character, for which once more we have to take Ts'eh's name into account. The word *Ts'i* means water in Keresan (Lincoln 56; Whitson, "Montaño" 155). Since her surname establishes a connection between her and the mountains, one can assume that Ts'eh's first name – apart from probably being a short version of Ts'its'tsi'nako, the Thought Woman, which together with her sisters "created the Universe" (*Ceremony* 1) – similarly underlines her identification with water. In one scene she tells Tayo, "I'm camped up by the spring" (221). Hence, Ts'eh can be considered yet one additional form of personification, namely that of water and its purifying traits, which would also explain her connection to the spring, i.e. this character is not only closely tied to just any kind of purifying water; she rather chooses the very source of purification and ritualistic rebirth (Nelson 31).

Summing up, Tayo's perceives this woman as the source of love, creation and change. To him she means and is everything. "Both flesh and spirit, Ts'eh is earth, and she is water. She is fire, and she is moon. She is fruit, and she is famine. She is rain, and she is drought. Ts'eh is life, and she is death" (Antell 219). According to Kenneth Lincoln, the symbolism surrounding Ts'eh is indeed tightly woven, but one can also doubt whether Ts'eh really is "Yellow Woman [...], a mountain spirit". Nonetheless he points out that the truth about Ts'eh's real genealogy is secondary, for what really matters is Tayo's healing (54). He for himself does believe that he has encountered the Mountain Spirit – "He could feel where she had come from, and he understood where she would always be" (*Ceremony* 230) – who he has fallen in love with and who, in return, shows him how to love himself and all of nature and humanity. Tayo subsequently creates his own new story with curative powers.

After his night with Ts'eh the protagonist remembers the ancient Katsina people, the Laguna ancestors, and that the Laguna have a ceremony through which they can meet with this people.

Before dawn, southeast of the village, the bells would announce their approach, the sound shimmering across the sand hills, followed by the clacking of turtleshell rattles – all of these sounds gathering with the dawn. Coming closer to the river, faintly at first, faint as the pale yellow light emerging across the southeast horizon, the sounds gathered intensity from the swelling colors of dawn. And at the moment the sun came over the edge of the horizon, they suddenly appeared on the riverbank, the Ka't'sina approaching the river crossing. (182)

John Purdy argues that this memory connects Tayo to the Katsina, whereby his connection to his Laguna tribe is strengthened (67). What instantaneously follows this memory is Tayo's recollection of a traditional Laguna prayer/song, usually performed at sunrise, which he sings to himself. "He repeated the words as he remembered them, not sure if they were the right ones, but feeling they were right [...]" (*Ceremony* 182). A part of the missing connection to his community has thereby been reestablished. However, why the Katsina have come to aid Tayo in this intense manner, and how Tayo's relation to them can furthermore be understood will be explained at a later stage.

Due to all the presented aspects, it is indeed true that Ts'eh is the strongest force in a personified form of the feminine principle surrounding Tayo, but in how far Antell's assumption that he has no other female characters which embody that principle is correct, will be the subject of a discussion in chapter 4.3., in which Tayo's aunt, mother and grandmother will be analyzed.

4.2.4. The Alienation from Animals – Imitation and Personification

In the same manner as Tayo has "estranged relationships with Indian women" (Antell 213) and has to put that aspect of his life back into balance, so he has to restore order between himself and animals, for they too are vital in the circular worldview of his People.

In his essay, "Animals and Theme in *Ceremony*", Peter Beidler notices that in the course of the story Tayo's awareness of animals, of their presence and their acting, gradually increases until he arrives at the point where he rediscovers true respect for them and realizes that the world is alive for him again (16). In writing "[a]s far as he could see, in *all* directions, the world was alive" (*Ceremony* 221, my emphasis), Silko actually also stresses that due to Tayo's restored connection to the animal world, he has come to see the world as one unit again, a fact which he expresses by acknowledging all directions, that is all four cardinal directions, including "the sun above and the earth below" (Pritzker "Laguna" 45), for they are vital aspects in the Native Circle of Life.

The stages of Tayo's development in terms of respect for nature can be described as growing from respect, to imitation, to identification/personification. The following examples will explain this fact:

After seeing old Betonie, the first animals of which Tayo shows a heightened awareness are the grasshoppers. Before he takes the above-mentioned ride with Harley, Leroy and Helen Jean he is still positive about the world because he already feels that "[a]ll those things old Betonie had told him were swirling inside his head, doing strange things" (154). The ceremony is beginning to show its effectiveness. In this positive mood about nature he notices the jumping insects in the grass and observes them in detail.

Grasshoppers buzzed out of the weeds ahead of him; they were fading to a dry yellow color, from their bright green color of spring. Their wings flashed reflections of sun when they jumped. He looked down at the weeds and grass. He stepped carefully, pushing the toe of his boot into the weeds first to make sure the grasshoppers were gone before he set his foot down [...]. (154-55)

He does not kill them, but is careful not to step on them even. In this manner he avoids becoming the same as the science teacher, for instance, who did not care about the dead frogs being disrespectfully dissected. Tayo rather demonstrates his respect for the grasshoppers.

The next step of his increasing connection to nature is his imitation of bees. "He found flowers that had no bees, and gathered yellow pollen gently with a small blue feather from Josiah's pouch; he imitated the gentleness of the bees as they brushed their sticky-haired feet and bellies softly against the flowers" (220). What makes this imitation process even more a proof of Tayo's love for nature and life is that he does not imitate just any bee action, but the very process of pollination. In this Tayo acknowledges the importance of creating life instead of destroying it.

Another form of imitation can moreover be exemplified in a comparison of Tayo to Josiah's spotted cattle. Both Tayo and the cattle are of mixed heritage, "crossbreeds" as Beidler refers to the animals ("Animals" 18), and yet both show an intense urge to follow their old instincts, i.e. in the case of the cattle their old instinct is to head south, so as to return to the place they came from originally. For them going home means survival. The intention here is not to say that Tayo in a certain sense imitates the cattle's crossbreed nature, because, of course, Tayo did not choose to be of mixed origin; he was that already before Josiah presented the spotted cattle to him. The crucial aspect of this argument, though, is that at first Tayo does not like the animals and that only later

does he come to appreciate their stubbornness and physique. Unlike the two cowboys – who catch the steers with ropes and wrestle them down, very often injuring or even killing them, because it “was their idea of ‘sport’ and fun” (213) – Tayo starts to respect the animals. He notices that their stubborn behavior is symbol of their old instincts to follow the path of which they know it is good for them. It is this trait that Tayo imitates in the end by stubbornly staying on the road which leads home, that is to form an identity which is in a balanced relationship with his community.

The climax of Tayo’s animal encounters is defined by the mountain lion. The animal approaches him when Tayo is in the mountains to bring back Josiah’s cattle. Tayo is not afraid of the mountain lion. He whispers to it softly and later engages in a ritualistic sprinkling of pollen into the lion’s tracks.

He went into the clearing where the mountain lion had stood; he knelt and touched the footprints, tracing his finger around the delicate edges of dust the paw prints had made, deep round imprints, each toe a distinctive swirl. He kept his back to the wind and poured yellow pollen from Josiah’s tobacco sack into the cup of his hand. He leaned close to the earth and sprinkled pinches of yellow pollen into the four footprints. Mountain lion, the hunter. Mountain lion, the hunter’s helper. (196)

In a similar way as he has done with the grasshoppers and the bees, Tayo demonstrates his respect for this strong animal, which he considers to be a Spirit helper. The lion, in return, seems to show the same respect for Tayo, for he lures the two cowboys who have caught Tayo away from him. However, Tayo is not worried that the lion might be killed, for he knows the Spirit helper is safe because of the sudden snow storm which covers up his tracks. Hence, this animal encounter is a symbol of the interconnectedness of beings in the Native Circle. In fact, the circle starts turning all over again when, just shortly after Tayo is saved by the mountain lion, he helps nature by saving a tree, which is standing in front of a hunter’s house, from the snow storm. Even this act of respect Tayo performs in a ritualistic manner circling around the tree while shaking off the snow from the tree’s branches.

He slipped his gloves out of his jacket pocket and took hold of the boughs gently, remembering that it was an old tree and the limbs were brittle. He shook the snow off carefully, moving around the tree from the east to the south, and from the west to the north [...]. By the time he had shaken a circle of snow in a pile around the tree, the storm has passed. (208-09)

Purdy (68) argues that the two last phrases from the quote about the mountain lion above, “Mountain lion, the hunter. Mountain lion, the hunter’s helper” (*Ceremony* 196), mark a connection between the lion and the mysterious hunter Tayo meets right

after the mountain lion has saved him from the cowboys. Being part of the phrase implies that the hunter is either closely related to the mountain lion or he might even be an avatar of it. In both cases the hunter and the lion would be embodiments of sacred spirits. Tayo's description of the hunter supports Purdy's idea, i.e. the hunter was wearing his hair in the *old style*, he had *sky-blue* ornaments, and *four* rings on each hand. All three elements point to the old traditions and beliefs, especially the latter two: the color blue, is associated with one of the underworlds and one of the cardinal directions, while the number four, emphasizes the fourfold division of the Sacred Circle of Life and also points to the four mythic underworlds, as was stated earlier. However, the most evident connecting trait is that the hunter is wearing a cap which looks like it was made of "mountain lion skin" (*Ceremony* 207). Furthermore, the hunter is familiar with songs from various Pueblo tribes, a fact which makes Tayo wonder where the hunter is actually from. One indication we get as to his origin is Tayo's description of their walking next to each other: "All he could see as he walked down the trail was snow, blurring the boundaries between the earth and the sky" (207). It seems as if the hunter and Tayo were on a path somewhere above the earth which was leading to a sacred place; and in fact the hunter takes Tayo to Ts'eh's house, where the hunter, too, lives. Hence, once more the sacredness of both the hunter and Ts'eh is expressed.

The two stages of respect and imitation have been looked at so far. What is still missing is an explanation for the assumption that Tayo even comes to the point where his love for earth shows in his identification with animals. This brings the discussion back to the blind gray mule.

In order to show that Tayo's sense of loss actually vanishes, Silko again uses the metaphor of the gray mule, which, due to its blindness and its liminal state in the gray area, between darkness and light, cannot find its way, that is its way home, to either Laguna Pueblo, literally speaking, or to traditional Pueblo ways of life.

The gray mule was gone, his bones unfolding somewhere on the red dirt, bleaching white and thin in the sun. The changes pulled against themselves inside him; the mule has been blind and old. But his room was the same, the creaking bedsprings and frame pushed into the southeast corner below the small window. The terror of the dreaming he had done on this bed was gone, uprooted from his belly; and the woman had filled the hollow spaces with new dreams. (*Ceremony* 219)

This passage is loaded with personifications due to the somewhat confusing use of pronouns which at a first reading leaves the reader puzzling over who each phrase or sentence is talking about. It supposedly jumps back and forth between Tayo and his

mule, saying that the mule has died, its carcass rotting in the sun, and that Tayo enters his room where earlier he was troubled by horrifying nightmares and was vomiting for days and nights. It basically brings two completely unrelated events together in one paragraph, thereby connecting them to each other. However, they are only seemingly unrelated. It is interesting that Silko chooses to use *he*, *him* and *his* as pronouns for both the person and the animal when she could have made a clear distinction between them by saying *it* and *its* to refer to the mule – as she does earlier in novel, when first talks about Harley's burro and Tayo's gray mule: "[B]ut the gray mule followed the burro without any trouble, holding *its* head alert, and *its* jackrabbit ears forward [...]" (26, my emphasis). Here she does not, though. This is precisely where she establishes the connection between the two events and the two subjects, i.e. Tayo identifies with the mule; he is the blind gray mule which does not know its way. Looking at the extract from this point of view, it is consequently Tayo's blindness that is gone because of the ceremony, it is his gray bones bleaching in the sun – that is in the light, the good as opposed to evil – to become white bones. Tayo's skeleton, the innermost part of him which holds him upright, is becoming white, not dark; good, not bad. In addition to the gray mule's disappearance, Tayo's terrifying dreams also vanish. They are turned into good ones as a consequence of Tayo's contact to the Mountain Spirit Woman, as Betonie had suggested.

4.2.5. The Conflict with Friends – Positive Non-Action

School and the biased Euro-American teachings Tayo, as well as his friends and relatives, have experienced are yet one more influence which has brought Tayo to alienate himself from his Pueblo People. What goes hand in hand with the negative image about Natives conveyed at school is that Tayo virtually starts believing in the idea according to which he would not accuse a white rancher of stealing Josiah's Mexican cattle. "[S]omething made him hesitate to say it now that the cattle were on a white man's ranch. [...] [H]e had a crazy desire to believe that there had been some mistake" (190-91)" He even tries to convince himself that the white rancher, Floyd Lee, "had gotten them innocently, maybe buying them from the real thieves" (191). The controversy is that he would not "hesitate to accuse [...] an Indian", though (191). The typical white idea about a member of ethnic origin other than white to be bad or a criminal has become deeply rooted in the thinking of Native Americans.

Nonetheless, the teachers and the common stereotypes do not affect Tayo as much as the witchcraft, Betonie mentioned, would intend. As opposed to his cousin, Tayo does not give up the belief in the old stories – in spite of having been taught in school that all those Aboriginal stories were mere nonsense tales. He feels that there is some truth around the narratives, no matter whether the myth of how Earth was created, or the stories about how and why it rains are concerned.

[Tayo] knew what white people thought about the stories. In school the science teacher had explained what superstition was, and then held the science textbook up for the class to see the true source of explanations. [Tayo] had studied those books, and he had no reason to believe the stories any more. The science book explained the causes and effects. But old Grandma always used to say, “Back in time immemorial, things were different, the animals could talk to human beings and many magical things still happened.” He never lost the feeling he had in his chest when she spoke those words, as she did each time she told them stories; and he still *felt* it was true, despite all they had taught him at school. (94-95, my emphasis)

There is, however, one character in *Ceremony*, namely Emo, who is deeply and most negatively affected by the Euro-American stereotype of the savage Native who is doomed to convert culturally or die. Emo is a full-blood Laguna who has returned from the war scene as a veteran who considers himself as “the best; [that] he was one of them. The best. United States Army” (62). He knows, however, that due to his heritage he was only accepted during the war. Afterwards he falls back into the pattern of the prototypical Native in the eyes of white society. He is aggressive and he is a drunkard. However, Emo is also an example par excellence of a denier of the feminine principle. He hates women, especially Native ones, and shows this by only talking about white women, whom he repeatedly humiliates and abuses, though. What is more, he has no respect for the old ways and disregards all Native traditions due to his longing to be again respected by the Euro-American culture, as he has been during the Second World War.

Emo despises Tayo because he is the son of a Laguna Pueblo woman and a white man. In fact Emo, thinking or wishing himself to be white, while he actually is a Laguna, turns out “to be the real half-breed” (Dasenbrock 73). His enormous hate shows when he chases Tayo in order to kill him to get his revenge for having been previously attacked by Tayo at the bar. The irony behind Emo’s hatred, however, is that despite hating Tayo for his not being a pure Native, he still wants to be like him, i.e. he wants what Tayo has, namely white ancestry. Ironically, it is exactly this white part of himself that Tayo, before his cure through the ceremony initiated by Betonie, wants to get rid of.

He wants to be perceived as a full-blooded Laguna Pueblo because he believes his white part is what is partly to be blamed for his deficiencies (such as the lack of ability to find Josiah's cattle or to save Rocky). On the other side of the coin, we again find Emo and his fellow veterans, who consider abandoning the Indigenous part of their selves as the only possible solution to reach a happy existence (Evasdaughter 90), i.e. they want to feel whitened and long to be accepted as full members by non-Native societies, amongst which they hope to lead a life of opportunities and chances, which they are missing in their home communities.

The definite climax of Tayo's story is reached when Emo tortures and kills Harley only to get hold of Tayo, who for the duration of the torture and murder is hiding somewhere on the site of the uranium mines and is fighting the destructive urge inside of him to get revenge for Harley's death. He does, indeed, manage to resist the forces of witchcraft and chooses not to turn into a being resembling Emo.

This scene, which proves Tayo's return to a balanced way of being, is set on the very site of the afore-mentioned uranium mines. There are two reasons why Silko's choice of this exact location for this scene can be viewed as perfect for reflecting the feeling of immediate annihilation emanating from Emo. On the one hand, most Pueblos are located in the so-called Four Corners region "among the Navajo, Black Mesa of the Hopi, and the Acoma and Laguna Pueblo" (Jaimes 285), which again belongs to the "National Sacrifice Areas"⁵⁴, an area which the Nixon administration in 1972 designated as "rendered literally uninhabitable through the deliberate elimination of the water supplies for industrial purposes [...] and the proliferating nuclear contamination" (Zamir 399). As a consequence, the health issues caused by radio-active materials, which can be found in the roads, the housing, and in "*all* its available water sources" (399), have become a huge threat to the survival of the inhabitants and their cultures in that region. On the other hand, the detonation of an atomic bomb over Trinity Site has caused an acute fear of instantaneous destruction. This is also made clear in *Ceremony* when Silko writes that during the night the first atomic bomb exploded even old Grandma could see a light outside. "As I walked back from the kitchen to my bed there was a flash of light through the window. So big, so bright even my old clouded-up eyes could see it. [...] I thought I was seeing the sun rise again" (245). The fact that old

⁵⁴ The National Sacrifice Areas do not only include the Four Corners region, with almost all of the Pueblo settlements. There are also "the impacted region of the Dakotas, Wyoming and Montana" which were designated as such (Zamir 399).

Grandma thinks of the nuclear destruction she witnessed as being a sunrise – in which sunrise is commonly associated with births, new beginnings, and good forces in general – points to an inverted concept of sunrise used by the evil forces, that is witchery, which in a further step stresses how close to total annihilation humanity has come (Lincoln 58). And Emo is the embodiment of this destructive concept; hence his final action, torturing and killing his friends, is a metaphor for the bigger picture of evil forces torturing (through severe or incurable illnesses, for instance) and killing (through natural catastrophes, but rather through man-made arms) all humans.

Being on this very site of literal and ritualistic death – Harley's violent death can, in fact, be seen as a counter-ritual to Betonie's ceremony, and is intended to take Tayo's strength, instead of giving it to him – makes Tayo feel weak and sick again, even though his ceremony has come all the way from a point in time when he perceived himself as mere shadow to feeling alive again. Tayo, however, realizes why the bad feelings have returned. "He knew why he had felt sick; he knew why he had lost the feeling Ts'eh had given him, and why he had doubted the ceremony: this was *their* place, and he was vulnerable" (242-43, emphasis added). Nelson (36) writes that Tayo's ceremony has indeed worked, for without it he would still be not integrated into the land of his ancestors. Only because he is in fact reintegrated, he can feel the wounds of the land inflicted by the uranium mines. The land was cut open in the form of canyons.

The fact that his relation to earth has been firmly reestablished is furthermore visible in "Tayo's positive nonaction (sic) [...] not to kill Emo" (Lincoln 59). Hence, he opts for the balance he has learned to appreciate in the course of the ceremony. If he had decided for the contrary, namely negative *action*, Tayo too would have been transformed into an object guided by the witchery, Betonie mentioned, whereby the Sacred Circle of Life would subside.

Whereas Euro-American society, especially in Anglophone settings, regarded a white person who turned to a different way of life than the white one as a despicable renegade and traitor, who, when once gone, was not accepted back in case the person actually wanted to return to his /her original culture, most Native tribes did "welcome Indian people who genuinely return[ed] to the tribe, even after an extended period of living as non-Indians" (Garrouette 96).

