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Native Spiritualities As Resistance: Disrupting Colonialism in the Americas

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NATIVE SPIRITUALITIES AS RESISTANCE:
DISRUPTING COLONIALISM
IN THE AMERICAS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Interdepartmental Program in Comparative Literature

by
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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to three special people: my father, Walter Samuel Hamblin, Jr., my mother, Donna Jeanne Hamblin, and my husband, Anthony Michael Squint.

I lost my father to cancer in July of 2004, one year into my Ph.D. program. My dad taught me so many important lessons, but two in particular helped me to persevere throughout the stressful years of coursework, comprehensive examinations, and dissertation-writing which comprise the Ph.D. First, he taught me that one should never quit because, in his words, “the only surefire way to fail is to stop trying.” Second, he taught me that elephants can only be eaten “one bite at a time.” The journey of Ph.D. attainment is the largest elephant I have ever faced.

I lost my mother, suddenly, in late 2006 due to heart failure. Though my mother was the quiet parent, she made sure I knew that regardless of how much pressure I felt I was under, whether it was job or school-related, the only thing that had ever been asked of me was to do my personal best. This has always seemed an achievable goal, and I remind myself of it often.

My husband, Andy, has stood by my side, giving me comfort, strength, and companionship through my intellectual and emotional struggles for more than thirteen years. In addition to helping me sort out the theoretical questions of my dissertation, Andy has relieved my stress by telling me silly jokes, accompanying me on walks with our dog, Liza Jane, and riding along with me on trips to Baskin Robbins. There are not enough words to encapsulate my appreciation of his support through these many years I’ve been a student.

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When I began this dissertation project two years ago, I had no idea how complex the final product would be nor how much the process would transform me as a writer, researcher, and thinker. Many people offered advice, suggestions, and support over the years—so many that I can not thank them all here. However, I would like to give special acknowledgement to those who gave me so much of their time and consideration.

I can not thank Dr. John Lowe, my dissertation advisor, enough for the thorough comments and reading suggestions he gave me on multiple drafts of every chapter of this project. He helped me to see new vistas I had not considered within my argument by introducing me to invaluable theoretical and analytical works and then by letting me grow my own ideas. He also made sure I knew when an idea was *not* working, and I was forced to go back, reconsider what I had written, and rewrite. I would not be the researcher and critic that I am today without his guidance and support.

Dr. Jack Yeager is someone else who suggested critics and perspectives that I had not considered, all the while cheering me on as my drafts progressed. From day one in the advanced French grammar course I took with him five years ago, Dr. Yeager has continued in the tradition of all my French teachers (in the United States and in France) by being a relentless editor of language and style. I valued his close readings of my chapters tremendously.

I want to thank Dr. Katherine Henninger and Dr. Christian Fernández-Palacios, also members of my dissertation committee, who suggested ideas to consider and scholars to consult at the beginning of the process, showing me a direction from which to start. I have kept their suggestions in mind throughout the writing, and I know the end product is better because of it.

I was tremendously lucky to have an opportunity to interview one of the authors whose novel, *Shell Shaker*, I critique in Chapter Four of this project: Choctaw writer and critic, LeAnne Howe. She graciously agreed to give of her time at the Society for the Study of Southern Literature Biennial Meeting in April of 2008 where she was an invited reader. My interview with her clarified questions I had about the novel and also helped me to understand more about Native American literary separatism which I discuss in the introduction and conclusion of this dissertation. At that same conference, Muskogee critic Craig Womack generously listened to my thoughts on third spaces and shared ideas with me that made the final chapter of this project possible.

Another thorough reader and supporter of my work who deserves all the accolades I can shower upon her is my soul sister and fellow scholar, Erica Abrams Locklear. Erica read many early chapter drafts, giving not only of her time but lots of critical feedback. More importantly, being further down the dissertation road than me, Erica showed me that I could, indeed, write a fifty-page chapter and that someday I really would graduate. From our early coursework days to our last walk/run at the LSU Lakes when we actually, by golly, spotted an alligator, Erica has been a great friend and a great colleague.

Lastly, I must thank my supervisors and colleagues at Southern University, Baton Rouge, where I have been teaching as a full-time English instructor since the fall of 2005. My supervisors have been committed to helping me complete my Ph.D. by scheduling my classes so that I had the maximum amount of research and writing time possible. My fellow faculty members have supported me through times of personal loss and have encouraged me to keep writing, to finish. I feel very lucky to have found such a situation while working to complete the Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

This project analyzes eight novels which represent revolt or resistance by varied Native peoples against the European and Euro-American colonization of the Americas. I take a comparative approach to literatures of the Americas because of the dearth of research examining the literatures of both continents side by side, particularly literatures by and about Indigenous Americans.

Chapter One introduces the theoretical bases for the project, including colonial and postcolonial theories, Native American literary theories, and aesthetic concerns specific to American Indian literatures. The second chapter is a comparative analysis of Miguel Angel Asturias's *Men of Maize* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. These novels explore revolutions by Indigenous Americans against a colonial superstructure, and both are rooted deeply in Mesoamerican cosmology. The novels' revolutionary themes and their aesthetic approaches, which draw on both the oral and written traditions of Native American peoples, provide a foundation for my other chapters. This second chapter also demonstrates how Homi Bhabha's third space operates as a model for the performance of hybridity through the linguistic act of divination. Chapter Three explores the application of Gerald Vizenor's trickster hermeneutics in three trickster-narrated novels, Vizenor's own *Chancers*, Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*, and Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*. Each of these novels resists hegemonic Euro-American discursive tactics through their trickster narrators; my application of a trickster hermeneutics reveals another manifestation of the third space. Chapter Four is an analysis of James Welch's *Fools Crow*, N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, and LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker*. These novels require their readers to participate in the Native spiritualities presented; through a third space, readers from both inside and outside those spiritualities can

participate in the visions and ceremonies integral to the protagonists' transformations. These transformations signify individual resistance to colonizing forces, a resistance that is doubled by the participating reader. Chapter Five, the conclusion, addresses the concerns of American Indian critics who disagree with the application of hybridity theory to Native literatures. I examine the performative and linguistic qualities of Bhabha's third space to show its relevance for works that represent resistance to colonization in the Americas.

CHAPTER ONE: INTERSECTIONS OF COLONIAL/POSTCOLONIAL THEORY, NATIVE AMERICAN LITERARY THEORY, AND AESTHETICS

For today, allow me to share Hózhó
the beauty of all things being right and proper as in songs
the Holy Ones gave us. They created the world,
instilling stories and lessons so we would know Diyin
surrounds us. Our lives were set by precise prayers
and stories to ensure balance.¹

One morning in late August 1997, I found myself walking down a dust-blown dirt road in the high desert of northwest New Mexico. The sky was a blue bowl overturned above me, and the sun reflected minerals scattered in the tan and brown earth. From these flecks of sunlight, I understood that we live in the Fourth World, the Glittering World. To my north, I could see Hesperus Peak, the obsidian mountain and symbol of old age and death. The Diyin (Holy People) set four sacred mountains in four sacred directions. Blanca Peak, the white shell mountain, is in the east, place of the dawn and symbol of birth; Mt. Taylor is in the south, the turquoise mountain, representing adolescence; and the San Francisco Peaks are in the west, place of the setting sun, the abalone shell mountain symbolizing adulthood. The Diyin instructed the Diné to settle in the land in between the four sacred mountains, or Dinétah (Central 60-61). The four sacred directions and four sacred mountains of Diné cosmology were some of the topics I had encountered at a cultural orientation session for new teachers with the Central Consolidated School District Number Twenty-Two just days before. I had arrived in my first professional position as an English teacher at Newcomb High School on the Navajo Reservation.

I spent seven months as a non-Native teacher teaching at-risk eighth through eleventh grade Diné students, but the chronological representation of time cannot represent the deep epistemological shift I experienced. I was not trained as a teacher; I was a cultural curiosity-seeker with a half-finished master's degree and a desire to teach on the "Rez." Indian

reservations in the United States, though considered to be rich sites of Native American culture, are also known for their poverty and social problems. At the time of the 1980 census, reservation Indians lived at six times the poverty rate of the white population (Frantz 108). During the 1980s, the unemployment rate jumped from forty to eighty percent on reservations across the United States (Beck 49-50). This resulted from changes in the federal funding of services that directly impact Indian peoples. Indian reservations are unique in the United States: as “dependent nations” (Kodras 87), they are not subdivisions of state governments. This, of course, means they do not receive aid from states, nor can they levy local tax bases to fund projects. Rather, the federal government is their only recourse for social programs that support housing, education, and health needs (87). Ronald Reagan’s “New Federalism” of the 1980s was supposed to increase the economic self-determination sought by tribes in the 1970s; however, the primary result for Native peoples was to greatly reduce the amount of federal funding received. Economist David Vinje studied the effects of these policies on twenty-three tribes,² concluding that “the median number of families below the poverty level had increased to 48.8 percent by 1990 compared to a figure of 44.1 percent as of 1980. Reflecting the decline in federal program monies, government employment, including tribal employment, declined from 60.8 percent of employees to 51.8 percent by 1990” (431). According to the National Academy of Public Administration, 31 percent of American Indians still lived below the poverty line in 1999, a stark contrast to the 13 percent of U.S. population as a whole (Porter 39).