Tayo is one such example of a person who has been lost to the tribal community for an extensive period of time while being at war. After his literal coming home from the Philippines he is still not completely home, from a figurative point of view, given

the problems of his being out of balance in the light of holistic health. But when Tayo finally finds his way and really returns to the people of Laguna Pueblo, he is fully accepted and is invited to tell the story of his ceremony to the community. During the narration the words turn into a powerful means. They heal Tayo, and, on the other hand, they equally serve as a “collective healing story” for the tribe (Brill de Ramírez 111), since curing stories and curing ceremonies frequently are indeed “[c]ommunal ceremonies for purifying the entire pueblo and its inhabitants”, as well (Hirschfelder and Molin, “Curing” 61). Brill de Ramírez explains this phenomenon by stating that

[w]ithin American Indian traditions of oral storytelling, there is a power that actually transforms the listener through her or his engagement with the story. In fact, within the oral storytelling practice, the listener is an active participant whose presence is necessary to the telling-creation of the story. The storyteller and listener interact throughout the process in a conversation that reflects the inherent interrelationality of storytelling. (6)

Interrelation is an essential feature in a storytelling process, because both the teller and the listener are influenced by the story itself. Paula Gunn Allen agrees with this principle by arguing that Native myths can only work their magic, if there is a certain “relationship and participation” between the narrator and the listeners. (qtd. in Dennis 46). Hence, all the memories which Tayo had to recollect and all the stories he had to listen to anew and subsequently remember have in this relational way become part of tribal history. What is more, by retelling his story to his People at such a central place as the kiva – the symbolic place which indicates the hole in the ground from where the Pueblo People emerged – Tayo establishes an even closer connection to his People due to the interrelational process in which narrator and listeners take part in the act of storytelling (Brill de Ramírez 111).

Taking into account that storytelling can either involve stories from one’s own life or tribal myths, both types of story can work their effect by provoking a certain reaction in the listener (or even in the teller himself/herself) which affects how they understand their own identity. Consequently, it can be said that oral stories have the power to change the self.

4.3. Auntie Thelma, Laura, and Old Grandma – (Anti-)Feminine Principles

This chapter will be used to analyze whether Antell’s afore-mentioned argument, according to which Tayo has no female figure whatsoever to embody the feminine principle except for Ts’eh, is really valid. This is why the focal points of this

chapter will be Tayo's three female relatives, Auntie Thelma, his mother Laura and old Grandma.

Barry M. Pritzker writes that the main impact of Euro-American culture on the Pueblo was the introduction of Christianity. Nevertheless, not all people have substituted the traditional belief system with the new one. "Many Pueblo Indians, though nominally Catholic, have fused pieces of Catholicism onto a core of traditional beliefs" ("Laguna" 46). Despite the fact that many Laguna have blended their old way of life, including religious and social elements, with non-traditional aspects, there were also individuals who converted entirely to the new faith.

Auntie is such an example of a complete convert. She assimilates; she takes over Catholicism and the colonizers' way of life. Interestingly enough, she does not do this out of true conviction that the Catholic faith is the only right one, but rather out of the need to put herself into a position superior to the remaining members of her family and tribe can be due to their rejection of the white culture. Although she hopes for her son Rocky to become an integrated part of white society, she is also very much concerned about her own (spiritual) advantage.

[Auntie] had gone to church alone, for as long as Tayo could remember; although she told him that she prayed they would be baptized, she never asked any of them, not even Rocky, to go with her. Later on, Tayo wondered if she liked it that way, going to church by herself, where she could show the people that she was a devout Christian and not immoral or pagan like the rest of the family. When it came to saving her own soul, she wanted to be careful that there were no mistakes. (77)

In this passage it becomes evident that Auntie is not loyal to her family, something she would be, if she were to embody a feminine principle. Proof of this individualistic trait of hers can be observed, for instance, when she refers to "*the* family" instead of "*her* family". By using an article instead of a possessive pronoun she demonstrates that she does not fully accept her family as her own; and this feeling of rejection is even stronger when it comes to Tayo. This would imply that Thelma has turned into an egoist who only thinks about her own needs and is constantly worried what the rest of the people, including the Euro-Americans think of her. In doing so she basically does not only turn her back on her family and their needs, but also on the traditional ways.

On the other hand though, one has to keep in mind that the phrase "not even Rocky" suggests that of all family members Rocky is the one Auntie solely cares about. Consequently, it can as well be interpreted that she, by establishing herself in society

first, does in her own way want to help her family, or at least Rocky, to rise in society. Rocky is actually the only family member who adopts white views to a large extent. Already in school he has always been an “A-student and all-state in football and track” (51). He does not think well of the old traditions, but he is not baptized and does not want to accompany his mother to church, either. In this respect it can be said that he is one of the Pueblo people who is syncretized, i.e. he has two parallel possibilities of ways of life he can follow depending on the situation. Nevertheless, his biggest wish is to establish himself in the white world, which is why, firstly, he goes to war – he wants to become one of the respected soldiers and thus be accepted into the Euro-American world for which he is fighting; and why, secondly, “he listen[s] to his teachers, and he listen[s] to his coach. They were proud of him. They told him, ‘Nothing can stop you now except one thing: don’t let the people at home hold you back.’” (51); and why, thirdly, Rocky even rejects his baptismal name and takes on *Rocky* instead – “‘We did that too, at home. Nicknames.’ [Tayo] thought about Rocky then; his baptismal name had been Augustine, and ‘Rocky’ had been as close as he had wanted to come to the Indian name old Grandma’s sister had given him” (223).

As a Christian, Auntie also remains an individual, in the negative sense of the word, for “Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul” (68). In being only concerned about her status she takes the opposite stand to Silko’s and Sioui’s idea of cultural interaction and subsequent change. Thus, it is not possible to negate, from this point of view, that at no point of Tayo’s life she is a personification of the feminine principle.

Interestingly enough, Auntie very often is not as concerned about Christian values, such as love or charity, as she should be, for she rather cares about the gossip going on in the community, as already said. This is why she does not help her little sister when she started drinking and having sexual relationships with white and Mexican men, in spite of compassion and forgiveness being very important values in Christian societies. She did not want to be associated too much with her sister’s faults. The Catholic priest reacts in the same way as Auntie; he judgmentally turns his back on Laura. In contrast to that, the tribe felt that losing one tribal member, no matter in which way and for which reason, was still a loss for the whole community. “[B]ut the people felt they were losing her, they were losing part of themselves” (68). Ironically, Auntie,

but also Laura, reject the Laguna people, who are, however, the only ones who show compassion for the fate of the young woman (Brill de Ramírez 103-04).

In contrast to the supposedly devout Auntie, Laura is represented as “a drunkard and [...] hopeless, helpless whore, who cannot care for her child or herself” (Antell 217). She desperately tries to assimilate and become part of white culture. She feels lost in her tribe and does not know what to do with her life in order to feel useful and wanted. So she wants to “be less Indian” (Brill de Ramírez 104), for she sees this as the only possible solution to achieve something in her life and gain the respect of white people. Listening to her teachers’ advice in school, she leaves her home town and goes to Albuquerque to look for this better life. She even follows the teachers’ instructions on how to dress, and how to do her make-up and hair. She likes that “the white men smiled at her from their cars, [...] despite the fact she was an Indian” (*Ceremony* 68). Laura thinks that by imitating the white looks and behavior she would be respected like a white person. Tragically, the only effect which her “whitened” behavior brings about is that she gets involved with men, who humiliate and maltreat her. Paradoxically, she does not hate white people, but rather her own tribe and herself, as can be observed in the following extract. “She hated *the people at home* when white people talked about their peculiarities; but she always hated herself more because she still thought about *them*, because she knew *their pain* at what she was doing with her life” (69, my emphases).

Laura is an example of an attempted complete cultural conversion, that is assimilation. “Attempted” because she does adopt a socially different behavior, and yet she admits that she repeatedly thinks about her People and their pain. She knows that they still perceive her as part of their community and are consequently worried about her. No matter how much she strives to be less Native, she still feels a bond between her and the Laguna. In this Laura, like Tayo, finds herself in a limbo state, albeit not heritage-wise (for she is of pure Laguna descent) but from a social perspective. She is one of the above-mentioned “Red Euro-Americans” who want to convert, but even in their converted state of being are not fully accepted by the society they want to be integrated in. Despite the minimal connection which is left between Laura and the Laguna Pueblo people, she is not there for Tayo, and what he knows about his mother, is not supportive in the way a feminine principle should offer support.

As for the relationship Auntie has with Tayo it has already been pointed out briefly that whenever she can, she tells Tayo of his mother’s moral defects and thereby

tries to make him feel worth less than the other family members. She furthermore strongly favors Rocky over Tayo, which can be seen from the following extract:

She [Auntie] was careful that Rocky did not share these things [he was given to play with] with Tayo, that they kept a distance between themselves and him. But she would not let Tayo go outside or play in another room alone. She wanted him close enough to feel excluded, to be aware of the distance between them. (*Ceremony* 67)

In acting this way Auntie shows Tayo that his mixed heritage as well as his liking of the Native life style as a boy are not appreciated. She makes him aware of the fact that she does not consider him as a real part of their family because he is no full-blood. Ironically, she hates Tayo for having white heritage, something which she, however, desires. In this respect she is in a certain sense the female counterpart to Emo, who also wants what Tayo has, white heritage. Due to their full-blooded origin they, Auntie, Emo and Rocky, are nonetheless caught in-between cultures, since culture-crossers always remain in the marginal areas of society.

Antell moreover states that Auntie is rather an “assimilated woman who offers no spiritual connection with the past” (217). Despite her generally biased and humiliating behavior towards Tayo, there is one scene, however, in which Thelma tells her nephew of an incident involving his mother, which at first glance underlines the notion that Auntie is acting solely from a Christian point of view (Purdy 65). It seems as if Thelma only wanted to show Tayo the lack of both morals as well as morale in Laura, of which he is the logical heir. In order to understand Thelma’s (real) motivation behind telling Tayo of this event with Laura, we have to briefly look at Thelma’s religious formation.

Despite having converted to Christianity, Auntie does know and remember the old stories and ways. This is made clear when she remembers in which way she had tried to help her little sister in the past and thereby wanted to reconcile the family with the community.

[T]he old instinct had always been to gather the feelings and opinions that were scattered through the village, to gather them like willow twigs and tie them into a single prayer bundle that would bring peace to all of them. But now the feelings were twisted, tangled roots, and all the names for the source of this growth were buried under *English words*, out of reach. And there would be no peace and the people would have no rest [...]. (*Ceremony* 69, my emphases)

From this extract it is evident that Auntie had been living according to the Laguna ways before she adopted Christianity because earlier she had followed the old instinct, which was only later replaced by the English words which pushed the

traditional solutions away and out of reach. Hence, Thelma was indeed aware that people were no individuals, but integral parts of the family and the whole tribe. She knew that being related meant having to face certain responsibilities, and that certain issues had to be settled so as to bring peace to all of them. This is in fact why the following passage, in which Auntie reveals a crucial aspect of Tayo's mother, can be read as proof of Thelma's (maybe unconscious) motivation to keep the family (even including Tayo) vital and strong. She momentarily takes over the role of the traditional feminine principle.

"One morning," [Auntie] said, "before you were born, I got up to go outside, right before sunrise. I knew she had been out all night because I never heard her come in. Anyway, I thought I would walk down toward the river. I just had a feeling, you know. I stood on that sandrock, above the big curve in the river, and there she was, coming down the trail on the other side." She looked at him closely. "I'm only telling you this because she was your mother, and you have to understand." She cleared her throat. "Right as the sun came up, she walked under that big cottonwood tree, and I could see her clearly: she had no clothes on. Nothing. She was completely naked except for her high-heel shoes." (70)

This extract also contains an indication of Auntie's realization of the connection between her little sister and the Katsina People, the ancient people who emerged from the ground to become the Laguna. As Purdy (65) points out, Auntie says two things which are usually associated with exactly this Native People.

Firstly, the place she sets the scene in, is above the big curve in the river. What is crucial about this place is the water; in which, on the one hand, water (or all places and natural phenomena of which water is a part, such as, rain, riverbanks, snow, and so forth) establishes a direct link to the Katsina, while, on the other hand, it can be equally associated with Tayo himself, since throughout the novel water is repeatedly mentioned in connection to him.

Secondly, the time at which the recollected scene happens is dawn, the time when the Laguna go to the same place on the river as described by Thelma to wait for the Katsina to arrive, i.e. humans meet with the ancient people during certain ceremonies. Both aspects mentioned by Auntie imply that Tayo's mother had some sort of contact with the Katsina, the Laguna ancestors. Subsequently, Tayo, in being Laura's direct descendant, is also directly related to this ancient People and is heir to their traditional heritage instead of the morally dubious behavior his mother showed, as supposed earlier (65).

This is what Auntie unconsciously seems to feel, and decides not to keep a secret anymore; she feels the necessity to inform Tayo about his heritage, which she so often judges critically. However, it is possible that it is not so much Tayo's white heritage, which constantly seems to disturb his aunt, as it might be the Katsina origin which she does not appreciate, for she is of the biased opinion that Native myths and traditions can only produce drunkards, like Tayo and his veteran friends, whom she does not want to be associated with. According to her, only Christianity can guarantee the salvation of the soul, Nativeness can not. Tayo's knowing about his deep roots in the old traditions via the Katsina influence would endanger his acceptance of Euro-American culture, and at the same time it would bring about the threat of strengthening the bad aspects Auntie sees in Indigenous people, only because Tayo would be one more person to stick to and cultivate Native ways. Nevertheless, Thelma acts in accordance with her former "old instinct" which advises her to adopt the old feminine role and empower Tayo by presenting him with the knowledge about his heritage, which turns out to be essential for him. She could have decided to keep the story to herself, leaving Tayo in the dark, with only the negative characteristics of his mother known to him. Still she chooses the former option and in that way significantly aids his healing process in which (re-)defining his identity is crucial.

Having come to the conclusion that Auntie does at one single, but nevertheless crucial moment embody the feminine principle, it appears necessary to take a second look at Laura's relationship to Tayo and try to approach it from another angle.

Interestingly, Laura's "feelings of shame, at her own people *and* at the white people, grew inside her, side by side like monstrous twins that would have to be left in the hills to die" (69, my emphasis). In saying that the white and the Native people are twins, Laura shows that she feels the family connection among Peoples as described in the Sacred Circle of Life, and reiterates her feeble but still existent feeling of the traditional way of life inside her. She realizes that because of the way both Indigenous and Euro-American people are vegetating at the moment, destruction of everybody can be the only logical outcome. Curiously enough, she has a baby, Tayo, who is from both cultures and who is supposedly of powerful Katsina origin. This implies that Tayo might even be as powerful as to be able to reconcile the two cultures. In other words, Laura gives birth to a child who goes through a big and important ceremony of reconciliation, curing, and acknowledging the fact that people have to interact and not stay separate if they want to survive. It almost seems as if Laura had planned to help

both her own and the Euro-American Peoples to act against being left in the hills to die. Through this the feminine principle grows strong in Laura.

Moreover, in the scene in which Thelma implies Tayo's relation to the Katsina, Laura appears "[r]ight as the sun came up" (70). In this respect I want to mention that Maureen Trudelle Schwarz's work, *Navajo Lifeways* (16), contains a figure showing the circular pattern of Navajo cosmology, according to which the East is associated with traits such as dawn/sunrise and birth (and consequently also re-birth). If we consider that, in the light of this circular pattern, sunrise is a strong symbol of spiritual rebirth, then Laura is "re-born". This forms a parallel to Tayo who, as stated earlier, is also re-born after the encounter with the mythical ancestors. From this point of view Laura would give birth to Tayo not as the morally doubtful woman she is perceived as, but as a changed person.

Another example from that passage which is a symbol of Laura's rebirth is that her sister saw her stripped naked, only with her shoes on, which she had been told to wear at school. By having left behind the European-style clothes, she has basically left the(ir) bad influence (we just have to think of her being humiliated and abused by men because of her way to dress) behind as well; her body goes back to the original state at birth, and is open for a new development of identity. She can form a new sign of the/her self.

The fact that only her shoes remained on her feet, might seem opposed to the idea of a complete rebirth. Instead of viewing the high-heels as a denial to Laura's having become a totally new person, they should rather be thought of as indicators of her belief in the concept of interconnectedness among Peoples. Laura demonstrates that she cannot only be reborn into an Aboriginal state of self, but that every person regardless of his/her ancestry (pure or mixed) is subject to influences from the surrounding cultures, which in the case of the Pueblos naturally would be various Euro-American traditions. In accepting this, Laura has come home across the river as this new self; she has reentered the Circle.

By the end of the story Auntie too is healed of her prejudiced views about her People and their old ways of life. After Tayo tells his story to the community in the kiva, Thelma does not treat Tayo like an "other" anymore, she rather talks to him in the same manner as she talks to immediate family members, thereby acknowledging him as such. Moreover, she admits that Betonie's ceremony has managed to cure Tayo, which the Catholic priests or white medics have not. Through this she rediscovers her formerly

lost belief that the old traditions are worth being valued, and kept alive and changing, even though “Auntie still goes to mass and to the bingo, no longer out of rejection of the other traditions, but more out of long-standing habit” (Brill de Ramírez 112). Brill de Ramírez (112) also notes that Auntie actually shows signs of having realized the truth behind Betonie’s words about the significance of the connection between cultures and peoples, and, consequently, brings together her bingo and going to church with the traditional myths by uttering a sentence at church which stems from the Hummingbird and the Fly story: “It isn’t easy. It never has been easy” (*Ceremony* 113; 255-56; 259).

All in all, the above-stated suggests that, even though Auntie and Laura cannot be said to be the permanent personifications of feminine principles, their temporary embodiment of this role cannot be denied, either. There is yet one more female character which deserves to be taken into account for the current discussion of the vital aspect of female relatives and their respective roles.

Old Grandma cannot be described as being completely against Tayo, either. However, before Rocky’s death and also for some time after it, she rather favors and praises Rocky, and not Tayo. This can be observed, for instance, when old Grandma repeats over and over that “Rocky had promised to buy her a [new] kerosene stove” (27).

Tayo might not exactly be her favorite (whether her attitude towards Rocky changes later, we do not know), still old Grandma is the only one to actively care about Tayo’s well-being, which is why she calls for old Ku’oosh. When she realizes that Ku’oosh cannot help her grandson, she even settles for Betonie, who she does not approve of as much due to his being non-traditionalist. Nevertheless Tayo’s health is considered to be more important than the way in which he is healed. In the end she acknowledges Betonie’s work, though. ““So old Betonie did some good after all,” old Grandma kept saying.[...] “You’re all right now, aren’t you, sonny?” “Yeah, Grandma, I’m okay now,” [Tayo answered]” (215).