Poverty and unemployment are just the beginning of the laundry list of socioeconomic problems faced by Native Americans, as I learned in my short stint on the Navajo Reservation. Being raised in one state and educated in two others east of the Mississippi where there are no reservations and from which the original Native cultures had been either destroyed through

disease and/or warfare or removed to Indian Territory in the early nineteenth century, I had been fairly ignorant of these issues. My one undergraduate course in Native American Literature did not prepare me for the reality of Rez life. I was looking forward to reading the poetry of Luci Tapahonso and Simon Ortiz with my students and learning about the Navajo, who I had learned call themselves Diné, or the People, from within the culture. My good intentions were, not surprisingly, met with suspicion by some in the classroom and among my colleagues.

My stay on the reservation included enriching experiences such as learning how to make frybread with the home economics class and marching with the students of the Newcomb schools in an anti-DUI rally. We shouted “Don’t drink and drive!” on a sunny desert morning, the prickly pear cactus, sagebrush and Chuska Mountains our quiet, watchful audience. But more often than not, there was frustration, my own and others’. I included contemporary Native American literature in my lesson plans, even though the antiquated curriculum did not allow for it, and I learned that there were very few high school students, regardless of culture, who truly enjoyed poetry. I had not been trained in classroom management, and the authoritarian disciplinary method passed down by my Army officer father was ineffective for my class of hormonal eighth grade boys. My students’ journal entries describing absent parents, cultural confusion and poverty left me feeling hopeless for their futures and for mine as their teacher. As the chill winds of winter swept across the Colorado Plateau, I became disillusioned. Even though I knew that many of my students were acquiring skills that they needed, others were not, and I feared this was partly because they felt animosity toward me. It took me many months to be able to articulate this animosity: as a “white” woman, an American of European descent, some of my students saw me as a symbol of oppression. My intentions did not matter; I was simply white.

In his 1965 *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Albert Memmi argues that the situation of colonization perpetuates itself through the creation of “colonizers” and “colonized.” He describes how new arrivals to the colony from the metropolitan center quickly realize their position of privilege. This socioeconomic status comes at the cost of usurping land and resources from those who are colonized (8-9). Colonizers may live in the colony, believing in their own racial superiority and benefiting from their systemic privilege, or they may decry such privilege, either choosing to fight against the unjust social, economic and ideological hierarchies of colonization from within the colony or choosing to leave the situation entirely. Though I met a number of well-intentioned non-Native teachers during my time on the reservation, I also saw many who stayed there because they could not have gotten a job elsewhere. Ultimately, I became what Memmi describes as “the colonizer who refuses” (19), leaving the reservation and my job in late February of 1998. I felt that I failed my students by not being able to break through our cultural barriers and that I failed myself by quitting my job because I could not accept the truth of my place in the world. At the time I left, I believed that I was not oppressing anyone; in fact, I had hoped to help, and my help was not appreciated. Such an attitude is much like what Edward Said describes as the particularly American imperialistic ideology which conflates beneficence and control of other cultures (*Culture* 8). I didn’t understand that as an agent of a U.S. ideological state apparatus, to use Althusser’s term,³ I could not engage in an equitable cultural exchange; rather, my efforts were inextricably linked to an oppressive system.

The history of educating Native peoples in the United States is a troubled one. Indian schools were initially created to assimilate Indigenous Americans and convince them of their cultural inadequacy (Frantz 131). Indian boarding schools became prevalent at the end of the 19th century with the passing of the General Allotment Act.⁴ Most students sent to these

institutions remained away from their reservation homes for years, not seeing family and friends even on school vacations. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) also operated day schools in isolated places on reservations, but these schools were not well-attended since parents often “preferred to hide their children from the authorities, and there were even some who, despite penalties, openly refused to let their children go to these schools, not wishing to expose their offspring to the powerful influence of mainstream society” (133). Indian boarding schools still exist and still push an assimilationist agenda. The trend more recently is for Native students to attend tribal contract schools, which are financed by the BIA, but are administered and directed tribally according to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (137). There are also private schools, often managed by religious organizations, and state-funded public school systems that operate on reservations, such as the one for which I taught in New Mexico. The education of American Indians has improved in achievement and in purpose since the early boarding school days; literacy and graduation rates have steadily risen, and there are now courses in culturally-sensitive subjects such as Native languages (138-146); still, the scars of early Indian education in the United States remain with the cultures. The pain of these experiences has been represented by many Native authors including Turtle Mountain Ojibwe Louise Erdrich and Diné Laura Tohe,⁵ both of whom depict rebellious children who endure abuse and oppression in Indian boarding schools.

Thus far, my argument has rested on the assumption that because Native Americans in the United States are colonized (not “conquered” per the dominant U.S. mythos), the discourses of colonial and postcolonial theory are useful tools for understanding the cultural problems associated with this particular colonizing situation. This assumption is controversial in light of contemporary debates regarding American Indian cultures and their aesthetics. Yet I have

chosen to embark on an analysis of Native American literatures with a discussion of coloniality and postcoloniality and their applicability to such literatures because the interaction between Native and non-Native peoples on the continents we now call the Americas is a result of European colonization. The material impact of that colonization did not become real to me as a Euro-American until my experience living and teaching on the Navajo Reservation. Robert Dale Parker discusses the dangers of self-identifying as a white critic or an Indian critic when approaching Native American literatures because even though “we increasingly recognize the need to reflect on our perspectives and biases, we also fortify bias when we reduce it to essentialized racial categories” (15). I choose to self-identify because the history of colonization is one that is shared by many Americans, whether they are of European, African, or Indigenous American descent. We are each informed to some extent by our placement within that material history. When I left the reservation, I believed that the power struggles I had encountered in the classroom were not my battle—that my students were fighting a dominating white culture that did not include me. I have since learned that I am not exempt from this struggle. As Said argues,

An immense wave of anti-colonial and ultimately anti-imperial activity, thought, and revision has overtaken the massive edifice of Western empire, challenging it . . . For the first time Westerners have been required to confront themselves not simply as the Raj but as representatives of a culture and even of races accused of crimes—crimes of violence, crimes of suppression, crimes of conscience.
(*Culture* 195)

The diverse strands of postcolonial cultures are bound together through a painful collective history; an honest acceptance of that history helps us to work through the pain and better understand its effects on contemporary culture. Yet, such honesty on the part of dominant U.S. culture has not yet been forthcoming. Dakota scholar Waziyatawin Angela Wilson delineates how the compensation by the U.S. government to the victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist

attacks was supported by U.S. citizens because the victims' pain was so extreme. She argues that healing may be possible for the victims of these attacks because their pain was acknowledged, and attempts were made to assuage it by their larger national community. She contrasts the actions of the government in this case to its silence on the history of Native American oppression in the United States: "While policies of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and ethnocide have been perpetrated against us and our lands, and resources have been threatened decade after decade, century after century, not only are we taught we are to blame, we are taught that we should just get over it" (190).

Though a good deal of this project is based in literary analysis derived from theoretical constructs and cultural traditions originating from Native Americans, particularly the oral tradition, I will also argue that one aspect of what we call "Indian" identity is connected to the original European invasion, and subsequently, U.S. colonization; therefore, colonial and postcolonial theory will not only play important roles in the discussion of the primary texts, but they will also provide a point of departure for introducing my analytical approach. The authors of the first edition of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989), drew censure from Cherokee/Choctaw critic Louis Owens for not including a single Native American author in their discussion of postcolonial literature:

The authors might have made the very interesting point that in fact Native American writing is not postcolonial but rather colonial, that the colonizers never left but simply changed their names to Americans; but the editors do not make such a point. The basic problem seems to be that the center, even when it begins to define itself as something ambiguously called "multicultural," still does not always hear more than the echo of its own voice or see very far beyond its own reflection. (*Mixedblood* 51)

As he plays devil's advocate, Owens makes a convincing argument against the inclusion of Native American hermeneutics under a postcolonial umbrella; however, even the authors of *The*

Empire Writes Back would agree that Native American literatures are postcolonial by their very definition of the term: “We use the term ‘post-colonial’ . . . to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2). In the 2002 edition of the same text, the authors address this issue in the added chapter “Re-Thinking the Post-Colonial,” by agreeing that analysis of indigenous groups with an unbroken history of colonization is an important cross-disciplinary subject, though they show reluctance in actually applying postcolonial theory to the literatures of such groups (206). Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt explain that the definition of “postcolonial” embraced by Ashcroft and the other authors of *The Empire Writes Back* is generally considered to be too broad: “most critics concur that the term ‘postcolonial’ describes the combination of material, economic, social, and cultural practices an indigenous (and/or creolized) population engages with after the removal of the physical presence of the colonizing nation” (18). Hence, American Indian literatures cannot be postcolonial since Native Americans are still colonized. Still, despite the actual colonized situation of Native American tribes, Native and non-Native scholars have begun to utilize some of the tools of postcolonial theory to explicate Native American literary works (Pulitano 10). Arnold Krupat explains why: “[E]ven though contemporary Native American fiction is produced in a condition of ongoing colonialism, some of that fiction not only has the look of postcolonial fiction but also . . . performs ideological work that parallels that of postcolonial fiction elsewhere” (32). Sioux scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn argues that the themes of oppression which manifest in American Indian literatures link Native Americans to other colonized cultures around the world; hence, “major concerns of Third World theorists must be crucial analytical components of anything that might be said about the current literary trends in American Indian voice and one about which mainstream critics can no longer be ignorant or silent” (28). Krupat,

commenting on Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, says that Silko "lives in a postcolonial world, but writes . . . from within a colonial context" (90). This is the unique position of Native American writers and indigenous writers from other cultures around the world living in countries with an unbroken history of colonization. Singh and Schmidt describe the particular situation of the United States as a colonial power which is significant for the consideration of American Indian cultures: "While the U.S. defined itself as the world's first independent and anti-colonial nation-state, it simultaneously incorporated many of the defining features of European colonial networks—including the color line—into its economic and cultural life" (5).

In recent years, discussions about decolonization, a primary concern of postcolonial studies, have become more pervasive among Native scholars. An innovative example is the 2005 workbook *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*. This community-oriented text was authored by nine Indigenous American intellectuals who self-identify as "practitioner-activists" (Wilson and Yellow Bird 3). This hands-on tool is designed to help American Indian peoples decolonize on individual, community, and national levels. The introductory chapter argues that "*Colonization* and *decolonization* are words that should become a standard part of the vocabulary of all Indigenous Peoples, including the young people. Giving a name to our experience will add to our own empowerment. When you can use this language to speak for yourself, you are engaging in a form of resistance to colonialism" (3). Colonial and postcolonial theories, then, are useful tools for the analysis of Native American literatures because they address head-on the issues of colonization and decolonization, material processes experienced by Native American peoples.

The specific history of colonization relative to colonial and postcolonial cultures is a factor informing their literatures. Native American cultures have experienced colonization by many world imperial powers, the most dominant having been France, Spain, England, and the United States. Estimates of the pre-Contact Indigenous population in the Americas vary among demographers, ranging from one to eighteen to ninety million inhabitants (Porter 40; Dobyns, “An Appraisal” 23). According to anthropologist Henry Dobyns, “[n]inety percent of the population of civilized Mesoamerica and Andean America had perished by 1568” (“Disease” 276), primarily as a result of disease. Porter notes that the Indigenous population of both American continents was reduced by 70 to 90 percent in the first century of contact while over 95 percent of the land base once belonging to Native peoples has been expropriated by non-Natives in the subsequent centuries (40). By 1900, the population of Native Americans in the United States was a mere 237,000 (40). In terms of cultural diversity, conservative estimates suggest that there were over three hundred cultural groups and over two hundred languages spoken in North America alone when the first Spanish fleet landed on the shore on the Caribbean (Roemer 4). Porter argues that there were five hundred different languages being spoken in North America with far fewer than two hundred still spoken today (42). These statistics documenting cultural and demographic destruction reflect the impact of the various colonizers on American soil.

Though colonizing countries took individualized approaches, they all created chaos in what had formerly been unified tribal systems. Invading Europeans upset gender roles, displaced traditional political and economic structures, and divided spiritual allegiances within Indian communities. The Spanish *encomienda* and *repartimiento* systems both exploited Native labor and included assimilation of tribal people into Christianity and Spanish culture (46). Porter

describes French assimilation of Indigenous Americans as less brutal than the Spaniards' approach; indeed, she argues that the Native peoples were more successful at assimilating the French fur traders. Despite this seemingly more benign colonization tactic,

[t]he French fur trade can be seen as emblematic of the unequal Indian/non-Indian trade relationships and the fundamental gap in comprehension between the two sets of cultures that characterized the period. Most tribes saw animals not as a commercial resource but as a species of persons with their own powers and understood trade as part of reciprocal exchange with its own symbolism and matrix of obligation. (47)

The English colonizers differed from the French and Spanish in one significant way: unlike the Spanish and French propensity for mixing with the Native peoples, the Puritans were separatists. The first reservation-style living situations were thus created in 1638. These were known as plantations, or "segregated areas where it was intended Indians would live, detribalize, and convert to Christianity . . . In the 1760s, British Indian policy officially articulated the kind of bias against mestizo or mixed-blood peoples that eventually characterized American culture" (48). Jana Sequoya Magdelano points out that this circumstance led to very different outcomes in terms of Native American identity formation: "In Mexico and the Americas to the south, and to varying degrees in Canada, the category of the mestizo or the métis refers to historically cohesive cultures" (293). Because of the French and Spanish willingness to mix culturally and biologically with the tribal peoples of the Americas, there now exist mixed-blood individuals with fairly stable cultural identities in Canada and Latin America; in the United States, however, the separation between cultures that began under English rule has led to the fragmentation of identities among mixed-blood peoples, a topic explored by a number of U.S. Native writers including Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, and Louise Erdrich.

The colonization of Native Americans by the United States differs somewhat from colonization by European countries, because as Singh and Schmidt point out, "[t]he U.S. may be

understood to be the world's first postcolonial *and* neocolonial country" (5). Even though the U.S. perceives itself to be anti-colonial because of the American Revolution, it modeled itself after many European colonizing societies, especially its attitude of self-importance and its embrace of racial hierarchies (Said, *Culture* 8). Lidia Yuknavitch argues that "the growth of the United States has a shadow-self; the Native American, Central American, Mexican-American economies, cultures, and peoples have each experienced that 'growth' to differing degrees, as a form of occupation" (99). The occupation of distant lands by a dominating metropolitan center, such as what Yuknavitch describes, falls in line with Said's definition of colonialism, enacted by an imperialistic nation (*Culture* 9). One aspect of imperialism that particularly informs Native American literatures is the hegemony of Western discourses.

The predominant hegemonic discourse to affect cultures colonized by European imperial powers in the last five hundred years is scientific racism. Essays such as Immanuel Kant's "On the Different Races of Man" and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's "Geographical Basis of World History" are examples of rational justifications for oppressive systems such as slavery and colonization and inform the constructs of race which to this day create conflict in contemporary societies. In the 1820s, Hegel commented on the situation of Indigenous American tribes:

As for the human population [in the Americas], few descendents of the original inhabitants survive, for nearly seven million people have been wiped out. The natives of the West Indian islands have died out altogether. Indeed, the whole North American world has been destroyed and suppressed by the Europeans. The tribes of North America have in part disappeared, and in part withdrawn from contact with the Europeans. Their degeneration indicates that they do not have the strength to join the independent North American states. Culturally inferior nations such as these are gradually eroded through contact with more advanced nations which have gone through a more intensive cultural development. For the citizens of the independent states of North America are all of European descent and the original inhabitants were unable to amalgamate with them. (114-115)

Hegel's thoughts reinforce Memmi's assertion that racism is complicit with colonialism (74); belief in racial hierarchies blinded Hegel and those who accepted such theories of race to certain historical truths. Hegel's assertion that North American tribes had separated themselves from European-descended Americans as a result of their inability to assimilate is simply untrue. In 1830, the Indian Removal Act forced the peoples known as the Five Civilized Tribes (the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles) to leave their extensive properties in the U.S. Southeast—including land and slaves—for Indian Territory. Besides property ownership, these tribal peoples had embraced constitutional government and alphabetic writing to the point of producing the first American Indian newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix* (Porter 51).

Another flaw in Hegel's argument stemmed from the nineteenth century's ignorance of pathology. Contemporary environmental historians have asserted that European domination during the high imperial era resulted from environmental factors that helped European peoples and species flourish, while aboriginal peoples and species died out from contact with foreign pathogens. Jared Diamond comprehensively examines the role played by infectious diseases in various European conquests. One of many examples is the "smallpox epidemic [that] devastated the Aztecs after the failure of the first Spanish attack in 1520 [killing] Cuitláhuac, the Aztec emperor who briefly succeeded Montezuma" (77).⁶ Thus, the dominance of European cultures was not a result of racial or cultural superiority; instead, European domination of the Americas can more honestly be attributed to biological factors not well understood by any world culture until the twentieth century.

Western scientific racism is but one example of discursive oppression which informs European and Native American relations. Christopher Columbus was the progenitor of European hegemonic discourse in the Americas as a result of his belief that the people he met in

the Caribbean could not communicate since he did not understand their language (Asselin 138). His act of renaming the islands and people he encountered demonstrates a refusal to accept Native sovereignty, a policy perpetuated by Europeans and Euro-Americans well into the current era. Of course, Columbus's most glaring error, which is reflected in the name he gave the indigenous peoples he encountered, was his conviction that he had actually reached the East Indies, his original destination. The name "Indian," a label suggesting Native American ancestry, is a burdened signifier in American culture, weighted heavily with five hundred years of oppression.

It is impossible to analyze contemporary Native American literatures, especially from multiple tribal traditions, without asking the question, "What is an Indian?" Indianness can be read as a construct, like so many constructed "Other" identities created by Europeans during the era of high imperialism. This construct is similar to Edward Said's description of the European designations "Orient" and "Occident" in *Orientalism*. Like Orientalism, Indianness "has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that has given it reality and presence in and for the West" (5). The construct of Indianness and Indian identity has been addressed on some level by most Native writers. Magdaleno claims that "[t]he name 'Indian' is . . . rooted not only in New World fantasies of lost origins, but also in contested material transactions between the colonizing self and the colonized other, figured as the New and the Old" (284). Singh and Schmidt describe how Indianness became perceived as a historical artifact through the hegemonic discourse of European colonialism. Europeans began to self-identify as "European" for the first time (rather than solely as subjects of a particular kingdom) in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries because of their interactions with the cultures of the Americas. Europeanness was considered to be superior to Indianness, per hierarchal discourses of race. Indianness was

divided, in the eyes of Europeans, into “good” and “bad” Indians. “Good” Indians were “noble, innocent, and virtuous” while “bad” Indians were “fiendish, warlike” (45) and associated with the occult. Significantly, Europeans saw themselves as dynamic within history, while they viewed Indians as static and somehow existing outside of this grand narrative. “Thus any change within Indian culture away from the basic image of the Indian invented during the period of early contact came to be seen by non-Indian culture as degraded and less authentically ‘real’” (45).