What is furthermore interesting is that old Grandma is the only female relative who still openly believes in the Native traditions and encourages Tayo to follow them as well. In this regard there is, in fact, one scene in which Auntie once again compares Laura’s “drinking and hell raising” (218) to the negative behavior of Tayo and his veteran friends, and complains that this “give[s] her more to worry over” and “bring[s] disgrace to the family” (218). Immediately after Auntie tells Tayo not to bring his drinking friends to her place, old Grandma in her own way reminds her grandson, and

also Auntie, that he should not forget he has reentered the Circle with Betonie's help and is, thus, not regarded as a sick troublemaker anymore. She makes Tayo aware of this fact by saying "Gather up some Indian tea for me," old Grandma called to him from the back room. "You hear me? I said pick me some tea" (*Ceremony* 218). Through this old Grandma brings back the memory of the Indian tea Tayo got from both medicine men, Ku'oosh and Betonie, and by doing so also brings back the recollection of the ceremony he has gone through. In addition, she repeats her desire for tea. "Repetition is prominent in Native American narrative styles [...]" (Hendricks 78), not only because in the context of oral storytelling it "facilitate[s] memorization" but rather due to the fact that in "ceremonial context[s it especially] serves to convey an accumulation of power" (Gruber 30). In short, "repetition creates intensity (Tedlock qtd. in Hendricks 79). This means that by repeating the sentence old Grandma empowers the words and turns them into a healing medicine which help Tayo to firmly remain in the re-traditionalized state.

One last time we have to take Tayo's gray mule into account, for this animal once again establishes a metaphorical connection in the novel. In old Grandma's case it symbolizes that the old woman is not only familiar with the Indigenous circular worldview but that she is still deeply rooted in it. At one instance, when Harley is fighting against his black burro's determination to go the left, Tayo starts thinking about animals in general and how they are so different from many humans because they are not resisting something they cannot change or influence. "[O]nly humans resisted what they saw outside themselves. Animals did not resist. But they persisted, because they became part of the wind" (*Ceremony* 27). Already in the next paragraph Tayo thinks of old Grandma and compares her way of being to the persistency of the gray mule. "[T]he mule stood alert, its milky staring eyes wide open. They were the same – the mule and old Grandma, she sitting in the corner of the room in the wintertime by the potbelly stove, or the summertime on an apple crate under the elm tree; she was blind as the gray mule and just as persistent" (27). In comparing old Grandma to an animal, or rather in assigning her a trait usually found in animals, Tayo shows that he – even at a very early stage of the novel when he has not yet taken part in any ceremonial curing – is aware that his grandmother is living in the old circular way in which all creatures of the natural world belong to the same family; basically they were all the same. Furthermore, he realizes that all living beings can only survive, if they do not fight the natural circumstances. Hence, humans, such as old Grandma, who simply accepted the

surroundings, whether good or bad, are more probable to be at peace with oneself and survive under the given conditions than somebody who is fighting against the current. Only towards the end does Tayo himself take on this character feature, namely when he shows not too big a concern about what the two cowboys, who caught him, would do to him. He does not fight them, but he hopes for a good ending. He persists like the gray mule and like old Grandma.

Despite old Grandma being firmly established in the Native community and the Laguna traditions – she even remembers stories from “time immemorial” (94-95) – she does not stubbornly reject lifeways and beliefs of other cultures. Judging from this, one can infer that old Grandma is in no sense a convert, although she accepts both traditions that can be found in the Pueblo settlements. She, however, prefers her own People’s teachings. Consequently, she does not forbid Thelma to go to church, but she still shows a certain disapproval by telling her, “Church, [...] Ah Thelma, do you have to go there again?” (77).

At the very end of *Ceremony* there is one more indication that old Grandma has for a long time been and is going to remain for a long time still embedded in the Sacred Circle of Life. She says that “these goings-on around Laguna don’t get [her] excited any more, [...] [for] it seems like [she] already heard these stories before . . . only thing is, the names sound different” (260). This shows that the same stories circulate and repeat themselves. The people have to re-live them actively and, thus, cannot forget them. Old Grandma has heard the stories before, which means that she has already, to some extent, been part of them; and she is reliving one of the stories again with Tayo. She too, like Laura and Thelma, is part of the Circle.

All three of them are in their own way personified feminine principles.

5. JOSEPH BOYDEN’S *THREE DAY ROAD*

5.1. Plot Summary

In TDR the healing story of a young Cree man, Xavier Bird, is told. Having come home from WW I, Xavier is suffering from battle fatigue and morphine addiction, a condition of which he is certain that it will kill him. His only living relative to whom he returns is his aunt Niska, a Cree medicine woman. On their three-day paddle home to Moose Factory Niska realizes that the only thing which could help her nephew to come to terms with the memories of the events on the battlefields in France and Belgium, and of his role as a marksman and sniper in the Second Division of the Canadian Army, is a

curing ceremony. However, Niska feels that there is something even worse that is haunting Xavier which he represses. In the course of the ceremony, the essential part of which is recollecting and retelling what has happened in the past, both the story of Niska's, as well as of Xavier's lives are revealed. As the final step of the ceremony Xavier comes to the point where he cannot deny the past anymore and remembers that he actually had to kill not only numerous German soldiers, and an innocent mother and her child, but also his best friend Elijah who had descended into madness during the war and who had wanted to murder Xavier first. By going through the ceremony all the way Xavier finally makes peace with the spirits of his fallen fellow soldier and his best friend, and most importantly with himself.

5.2. Xavier – A Bird Rooted in Nature

The sickness, the longing for death, the indifference about anything happening in his surroundings, are only symptoms of what can be identified as Xavier's real problem, or rather problems, for that matter. Like Tayo in *Ceremony*, Xavier feels loss; loss, which in his case develops in stages: loss of home, when he is put into a Residential School; loss of his mother, due to being in Residential School; loss of language, when being taught in Residential School; again loss of home, when he goes to war; loss of fellow soldiers; loss of his hearing; loss of his Native traditions; loss of his aunt; loss of his best friend; loss of one leg; loss of independency from white medicine for he turns into a morphine addict; and again loss of home, where he only returns to die and believes that in his doing so, he would lose it irreversibly.

It all boils down to one major problem, which entails all the other ones: Loss of home, and metaphorically speaking, of identity.

Considering the fact that Xavier experiences most of these stages of loss during his involvement in WWI, we cannot deny a certain level of "acculturative stress," as James B. Waldram's terms it (117), which the male protagonist of *TDR* has to go through as an Indigenous person. However, Xavier's sickness and the reasons for it could moreover be seen in the light of the phenomenon of "deculturative stress", that is the stress of losing traditional beliefs and values," which very often accompanies acculturative stress (117). Of course, one might argue that the actual trigger and, thus, main reason for Xavier's depression, which is only revealed at the end of the novel, is having killed his best friend Elijah. If we also take Peirce's theory of the self as a sign into account, then we must say that there are far more influences which, on the one

hand, cause the loss of (current) identity, but on the other hand, also form a new self, which is adopted by the bearer of this identity. To identify and describe these influences and come to a conclusion as to what kind of identity he embodies in the end of the story, is the focal point of discussion of this chapter.

5.2.1. The Impact of White Culture – Active Forgetting and Repression

In the beginning of *TDR*, Niska goes to the city to supposedly pick up Elijah, her nephew's best friend, from the train station. She discovers, however, that it is not Elijah who has come home as a war veteran, but that it is her nephew Xavier, whom she thought dead. However, he turns out to be a morphine addict who has lost both a leg and his hearing – symbols of having lost vital parts of himself, namely a means of moving around and a sense. He cannot keep any food inside of him for a longer period, almost does not speak but is inverted into his own world of dead friends, and does not remember the traumatic past.

Xavier's feeling of alienation from everything he loves is influenced by many factors, both positive and negative. The logical outcome of this mix of various influences is also a mix of identity which is shaped due to all these influences. One undeniably negative influence is the institution of Residential Schooling. The impact of this schooling system can be observed at several levels, one of them being possible destruction of tribal history.

It was mentioned already several times that oral storytelling is a vital part of Indigenous traditions. Furthermore, repetition – as a means of both filling the stories with power to come into being or influence already existing things, as well as rendering memorization easier – is frequently encountered in Native oral texts. This fact is very well exemplified in Thomas King's *The Truth about Stories*, in which he starts each chapter by letting an Indigenous storyteller narrate the same part of the earth diver myth, a creation story, in which Earth was created on the back of a floating giant turtle. However, each time a skeptic listener wants to know what is beneath the turtle, the storyteller's answer sounds, "Another turtle. [...] And below that turtle? Another turtle. And below that? Another turtle. [...] So how many turtles are there? [...] No one knows for sure, [...] but it's turtles all the way down" (King 1-2; 31-32; 61-62; 91-91; 121-22).

What this brief excursion to one facet of an Aboriginal creation myth is supposed to be good for, is pointing out that repeating stories so as to ensure their memorization of both the storyteller and the listener is not to be undervalued in its

significance. Basically it would be enough to have only one uninformed generation of Indigenous people to lose the tribal stories, which are such a vital part of the Native way of life. All it takes is an interrupted chain in the process of spreading oral history for a single person or even a whole People to become “culturally estranged” (Nelson 7). Unfortunately, Residential Schools were very powerful in bringing about this exact effect, i.e. they “produced” whitened Native children (or “Red Euro-Americans” to stick to the formerly introduced terminology), who had no cultural knowledge handed down from their Aboriginal relatives whatsoever.

One might ask how such a schooling system could come into being, given the situation that it showed such a potential for cultural annihilation. As Olive Patricia Dickason explains in *Canada's First Nations*, “[w]hen Amerindians had asked for schools during treaty negotiations, they had envisioned them as a means of preparing their children for the new way of life that lay ahead” (315). They did not imagine that the government, which had promised “to preserve Indian life values, and Indian government authority” (qtd. in Dickason 315), would alter the plan to establishing a school system for Native children in a way that supported the federal government’s idea of assimilating Aboriginal Peoples, and thereby abolishing their previously existing culture. Ottawa quickly decided that a very effective way of doing so would be to establish and favor Residential Schools as opposed to day schools, and to take away Native children from their families, even for extended periods of time, and subject them to the authority of missionaries, who acted at the same time as teachers, for the common belief was that in such institutions the process of assimilation would be facilitated and accelerated (Dickason 315). There children had to face cruelty of various kinds, which obviously did not only lead to traumatic psychosomatic aftereffects, but it also changed the students’ complete way of being and living the way their Native parents had taught them before⁵⁵. According to Carl Waldman, the recent decades have brought a change in the educational system, which shifted the focus back from boarding schools, which were off-reserve, to on-reserve day schools (194).

Since Residential Schools had such a devastating impact on numerous Indigenous children and young people, Boyden includes this rather unsettling part of North American history which Aboriginal Peoples share in his novel. Having spent a

⁵⁵ The play *Path with no Moccasins*, written by Cree playwright, author, director and actress Shirley Cheechoo, and the collection of first-hand accounts about life in Residential Schools, *Behind Closed Doors*, edited by Agnes Jack, can be considered as two very detailed and touching reference works in connection to this topic.

certain period of their respective lives in one and the same Residential School, is what the three main characters, Xavier, Elijah and Niska, have in common. Interestingly enough, the parallels concerning the stay at the local Residential School, which are observable in the text, only go as far as the three persons having actually experienced it, but the differences start when it comes to the duration of the stay, the intensity of it and, hence, the nature of the psychological and developmental impact this educational process had on each of the protagonists. While Niska and Xavier, for example, only have to endure the schooling facility for a comparably short period of time, Elijah is as unfortunate as to have to live there for many years. Consequently, the impressions he gained of white culture and the related attitudes he adopted are even deeper imbedded in his mind than in the minds of the other two characters. As a result, his complete development throughout the story takes an immensely different course as the story unfolds than Niska's and Xavier's. How Elijah's identity is reshaped, or rather *what* he turns into, will be presented at a later stage of this paper.

Nevertheless, severe corporal and/or mental maltreatments are not exclusive only to Elijah's stay at the school. They play a role for Niska and her nephew as well. They are forced to exclusively speak English, with the intended effect of having them forget their own language. In case they did say something in their mother tongue, they were corporally punished. A similar means of making the children repress their real identity was giving them Christian names instead of their Native ones. In this respect we can read Niska say, "[The nuns] kept me away from my sister. They didn't want me changing what they had taught Rabbit, who they now called Anne" (103). Niska goes on telling Xavier of her experiences:

[They] would wake me in the middle of the night and drag me to a brightly lit room where I was made to repeat words over and over until I pronounced them correctly. When I was caught speaking my tongue, they'd force lye soap into my mouth and not give me anything else to eat for days. (103-04)

At another instance of her oral storytelling, Niska remembers how Elijah reacted to the fact that outside of Residential School Xavier was not addressed by the name of *Xavier* but simply by *Nephew*. In a conversation with Xavier, Elijah asks,

'Why does [Niska] call you Nephew and not your real name?' he asked. 'Nephew is my real name,' you answered. 'I am her nephew.' 'Does she ever call you by your Christian name?' he asked. You shook your head, looked at me nervously. 'My name is Nephew.' 'Your name is Xavier,' your friend answered. It was not said meanly. I could tell from his voice that the boy was simply trying to understand. 'Your Christian name is Xavier,' he said. 'And mine is Elijah.' (304)

The essential difference in these two extracts is how the three characters handle the fact of having been given new names. While Niska does not mention that she received a Christian name at all, she does, however, notice that her sister Rabbit was suddenly called Anne by the nuns. Still Niska does not seem to accept this new name as Rabbit's real name, but rather as a strange habit the white missionaries were engaging in, which however did not change the fact that her sister was actually a Cree. As a child, Xavier reacts in a similar way as Niska did. He regards *Xavier* only as a temporary denomination, while *Nephew* reflects his real identity. It is only when Elijah asks him about the curious fact that his aunt does not call him by the Christian name given at Residential School that Xavier starts to think about it. The final result is him being permanently called *Xavier* by everybody else apart from his aunt. What seems to be even more significant about this incident, is that it can also be interpreted as one of the numerous indicators of Xavier's being torn between Auntie, that is the old ways of thinking, and Elijah, who for the most part comes to represent non-traditional ideas, which in turn is observable in Elijah's full acceptance of his Christian name. Later on, this acceptance, for instance, also clears the way for Elijah's decision to take part in WWI and adopt many non-Native customs.

Of course, the changing of names was not the only cruelty Aboriginal children had to endure at Residential Schools. Apart from the "constant indoctrination in Christianity and the three Rs, [Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic]" (Miller 135), far worse things were going on: frequent corporal punishments, cutting off the children's hair as a symbol of the missionaries' power over them, public humiliation and even sexual abuse were part of everyday life.

Despite the hard times at Residential School, Xavier does not forget his mother tongue, even though he speaks it with an accent, as Niska notes. "You [Xavier] spoke Cree with a *wemistikoshiw* accent" (247). He also has difficulty to learn the English language. Knowing it only little in the beginning of the novel, he gets better and better, though. Due to his long participation in the war and the constant contact to English it is only natural for Xavier's language skills to ameliorate. Nevertheless, this can also be taken as a sign of his constant approximation to the Euro-Canadian culture. This idea is supported when the army soldiers sing songs at a point when Xavier is still new to the army. He does not want to join them, though. "They sing a song I don't know and even [sergeant] McCaan sings out in his thick and raspy voice. [...] Me, I won't sing their songs. I have my own songs. I try to remember one of my own but the English words all

around stop it from coming” (18). Through this it becomes obvious that the English language is influencing Xavier’s language skills, which are crucial for the transmission of Native oral stories. The white tongue is slowly merging with the Cree language, if it is not even substituting it. Due to this it might be even said that he is actively forgetting tribal history.

As in *Ceremony*, repression is one of the worst enemies of oral cultures and the concept of holistic health, which only works when the past, present, and future events are remembered and processed in a way so as to provide a person or tribe with advice on how to act and what to do or not to do. Xavier, too, is falling into a highly repressive state of being, in which he does not want to think of certain moments of the past because they are too painful. However, by not coming to terms with these moments but forgetting or repressing them, Xavier is working against his own Nateness, which he wants to keep so as not to go mad due to the atrocities of war. With the two opposing motivations (keeping traditional ways, and forgetting painful memories) existing side by side in Xavier, he puts himself in the paradox situation of wanting to tell a funny oral story about white soldiers to his elders upon return to Moose Factory, and playing soccer in order to forget the execution of a soldier who fell asleep on nightwatch; “the only reminder that we are in a war is the rumble of shells on the horizon” (95).

The act of repression can also be observed after Gilberto’s death in a trench raid. This soldier, who fought in the same division as Xavier and Elijah from the very beginning, is killed right in front of Xavier, who gets shot himself. When Gilberto’s dead body falls on Xavier, in shock, he pushes it away and “begin[s] running with the other toward the German line” (267), and probably running away from this image of Gilberto’s death, because shortly after Xavier thinks to himself, “I don’t remember much after gaining their trench [...]. My mind cracked after Gilberto was killed in front of me” (273). There are many more instances throughout the novel in which one can see Xavier’s repressive behavior. Outlining all of them would, unfortunately, go beyond the scope of this paper. What, nonetheless, still needs to be looked at is how Xavier’s repression and forgetting the past and the old ways is countered. Since this unbalanced state runs parallel to Tayo’s state in *Ceremony*, it is not surprising that the method to cure it are the same, namely by oral storytelling and the matriarchal principle, which is why it will be discussed in the course of the analysis of Niska, the leading female character.

A further indicator of Xavier's increasing mixture of a white/Native identity can be detected by looking at the hand-made moccasins the protagonist takes to Europe. In short, when worn or talked about, they are a symbol of the Aboriginal self, which is still a part of him. The first time he thinks of them occurs in the course of his very first memory of war after his arrival in Ontario. He considers rejecting the heavy army boots in favor of his hand-made Native footwear, for they would probably be more suitable for the muddy conditions. "I wonder if my moccasins in my pack would be a better choice right now" (20). Shortly after that Xavier again feels that wearing the moccasins would be more comfortable, but he "do[es]n't want to ruin them" (74). The third time he recollects wearing the moccasins is when many soldiers report a certain medical condition, the "trench foot", in which pouring rain and a permanent high level of water in the trenches caused wounds on the soldiers' feet. "We wear the tall moccasins I made for us a long time ago back in Canada. They dry quickly and allow our feet to breathe, and in this way we avoid foot trouble. The moccasins are the one break in dress code that McCaan will allow" (226). The sole fact that Xavier and Elijah wear moccasins at war points to their continuing connection to Native lifeways. However, the mentioning of their mixed dress can be understood as a mix of traditions they already embody. We hear again about the moccasins when Elijah comes to the point in his development in which he does not want to take part in war anymore but go home at last. Elijah says in fact:

'I feel like I must leave this place, that I am ready. We will go back home and you and I will return as heroes.' He points to the moccasins that he wears, the ones I made him so long ago back in Ontario. I have re-stitched them many times, but they are clearly near their end. 'There's no fixing those,' I say. (388)

Elijah's still wearing the moccasins once more underlines his still existent connection to Nativeness, no matter how feeble it may be. However, his statement that he finally wants to return home, which is immediately succeeded by pointing to his irreparable moccasins, is easily understandable as an implication of his irreparable relation to the old ways as well, for he has gone too far in his current identity alteration. Xavier does not wear his moccasins anymore, yet his Native identity is not completely lost at that point. It has only been weakened by the unintentionally wrong information he has received in a letter about Niska, from which he believes that she has died, thus leaving him with no immediate relative he would like to come home to.

Niska's supposed death is only one of the crucial events which shape Xavier's self. A second one – which can be found in a chapter of the *TDR* which has the telling

title *Turning* – would be the disappointment in love he has to experience with Lisette, a beautiful young woman, whom he sees in a bar. He falls in love with her and is desperate to leave the battlefield to be with her again. He even risks being court-martialed because of leaving without permission. When he finds out about her being a prostitute, who has only had sex with him because Elijah paid her for it, Xavier sinks into a highly depressive state in which he feels indifferent towards life.