Anishinaabe critic Gerald Vizenor takes this element of Indianness to task in many of his fictional and critical works. He argues that because contemporary Native American cultures come after the colonizers’ misnomer and subsequent construct of Indianness, they are *postindians* (*Postindian* 84). Indianness, for Vizenor, is the absence of a true historical reality, never understood by Columbus, the “discoverer”; postindianness is the presence of actual, diverse tribal peoples who survived genocide and still exist in contemporary American society. Despite this construct of “Indianness,” one must remember that many Native Americans self-identify as Indians; hence, there is a material experience connected to the signifier that is separate from its constructed signification. Another way to say this is that even though Indianness can be constructed, all Indians are certainly not constructs.

Identity, in terms of contemporary Native American cultures, is complicated. As Magdaleno contends, tribal enrollment is the beginning of a divide among Native peoples: there are those who are enrolled, attempting to create political relationships between state and national governments, and those who are not enrolled, but still connected to a Native past. As she points out, tribal rolls did not exist until the Dawes or General Allotment Act of 1887; thus, contemporary Americans who only accept enrolled Indians as authentic forget that it was previously a sign of a colonized identity to sign one’s name to a tribal roll (280). In addition to

the Dawes Rolls, there is the problem of blood quantum. The General Allotment Act required Indian identity to be defined by the degree of “Indian blood.” The blood quantum requirement is a tool of the U.S. government to determine who will receive or be denied federal services; yet, Magdaleno contends that it is largely not a cultural identifier for Native Americans:

Since most Native American communities define members on the basis of kinship affiliations and social acuity rather than blood quantum, the key to being American Indian in terms of a given community is in the degree of incorporation into the social network of that community. Thus, a ‘fullblood’ may be thoroughly acculturated to the dominant society, while a ‘mixed-blood’ may identify and function entirely as a member of a tribal group that has assimilated biological non-Indians over generations. (289-290)

Though Magdaleno’s point about cultural identity is salient, blood quantum is still the primary identifier used by most tribes to determine tribal enrollment. Sahnish/Arikara and Hidatsa First Nations scholar Michael Yellow Bird describes the resistance he encountered at a tribal elders’ conference he had organized in 1995 at Haskell Indian Nations University when he proposed changing the tribal enrollment criterion. Yellow Bird’s argument rested on the following premise: “the 1980 U.S. Census shows we [Indigenous Americans] have among the highest out-marriage rates of all races in the United States . . . If this continues, the tribal blood of each generation will get thinner and thinner, and there will come a day when the majority of our people will have less than one quarter blood, the magic number that many tribes use as a standard for tribal enrollment and identity” (180). Yellow Bird argued, as have other Native scholars, that using blood quantum as a primary cultural identifier continues genocidal policies toward Native Americans.⁷ One aspect of this problem is the inaccuracy of the U.S. Census Bureau in counting American Indians historically and today (180). In addition, the current system allows for tribal disenrollment of some Native peoples. For example, someone born of American Indian parents from different tribes, who have one Native grandparent on each side

(i.e. the parents have one-half blood quantum), can be denied enrollment if both tribes in question require one-half blood quantum. This is only one statistical quandary created by the blood quantum requirement and its variance among different tribes (183). Disenrollment can also be used against Native peoples with unquestionable blood quantum amounts due to tribal government corruption (184). Despite Yellow Bird's arguments, the tribal leaders at Haskell did not support his suggestions; the primary concern seems to be that without blood quantum requirements, tribes would soon be overtaken by whites who desire Indian identity (181). Such a fear is not surprising from colonized communities that have been trying to preserve their cultures from European and Euro-American assimilation for over half a millennia.

One way to unpack the complex signifier of "Indian" is to consider the binary opposition so favored by Hollywood Westerns: cowboys vs. Indians. Any visitor to an Indian Reservation in the U.S. Southwest can verify that it is not so easy to make this distinction. Diné poet Luci Tapahonso's "Raisin Eyes" depicts the adoption of the cowboy image by Native peoples. In the poem, the speaker (also named Luci) is having a conversation with a girlfriend about her new boyfriend, one of those "Navajo cowboys" (30). In the spirit of a down and out country western ballad, Luci details her friend's woes: her Navajo cowboy always needs money for rodeo fees and brand new Tony Lamas boots. Luci's friend is thinking about leaving her man, but she cannot, even though she knows "[t]hese Navajo cowboys with raisin eyes/and pointed boots are just bad news" (30-31). It would be a mistake, however, to argue that this Indian cowboy image is one of assimilation. In Tapahonso's poem, the cowboy is a member of AIRCA, or the All Indian Rodeo Cowboys Association; thus, his rodeo group is separate from those of the dominant culture. Moreover, the kind of herding (a typical cowboy job) that occurs on the Navajo Reservation generally involves the traditional movement of livestock from the mountains to the

desert, or vice versa, depending on the season; hence, the cowboy image has been appropriated rather than assimilated, according to the culture's needs. One might even go so far as to say that Indians have colonized the cowboy image, per Muskogee/Cherokee critic Craig Womack's similar argument about language use: "Maybe Indians colonized English instead of the other way around" ("Theorizing" 404).

When trying to understand how Native peoples define Indianness during my stay on the Navajo Reservation, I observed that though many of my Diné students had modeled themselves after the Western American image of the cowboy, wearing boots, hats and Wrangler jeans (and participating in rodeos), others had adopted images of outright resistance in their clothing choices. For example, in late 1997, the hip hop world was still reeling from the death of Tupac Shakur a year before. Many of my Diné students in the high desert of New Mexico found solace in Tupac's lyrics of resistance against dominant white culture and poverty, just as they embraced the empowering words of Rastafarian Jamaican Bob Marley. I saw numerous t-shirts proclaiming allegiance to these men among the student body of Newcomb High School. It was this connection between poor youth living in BIA housing in Newcomb, Two Gray Hills or Tohatchi, New Mexico; the son of a Black Panther; and a cultural hero from a former British colony that helped me begin to understand the impact of colonization on Native American peoples. Each tribe has its own history, culture, and cosmology, yet all have been influenced by varied colonizing experiences.

Though many Native and non-Native critics agree that the colonization of the Americas is a significant element of contemporary Indian identity, there is certainly more at stake when analyzing Native literatures. In this project, I also utilize the theoretical frameworks of contemporary Native American scholars. In his groundbreaking 1999 study, *Red on Red: Native*

American Literary Separatism, Womack argues for a re-centering of American literature, claiming “tribal literatures are not some branch waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk. Tribal literatures are the *tree*, the oldest literatures in the Americas, the most American of American literatures” (6-7). Womack critiques a pan-tribalism that “endorses Indian genericism” (235), suggesting that Native literatures and criticisms should embrace more tribally-specific concerns. Though Womack also takes aim at postcolonial theory for its emphasis on colonizers’ perceptions of colonized people rather than a colonized perception of itself, I have combined the tools of colonial and postcolonial theories with aspects of what he calls his “Red Stick” literary criticism. “Red Stick” alludes to an early 19th century political movement of traditional Creeks against colonialism that was based in “religion and myth” (12). Womack argues for Native literary criticism written by Native authors that “emphasizes Native resistance movements against colonialism, confronts racism, discusses sovereignty and Native nationalism, seeks connections between literature and liberation struggles, and finally, roots literature in land and culture” (11). Though I am not a Native scholar, my project examines representations of resistance against European and Euro-American colonization in novels of Native America. The kinds of resistance on which I focus are those based in Indigenous systems of faith; hence, it is necessary that I couch my analysis within specific cultural traditions. Womack has recently claimed that “spiritual matters are paramount for Indian people themselves and no discussion of art or politics can proceed without referencing them” (“A Single” 9). My project underscores the complicity of spirituality and resistance; this type of purposeful aesthetics is examined at length further in this chapter.

Other Native theoreticians whose ideas are featured in my project are Gerald Vizenor and Paula Gunn Allen. Vizenor’s poetics represent an intersection of poststructuralist theory and

Anishinaabe cosmology. His stories and critical works often masquerade as one another, and his writing emanates a joy in escaping traditional narrative boundaries, displaying new vocabularies and metafictional techniques. Scholars have noted that Vizenor's embrace of the poststructuralist project of breaking down binary pairs (for example European/Indian⁸) has allowed Native peoples to go beyond fixed definitions of themselves and their cultures and embrace whatever identity they choose.⁹ His creation of a "trickster hermeneutics" is essential to my analysis of trickster-narrated novels. Womack neatly summarizes Vizenor's relationship with the trickster trope:

Vizenor borrows the shape-shifting abilities of tricksters to explain his own understandings of language, poststructural theory, and issues of representation. Postmodern interpretations of literature have questioned the role of mimesis—of the idea of literature holding up a mirror to society—instead emphasizing the mediated nature of the representation that is the project of a whole host of culturally shaped institutions as well as processes that occur while reading. Language, with its tricksterlike capacity to take on many guises, shapes, and manifestations, has the potential to liberate Indians from static definitions . . . ("A Single Decade" 70)

Trickster figures, who appear in many world cultures, function prominently in creation and other traditional stories of a number of Native American tribes. Chapter Three of this project locates the intersection of Vizenor's poststructuralist trickster hermeneutics with certain postcolonial ideologies.

Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop* (1983) is critical to my study because of its focus on American Indian spirituality; it also notable because it is "the first book-length work of literary criticism published by an American Indian author" (Womack, "A Single" 21). Allen's book has received much criticism for its essentialism, and it is true that the author makes numerous claims to a homogeneous Indian experience, thus seeming to buy into the modernist binary of the rationalist European/spiritual Indian. Womack notes other problems associated

with essentialist aspects of the book: “Allen often reduced diversity among Native people to a gynocratic utopia and made other totalizing statements about a singular Indian consciousness. She pointed to Indian difference from Europeans but did not extend the notion to Indian diversity across and within tribes, at least in any way that might have challenged her problematic gynocracy” (23). On the other hand, Womack praises Allen for making numerous specific and supported historical and cultural claims, especially when discussing Keres (Laguna) culture (23), and he admires the thoughtful literary analysis within the book, especially of Leslie Marmon Silko’s 1977 *Ceremony* (31). It is not my goal to provide a detailed criticism of or defense for using *The Sacred Hoop*;¹⁰ I simply want to make clear that, despite claims of essentialism, the book has much to offer a study of resistance and Native American spirituality.

In this project, I analyze eight novels which represent revolt or resistance by varied Native peoples against the European and Euro-American colonization of the Americas. I am continuing in the vein of critic Lois Parkinson Zamora who takes a comparative approach to literatures of the Americas; this is an important project because, as she argues, there is a dearth of research examining the literatures of both continents side by side (*The Usable* xii). Zamora explains that comparatists of American literatures are challenged by their diversity of forms and traditions as well as political and social purposes (xii). My work is dedicated to unearthing Native American spiritual roots in American literatures. Chapter Two is a comparative analysis of Miguel Angel Asturias’s *Men of Maize* and Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*, novels that explore revolutions by Indigenous Americans against a colonial superstructure; both are deeply embedded in Mesoamerican cosmology. These novels provide a foundation for the other chapters because they deal with anti-colonial revolts, placing their concerns in line with mid-twentieth century theorists Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi who unveil the dialectics of

colonizers and colonized. The problem introduced by Memmi is that, during decolonization movements, power often simply shifts from one pole to the other, leaving the colonizer and colonized engaged in an endless struggle for power. Since the global political movements of the mid-twentieth century, during which many colonized nations gained their independence, postcolonial theory has begun to seek ways to represent cultural conflict and resolution which better reflect the complex issues of postcolonial societies such as decolonization, cultural imperialism, and globalization.

Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha has introduced a spatial model that takes into account the history of colonial power structures, specifically racism, in order to enact agency in a postcolonial identity. His project takes modernism to task, but in a different way than postmodern theorists whose “reconstruction and reinvention of the subject does not assume a cultural temporality that may not be universalist in its epistemological moment of judgement” but is instead, he argues, “ethnocentric in its construction of cultural ‘difference’” (344). Bhabha claims that formerly colonized or enslaved peoples do not have to mimic the violence of colonizing hierarchies; instead, his model demonstrates how to span the gap between a subject and an object:

The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an ambivalence in the act of interpretation. (53)

The “inbetween space” described above reflects cultural hybridity (56). Bhabha’s theory of hybridity, however, should not be read as simply a new way to talk about racial mixing; critic Brannon Costello underscores the import of the performative aspect of a third space model: “the

bright line separating colonizer and Other blurs and bends, making possible complicated and unique exchanges across cultures as well as the creation of new kinds of identity . . . the performance of hybridity can serve as a tool of positive change, unsettling supposedly stable binaries and power relations” (616). It is this performative quality that I find most intriguing and useful for my analysis: in each of the following chapters, performative acts such as divinations of ancient texts, trickster narrations, or ceremonial rituals become the third space in which cultural exchange and change may occur. For the purpose of this analysis, it is also important to note that “[t]he splitting of the subject of enunciation destroys the logics of synchronicity and evolution which traditionally authorize the subject of cultural knowledge” (Bhabha 53). Hence, the third space explodes a Western view of temporal linearity. Temporal linearity has been a divisive ideology between Euro-Americans and Native Americans since first contact. Vine Deloria Jr. depicts this divide in *God Is Red* by examining the way in which European epistemologies are linearly conceived in contrast to spatially-conceived Indigenous American epistemologies (65-72).

Chapter Two, then, is not only foundational for my project because it introduces Native resistance to colonialism, inspired by Indigenous American spirituality, on a revolutionary scale, but also because it introduces how third space theory can be utilized as an interpretive tool for American Indian literatures. The authors of *Men of Maize* and *Almanac of the Dead* interpret ancient Mesoamerican texts, creating hybrid third spaces, in which the past (pre-Contact Mesoamerican spiritualities) meets present (post-Contact ideologies). This chapter stands apart from the rest of the project because the spiritual resistances are rooted not only in spirituality passed down through the oral tradition but also through Indigenous American sacred texts. The oral tradition, an integral storytelling form of most American Indian cultures, has been privileged

in aesthetic studies; however, there is a history of written texts that stretches back beyond the early Cherokee alphabetic writings of the 16th century to the ancient hieroglyphic writings of the Mayans and Aztecs. Womack asserts that “scholars of Native literature need to break down the oppositional thinking that separates orality and literacy wherein the oral constitutes authentic culture and the written contaminated culture” (*Red* 15). One goal of Chapter Two is to elevate the status of ancient sacred writings of Native peoples while examining their connection to the oral tradition.

Chapter Three reinforces my assertion that Homi Bhabha’s third space, a place between cultures that eludes the binaries of modernity (56), creates an alternate interpretive model for analyzing Native American literatures. This chapter explores the application of Gerald Vizenor’s trickster hermeneutics in three trickster-narrated novels, Vizenor’s own *Chancers*, Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks*, and Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water*. Each of these novels resists hegemonic Euro-American discursive tactics through the tricky moves of their narrators. The analysis of these novels reveals how Vizenor’s trickster hermeneutics, both semiotic and performative, can also be read as a manifestation of Bhabha’s third space.

Chapter Four is an analysis of James Welch’s *Fools Crow*, N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn*, and LeAnne Howe’s *Shell Shaker*, also utilizing Bhabha’s theory of hybridity. These novels require their readers to participate in the Native spiritualities represented; through a third space, readers from both inside and outside the Indigenous faiths represented can participate in the visions and ceremonies integral to the protagonists’ transformations. These transformations signify individual resistance to colonizing forces, a resistance that is doubled by the participating reader.

My concluding chapter examines the critique of third spaces as useful models for analyzing Native American literatures. The word “hybridity” can be distasteful from a Native literary separatist standpoint because some read it as melding with the colonizing culture in an era when decolonization and sovereignty are desired. I will argue that third space theory, when read as performative, is a way for diverse cultures to come together in the postcolonial era, without losing cultural integrity.

This study, concerned with representations of Native spiritual resistance against European and Euro-American colonialism in Indigenous American literatures specifically within texts rooted in sacred Mesoamerican writings, trickster stories, and ceremonies, focuses on novels because the form itself can be read as a kind of resistance against hegemonic culture. Determining the resistant nature of these novels, requires explication of current theoretical assertions about Native American aesthetics.

The field of aesthetics, “a philosophical investigation of art [or] a branch of philosophy which is concerned with art and questions of beauty” (Blocker 8), is a Western construct; hence, its applicability to Native American literature is limited unless its definition is expanded to include non-Western ideologies. Art, for American Indian cultures, does not exist for its own sake. Instead, art tends to serve a wider cultural function. Gene Blocker argues that the Western view of art “presuppose[s] a division of society and culture into distinct functional regions—in which art is more or less separated from religion, which is more or less separated from agricultural, military, political, and scientific concerns” (6). Western aesthetics, then, was formed by modernity. Traditional Native American art was not separate from its functional purpose. Examples include the ephemeral and complex sand paintings of Diné healing ceremonials or the precise decorative lines of Anasazi cooking pots. According to Blocker, this

functional view of art can be labeled as “premodern” (8) and would include European Stone Age cave paintings, and Greek, Roman, and early Christian religious art, since such works perform a cultural function.

Traditional American Indian creative expression reflects “the social and spiritual dimensions of culture,” (27) according to Leroy Meyer. He argues that Western critics must release themselves from formalistic ways of thinking (29) and examine the cultural context of such art (34). His approach is not to set “functionality” and “aesthetics” as oppositions; rather, he suggests that art be considered as an aspect of culture, thus linking the concepts through their wider social relationship (37). Consequently, Meyer suggests a way to apply “aesthetics”—a construct of Western modernity—to Native American artistic production.

A number of literary critics have attempted to classify the aesthetics of contemporary American Indian literatures since the publication of N. Scott Momaday’s Pulitzer Prize winning *House Made of Dawn* in 1968. Gros Ventre scholar Sidner Larson has enumerated characteristics that are “features of the Native American aesthetic, a direct reflection of the values that are held close and acted upon by the various native people who live in the Americas” (59). The first characteristics he notes are linguistic, both oral and written elements.