Something in me has gone dull and hard, and I force myself to keep running. My ears hear nothing now but the shallow *woosh* of my own breath in my chest. I avoid the place with the hospital and begin making my way south along a dirt road, no longer caring that I will be court-martialed when I make it back. I will just keep walking along this road until I'm with my section again, and then if they let me, I will go back to the trenches and commence killing. (286)

What is even more dramatic than his indifference to his own death or survival, is that he does not show any interest in or respect for human life either. In choosing to say *commence killing* rather than *kill again* or *go back to killing*, it is stressed that the soldiers he has killed before this turning point he killed with respect, and solely for his friends' and his own survival, whereas the new victims to his sniping skills will be killed in anger and a generally destructive attitude.

5.2.2. Animals as Roots – Finding One's Identity

Curiously enough, Xavier retains his respect for life when it comes to animals – a respect he has already nourished before as well as during the war. Although it has to be pointed out that there is one scene, which will still be described a bit further down, in which he momentarily turns his back on preserving his respect for life – as opposed to becoming a sniping machine, which has no tie to a balanced way of being – in order to make himself seen and noticed by his fellow soldiers, who usually give Xavier the feeling of “becoming a ghost” (108). He feels that despite his gradual adaptation to the ways of the war and his taking over specific features of other Euro-Canadian or European cultures, “[the other soldiers] don't know [he's] right beside them” (108). Xavier is whitening, but they still do not fully accept him as one of their own; he is invisible to them.

In general, though, the protagonist has learned through his aunt and through her stories that Indigenous people are always very thorough when it comes to hunting and killing an animal for sustenance. This had especially been valid in earlier times, when there were no supermarkets, where one could buy groceries, and a tribe depended on the season and the natural resources which went along with the respective time of year.

They had rituals for showing their respect and gratefulness to the killed animal for having given up its own life so as to feed a family or tribe. Moreover, Natives were careful to use all parts of the killed animal so as not to waste. They used all the meat, skins, horns, bones, organs, and so forth and in that showed a great inventiveness in working up the parts into things of every-day or ritual usage. If the rituals were neglected or the people displayed wastefulness in regard to the parts an animal provided, the animal spirits would be insulted and would not give their life the next time (Gill, J.H. 139; Sioui, “Spirituality”).

The introductory scene to *TDR*, in which Xavier and Elijah have trapped a marten as boys, shows how Xavier indeed holds on to the Native rules on how to kill an animal and process its parts further. “I untie the noose from the marten’s neck, take out my knife and begin to skin it. I make sure to be careful, to not damage the fur, to keep the body intact. I want Auntie to see that I do not waste” (2). Xavier’s traditional killing and processing of the marten creates a sharp contrast to the before-mentioned incident, in which Xavier wants to step out from his invisibility, which, interestingly enough, is also part of the chapter *Turning*, in which he loses both love and respect for life.

The situation in question involves the duck shooting, in which Elijah wants to prove his incredible sniping skills to some soldiers unknown to Xavier. Elijah misses the duck, though. Previously in this scene, we feel Xavier’s jealousy increasing because he feels not in the least as respected as Elijah, although Xavier knows that he is the better hunter, only that he does not enjoy killing as much as his best friend does. Out of this jealousy and desire for some acknowledgment – in fact Xavier wants at least to be *seen*, not as a ghost but as an integral member of the division – he “pick[s] up [his] rifle and slip[s] in a round, [...] pull[s] the trigger and [his] rifle barks. The duck’s feathers spray up, then slowly float back onto the water, landing on the surface and around the ripped carcass. The men [...] stare at [Xavier] as [he] stand[s] up and walk[s] away. [...]” (276-77). Already the fact that he kills the duck without having to do so for sustenance, shows his separation from the Indigenous teachings about respect for all beings. What is more, Xavier does not even take the duck with him, to try and use at least some parts and, thus, not waste. He leaves the destroyed body of the animal right where it fell, does not say a ritualistic prayer, but just turns away from the animal. Given the fact that Xavier’s surname is Bird, one might suggest that in killing the duck, a type of bird, mercilessly, he also metaphorically kills a part of himself.

In this respect I want to point out two further instances, which go hand in hand with the argument about shooting the duck. In both situations noticing animals, and killing and/or saving them, is significant for Xavier's development and identification.

The first time he sees animals on the battlefields is when he is lying in no-man's-land between the trenches of the Canadians and the Germans, where otherwise he only perceives death and destruction. Having to hide there for the day, Xavier suddenly sees little birds and seems to be relieved to find life in such a tragic and hopeless place filled with craters.

Small birds dart across the crater chasing one another. One swoops in and lands close to my head. It doesn't know I'm there and begins to primp itself, just a few feet away from me, its feathers shining in the sunlight. It is a type I've not seen before. The eyes are black as night. I blow on it and, startled, it hops, then flits away. For a while nothing moves. Pure silence. (80-81)

The second scene involves a swallow and its baby-birds, which has built its nest in the room where Xavier was put for medical observation after he had returned from his disappointing encounter with Lisette. Immediately Xavier says, "[t]he bird reminds me of home. I watch it all afternoon, fascinated" (292). The situation takes a tragic development when Lieutenant Breech, who hates both Elijah and Xavier for being Natives, realizes Xavier's happiness caused by looking at the bird family and orders Xavier to destroy the nest with a broom, which would also kill the bird babies. Xavier refuses to do this, risking to face severe consequences for disobedient behavior towards a superior officer. To save his friend, Elijah takes the broom and finishes the job instead of Xavier. Xavier is devastated and, after the previous loss of love, he falls into an even deeper state of depression.

Elijah takes the broom and sweeps the nest hard, knocking it to the floor. The baby swallows tumble out. Two are lifeless, killed instantly by the fall. The third raises his featherless head, bewildered, its eyes large and round above its small yellow beak. Its tiny wings beat frantically on the floor, then more slowly. The mother bird cries out. The baby swallow's lids sink and it ceases to move. I *turn* my head away from all of them. (293, my emphasis)

In regard of the above-stated notion that in shooting the duck, Xavier loses also part of his Native roots, one has to say that the extract about the swallows, in a way supports the reading. Xavier turns away from the swallows and from the soldiers, including his friend. He is no part of either group anymore. However, we must not disregard Xavier's surname. In the discussion about Ts'eh and how both her name and surname defined her identity, we said that Ts'eh through her name will always be part of water, the mountains, and relative to or personification of the respective spirits.

Similarly, Xavier's surname is of utmost importance. What he personifies might be referred to as the "Bird Spirit", or he might be a relative of birds. Hence, he will always be connected with nature. This idea finds support in the nest-like hiding places Elijah and Xavier have to build as snipers. Corporal Thompson finds it very funny to be able to tell Xavier "'Bird, got to your nest'" (97). In response Xavier thinks to himself, "I am made for this" (97). There are two possible interpretations for this utterance. Firstly, it could mean that Xavier has come to understand that, due to his hunting skills and precision in sniping, he is destined to be part, not so much of the white culture (for naturally, white culture does not imply that all people who identify with Euro-American, Euro-Canadian, or other white societies are ruthless killers), but of "war culture". In contrast to this idea, the second option would suggest that via his name, Xavier is connected or related to real birds, which are at home in nature. As a consequence, Xavier is at home in nature as well, i.e. he is rooted in the old circular ways of his People.

In *Ceremony*, Ts'eh is a Montaña; in *TDR*, Xavier is a Bird; and that Bird is rooted in nature.

5.3. Elijah – Trickster or Windigo?

Elijah, just as Xavier, is a character who due to various sorts of influences is torn between two sides. Culturally speaking, he might even be in the very same liminal position, that is between traditional and non-traditional. In terms of the introduced aspect of cultural (and religious) conversion, he can be referred to as a syncretizing Red Euro-American (or Red Euro-Canadian, in his case), since on the one hand, he interchangeably uses bits and pieces of both the Cree and the Euro-Canadian culture, but, on the other hand, he is still apparently closer to having converted to the white side, at most stages of *TDR*. Nonetheless, he shares the same destiny as almost all Red Euro-Americans: he is never a fully appreciated member of white society.

There is, however, still another aspect of his liminality. It can be viewed from a mythological perspective, as is implied in the title to this chapter. From this viewpoint it can be suggested that the crucial difference between Xavier and Elijah lies in their embodying mythological or archetypal figures. Considering Elijah's actions and behavior throughout the story, the possibilities of the figures he personifies are the trickster and the windigo.

In Wiget's *Native American Literature* (4), there is a table which illustrates the genres which can be identified in Aboriginal oral narratives. One of the table's distinguishing features shows that the trickster figure has a rival counterpart. This is an important idea which has to be regarded in combination with the fact that trickster myths "usually [...] provide explanations of why things are the way they are or how people should and should not behave" (Stein and Stein 48). What these two ideas in other words describe is that tricksters can act as good or bad spirits. They can shift between one or the other in one and the same story. However, tricksters can have counterparts embodied by rival figures as well. These figures can, for instance, be the culture hero or a hero twin. The latter is usually used when the myth includes rival twins, one good, the other evil.

If we assign both Elijah and Xavier a respective mythological figure, then Elijah would definitely be the trickster, or evil twin, whereas Xavier would be the good twin, or culture hero. (Or if we briefly think of Xavier's main problems of culture loss, which he, however, overcomes, we might adapt the term "culture hero" to "cultural hero", since he succeeds in preserving the old ways and culture of his People.)

Boyden, in his attempt to "explore man's easily savage nature, [...] places the story of the Windigo, the Cree man-eating spirit and human nemesis, in the desecrated and mustard-gas poisoned fields of France" (qtd. in Richler 296). The implications which point to Elijah's having turned into the windigo spirit are many, but all of them originate in a negative impact of some kind on Elijah. The passages in *TDR* which underline Elijah's trickster spirit, though, are equally as numerous as the ones indicating his windigo side, but they are a mix of positive and negative situations, just as the trickster is a mix of good and bad.

Despite the idea that Elijah is a personified spirit, I first want to have a look at his development throughout the story, since it is the exact opposite of Xavier's, i.e. Elijah's identity goes from Euro-Canadian with a bit of Native, to a mix of Native-white, and back to Euro-Canadian with a hint of Aboriginal.

In fact, Elijah starts out with his Native heritage, but we know nothing about his parents apart from their being Indigenous and Elijah's mother dying of a "coughing sickness" (376). Elijah is put into Residential School at a young age, when he already speaks Cree, and spends almost his whole childhood there. Therefore, he has no relatives, male or female, who could have further grounded him in the Aboriginal lifestyle. Thus, the biggest portion of his identity formation is influenced by the nuns.

His time at the Residential School is considerably harder than Niska's or Xavier's, because in addition to all mental and physical maltreatments, the humiliation, and so forth, he was victim of sexual abuse. Although there are only few times Elijah talks about his Residential School experiences, we still get to know that one nun "always want[ed] to bathe [him]" (303), for instance.

Nevertheless, there is also a positive aspect, according to Elijah's perception, and that is the English language, which he learns very fast and in which he becomes fluent. So fluent that the nuns even regret having taught it to him.

Elijah has always had a gift for the *wemistikoshiw* language. Once the nuns taught him to speak English, they couldn't stop him and soon learned to regret that they ever had. In school, it got so that Elijah learned to talk his way out of anything, gave great long speeches so that his words snaked themselves like vines around the nuns until they could no longer move, just shake their heads hopelessly at the pretty little boy who could speak their tongue like one of their bishops. (65)

In spite of certain advantages Elijah has from having been educated at that school, the negative psychological impact is far bigger. The hidden aggression because of the sexual humiliation and being beaten to tears, and the feeling that his Native heritage prevents him from being respected for his intelligence and other human qualities, can be considered to be among the motivations due to which he has to enroll in the army. There he wants to earn the Euro-Canadian society's respect by killing German soldiers, after which he wants to come back to Moose Factory a changed, that is a respected man. However, his plans do not work out the way he wanted them to. Actually, many real men at that time, who also felt disrespected, believed that by joining the army white people would pay them the deserved respect, even when they got home from the war. Boyden says that the problem was, that though they were acknowledged overseas, but later had to come home without any recognition" (qtd. in "Reading Guides"), their achievements being again disregarded⁵⁶. As many Native men told him when they talked about their war experiences, "despite the horrors they faced

⁵⁶ Boyden adds that unfortunately a lot of people do not even really know that many Aboriginals had enrolled in both World Wars. So one of Boyden's ambitions in writing *TDR* was reminding his readers about Native involvement in WWI because "Native soldiers are not recognized for their accomplishments. When you look at the number of [N]ative soldiers that actually volunteered for World War I and World War II, it is an incredibly high rate" (Boyden qtd. by Nurse). Boyden clarifies though: "[I]t wasn't this big lofty ideal that I am going to let every Canadian know about Native involvement in the war, but I certainly knew that no one else was writing about it, and I was really shocked that no one had" (Boyden and Shackleton, "Author Podcast").

overseas, these were some of the better times of their lives because for once whites treated them as equals” (qtd. in Richler 296).

Elijah’s destructive intentions to kill as many enemy soldiers as possible are nourished during the war by the knowledge that there was another Native sniper, the Ojibwe Francis Pegahmagabow (referred to as Peggy in the novel), who was said to have sniped more Germans than anybody else.

Francis Pegahmagabow, [was] the great Indian marksman of the First World War. He was an adept hunter, able to lie still for days in no-man’s-land, and by war’s end recorded more enemy kills than any other sniper in the Great War, or any war, for that matter. He returned to Parry Island a hero, becoming chief of the reserve. And yet very few people know of him anymore. (Boyden qtd. in “Reading Guides”)

Pegamahgabow experienced a fate which becomes Elijah’s aim too, as we learn at a later stage of the story. This is why he turns more and more unscrupulous in killing enemies.

A detail which exemplifies Elijah’s developmental stages, is his hair. While at Residential School he always has short hair, he decides to let it grow, when he comes to live with his best friend and Niska in the bush, where he gradually gets increasingly integrated into the traditional Cree lifeways, which both Niska and Xavier show him. This implies that the Native part of his identity is strengthened, creating a balance in Elijah’s cultural mixture. That he has not forgotten the white ways and that he does not feel bad about them, is evident when his hair has to be cut short again for the army. Whereas Xavier is almost worried about the hair cut, Elijah is more open to the possibility of it. He thinks “it would look good on [him]” (67). The established balance is again disrupted due to Elijah repressing memories of home, because the consequence of repressing and forgetting something, as has been noted earlier, is the probable loss of it. In this manner, Elijah also, for example, forgets to pay respect to the dead, whether human or animal, as he has learned from Xavier and Niska.

He, moreover, starts to talk with a British accent, of which he says that it “came to him while deep in a slumber” (156). In response Xavier thinks to himself, “I’ve got my animal *manitous*. Elijah’s got his voices. He says he couldn’t speak in his old voice even if he wanted to now. It’s gone somewhere far away.” (156). As was pointed out in regard of Tayo’s dreams about Ts’eh and his ultimate joining with earth, Elijah’s dreams define what his unconsciousness tells him to be primary. In having adopted a distinctive European accent, he moves one step away from his Nativeness again,

because the old voice of his old (balanced mix of) identity has gone far away. His dreams have thus indicated in which culture he rather thinks himself to be rooted.

Having seen what Elijah's identity is culturally, I want to return to the previous idea of his mythological identity, for which it is necessary to describe first the typical character features of both the trickster and the windigo figure.

The trickster's most characteristic trait is the duality of his good as well as evil nature. Furthermore, "[h]e is part human, part animal and is often able to change form" (Stein and Stein 48). Eva Gruber notes that the trickster can take numerous forms – depending on the region he could be Coyote, Raven, Badger, Mink, Hare, Nanabozho, Weesageechak, or even Old Man (35). Even though they "can exchange their animal and human forms at will, and frequently do so to evade or deceive others", the motivations behind their doing so are "recognizably human" (Wiget 16). Alan R. Velie adds that "[t]ribal tricksters are quintessential wise guys and loners; they are lovable, but more trouble than they are worth" (326) because they can also be "cruel and bloody" (324); they are "adventurers, gluttons, searchers of sexual pleasures, lazy and easily bored, dishonest and impulsive" (Stein and Stein 48). Finally, tricksters are not always the ones to trick people, they can also be "tricked, trapped or humiliated [themselves]" (Velie 325). Although most characteristics will be of importance in the subsequent discussion, but it is in fact this latter aspect of the trickster figure, which decides the fate of Elijah.

The windigo figure, on the other hand, is the once human, cannibalistic spirit with a heart of ice, which is only destructive and causes considerable damage (of mostly psychological nature) to the Native community the windigo has lived in before his "turning". In his article on witiko psychosis from 1960, Seymour Parker explains that "the witiko sufferer enters a stage of violent homicidal cannibalism. It is commonly thought that once this stage is reached and the person has tasted human flesh, the craving will not leave him and he must be killed" (qtd. in Waldram 193). In other words, due to their willingness to kill and eat human flesh, the windigo has to be destroyed in a ritualistic way by the tribal medicine people, which is necessary to ensure the peace of both the community and the once human soul of the windigo. Wesley Bernardini, however, points out that "oral traditions are used primarily to inform the present rather than simply record the past" (24). What he means is that current events, circumstances and motivations have a considerable impact on the choice of story (and in which *way* the narrative is told). Hence, it is necessary to emphasize that many

stories, such as both of Niska's accounts, about how her father and she herself had to kill a tribal member who was defined as having become a windigo, cannot always be taken literally. The situations involving the eating of human flesh or the image of the heart of ice should be understood metaphorically, in which the former of these two examples would suggest the infliction of severe damage to a human body, and the latter as having hardened feelings after having experienced something traumatic.

In the light of the above-said, we can proceed to look at the parts of *TDR* which carry implications about Elijah's connection to the trickster spirit and the windigo figure.

It has been presented several times already in this thesis that a person's name indicates a certain identity or distinguishing trait. Xavier's surname is Bird; Elijah's is Whiskeyjack. Both surnames imply that both male characters are related to a bird family. In Xavier's case there is no specified bird kind he belongs to. He is rather a relative to all birds and part of the circular world, whereas Elijah is only related to the Whiskeyjack, or gray jay kind. However, his original surname is not Whiskeyjack, but Weesageechak (174), the name for the trickster spirit in Ojibwe and Cree. Whiskeyjack is only the anglicized version of Weesageechak, making it denote this mythological figure too. Given Xavier's relation to all bird kinds, he consequently must be also a relative of the Whiskeyjacks. This supports the previously noted idea, based on Wiget's table about Native oral genres, that Elijah is the real trickster and Xavier, his brother-like relative, is the good rival twin.

Elijah's trickster identity is moreover repeatedly underlined by phrases which mention his "trickster grin" (120), which he has since he was a boy. Yet another aspect of Elijah's character traits as a trickster is described in a scene when Elijah and Xavier are out sniping.

Sometimes late at night when we are in a listening post or in one of our nests, Elijah will comment on what Fritz [the Germans] is doing in his own line, on what his actions will be in the next few days. It is as if Elijah is lifted from his body and carried to the other side where he can float around at will. His eyes stare as if he can see very far. Some elders talk of this experience, but more often a man takes the form of an animal when he leaves his body – a bird or a fox or even a bear. (126-27)

It was said that tricksters are known for their shape-shifting into various forms. In this extract it becomes clear that the ability to change forms is also present in Elijah. He is already a Whiskeyjack – a trickster and a bird.