The primary epistemological division between Native American peoples and the Europeans who colonized the Americas was that the former were primarily oral cultures and the latter relied upon written modes of communication. Karl Kroeber eloquently summarizes this division:

To people for whom words exist only as sound, dying away even as spoken, verbal comment on the phenomena of the surrounding world and engagement in the special practices of their culture must be more ongoingly dynamic and dramatic than for [people of written cultures]. Speaking is always a vital event, for spoken words are evanescent movements in time without the thinglike permanence of written words. In societies without writing, not only every story

but also every speech is a realizing, a making real, of a particular culture. In such societies nothing is more important than words spoken and words heard, because each singular human way of life exists primarily through these utterances. (Kroeber, "An Introduction" 7)

An important aspect of American Indian cultures is the oral tradition, a mode of storytelling in which tales are passed down from one generation to the next. Acoma poet Simon Ortiz explains that the oral tradition is more than a simple retelling of traditional stories. It consists of "the actions, behavior, relationships, practices throughout the whole social, economic, and spiritual life process of people . . . [T]he oral tradition is the consciousness of the people" (7). The oral tradition serves cultural functions which are both social and educational: storytelling is an event in which people may gather and share information whether it is of a cosmological, historical or entertaining nature (Larson 59). The mode is performative in that the storyteller engages his or her audience. Larson explains that American Indian writers are "closer to live performance in [their] imagining" (60), so they emulate the performative nature of the oral tradition in their writings. It follows, then, that an American Indian novel that relies on elements of the oral tradition will engage its reading audience in a way that invites participation. Also, because the oral tradition is fluid (the storyteller may tell the story the way he or she wants to tell it), the story's theme is constantly reinterpreted. Larson asserts, "Native American written literature is traditional in this sense. It includes stories, the authors' telling of stories they have heard, and it is criticism, a story about those stories" (60). Arnold Krupat categorizes contemporary Native written productions informed by the oral tradition as "oral texts" (*The Turn* 4). Borrowing from Krupat, I use the phrase "oral textuality" when examining the trickster-narrated novels of Chapter Three. In addition, the oral tradition is a significant aspect of the ceremonial novels analyzed in Chapter Four. Trickster stories and ceremonial chants are both considered elements of Native American oral tradition.

The other linguistic feature of a Native American literary aesthetics is the European American written tradition (Larson 59). This tradition becomes transformed, however, when the cultural context changes. In *For Those Who Come After*, Krupat sketches the ways in which the Western literary classifications of romance, tragedy, comedy, and irony have been inappropriately applied to American Indian biographical narratives (63). In his later study, *The Voice in the Margin*, Krupat proposes the classification of “indigenous literature” created by “the interaction of local, internal, traditional, tribal, or ‘Indian’ literary modes of the various nation-states in which it may appear” (214). If contemporary Native American narrative forms are strongly rooted in oral traditions, then their development into a Western form such as the novel suggests a performative third space between an oppositional colonizer/colonized aesthetics. Paula Gunn Allen highlights the Eurocentrism of those scholars who would argue that American Indian novelists who defy Western narrative conventions are “experimental” since they have been “reared in the oral tradition” (*The Sacred* 81) and therefore maintain a different epistemological viewpoint. Though I concur with Larson about the hybrid nature of contemporary Native literatures, my project echoes Craig Womack’s claim that traditional Mayan writings also inform American Indian literatures, as demonstrated by my analysis of *Men of Maize* and *Almanac of the Dead*. Thus, both Native American and European written traditions merge with the oral tradition to create the contemporary American Indian literary landscape.

Another aesthetic characteristic Larson identifies in contemporary Native American literature is what he calls a “‘curing’ phenomenon” (60) that creates both a way to cross the cultural divide between the indigenous peoples of the Americas and their colonizers and as a way to heal the violence done to the land as a result of European colonization (61). This curing quality is derived from the relationship between contemporary Native writing and traditional

American Indian chants and ceremonies which, according to Allen, “emphasize restoration of wholeness, for disease is a condition of division and separation from the harmony of the whole” (*The Sacred* 60). Larson’s example of a curing novel in the former sense is Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*; however, *House Made of Dawn* is the first novel to make this attempt at bridging Native American and European American culture for healing purposes, as I will argue in Chapter Four.

The close relationship between Native American spirituality and land is also a common theme of Native literatures (Larson 61) and informs every novel in this study. Exploitation and abuse of land by colonizing forces, particularly for the purposes of capitalism, drive the revolutionary tactics of the novels discussed Chapter Two. Chapter Three is concerned with the removal of Native American remains from the land in which they were buried, the devastating loss of Native lands as a result of the Dawes Act, and the governmental damming of a river on Indigenous land. Encroachment on American Indian land by colonizers and spiritual disconnection from the land are issues that emerge in Chapter Four.

Non-linear representations of time are another oft-discussed element of American Indian literatures. Larson groups this quality under the larger category of “seeming fragmentation of thought” (62). Paula Gunn Allen delineates what might make American Indian thought seem fragmented to the Western reader: “the American Indian [tends] to view space as spherical and time as cyclical, whereas the non-Indian tends to view space as linear and time as sequential. The circular concept requires all ‘points’ that make up the sphere of being to have a significant identity and function, while the linear model assumes that some ‘points’ are more significant than others” (*The Sacred* 59). As soon as *Men of Maize* and *House Made of Dawn* appeared, they confounded Western readers of the twentieth century, when a Western-based literary

critique remained dominant, for their non-linear structural elements emulated non-linear perceptions of time. Other novels in this study notable for their cyclical structures include *Green Grass*, *Running Water* and *Shell Shaker*.

Larson suggests that the aesthetics of identity in Native American literatures are a result of issues arising from European and Euro-American colonization: “assimilation, acculturation, acceptance, and rejection” (62). Such issues manifest in *House Made of Dawn* through Abel’s alienation from Jemez Pueblo because of his father’s questionable identity (11), by the destruction of Isaac’s tribal enrollment card as an act of identity-stripping in *Shell Shaker* (57), or by the separatist Solar Dancers of *Chancers* who embrace stereotypical Native American identities. The roots of contemporary American Indian identity crises lie within the political history of Euro-American and Native American relations. In addition to genocidal and assimilationist moves by the U.S. government, the creation of boundaries such as reservations, blood quantum, and the partiality shown toward some tribes over others have contributed to identity conflict within individuals. Barbara Alice Mann summarizes the problem: “it is not by ‘full blood’ that people acquire their identity; it is by living in, with, and through their culture” (94). Cultural continuity, then, is critical to maintaining American Indian identities.

A final feature of a Native American literary aesthetic, argues Larson, is “a prevalence of ethnographic and historical content” (63). He explains that the traditional tribal stories and ceremonies depicted in *House Made of Dawn* reinforce data collected from ethnographers; hence, the book is believed to be “authentically American Indian” (63). Clearly, novels with significant historical content like *Shell Shaker*, *Fools Crow*, and *Tracks*, all written by contemporary Native American writers, must rely heavily on historical and ethnographic documents in addition to traditional Native forms such as the oral tradition. The only non-Native

author in this study, Spanish-descended Guatemalan Miguel Angel Asturias had training as an anthropologist.¹¹ Roberto González Echevarría classifies *Men of Maize* as an archival fiction because it attempts to create a myth according to anthropological discourse, in this case, about Mayan culture (173-174). Though the novel displays other elements of a Native American aesthetics as discussed above, this characteristic is pronounced in *Men of Maize* and is an essential one for inclusion of the novel in my project. As critic Raymond Williams has noted, most Latin American modernists, Asturias included, did not accept the division of aesthetics and politics that is present in much European and U.S. American modernist writing (11). Consequently, stories can be said to have functional purposes in Latin American culture (in this case, to enact social change), as they do in Native American traditional cultures.

Clearly, from this overview, Native American novels do not simply exist as a mode of resistance against European and European American colonialism. They have evolved through cultural contact with Europeans and their descendants into a hybrid form that includes both Western and traditional Indigenous American aesthetics. Yet, formal resistance does occur within the Native novel-writing tradition. Edward Said famously argues that stories are one way that colonized peoples resist hegemonic cultures (*Culture* xii). He also convincingly traces the development of the novelistic tradition to the development of Western imperialism:

I am not trying to say that the novel—or the culture in the broad sense—“caused” imperialism, but that the novel, as a cultural artifact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other. Of all the major literary forms, the novel is the most recent, its emergence the most datable, its occurrence the most Western, its normative pattern of social authority the most structured; imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible, I would argue, to read one without in some way dealing with the other. (70-71)

Such an argument does not, of course, claim that the novel itself is an imperialistic form. When placed into the hands of colonized writers, the novel form can be read as a kind of resistance

against Western imperialism. As Said notes, this kind of resistance has existed as long as colonization has existed; stories are one method used by colonized peoples to assert their histories and identities (xii).

Many scholars agree that the seeds of novelistic narrative lie in early classical forms such as the epic (Bakhtin, *Problems* 109), yet its growth is closely connected to modernity. Bakhtin notes that the novel emerged from an essentially Euro-centric and patriarchal culture that was forced to interact in a linguistically and socially complex global situation for the first time (“Discourse” 325). The relative newness of the form creates a challenge for scholars. Bakhtin suggests a helpful comparison: “Studying other genres is analogous to studying dead languages; studying the novel, on the other hand, is like studying languages that are not only alive, but still young” (321). Echevarría claims that the novel “[has] no fixed form” (8), and its value depends on its social context. These scholars’ critiques speak to the flexibility of novelistic narrative: though its beginnings may lie in Western traditions, it is a form ripe for cultural appropriation.

American Indian peoples have very old storytelling traditions that reach into the past far beyond their initial encounters with Europeans; the American Indian novel, however, is a new form, emerging only after European colonization. Therefore, it is through traditional aspects of Native aesthetics that resistances emerge. Allen argues that the oral tradition is one way that American Indians have resisted colonizing attempts: “It has kept the people conscious of their tribal identity, their spiritual traditions, and their connection to the land and her creatures” (*The Sacred* 53). Consequently, one can infer that hybrid novels which embrace elements of the oral tradition reject the monolithic Western written tradition. She also claims that temporal non-linearity as a structuring device resists colonialism: “[T]here is some sort of connection between colonization and chronological time. There is a connection between factories and clocks, and

there is a connection between colonial imperialism and factories. There is also a connection between telling Indian tales in chronological sequences and the American tendency to fit Indians into the slots they have prepared for us” (150). Therefore, Native American novels that represent time non-linearly not only more accurately reflect the epistemologies of Native peoples, but they also assert themselves in the face of structural devices that would oppress their non-Western inner unities. These kinds of resistances fall into Krupat’s classification of Indigenous writing because “[authors] of subaltern cultural identification [manage] successfully to merge forms internal to [their] cultural formation with forms external to it, but pressing upon, even seeking to delegitimize it” (*The Voice* 214). For Native American literatures, their “premodern” characteristics subvert hegemonic Western narrative forms.

One way of theorizing this “premodern” approach is LeAnne Howe’s “tribalography,” the idea that the United States is “a tribal creation story” (“The Story of America” 29). Storytelling, for Howe, has unified the colonizers and the colonized in the Americas since Contact. She describes how the U.S. Founding Fathers were inspired by the story of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) tribal confederation that “created an image so powerful in the minds of colonialists that they believed if ‘savages’ could unite they ought to be able to do the same thing. That united image remained indelible in the minds of immigrants, so much so that Indians will be forever spoken of as *one group*” (41). Through tribalography, Howe is suggesting an aesthetics of unification, one that pulls together diverse peoples and lands, as well as diverse periods of time. This aesthetics resists those hegemonic stories of U.S. history that portray Indians as conquered or vanishing. Howe thinks such an approach benefits all Americans: “Not only are Choctaws and other American Indians creating a future ‘literary past’ for American Indians, but the textual space, a tribalography, creates a literary and literal past for non-Indians as

well” (46). The first step toward a tribalographic approach is to recognize, as Craig Womack argues in *Red on Red*, the primacy of Native literature. In my recent interview with her, Howe explained her stance on this issue: “We’re [Native literatures are] foundational, not different, but foundational. And that’s the way that we can then see the growth of the American aesthetic. It’s based on us, not the other way around.” Howe believes that the changes in U.S. literature in the last twenty-five years, such as non-linear storytelling techniques, are non-Native Americans “catching up” to Native aesthetics. This tribalographic standpoint re-centers American history and the American aesthetic, giving the Haudenosaunee credit for their original story of unification without pushing out the experience of European Americans or other groups of non-Indigenous Peoples from the story of the United States.

The inspiration for this project, an exploration of the revolutionary power of Native American spirituality, is the Haitian Revolution. The uprising of slaves in the colony of St. Domingue, under the leadership of Toussaint L’Ouverture and others, and the subsequent defeat of Napoleonic France in 1804, echoed throughout the Americas as the first successful military revolt by racially-oppressed peoples against European colonialism. At the same historical moment as the American Revolution and the French Revolution, enough Enlightenment-inspired ideological discourse had infiltrated the mostly African slave population of French St. Domingue to sow the seeds of resistance in an already fertile soil. Yet, it was not solely militaristic strategy that defeated the French. What inspired the slaves of St. Domingue toward revolution was their shared belief that the vodou lwas (gods) protected them. As in most slave-holding societies of the New World, the practice of traditional African religions was prohibited in St. Domingue (James 66). Yet, on August 14, 1791, a meeting of revolutionaries occurred in Bois Caïman, to plan the destruction of the French slaveholders in the northern part of the colony. According to

Haitian oral tradition, this meeting was consecrated with a vodou ceremony (Bell 20). The conversion of Indigenous Americans to Christianity and suppression of their traditional religions began upon the arrival of Christopher Columbus. In the United States, the late-nineteenth century marked a particularly oppressive time for Native religious practitioners when specific ceremonies such as the sun dance, scalp dance, and war dance were criminalized by the government (Bellin 5). Later laws including the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), and its 1994 companion, the Native American Free Exercise of Religion Act, eased earlier restrictions on traditional religious practices (6). Despite Christian hegemony in the Americas, Indigenous American spiritualities have provided Native American peoples a way of self-identifying that is separate from the dominating ideologies of European colonization, just as vodou did for the African and creole slaves of St. Domingue.

Leslie Marmon Silko draws similar connections between African and Native American spirituality through the convictions of her African American/Native American character, Clinton, in *Almanac of the Dead*. Clinton's research of spirituality is designed to educate the American public about its suppressed history in the radio broadcasts he plans to transmit once Euro-American political hegemony has been overturned. His notes reflect his research: "The spirits of Africa and the Americas are joined together in history, and on both continents by the sacred gourd rattle. Erzulie joins Mother Earth. Damballah, great serpent of the sky and keeper of all spiritual knowledge, joined the giant plumed serpent, Quetzalcoatl" (429). Through Clinton, Silko represents the unity of Indigenous African and American cultures through spirituality and their ability to overturn colonial oppression. Clinton believes, and the conclusion to Silko's novel suggests, that the spirits "had emerged as the most dangerous and potent forces against the

European colonials” (417). My project asserts that Indigenous Americans have resisted European colonization since the first contact between the cultures, and such resistance continues to be represented in contemporary Native American novels. Centering my analysis within Native systems of faith and their ability to endure five hundred years of European colonization will continue the movement of literary criticism toward the Native canon, wherein lie the aesthetic roots of American literatures.

End Notes

¹ Excerpted from Diné poet Luci Tapahonso’s “A Birthday Poem,” from her collection *Blue Horses Rush In*.

² His analysis includes these reservations: Blackfeet, Cheyenne River Sioux, Crow, Eastern Cherokee, Flathead, Fort Apache, Fort Peck, Gila River, Hopi, Laguna Pueblo, Menominee, Navajo, Northern Cheyenne, Papago, Pine Ridge, Red Lake, Rosebud, San Carlos, Standing Rock, Turtle Mountain, Wind River, Yakima, and Zuni Pueblo.

³ In his essay, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” Marxist critic Louis Althusser describes legally-approved civil institutions responsible for the creation of obedient individuals who perpetuate a society’s dominant ideologies. Such institutions include schools, churches, political parties, families, and various other social groupings.

⁴ The General Allotment Act will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter and also in Chapter Three.

⁵ See Erdrich’s novel *Tracks*, her poem “Indian Boarding School: the Runaways” in *Jacklight*, and Laura Tohe’s collection *No Parole Today*.

⁶ Alfred W. Crosby’s *Ecological Imperialism* is another excellent source on this subject.

⁷ In her essay “Slow Runners,” cited below, Barbara Alice Mann makes the connection between blood quantum and scientific racism: “Although sounding ‘scientific’ . . . quantum counting actually derives from colonial Slavery, under which privileged slaves were classified according to the level of European admixture in their ‘blood’” (93).

⁸ See my earlier discussion of Vizenor’s “postindian.”

⁹ Kimberley Blaeser’s 1996 *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* is foundational for Vizenor scholars.

¹⁰ Womack does an excellent job of both in “A Single Decade: Book-Length Native Literary Criticism between 1986 and 1997” cited above.

¹¹ Asturias’s relationship to Mayan culture will be explained more fully in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO: REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS IN *MEN OF MAIZE* (*HOMBRES DE MAIZ*) AND *ALMANAC OF THE DEAD*

In 1949, Guatemalan writer Miguel Angel Asturias published *Men of Maize*, a densely woven work that spans Mayan history from the pre-Contact era until the mid-twentieth century. In 1991, U.S. writer Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* was published. Her novel is more sprawling and also reaches back to the Native American pre-Contact era. *Almanac of the Dead*, however, stretches further into the future than does *Men of Maize*, beyond her own time, prophesizing an end to European domination of the Americas if our cultures continue on their current spiritual and political path. Both novels depict revolts against European colonialism that are rooted in the stories of Mesoamerican¹ sacred texts and historiographies. Sources for *Men of Maize* include the Mayan genesis story, the *Popol Vuh*, the Aztec *Legend of the Suns*, and the *Sacred Hymns of the Nahuas* (Martin, Introduction xxiii). *Almanac of the Dead* is a fictional counterpart to the four existing Mayan codices that survived destruction by the Spanish and also draws from the collection of historical, scientific, and prophetic books known as the *Chilam Balam* (Connelly 247).

Men of Maize and *Almanac of the Dead*, based in Mesoamerican spirituality, are notable for their epic scopes. Mikhail Bakhtin describes epic discourse as looking at the past from the perspective of admiring descendants; between the storytellers and listeners lies a gap in which the concept of nation has sprung up ("Epic" 14). Gordon Brotherston and Lúcia de Sá argue that classic texts of genesis in the Americas can be contrasted to those from the Western tradition, particularly in terms of "plurality, time spans and agencies of creation, the place of humans among the other species, and the significance of agriculture. In American genesis . . . it is hard to find an Adam fashioned in the image of God, who precedes woman and who is explicitly given dominion over other life forms. It is just as hard to find a first planter who is also a

murderer” (11). Silko’s and Asturias’s novels are populated with hero twins and other god-like characters, echoing the ancient texts from which they spring, telling stories that tie early American cosmologies to contemporary national problems.

Much of the analysis of Native American literatures focuses on how the oral tradition informs their creative structures and themes, yet as discussed in the previous chapter, Womack points out that the ancient writings of Indigenous Americans are cultural artifacts that have not been given their due. Recent scholarship on the remaining Mayan codices, the *Popol Vuh* and the *Chilam Balam* has shown that “these books were used as a *complement* of oral tradition rather than a *replacement*. The books were recited and even read in precontact schools to educate the young in the oral tradition” (Red 16). The complementary nature of ancient Mayan writings and the oral tradition is also evidenced in the alphabetic *Popol Vuh*, containing the Mayan creation story and early tribal lineages, to which Europeans first gained access in the eighteenth century (Tedlock, Preface 28). The alphabetic version was written by Mayans post-Contact in order to preserve a history of their sacred stories, the original versions of which had been burned by European missionaries in the sixteenth century (27). Unlike the original hieroglyphic text, the alphabetic *Popol Vuh* was a written retelling of a “long performance,” or an interpretation of the symbols by a trained diviner (32). In the Mayan tradition, “[diviners] are, by profession, interpreters of difficult texts. They can even start from a nonverbal sign, such as an ominous invasion of a house by a wild animal, and arrive at a ‘reading’” (Tedlock, Preface 15). The theme of divination is present in both *Men of Maize* and *Almanac of the Dead* and helps explain how the revolutionary tactics of the texts avoid the shifting power struggles between the binary opposition of colonizers and colonized during decolonization movements,

described by Albert Memmi.² However, since such power struggles are based in the politics of both novels, an overview of those politics is a helpful point of departure.