However, in the course of the story, Elijah is changing more and more into something else, as can be inferred from Xavier's words: "Elijah seems to have no more need for food. He is thin and hard like a rope. He is a *shadow* that slips in and out of the *darkness*. He is someone I no longer know" (350, my emphases).

The extract says that from the position of being a pure trickster figure, which he was before, Elijah gradually takes one step after the other and thereby comes closer to having a changed identity. He becomes a mixture of the trickster and the windigo, being both and neither of them, being in-between. This in-betweenness is described in terms of his giving up a part of his former self and becoming a shadow, that is he leaves the metaphorical body of his previous trickster identity and slips into the place behind this body which cannot be reached by the light. This place, the shadow, is not totally separated from the body, but it is only an unspecified reflection of what the body in all of its facets has been. Instead the shadow, or rather the new self, is now including new characteristics, namely those of the darkness, or the absence of light, with which a shadow is inevitably connected. If we think of the black burro and the gray mule in *Ceremony*, light is the side of good, and darkness is the side of evil. It can be concluded that, if Xavier describes himself as a ghost – which is commonly thought of as being bright and essentially good – but speaks of Elijah in terms of a shadow – which is generally dark and thus associated with something bad – then Elijah is moving away from a good self towards an evil identity.

Considering that a shadow is an inversion of the physical body, grounded in the material world, it can be understood as the immaterial counterpart of the same, which only outlines the physical body's contours. It basically deceives observers to be something it is not. Since deception was argued to be a further character trait of tricksters, we must look at a situation in which Elijah builds a tent for himself and Grey Eyes, the morphine-addicted fellow soldier in the division. His actual motivation to build this tent is not the need for spiritual or physical purification, but rather to have a hiding place from the superior officers, where Elijah and Grey Eyes can engage in taking morphine. Elijah knows that the officers were still seeing him as a traditional Native person, and consequently would not question the purpose of building the tent. "It would be easy for [Elijah] to claim that he is conducting mysterious Indian ceremonies in his tent" (136). He basically tricks the officers by changing – and actually inverting – the purpose of the tent, shifting it from purification to intoxication. Having in mind that

deception and trickery are at the basis of a trickster's characteristics, Elijah can with increasing certainty be perceived as the personification of this figure.

Another incident deserves to be mentioned, namely the encounter with an old man in the train, when Elijah and Xavier are on their way to the recruiting center in Toronto. For this scene Elijah's wish to be able to fly has to be kept in mind, for he says that the feeling he has from the moving train, and his feet not touching the ground in this movement, is what he imagines flying to be like. When the train suddenly hits a curve, Elijah is thrown "onto a bench beside an old sleeping man. The man's eyes open, 'Whiskeyjacks should fly better,' he says. Elijah looks at him. 'How do you know my name?' 'I don't,' the man says. 'I was dreaming. There was a flock of whiskeyjacks.' He looks confused. 'They were pecking at something dead.'"(184).

My point about Elijah's name and his implied identity is valid also for this extract; from his dream (which makes his implication even more true) the old man tells Elijah who he is. The main difference in this instance is, however, that the old man – himself a possible avatar of a trickster and, hence, knowledgeable about a trickster's character traits – goes on making a prediction about Elijah's (possible) cannibalistic future.

Elijah has already crossed many taboos of human behavior and is on the best way to taking the final step from the shadow-like state between two mythological roles to cross over entirely to the singular identity towards which he has been moving, when he is invited by army pilots to accompany them on one of their flights. However, from being all excited about this opportunity to fulfill himself a wish (and to maybe fulfill his destiny as a flying Whiskeyjack even), he turns to being sick from the very feeling of flying. He decides never to fly again, literally but also metaphorically speaking. Elijah is not a good flier; as a Whiskeyjack he should fly better, to repeat the old man's words. Since Elijah gives up flying as part of his trickster identity, he has almost arrived at being a pure windigo. Nonetheless, he takes an unexpected turn, maybe even because he reconsiders the old man's warning, for Elijah is aware of the bad and inhumane aspect of certain things he has done in war. He tells Xavier (just before he wants his old moccasins to be re-stitched, but Xavier tells him that it is too late for that), "'I know I've done horrible things here. [...] I know that you think I have gone mad.' He pauses. 'Sometimes I feel like I was mad too. But I feel like I must leave this place, that I am ready. We will go back home [...]'"(388). The reader feels that there is hope that Elijah

might remain the dualistic good/evil trickster figure instead of becoming the all-evil windigo. However, author Joseph Boyden tricks the reader.

He separates Elijah from the only person embodying a feminine principle he has ever had in his life, Niska. (The nuns at the Residential School can hardly be said to have taken over the roles of matriarchal principles.) in his highly depressive state, Xavier mistakenly tells Elijah of Niska's death, a fact he has kept from his friend for some time. This is the crucial point of change for Elijah because he is suddenly left with no mother-figure to go home to. "Indian mothers, like the earth, endure; women's rituals and symbols – earth, moon, fire, and water – emphasize continuance rather than destruction, survival rather than extinction" (Antell 217). In being separated from Niska and her positive matriarchal influence to create, integrate, connect, and keep alive, Elijah turns to utterly destructive behavior, which is an indication for his really having crossed the point of no return and having become a windigo.

Apart from scalping (229), killing "retreating [German] soldiers, one by one" (380) by shooting them in the back, and cutting a dead soldier and having "blood [...] smeared across his cheeks" (395-96) when he looks up from him, are just some of the cruelties Elijah engages in after his turning into a windigo self. However, it has to be stressed that we never know for sure whether Elijah has or has not literally tried human flesh, but as mentioned before, that question is only secondary. What matters is the metaphorical connection which describes Elijah's deeds, in which he severely damages the flesh of humans, while killing them, to be the deeds of a cruel, emotionless, and unscrupulous cannibal.

What furthermore identifies Elijah as a windigo spirit, is his recurrent dream about a family in winter.

Elijah tells me of a dream that begins to come to him every time he closes his eyes and drifts into sleep. A family sits in the snow, cold and starving. They are too tired to move. Elijah can feel their cold, the gnaw in their bellies. Death is everywhere around them in the forest, staring at them from behind trees. But something far worse than death crouches close by. It is felt rather than seen. (383)

Dreams shape and identify our "signs of the self". The fact that Elijah is seeing and feeling a windigo story in the form of a dream every night, rather than listening to it in an oral storytelling, makes this dreams even more powerful. It tells Elijah who he has come to embody.

There is one more aspect about Elijah I want to discuss in this paper, namely the fact that a trickster usually tricks others, but that he can equally be tricked himself. The first time Elijah, in his trickster role, tricks another person is, when he steals the rifle from the nun who sexually abuses him. In this sense he repays her the sexual humiliation and trauma he has had to experience.

A second instance of tricking, albeit a cruel one, is Elijah's murdering Lieutenant Breech and Grey Eyes so as to evade being court-martialed for his morphine addiction. But here we find the opposite order of tricking and being tricked, i.e. Elijah only kills/tricks the two soldiers after Grey Eyes betrays/tricks Elijah and tells on his morphine addiction in order not to be court-martialed himself for deserting.

Thirdly, the climax of the whole novel can be seen as the ultimate tricking situation. Xavier, in his duty as windigo killer, strangles Elijah on the battlefields. However, he does so only after Elijah has attempted to attack and kill Xavier, for Elijah's desperation after having falsely learned about Niska's death has brought him as far as never wanting himself or his best friend to leave the battlefields anymore. "*We both can't [...] leave, [Elijah] mouths, still smiling. [...] [He] struggles up and reaches to wrap his arms around me again. He's no longer smiling. His mouth is twisted in an angry grimace*" (417). In trying to kill Xavier, Elijah tries to trick him out of going home, but Xavier manages to get on top of his best friend and fulfill his duty of a ritualistic killing. He tricks the windigo out of his malign plan.

Interestingly enough, after Elijah's turning windigo, there is no clear indication as to whether the trickster role is completely deleted in him. If we reconsider Elijah's surname, Whiskeyjack, then we must assume that the trickster spirit is still hidden somewhere deep down in Elijah's unconsciousness at the time of his being killed. Supposing that the trickster in Elijah is tricked by Xavier, then also the windigo is in a way tricked because both figures are part of Elijah. If we, furthermore, remember two significant ideas about tricksters, on the one hand, the good character, and the fact that trickster stories tell what (not) to do and how to behave; and if we define the windigo spirit as having an essentially evil character, which trickster stories have to point out, on the other, then it can be assumed that the trickster wants to do away with the windigo for the duration of this story of course. The trickster tricks the windigo, by having him murdered so that he does not proceed with his immoral and inhumane behavior. The thing is, however, that in tricking a figure which is part of the same identity, the trickster is tricked by himself and dies along with the windigo.

5.4. Niska – An Example of Matriarchy

Niska is the only relative Xavier has who really cares for him. (His mother, Rabbit – who through the impact at Residential School changed her name to “Anne” – is completely assimilated into the Euro-Canadian culture and does not want to have anything to do with her Native family.) Curiously enough, there is no (long-term) father figure to be found in the whole novel: Niska’s father dies when she is still young, and we do not learn anything about Xavier’s or Elijah’s fathers. In his “Podcast Interview”, Boyden declares that this fatherless state probably came to him unconsciously due to the author’s own childhood experience.

Having been raised in the old Cree and Ojibwe ways – Niska’s father is a Swampy Cree, while her mother is Ojibwe – Niska decides to take Xavier away from the Residential School, where her sister Rabbit left her own son at the age of his first memories, and thereby adopts a parental function. Given the fact that she grew up according to traditional thinking, she is supposed to embody Allen’s feminine principle, which is not only to be found among Natives in the south of the United States, but is equally valid in most Indigenous Nations in Canada, only that in Canada this principle is more often referred to as the concept of “matriarchy” (Sioui, *Autohistory* 14-18). Niska follows this call and adopts a matriarchal role. There is, however, a time, before she gets Xavier to live with her, in which she prefers to live all alone in the woods, with only a Frenchman to be her companion. Only after a complete change in her identity, in which she decides to ignore everything coming from the white people in the surrounding settlements, including the Frenchman, she becomes a substitute mother to her nephew. Therefore it is necessary to look at Niska’s development of identity which allows her to embody a matriarchal principle and help Xavier heal.

As already stated, Niska comes from a traditional Native environment. What shapes her immensely is that she is a medicine woman by heritage, i.e. her father and other ancestors were medicine people as well. She grows up among her tribal community, sheltered by her family. Early in her life she already learns that she has the same powers as her father. Her visions make it clear that she would be her father’s successor as the tribe’s medicine woman and, thus, has to be introduced to her future duties already at a young age.

In their description of “Medicine Men/Women” and “Shamans”, Hirschfelder and Molin (177; 260-61) write that the powers of a medicine man/woman, whether inborn or acquired at a crucial turning point of a person’s life (such as a near-death

experience), are nothing one can use without having acquired the necessary skills. The powers have to be controlled, for which a medicine man/woman (or shaman, for that matter) has to complete a certain training, in which he/she learns how to call upon the natural spirits, and how to effectively communicate with them. The training furthermore comprehends going on vision quests so as to find one's Animal Spirit helper.

Another skill of a medicine man/woman is gathering knowledge about herbs and other plants, and practicing the ability to use his/her given powers to provoke visions, of either the past, present or the future. This type of visions is especially used to see whether a tribe is holistically healthy or whether it needs a communal curing ceremony, which can include vision quests, purifying ceremonies (such as the sweat lodge or shaking tent ceremony), singing/praying, storytelling, and the usage of herbs. A medicine man's/woman's powers of vision are, moreover, used for the purpose of divination or scapulimancy – future events are foretold by “reading the bones of an animal, most often the scapula, or the shoulder blade (Lyon, “Scapulimancy” 273) – so as to ensure the tribe's hunting success; obviously, this kind of vision seeking is essential for a hunting and gathering society such as the Swampy Cree.

Niska, too, is instructed in the effective usage of her powers and in the correct performance of ritualistic ceremonies by both her parents. The biggest part, however, is done by her mother, since Niska's father gets imprisoned by the French for having killed a mother and her baby from his own tribe (even though it was Niska's father duty as medicine man to kill the two tribal members in a ritualistic windigo-killing, for they had turned windigo during the harsh winter) and dies in prison. So “my mother taught me all that she could about the shaking tent and the *matatosowin*, the sweat lodge. She taught me about the healing and killing powers of roots and herbs that grew around us, what part of the skunk would cure snowblindness and what parts of the owl gave night vision” (148). Following her mother's instructions, Niska creates herself a shaking tent in order to find out about her Animal Spirit helper. “Most often [...] it was the spirit of the lynx that came to me first and stayed through the night, showing through its sharp eyes the secrets of the forest” (148). Niska enjoys her father's storytelling and her mother's advice. She simply enjoys her identity which is firmly established as Native through the positive experiences she gets from her current way of living.

Even though her father dies a prisoner, on the one hand, and in spite of her short but intensely negative stay at the local Residential School, on the other, she does not entirely reject white society, which becomes clear when she falls for a French trapper,

whom she meets in the bush one day. By playing little tricks on the Frenchman, she attracts his attention, which has the effect that he becomes her visitor-companion for almost one year. Through Niska's account of her romantic encounters with the Frenchman, Boyden reminds us of the numerous historical relations of a similar kind. It was not unusual for a Cree woman and a Frenchman to have children, who even have formed a whole new Nation, the Métis. Niska's relationship basically goes hand in hand with Silko's and Sioui's concepts according to which different nations should not stay separate only because of their differences but should rather appreciate the multitude of cultural knowledge and traditions, which each party can learn from.

Niska does not think that the Frenchman would harm her in any way. She believes in his positive influence and love, even. During the time she spends with him she, thus, learns some French words and teaches him some words in Cree in return. What is more, she even chooses him over her powers, for the Animal Spirits do not appear anymore when she calls them during a ceremony, and her visions also cease to come to her. At that time, Niska does not perceive this development as negative, though, for she sometimes felt that her powers were more of a burden than a gift. She is thankful for the supposedly positive impact the Frenchman has on her. Niska, however, starts neglecting her family relations as well; she does not visit her mother anymore, and in this sense forgets about her past, which is a symbol of her losing both the traditions she grew up with and, through that, also part of her identity.

In her growing love for him, Niska does not foresee, however, that *her* Frenchman would betray her with other women and even conceive children, for whom he does not want to be a father. She learns about this when she goes to town to find out why he has not visited her in the bush anymore. For this Niska changes clothes, as she is advised by an old woman living on reserve. Even though she refuses to do so at first, she realizes that she has to put on non-traditional clothing so as to conceal her living in the old ways because the people on reserve do not endorse the traditional lifestyle. "I changed into the clothes the grandmother had given me and carefully and tightly braided my hair on each side of my head. [...] I appeared a different woman" (193). It is important to point out that, despite changing clothes, Niska says of herself that she was still the same person, for she only appeared to be different, that is whitened. In a pub, she finds the Frenchman, but drinks beer *with* him instead of turning away *from* him. She feels, though, that the influence of the alcohol is not good for her, because she does

not enjoy the drink but “choke[s] it down as fast as [she can]. [She] almost gagged” (195).

What changes Niska’s mind about the Frenchman completely, is his reaction after the, for him, ritualistic sexual intercourse with her in a church.

He laughed. ‘I fucked you in a church,’ he said, and smiled. I smiled back at him. ‘I fucked the heathen Indian out of you in this church,’ he said, but this time the smile was not happy. ‘I took your *ahcahk*,’ he said to me, the smile was gone now. ‘Do you understand? I fucked your *ahcahk*, your spirit. Do you understand that?’ [...] ‘I took your power away in this place and sent it to burn in hell where it belongs.’ (197)

This is when Niska realizes that it was only her who showed respect for his culture, and even seemed to give up parts of hers only to be closer to him. There was no mutual respect and appreciation, for he thought of her as “just another squaw whore” (197), whose powers were to be banned. The result of this is Niska’s taking a cultural u-turn by leaving the white settlement and the Frenchman behind. Before returning to her home in the bush, she camps at a river, devastated by the experience.

I crouched and sobbed, afraid that his magic had killed my family’s fire inside of me [...]. The stink of their tobacco and drink and especially of him wafted up from my clothes [...]. I stood and tore them from me, ripped every stitch from my skin and flung the material into the river and finally stood naked under the moon. (198)

It was discussed earlier in this paper that Tayo’s mother and Tayo himself are reborn with a different self – a notion, which was emphasized by the repeated connection, which was established between either of them and water of some kind. In Niska’s case we can also identify a source of water, which indicates ritualistic purification of her body and soul. She violently takes off the non-traditional clothes she had to put on so as not to be stigmatized at first glance by the on-reserve community, and throws them into the water for the river to take them away.

There is yet another indicator of Niska’s metaphorical rebirth, namely the moon. Antell identifies “earth, moon, fire, and water” as the symbols of women, symbols which “emphasize continuance rather than destruction, survival rather than extinction” (217). If we still take into account, as previously explained, that the creating forces of the universe are also considered to be female, then we can conclude that the moon, under which Niska stands, is creating her anew.

Moreover, before she comes to the river, Niska feels how she gets sick and sees “the contents of [her] stomach rushing up and spewing onto the steps below [her]” (197). In this another act of purification is detectable. She vomits out the alcohol, which

has already made her gag earlier that evening. A further ritualistic means which Niska uses in order to completely purify herself and attempt to gain back her supposedly lost powers, is her paddling home immediately after taking off the foreign clothes. Immediately after having arrived, she builds a sweat lodge and a shaking tent “according to [her] father’s directions”, acknowledges the four directions plus the earth and the sky, and prays for the Animal Spirits to join her once again. By appearing to her, “a sense of peace came over [Niska]” (199). From this it can be inferred that she drastically engages again in the traditional ways.

Only shortly afterwards she has the vision which makes her go to get Xavier away from the Residential School. Niska cannot see a close bond between Xavier and his mother, for which there are two reasons. For one, when Niska and Rabbit/Anne were still young girls, the latter left her own family, that is her mother and her sister Niska, and went to the Residential School voluntarily, whereas Niska had to be forcefully removed from her home and was put into the same schooling institution, from which she was rescued by her mother after a relatively short period of time; Rabbit, however, did not want to return to the bush with them because she liked the Euro-Canadian ways. “‘Did you see Rabbit?’ my mother asked. ‘Will she come with us?’ ‘She is called Anne now,’ [Niska] said, and watched the understanding cross my mother’s face” (106). A second reason for the non-existent mother-son relationship is that as an adult Rabbit/Anne is an alcoholic, who has lost her ties to the old ways. Hence, Niska knows that her sister cannot take over the role of a real matriarchal relative either, which is why Niska voluntarily replaces Rabbit/Anne in this respect.

At this point it is easy to see how Niska stays so firmly rooted in the old ways during all the time she cares for Xavier. She teaches him how to sneak and hunt, how to “walk in snowshoes through deep snow, [...] how to make [his] own clothing and moccasins, what plants and herbs were edible and which had healing properties” (249). She, furthermore, introduces him to Native rituals and the powers of the medicine people. “Over the years I taught you how to cleanse yourself, and much more difficult, how to divine answers yourself. This last cannot be taught so much as nurtured, and many days I saw the spark of true talent in you” (301).

More importantly, however, she initiates the curing ceremony after he comes home from war in a very serious condition. She leads him through sweat baths with the ritualistic purpose of purification of the body and soul (Hirschfelder and Molin, “Sweat Lodge Ceremony” 287), and she tells him the story of her and his life.

It is in her storytelling that she finds suitable medicine for Xavier's estrangement from the past, which makes him start recollecting the memories he tried to repress. The crucial story shows how Xavier as a little boy thinks to be lost in the forest, when he suddenly witnesses the circular mating dance of about forty grouse, and how he got his Native name, Little Bird Dancer, from Niska.

As you watched, their patterns reminded you of something else you'd seen before, [back at the Residential School] out of the eyesight of the watchful nuns. Your own people gathering in summer to celebrate an easy season, a tradition they carried on despite the stern words of the *wemistikoshiw* church. You stared at these birds dancing in the snow [...]. You saw in their movement the movement of your own people as they traveled from winter to summer to winter again, dancing through the years. You saw for the first time *the circle*. Even though you could not yet express it in words, *you understood* the seasons, the teepee, the shaking tent, the wigwam, the fire circle, the *matatosowin* [the sweat lodge]. You saw all of life is in this circle, and realized that *you always come back*, in one way or another, to where you have been before. (408, my emphases)

I argued before that his surname, Bird, is an indication for his returning to the old ways. This idea is strongly supported by this extract. Regardless of where Xavier has been, what he has experienced, what he has done, and how his identity might have changed in the course of the war, he and with him his identity would return to the Sacred Circle of life. The grouse helped him understand at a very young age that according to the circle he would always come back. Due to his forgetting and repressing the past, this memory, and the knowledge within it, were temporarily lost to Xavier. By retelling this story, Xavier remembers and, thus, the words can work their effect of bringing the whole story back to life.

One could say that without her engaging in the oral tradition, that is in stories from her and Xavier's past, we would never get to hear Xavier's accounts of events on the battlefields in Europe, either. Theoretically, he would still repress those memories, even though right after his getting off the train we can hear him think that his "dead friends [...] come to visit" (11) only to accuse him of the destructive actions of his. Seeing his friends repeatedly, but merely being accused by them would not help. He needs to be instructed how to process the happenings of the past and thereby make something good out of them, make them personal and tribal history. This is Niska's primary duty as Xavier's substitute mother and personification of the matriarchal principle. It is through Niska's embodiment of the matriarchal principle that Xavier can find his way back to being healthy. In other words he again finds his "place in the universal web of life" (Antell 217).

6. CONCLUSION – I FIND GUILT TRIPS INCREDIBLY BORING AND USELESS

I find Paul Chaat Smith's statement incredibly telling and useful for expressing why this thesis did not concentrate on "the usual recitation of broken treaties, massacres, genocide, and other atrocities [which Natives had to endure in the course of history]. It's what we're supposed to talk about, but [...] I find guilt trips incredibly boring and useless" (20). I agree.

This is why, instead, my attempt was to point out the importance for all parties, which were or still are involved in some sort of cultural conflict between individuals, or even between whole communities or nations, not to dwell on the past but to deal with it in a constructive manner. This step is indeed crucial in order to be able to live side by side and do so in an appreciative way. In fact, both protagonists from *Ceremony* and *TDR*, Tayo and Xavier, had to deal with the horrifying experiences of their pasts. However, they came to understand that mere forgetting or repressing was not getting them back to a balanced way of life. In order to be at peace with themselves they had to face their pasts/memories. The two protagonists had to learn from them in order to start anew and realize that not everything coming from a different culture must have a bad influence on them.

Hence, the main goal of this analysis was to describe how various characters from *Ceremony* and *TDR* developed identity-wise. What was introduced for this purpose was Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of semeiosis, in which he described the human self as a constantly changing semiotic sign. Through this approach it was demonstrated that human beings and their individual identities are indeed the product of a multitude of influences which are encountered daily in different areas and cultures, and that due to the permanent presence of such influences, the human identity/sign of the self underlies a process of constant re-formation. For the Indigenous context this, consequently, implies that "[i]t is misleading to assume that all [I]ndigenous people experience a Native cultural identity in the same way just because they were born into a Native community" (Weaver 243). This counts for both people living in the real world as well as for the fictional figures in question: Not everybody born a full-blooded Native will also pertain to an Aboriginal identity, nor will every Native give up their traditional way of life due to contact with Euro-American or Euro-Canadian culture. This concept is equally valid for persons of mixed origins. There are many more facets to cultural (and religious) conversion, which, consequently, leads to a multitude of kinds of

conversions, such as rejection, substitution or assimilation, fusion or syncretism, compartmentalization, pluralism, and a sixth kind which I have termed adaptation for the scope of this paper.

In this regard, it has been shown that Tayo, for instance, who comes from a background of mixed heritage, goes through a process of cultural adaptation initiated by his cousin Rocky's wish to go to war, on the one hand, and the teachings of both his teachers and his aunt Thelma, on the other. Traumatic experiences such as his cousin's and his uncle's death, ultimately bring about a change in his identity which shows parts of both substitution as well as adaptation. However, in the end he can overcome his problems and rejects Euro-American ways. Similarly, Xavier and his aunt Niska go through a period of adaptation as well. Both are in their own way seeking acknowledgment and respect, and are, therefore, willing to abandon certain vital aspects of their Native culture. Nonetheless, at a certain stage both come to a point at which they realize that for each of them a rejection of Euro-Canadian culture is best. As a consequence, they return to their previous selves and continue their lives in the Indigenous ways they grew up in.

There are two more, even though only minor characters who also rejected Euro-American culture, namely Tayo's uncle Josiah and Old Grandma. Both remained firmly established in the traditions of the Laguna Pueblo. Nevertheless they already showed signs of cultural tolerance instead of a stubborn, total rejection of different cultures, i.e. Josiah demonstrates his appreciation of Mexican culture (and certain traits of their cattle), while Old Grandma restrains herself from talking badly about Thelma attending church.

Elijah, Rocky and Tayo's mother, Laura, take the opposite course of rejection, i.e. all three of them substitute Native identity with a different one. Whereas Rocky and Laura opt for a whitened lifestyle early in their lives, Elijah takes a different direction. Even though at first he is torn between his Native and a Euro-American identity, he rather tends to adopt the latter. Only towards the end of the story does one realize that his development is heading towards a trickster-windigo self.

Auntie Thelma is the only character who comes to compartmentalize her Native culture and the Euro-American way of life. At the beginning of *Ceremony* Thelma rigidly follows the idea that nobody sticking to Aboriginal culture can be successful in the white world. Therefore she converts to Catholicism and supports her son Rocky in becoming a part of Euro-American life by engaging in various sports. Nevertheless, she

changes her mind about Native people being doomed to failure because of frequent drinking problems and lack of morals, after Tayo recovers from his trauma and proves to be a valuable addition to her family and the Laguna community. Following Tayo's positive development, Thelma incorporates both cultures into her daily routine and engages in them interchangeably.

There is one more fact which needs to be restated at this point, namely that both Tayo's and Xavier's healing ceremonies had new components to them; in other words, the original ceremonies were modified and adjusted to be suitable for each of the individuals who were out of balance with the Sacred Circle of Life. In Xavier's case Niska did not know at first how to treat her nephew and decided, thus, to try and tell Xavier the story of her life, which was an approach which she had never tried before and of which she did not know whether it would work. Betonie, on the other hand, included modern paraphernalia into his healing ceremony for Tayo, which proves his readiness to accept both the old and the new, the Native and the Euro-American. In this context I want to use the words of Georges Sioui once more:

Our Sages (sic) tell us that the time when we are to come together as a family has arrived. We no longer have, they say, the time to linger on our differences or even on the wrongs that have been inflicted upon us in the past, and that we are still suffering in this supposed post-colonial period of our history. We have to concentrate on how we can use our particular gifts and visions [as described by the Sacred Circle of life] to mend and better the world for everyone. We could invent and use an aphorism such as "There is only one race: the race against time". ("O Kanatha")

What Sioui repeatedly tries to say in his works, speeches, and lectures is that it is time to "[break] the image of the Amerindian that puts in doubt his very mental and spiritual adequacy as a human [...]" (*Histoires* 21). If that stereotype were abandoned, then "[t]he 'Indian' [could] thus cease to exist as a problem and begin being known as an important part of a solution" (*Histoires* 21). In other words, a variety of identities and ways of life, and contact between cultures should not be perceived as a threat, neither to the minority nor the majority culture. The only condition is mutual appreciation of and willingness to learn from humans with a different cultural heritage.

APPENDIX

A) TRANSCRIPT: “AUTHOR PODCAST: JOSEPH BOYDEN”⁵⁷

Boyden, Joseph, and Paula Shackleton. “Author Podcast: Joseph Boyden.” Oct. 7, 2007. *Bookbuffet: For Book Groups That Click*. 2010. BookBuffet LLC. April 3, 2010 <http://www.bookbuffet.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/news.article/article_ID/631E6ECA-F5AE-4D63-A784B947ED9B5F42/index.html>

BB is standing for BookBuffet; *JB* for Joseph Boyden

BB: This is Paula Shackleton podcasting for BookBuffet.com. Today I am speaking with Joseph Boyden, author of *Three Day Road* (Penguin Canada), who joins us from New Orleans. Joseph divides his time between Canada and Louisiana.

Joseph is Canadian from Irish, Scottish, and Ojibwa descent. His father became the most highly decorated medical officer in the British Empire during WWII and his grandfather served in WWI. His mother was a teacher. Joseph is the third-youngest of 11 siblings. As a young man his wanderlust took him many places, which he financed through a wide variety of itinerant work. He studied creative writing at York University where he earned his BA (1991) and went on to obtain his MFA (1995) at the U of New Orleans, where he also accepted a faculty post teaching Canadian literature and creative writing. He has a son, Jacob, now age 17. After marrying Amanda, who is a writer, trapeze artist, and contortionist, Joseph returned to the James Bay area to teach at North College in the reservation towns on the coast of “the great salt lake.” His first book is a collection of short stories published in 2001 titled *Born With A Tooth*. *Three Day Road* (2005) is his first novel. *TDR* has earned several important awards and nominations including the Governor General nomination for fiction in 2005.

BB: Joseph, I first saw you speak at the Talking Book Festival [at the University of British Columbia] and I was entranced by your reading, and so I am very pleased to have you speak with us on Bookbuffet.com today.

⁵⁷ Given the fact that this is a transcript from a live interview with Boyden which was transcribed by BookBuffet.com, the following pages contain several grammatical mistakes which I, however, chose not to correct in order to maintain the original form and flow of the interview. Nonetheless, mistakes which render reading and understanding the text difficult were indicated by adding (sic). All other additional comments in square brackets are from BookBuffet.

I wanted to start with a question about *Three Day Road*, a book that is both critically acclaimed and a popular success. The publishing contract was hotly competed by Knopf Canada, Thomas Allen Publishers, Doubleday Canada, McClelland & Stewart, and Cormorant Books, with US publishers jumping in as well. It sold to Penguin Canada for six figures and has been doing well in the US, UK, French, Dutch, Italian, and Spanish markets. What was that process like for you?

JB: Oh, it was crazy and it's coming on a few years ago now. When I look back on it I think, "Man, those were some crazy months in my life." I worked on that book for many years and I was teaching at the University of New Orleans where I am Writer in Residence now. Back then when I was working on it, I found the person who was right for it, Nicole Winstanley who became my agent and is now my editor at Penguin. I gave her a draft when I felt it was finally ready to go out, and within a month she was getting calls from all the major publishers in Canada, so it was just a madhouse for me.

As soon as that happened a couple of weeks later US publishers started fighting over it as well, and I was thinking, "What is happening in my world?"

BB: Yes! Very rewarding, I'm sure!

JB: I was just hoping some Canadians would want to read this book. Then after the US publishers fought over it, I was lucky enough for it to go to the London book fair and International publishers began fighting over it. I wound up checking my email because Nicole had more lovely emails for me every day. It was very overwhelming. My being in New Orleans and removed from all of the hubbub was very grounding for me, and a good thing. I'm just a regular Old Joe down here in New Orleans...

BB: [laughs] Oh yeah - I'm sure.

JB: [laughs]

BB: Now your dad is Raymond Wilfred Boyden and he was a medical officer who served in WWII, so you have a history of this war background in your family and I understand he received the highest decoration, the Distinguished Service Order, but he died when you were just eight years old.

JB: Yes.

BB: Now when I read this book, I think of the main characters Elijah and Xavier, who neither of those in *Three Day Road*, neither one have strong relationships with their

father — there's no father figure there -- and it reminded of John Irving who is another author whose work is haunted by the absence of a natural father, seen most particularly in his last novel, *Until I Find You*. Can you speak to this aspect in your own life?

JB: That's very interesting and it's not an angle I typically think of or was actually pursuing — this lack of a strong father role model. Niska, of course, has a strong father but he is taken away when she's young, where he ends up dying. That's kind of interesting. Perhaps unconsciously that comes out. My father left a very strong impression on me and all of my siblings, although I was only eight years old when he passed away. I remember him very vividly. Unconsciously you may have hit on something, because again, in my new novel that I am working on there's a real lack of father figures there as well.

BB: Oh, interesting!

JB: Uh huh...

BB: Well I know that in your upbringing you spent the school year in Toronto in an urban environment and then your father took you up to the Canadian North of Ontario where you spent your summers in a very different living existence.

JB: Yes, my dad wanted all of us kids to be in good schools. He had a medical practice downtown Toronto, and we lived in Willowdale, which was very suburban at the time.

Just as you said, whenever we were out of school for more than a few days, even on weekends, we were up in the Georgian Bay area and further north.

He had a love — a very, very strong tie to the land and to animals, and he emphasized this to all of us. There are eleven of us siblings. My three older sisters are half-sisters from his first marriage. We're all very close. My mother is also very much a lover of the rural land. She moved many, many years ago up to Georgian Bay. She moved when she was able to retire from her school teaching. She's been living there for well over twenty years. So I have a connection that is still very strong. For example, I'm heading up to go moose hunting in a month. Getting up on the land and getting out is really important to me. It is what grounds me.

BB: Absolutely. My husband is also a hunter and when we lived in Los Angeles, I used to catch him close to hunting season, when he was stuck in the city, going to his cupboard of outdoor wear and smelling the camp smoke and the smells of the wilderness on his clothing, so I can understand that.

JB: Oh yes. It's a very powerful thing that I do several times a year is to get up North and spend time up there. Oddly enough, I'm finding that I am attracted to the most desolate areas I can find. The further away from humans the better. James Bay is really good for that if you want to get away from life and feel on the edge of the natural world.

BB: Would you say it is the desolation and the complete lack of people or the landscape, per se?

JB: Oh, the very simple but powerful landscape, and very dangerous one, you know. The weather can turn very quickly, in a matter of hours, and you have to know what you're doing. Not being around humans is for me an exciting and intriguing thing.

BB: Right. Your novel, *Three Day Road*, captures that exquisitely and I wonder whether you can give our listeners a brief synopsis so we can move on to the questions?

JB: Well, the novel actually opens up in the summer of 1919. Niska, who is an old Ojibwa-Cree medicine woman, gets word that her nephew Xavier is returning from the Great War. So she paddles many days from the bush where she lives to go and get him from a rural train station. She picks him up and sees he's devastated from the war, he's lost a leg, but even worse he's addicted to morphine and he's very close to death. And so what she does is paddle him the three days home, and realizes along the journey that he very well might die. Not knowing what else to do, she's never faced this kind of sickness, she ends up telling him the stories of her life. She feeds him the stories of her life, because he won't eat any food, in the hopes that this will bring him back.

While she does that, Xavier internally reflects on his last years in the war. He and his best friend Elijah went [to war] and were recognized as being very good hunters and marksmen, and so they are made into snipers. To devastating effect.

BB: Joseph we discussed this book for Whistler Reads and we opened up our discussion with a sage smudge ceremony in which we honored you, the characters you created in this book, the four compass points, and we tried very hard...

JB: Migwetch

BB:... it was set in The Path Gallery, which is a Native gallery up here in Whistler, and so we were surrounded by beautiful Native carvings and paintings and art, and it was very moving. The people who had attended had all read your book and everyone was very moved by the book to the point where one gentleman participating had brought his great great grandfather's WWI trench poetry.

JB: Oh wow!

BB: So you realize how everyone had related to the characters and the writing. I wondered now how since writing this book you have immortalized Ojibwa Francis Pegahmagabow. Did I say that name correctly?

JB: It's Pega-ma-gabo, very close.

BB: ... and I wondered whether in writing this treatise to Aboriginal soldiers in WWI, was that a relieving process? Did you want to bring attention to this matter, to this issue?

JB: Absolutely; I was always very shocked that no one knew about Native involvement in all of our wars to really any degree. But the first thing I do when I set out to write, is to tell a good story. I think that is so important. I worry that a lot of writers sometimes forget that. The reader wants a good story. Also on a very basic level I wanted to tell an exciting story, a great story. I knew about Pegahmagabow since I was a little child. It always electrified me when I thought about this kind of thing, the Native soldiers in a foreign place doing such a job.

So it wasn't this big lofty ideal that I am going to let every Canadian know about Native involvement in the war, but I certainly knew that no one else was writing about it, and I was really shocked that no one had. So when I started, I wanted my first novel to be a big one, I wanted to use a big canvas, and I certainly chose one and I did it naively.

BB: When I was reading about the history of Canada's involvement in WWI, I was quite surprised to find that there wasn't much involvement from the French-Canadian side. Most of the soldiers who went over were actually English-speaking Canadians, and I am wondering if you could comment on that, since it was indeed Germany that was invading France.

JB: There were the Van Doos, [an anglicized word from the French "Vingt-Deux" - the 22nd Regiment] which were the very crack Canadian regiment. A lot of French-speaking Canadians, if I understand correctly, felt it was a European war that they had no need or desire to become involved in.

And it was a messy war. It was not like WWII where you're a great threat and a madman and somebody like Hitler. WWI was a political mess and it was an unnecessary war in many ways. So I think a lot of French Canadians felt this is not our war to fight.

I think about today with the US invading Iraq – a lot of people feel this is not our war to fight. Canada has purposely not put any soldiers in. I think that was a French-Canadian stand for many people.

BB: At the time that I read this book it was also the 90th anniversary of Canada's WWI sacrifices at Vimy Ridge and Canada made a reception over there, and you went over there with your son. What did that feel like when you visited hill 145?

JB: Oh, just amazing. I have been there a number of times, and every time it's been just as powerful as the last. You can really feel the ghosts of the place emanating from the ground. It really feels like holy ground to me. When you come up on the monuments on the ridge, you don't really see it until you're upon it. I've tried to recreate it in an article that I wrote for Maclean's magazine. That sacrifice of the average Canadian.

[There has been a debate that Vimy has taken on a mythic resonance in Canada and nowhere else -- and that by comparison with other WWI battles, (for example 60,000 British soldiers that died in a single day in the Battle of the Somme) eclipses Canada's sacrifices.]

BB: Xavier Bird and Elijah Whiskyjack show the contrast between a traditional Native lifestyle and the effects of a residential school upbringing. You were raised in Catholic Jesuit grade schools in Toronto, contrasted with summers spent with your family in remote parts of Ontario. It seems that the destiny sculpted for each boy in *Three Day Road* and the ending of the story most particularly are tied to this conflict, this stain (as Roth would say), this corruption, this duality of worlds. The reader sees a close fraternity battling jealousy and sickness that ultimately leads to an act of sacrifice and of love. I struggle to understand why Xavier would have gone to serve in the war more than I struggle with his actions toward Elijah at the end.

JB: A lot of people tell me that that is one of the strengths of the book. There are these two boys who are best friends. They are as close to brothers as brothers can be without being blood brothers. I wanted to really kind of make a statement – not an overly overt one – but one about the damage a residential school can do. Xavier makes it through the war because he has that grounding. He has that finger-hold on something that Elijah doesn't.

So people have responded strongly. A lot of Native people especially, too. They often come up to me after readings and say, "I was at residential school," and they just want to talk about it. So I take that as a positive reaction and response.

BB: Now Niska is a very amazing character; I was entranced by her. She is Xavier's devoted aunt and she comes to collect her nephew at the end of the war, as you mentioned, and her narrative is intertwined between Xavier's narcotic dream-state with the stories that she's telling him to sort of bring him back with remembrances of her own as she's paddling.

There's a very mystical realm to that and the sweat tent scene. I'm interested in the spiritual practices of people today. Are those things that you have experienced yourself?

JB: Yes, I've done plenty of sweat lodges and different ceremonies that I've been lucky enough to be involved in – especially on James Bay. There is definitely my reality in that novel in terms of – a sweat lodge is a difficult thing. It's not a spa treatment. It's a very painful and scary thing, especially the first few times you do one. I wanted to capture that but at the same time I wanted to respect Ojibway and Cree culture, and not paint the wrong picture. So I spoke to elders about it, I participated a number of times before that in sweats, and I wanted to get it across in a proper way. In a respectful way, I think was the most important [thing to me.]

BB: The other evocative aspect to the story is the fact that these characters are snipers, and you have the characters creeping up into no man's land in the middle zone, and hiding amongst the carcasses and [hunting men] which you describe so realistically.

Now I know you consulted with Canadian historian James Steel, *The Men Who Marched Away* (1989), for specific detail accuracy, but did you handle the types of rifles used by the soldiers in WWI? What goes into your research to ensure you get accuracy in these things?

JB: I've fired a lot of rifles and all of that before. I've handled a Mauser from WWI, I've handled a Ross rifle to understand. Jim was really helpful in helping with that actual physical kind of research.

I wanted to get the history right. Sometimes it requires specifics, like what size of round goes into a Ross rifle? Why did a Ross rifle, the Canadian rifle, always jam up at the worst possible times? Jim was amazingly helpful in those very specific things.

BB: When you were writing this book did you immerse yourself in other WWI literature?

JB: Actually I avoided the literature, and I am happy to have done so because there is so much of it that is just fantastic. I saved Pat Barker until after I finished my novel,

and I am really happy I did because after I read a couple of her books, my God, I don't know whether I would have been able to go out on this journey myself.

I did read a ton of nonfiction about WWI at the time and I still do. You know, "Put down that book, you're done with WWI. Get on with it." But I really am fascinated by the nonfiction of that era.

And then I began with a reading the classics, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and then in Canada the wonderful *The Wars* by Timothy Findley and a number of others. But I pushed away the literature because I didn't want it to take me off away from my own journey.

BB: Now you're living and teaching in New Orleans and teaching at the university.

How do you inspire young writers?

JB: I use myself as an example, I think because when I was teaching while writing this novel, I was often teaching five or six classes a semester, which is a brutal course load for a university instructor. So I found I had to write early in the mornings [which] was the only time I felt fresh enough and alive enough.

I would get home from school and grade for hours; you're not ready to write at night time. So I created a whole system for myself where I would get up early in the morning and write every day. And I translate that.

My teaching load right now is a lot lighter, which is wonderful. It has really freed me up to focus on my own work a lot more. I've got a lot of new students up here this year at the University. I'm the writer in residence. I've got a lot of new MFA students, and they've got a long way to go but they're really hungry to learn.

I have the classic workshop structure where they present a story and everyone reads it the week before and marks it up and discusses it. You know, we discuss it in class and the student basically takes notes about what we are saying and doesn't really get involved in the conversation.

It seems to be a proven practice. It's the same system that I was taught creative writing.

BB: What's it like living in New Orleans? What do you like about living down there and the contrast between coming back up to Canada?

JB: Well, Amanda and I still love the city very much but my number one fear now is the violence that has raised its ugly head again in the city. You constantly have to be careful. It wears on you, too. Makes you scared and paranoid. So that is our number one concern.

But a chance to get up into Canada is something that I take advantage of numerous times a year. My family is still up there and my son and he's seventeen already.

BB: Yes, that's right; I was looking at that – seventeen.

JB: [laughs] Yeah, time flies. So just getting up there to see family is incredibly invigorating. But to write, I find being here is so important to me because there is this distance that I am given – geographical obviously, but also the psychic distance too is really important. To write about Canada. I'll always write about Canada, I know that. I'm not an ex-patriot. Canada is still very much my home and my country in so many ways.

BB: Yes, that feeling intensifies when you're away.

JB: Yes it does. When I am surrounded by it, it's very difficult. Too much noise all around, you know?

BB: Now you've written a series of short stories, *Born with a Tooth* and I understand you've been working on an adaptation of your novel, *Three Day Road* into a screenplay. How is that going?

JB: Good. We've gotten a draft done and the person who has optioned it is really happy with it so far. It's an ongoing progress, he says. But he's very excited about it. So we are keeping our fingers crossed and we'll see what happens. Amanda is the screenwriter in the family. She's really got it down, so she is the one I leaned on, and wrote the screenplay with my help. She hated the war scenes of course, right – writing them anyway, so I gave her some help with that. But she has been the one to drive this project, which made me very happy because she knows what she's doing.

BB: Well, Joseph, is there anything else that I've missed that you'd like to add? I mean, there's so much to your novel that I wanted to discuss and we've only touched on a few things, but...

JB: Really thorough research, I'm impressed.

[Beware Spoiler] BB: Ohhhhhh, there was just so much to this book. In fact my question would be ... about the identity switch at the end. You know when Xavier takes Elijah's ID tags and his life is saved after the amputation because the white men probably wouldn't have otherwise bothered to save an undecorated soldier of his rank. And I began to think who is who here?

JB: Yes and I bet that often did happen. But I have to say that is a big part of my new novel – identity and the loss thereof and the re-finding of identity. With this new

novel I am working on is (sic) grandchildren of the characters in *Three Day Road*. It's a novel in a contemporary setting.

I've got the bush of Northern Ontario which I actually love and then I've got big city Canada and America right now. One of my characters is in New York City for the first time. She's a girl from Moosonee and Moose Factory who's never been off the reserve before. And so I am really exploring the sense of identity again through the same family line.

BB: But in a modern setting. I'll look forward to that.

JB: Yes, in a very contemporary setting. I am almost finished the first draft, so I am very excited.

BB: How long did it take you to write this draft as opposed to your first novel?

JB: Well, this one's not done, and I think with all the traveling – I've been so lucky in so many ways. Just traveling around the world and really being treated so wonderfully. It's been a lot different type of struggle. I work here and there and then I finally said enough with the travel, it's time to write the new book and I've been really focused on it for well over a year, but altogether two years. Sometimes in fits and starts, but this last couple of months in particular it's all I do: eat, breathe, and dream my novel, kind of thing.

BB: Well you know it's funny because when I was interviewing Margaret Atwood she mentioned your name, and when we had John Vaillant up here, he mentioned your name.

JB: Ha ha, that's nice. Nice of Margaret, I'd have to say.

BB: Well, with great writing there is a community there, and so I have to ask: who you would recommend to us?

JB: Who I would recommend? Michael Winter. Michael Winter is just a brilliant writer and he's one of the kindest, most lovely people I know, and he's a brilliant writer with a new book just out called *The Architects Are Here*.

BB: Yes, yes it's getting wonderful reviews. Excellent. Thank you, I really appreciate that.

JB: Well, tell him I sent you.

BB: Yes, I'll tell him you sent us – he may not thank you!! [laughs]

JB: [laughs] He's just had a new baby with his wife, who is another Canadian writer. They're new parents.

BB: Well, Joseph, thank you so much. I really appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule to take this interview.

JB: No, thanks, I was happy to do it; sorry it took so long.

BB: We loved the book, it was very well received and we'll look forward to the next one and the movie too when it comes out. So take care.

JB: You too, Paula.

BB/JB: Bye.

B) MAPS OF LAGUNA PUEBLO AND MOOSE FACTORY

“Laguna Pueblo, New Mexico.” Map. *Google maps*. June 20, 2010

<<http://maps.google.com>>



Fig. 1. Laguna Pueblo, NM: Satellite picture; with Gallup to the west and Albuquerque to the east of Laguna.



Fig. 2. Laguna Pueblo, NM: Area picture; again with Gallup to the west and Albuquerque to the east; Mt. Taylor is indicated by the green area to the north-west of Laguna.

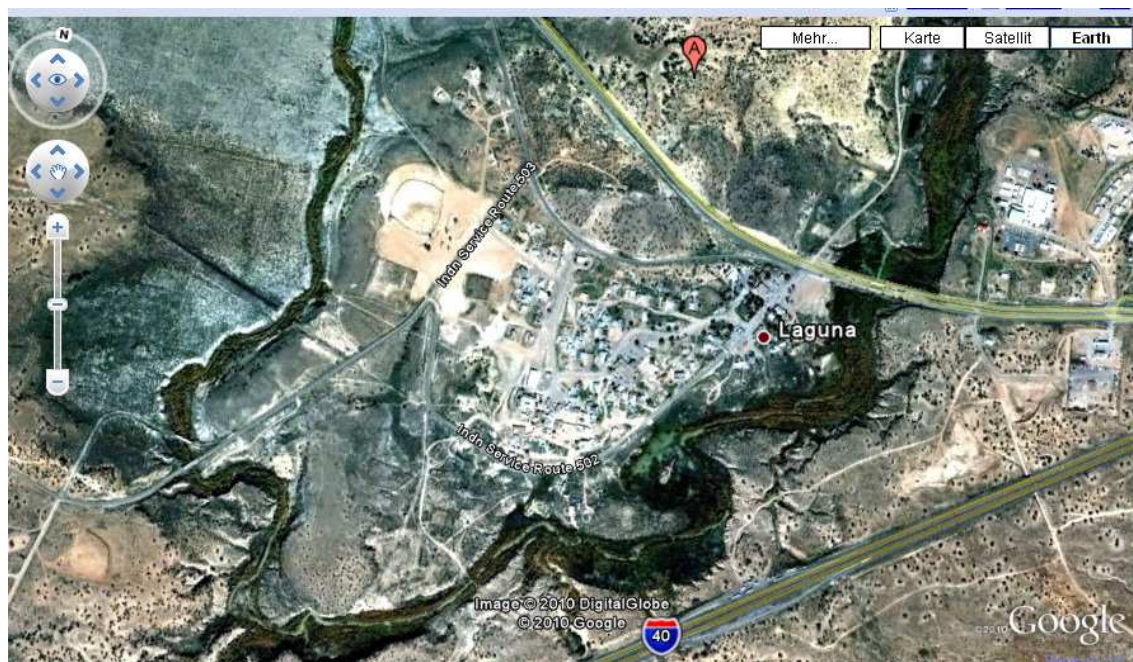


Fig. 3. Laguna Pueblo, NM: Satellite picture of Laguna and surroundings.

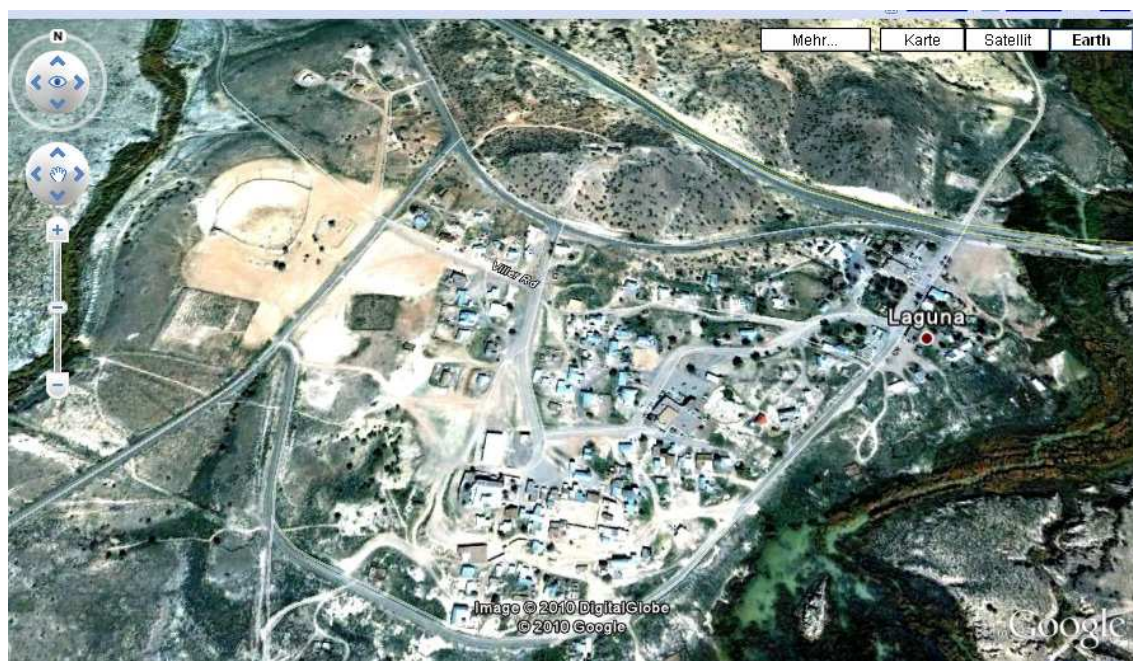


Fig. 4. Laguna Pueblo, NM: Satellite picture of Laguna; closer view.

“James Bay, Ontario.” Map. Google maps. June 20, 2010 <<http://maps.google.com>>

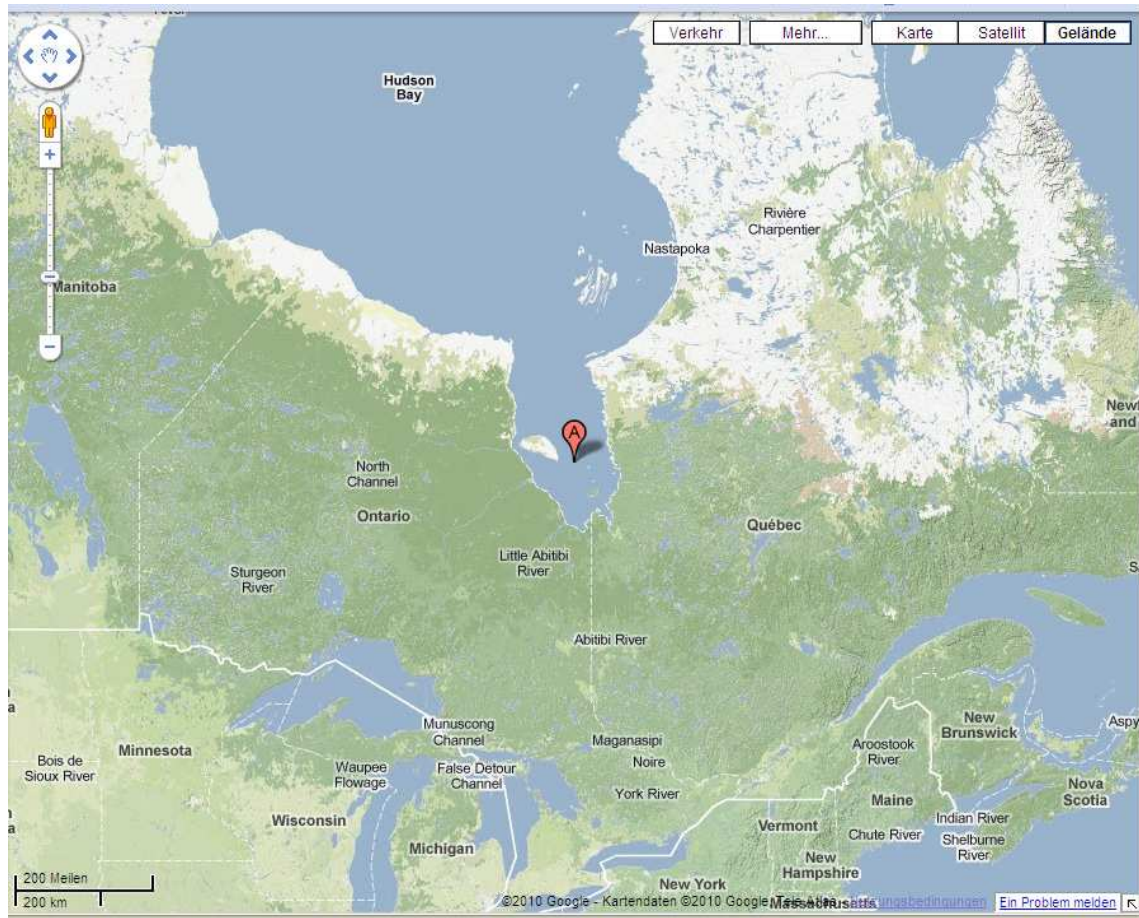


Fig. 5. James Bay, ON: Indicated by marking A.

“Moose Factory, Ontario.” Map. *Google maps*. June 20, 2010
 <<http://maps.google.com>>

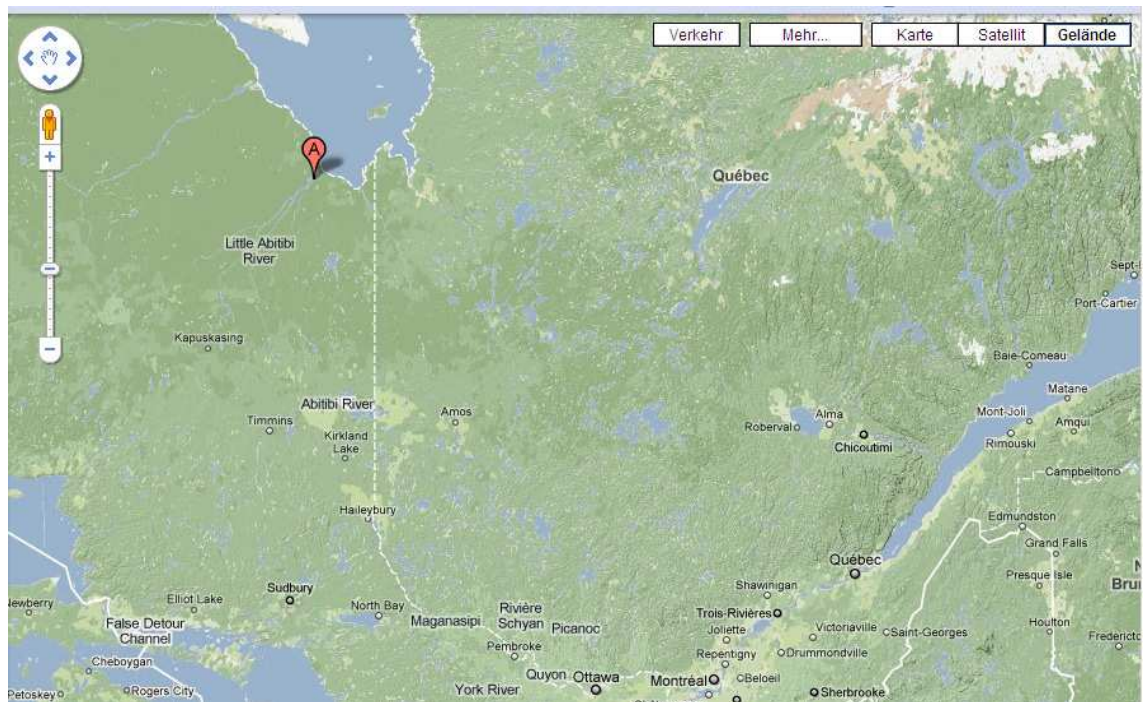


Fig. 6. Moose Factory, ON: Located on the south-western end of James Bay; with Kapuskasing to the south-west and Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec to far south-east of Moose Factory.

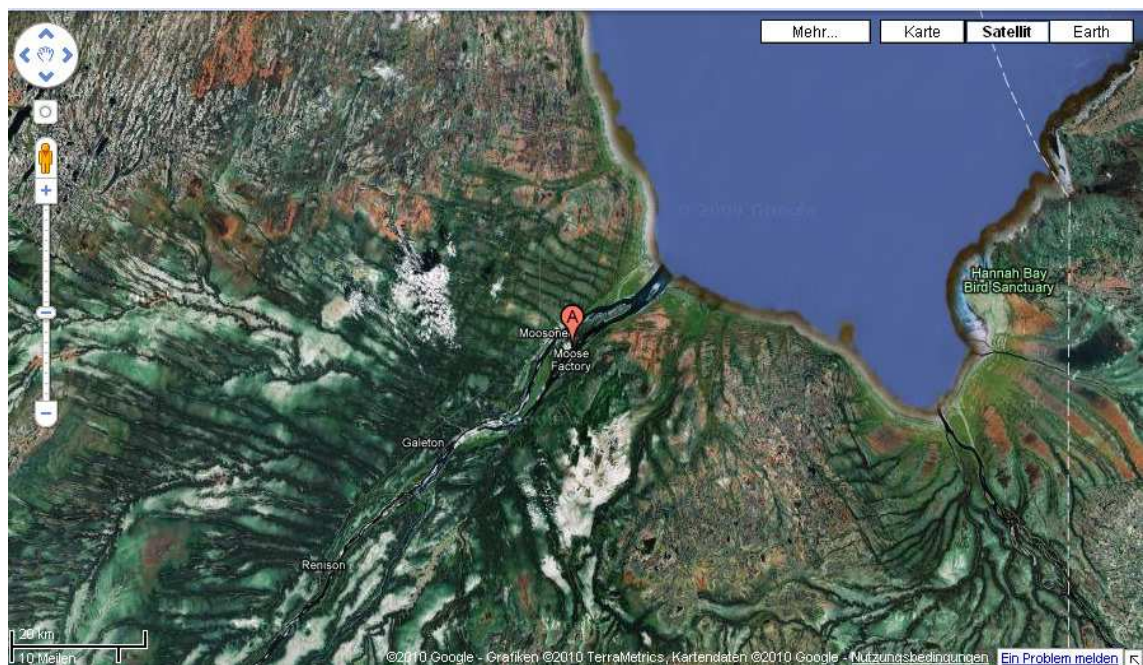


Fig. 7. Moose Factory, ON: Satellite picture of the Little Abitibi River and surroundings.

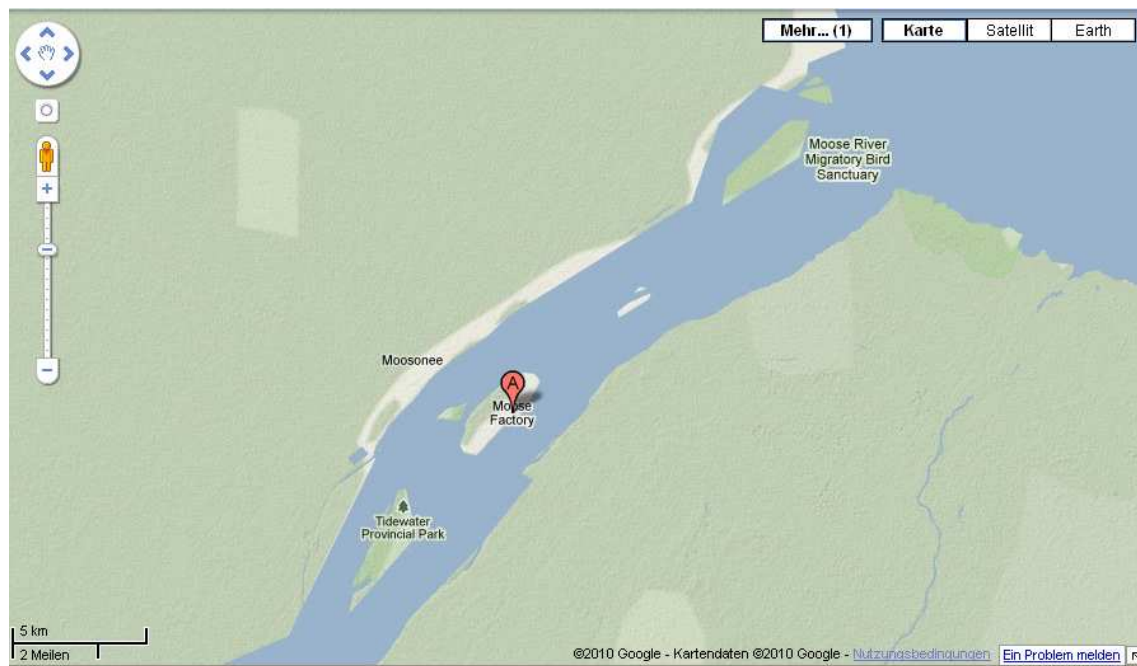


Fig. 8. Moose Factory, ON: Area picture; Moose Factory Island with Moosonee on the north-west shore

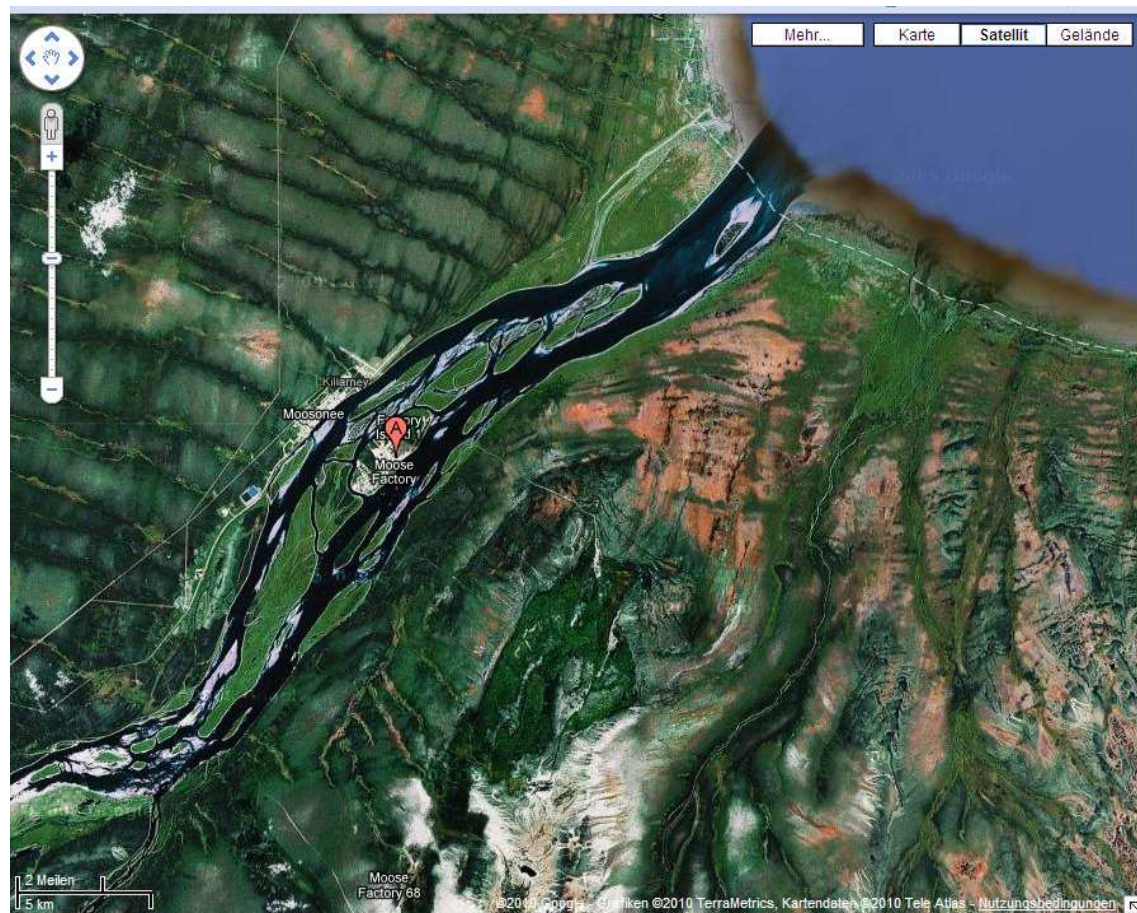


Fig. 9. Moose Factory, ON: Satellite picture; showing further islands on the Little Abitibi River and Moosonee on the north-west shore.

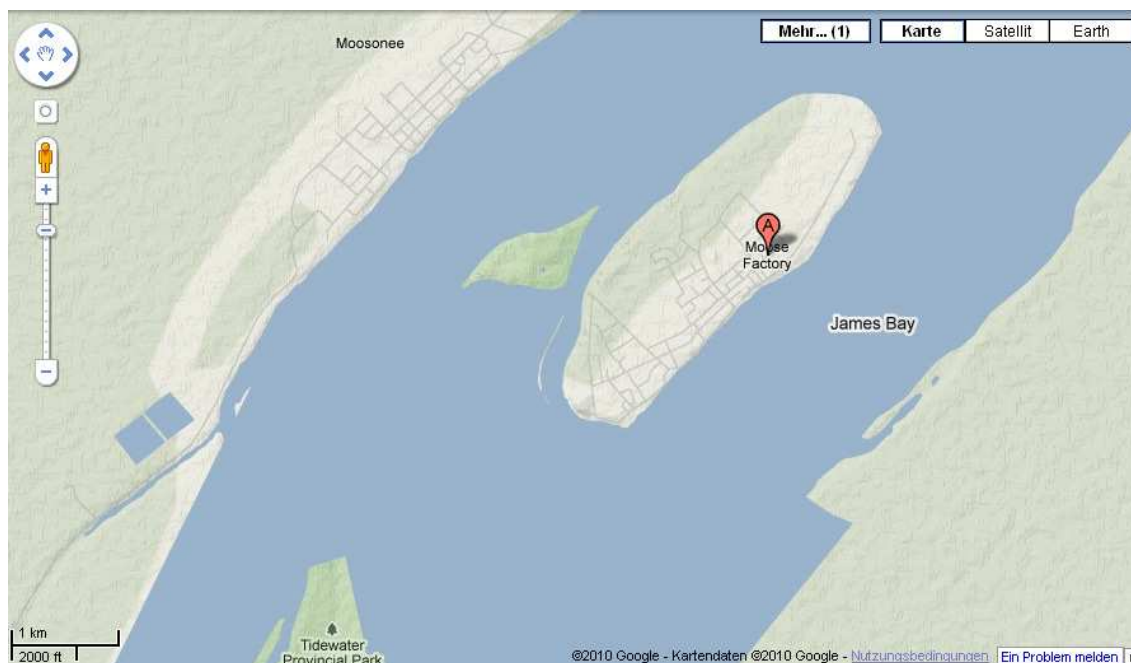


Fig. 10. Moose Factory, ON: Area picture showing the road system of Moose Factory and Moosonee.

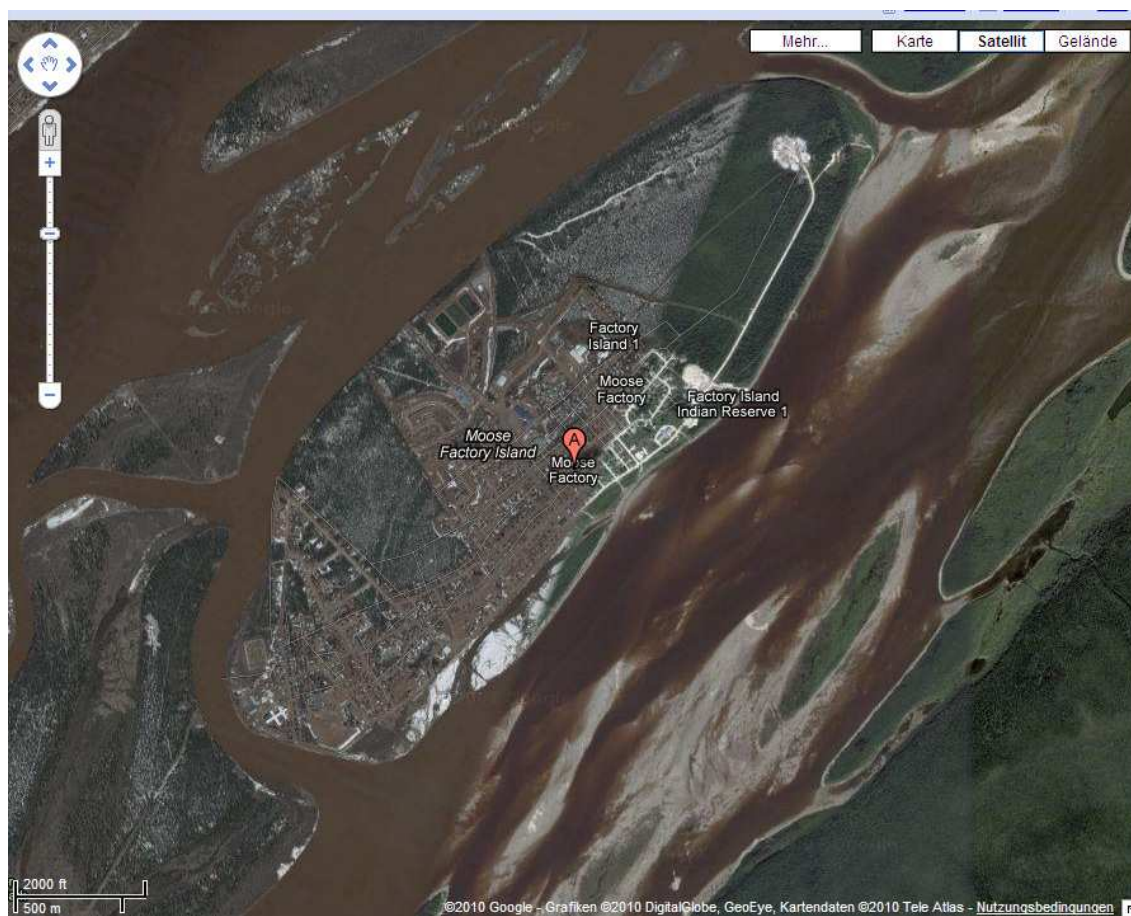


Fig. 11. Moose Factory, ON: Satellite picture of Moose Factory Island.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bei der Diplomarbeit „The Impact of Native-White Encounters as Reflected in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* and Joseph Boyden’s *Three Day Road*“ geht es vorrangig um die Identitätsbildung bzw. –findung einiger fiktionaler Charaktere, welche aus indigenen Indianervölkern aus den USA und Kanada – den Laguna Pueblo aus dem Bundesstaat New Mexico, und den Cree aus Ontario – stammen. Da sich die Identität bzw. das Selbst der Charaktere hauptsächlich durch den Kontakt zur euro-amerikanischen und euro-kanadischen Bevölkerung geprägt aber auch verändert hat, mussten zu Beginn der Arbeit einige historische Entwicklungen, sowie stereotype Sichtweisen klärend dargelegt werden.

Somit beschäftigt sich der erste Teil der Arbeit zuerst mit Terminologie, welche für den indigenen Kontext entscheidend ist, um Missverständnisse, die durch den umgangssprachlichen Gebrauch der einzelnen Termini gegeben sein können, zu vermeiden. Danach wird auf die Biographien der beiden Autoren eingegangen. Was folgt, ist eine Darstellung der geografischen und historischen Entwicklung der beiden oben genannten Völker.

Das nächste Kapitel enthält Erläuterungen dazu, wie sich das stereotype Bild der indigenen Bevölkerung Nord- und teils Süd-Amerikas durch die Jahrzehnte und Jahrhunderte verändert hat, um vom „zivilisierbaren“ zum „noblen Wilden“ zu kommen. Weiters wird dargelegt, welche Art von sowohl religiöser als auch kultureller Konversion bei Indigenen wie auch bei Euro-Amerikanern und Euro-Kanadiern festgestellt werden konnte.

Die literarisch-kulturelle Analyse der beiden Hauptwerke beruht auf der Theorie der Semeiose von Charles Sanders Peirce, welche auf semiotischen Ideen aufgebaut ist und besagt, dass sogar das menschliche Selbst als semiotisches Zeichen angesehen werden kann, da die Identität einer Person nicht etwas Fixes ist, sondern sich laufend durch äußere Einflüsse verändert.

Daraus ergibt sich die These dieser Arbeit, deren Absicht es ist, zu zeigen, dass auch die Identität der Charaktere nicht unveränderbar ist, und sich nicht nur auf eine angeborene Identität gegeben durch genetische Herkunft, oder auf eine assimilierte, teilweise erzwungene Veränderung der Lebensweise durch die Euro-Amerikaner und Euro-Kanadier beschränken lässt. Somit wird im Laufe der Analyse erörtert, dass eine Vielzahl von adaptierten Lebensweisen und Identitäten in den beiden Werken zu finden ist, wobei einige Charaktere, wie Tayo, Xavier und Niska bei ihrem traditionell

indigenen Selbst und der dazugehörigen Art zu leben bleiben, während andere, wie etwa Tayos Tante Thelma und seine Mutter Laura ihre ursprüngliche Lebensweise entweder komplett oder auch nur zum Teil aufgeben und sich eher der euro-amerikanischen Kultur und Identität zuwenden.

Das Ziel dieser Arbeit war nicht durch literarische Beispiele von Identitätsformierung auf die gesamte indigene Bevölkerung in der Realität zu schließen, sondern vielmehr anhand fiktionaler Charaktere aufzuzeigen, dass es eine Vielzahl von möglichen Auswirkungen gibt, die sich durch den Kontakt zwischen Indigenen, Euro-Amerikanern und Euro-Kanadiern ergeben können. Es ist deshalb nicht unbedingt davon auszugehen, dass ein isoliertes Dasein von indigenen Völkern in Nordamerika eine Sicherung der traditionellen Kulturen mit sich bringt, noch kann gesagt werden, dass Kontakt zwischen den verschiedenen Kulturen die unbedingte Auslöschung der Minderheitskultur verursacht. Es wird hier eher angenommen, dass das Ziel, um den Fortbestand aller Kulturen zu fördern, ein konstruktives Zusammenleben sein soll, in dem jede Bevölkerung die Kultur der anderen wertschätzt und sie unterstützt, und von ihr lernen und somit profitieren kann.

LEBENS LAUF

Persönliche Daten:

Redzic Sabina

Geb. am 06.01.1985 in Wien

Ledig

Ausbildung:

1991-1995 Volksschule Haeb ergasse, 1120 Wien

1995-2003 Bundesrealgymnasium Diefenbachgasse, 1150 Wien

Juni 2003 Matura

September 2003 Immatrikulation an der Universität Wien:
Studienrichtung Lehramt Englisch / Italienisch

August 2006
– Mai 2007 Joint Studies Auslandsaufenthalt an der University of Ottawa

Februar 2008
– Juli 2008 ERASMUS Auslandsaufenthalt an der Università di Catania

Berufserfahrung:

November 2008
– August 2009 Lehrstelle an der HLTW Bergheidengasse, 1130 Wien