Men of Maize appeared in a post-dictatorship Guatemala, after the revolution of 1944. One of the goals of the regime in the early 1950s was a program of agrarian reform designed to uplift the situation of Native peoples who had been enslaved when the Spanish arrived in 1524 and continued to be oppressed for the next four centuries (Martin, Introduction xv). Asturias scholar René Prieto argues that the novelist's "portrayal is a translation of what President Aravelo and his successor Jacobo Arbenz advocate through legal means: the distribution of land to the peasants and the formation of small privately owned farms" (100). Similarly, Silko's novel also concerns a battle over the land. Her revolutionary mestiza character, Zeta, articulates the problem: "There was not, and there never had been, a legal government by Europeans anywhere in the Americas. Not by any definition, not even by the Europeans' own definitions and laws. Because no legal government could be established on stolen land. Because stolen land never had clear title" (133). Though *Almanac of the Dead* does not depict a return to Native American values and social systems in the way *Men of Maize* does, enough of the almanac's prophecies come true for the reader to believe that the great battle for the Americas will end in favor of tribal peoples. In a critique of *Men of Maize*, Latin American writer Mario Vargas Llosa telescopes the historical experience reflected in the novel so that it might apply to *Almanac of the Dead* or any other work that details the consequences of European colonialism:

To see yourself suddenly confronted by different gods that have come to oust your own, by a view of this world and the next that has nothing to do with the one you have been immersed in, and to have to change your work practices, family customs, food, and even thought, to be able to survive, is a drama undergone by all the peoples colonized by the West. And in all of them acculturation has given rise to the same complicated dialectic of appropriation, substitution, and modification between colonizer and colonized. (450)

Both *Men of Maize* and *Almanac of the Dead* are novels depicting the material circumstances of the colonization of the Americas in which the Indigenous peoples have had to confront Western political, economic, and ideological systems. The primary political and military move of the colonialist enterprise was to force Native Americans from their lands and to give up traditional economic systems in favor of European feudalism first and capitalism later. They were also coerced to convert to Christianity from their centuries-old forms of spirituality.

Though many European countries had a hand in the colonization of the Americas, subsequent independence movements by North and South American colonies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries changed the hierarchy of authority on the continents. Nowhere in the Americas did an indigenous culture topple a colonizing culture; instead, the descendents of colonizing Europeans maintained dominance in the independent nations. The Haitian Revolution stands apart from other American independence movements, but it is difficult to claim that this was an Indigenous American revolt since Hispaniola's native Taino people had been decimated by the Spanish two hundred years before (Rojo 40). Despite this history of European and Euro-American cultural dominance, Native Americans have revolted many times against their colonizers beginning with Taino Hatuey's sixteenth century rebellion against Spanish slave hunters in Cuba (Stevens-Arroyo 527). Yet, as critic David Harding points out, "elites establish and maintain hegemony . . . through the control of the means of cultural production and distribution"; hence, the European American side of history has been privileged over the viewpoint of Native Americans. Both *Men of Maize* and *Almanac of the Dead* tell stories about revolt, which Memmi argues is "the only way out of the colonial situation" (127).

The dialectics of colonization emerge in this analysis of the numerous revolts contained within these novels, yet such upheavals do not come to the same end as those detailed by

Memmi. For him, the binary opposition of colonizer and colonized cannot be separated; therefore, “[in] the midst of revolt, the colonized continues to think, feel and live against, and therefore, in relation to the colonizer and colonization” (139). Because the revolutionary tactics of Asturias’s and Silko’s novels are based in Native spiritualities, the colonized people have the ability to define themselves through their own culture, avoiding the trap described by Memmi. Assimilated Native people in the texts are forced to change or do not survive the revolution.

Like Mayan diviners, both Asturias and Silko interpreted Mesoamerican sacred texts in order to create their novels. It is important to note that Miguel Angel Asturias is the only author in this study not of Native American descent. Trained as an anthropologist, he translated the *Popol Vuh* into Spanish in 1927 (Brotherston and de Sá 23). Critics have argued that Asturias is so knowledgeable in Mesoamerican spirituality that *Men of Maize* is a complete “cosmography” (Harss and Dohmann 429).³ Despite Asturias’s passion for his work and his belief in its importance to Guatemalan history (Christ 436), the role of the anthropologist has been viewed with increasing skepticism. Claude Levi-Strauss alluded to early anthropology as “the handmaiden of colonialism” (qtd. in Said, *Culture* 152), encapsulating the problem of a supposedly objective outsider attempting to interpret a culture to which he or she does not belong. In fact, Asturias’s early *El Problema social del indio* (1923), though sympathetic to the plight of Guatemalan Indians, advocated both cultural and political assimilation as the appropriate way to improve their social condition (Handy 49). Yet by 1927, his work translating the *Popol Vuh* and other Mayan compositions “transformed Asturias’s view of his own country and those who constitute its majority, curing him of an inherited minority white racism” (Brotherston and de Sá 23). René Prieto explains how Asturias’s personal investment in the Native culture of his country resulted in acceptance by the Maya:

To this day, there is a very select group of diviners in Mayan country called “daykeepers.” Their function is to interpret illnesses, omens, and dreams given by sensations internal to their own bodies and the multiple rhythms of time. It is their business to bring what is dark into “white clarity,” just as the gods of the *Popol Vuh* brought the world itself to light. It would not be an exaggeration to say that when the Indians of Guatemala referred to Miguel Angel Asturias as Tecún Umán, the cultural hero who defended them against [Spanish conquistador] Alvarado, they were aware that he, too, was seeking that “white clarity.” (67)

Asturias’s clarity seems to have resulted in a prophetic divination. *Men of Maize* foresees a future for Guatemalan Mayans that did come to pass, although briefly. In 1952, the Agrarian Reform Law was passed under the leadership of Jacobo Arbenz, leading to a shift from a minority of landowners owning large plantations to a more communal approach that put land back into the hands of Guatemala’s Native population.⁴

Almanac of the Dead, like *Men of Maize*, is an epic, with a foundation in multiple Native American belief systems. Silko, a Laguna Indian, also “divined” Mayan sacred texts, a practice not unlike her writing process which she describes as being a “medium” for spirits and ancestors (Arnold xii). What makes her novel different from Asturias’s is that in addition to the *Chilam Balam*, she used the Mayan codices as subtext. These calendar almanacs were used for scheduling ritual activities (Schele and Freidel 50), but they also were employed to predict the future (Harding). Therefore, the prophesizing aspect of Silko’s divination is more overt than in Asturias’s novel since she is actually emulating Mayan prophetic texts. Like *Men of Maize*, *Almanac of the Dead* seems to have foreseen actual events that came in the novel’s wake. Since the novel’s publication date of 1991, critics have noted the fulfillment of a number of its predictions: the failure of the Mexican economy (Janet Powers 271), the 1994 emergence of Mayan Zapatistas in Chiapas (Moore 164),⁵ and the 1992 northward moving Indigenous “Ant March” from Palenque to Mexico City for autonomy and land rights (Connelly 247-248).

As diviners of Mesoamerican sacred texts, both Asturias and Silko produce meaning for their readers through Bhabha's performative third space;⁶ this is how the revolutionary tactics of the novels avoid the cyclic power struggle of colonizers and colonized described by Memmi. Dennis Tedlock explains that even today the Maya think of dualities (seen as binary oppositions by Western modernity) as complementary: "the realms of divine and human actions are joined by a mutual attraction" (63). The long performances of ancient Mayan diviners were intended to recreate the vast understanding of the first four humans "who could speak the very language of the gods [and] could also see everything under the sky and on the earth" (23); consequently, diviners had access to both the sacred and the secular, intertwined realms for the Mayans. Like these long performances, the divinations of Asturias and Silko are interpretations of sacred stories; however, their divinations come as a result of an enunciative split between past and present. These authors are not Mayan diviners whose audience comprises believers of their own faith. Rather, Asturias and Silko both recreate stories of the European colonization of the Americas by representing Indigenous revolutions against political, economic, and ideological systems; their divinations of ancient texts create hybrid third spaces, in which the past (pre-Contact Mesoamerican spiritualities) meets present (post-Contact ideologies). By embracing hybridity in this way, the authors undermine a Euro-American hegemonic system that emphasizes binary oppositions.

Men of Maize is a difficult novel partly because it spans an enormous period of time in Guatemala's history without alerting the reader to those time shifts in any overt manner. English translator Gerald Martin describes the book as being divided into three phases of Guatemala's history, and "[i]n each of the three phases—tribal, feudal-colonial, and capitalist-neocolonial—an Indian protagonist is defeated, loses his woman, and, cut off from the earth and the

maizefield, turns to drink and despair” (Introduction xvii). Similar to *Almanac of the Dead*, one kind of defeat for the Indian protagonist is political, resulting from the colonizers’ seizures of land. The Spanish Conquest of the Guatemalan highlands killed between 75 and 90 percent of the pre-Conquest Native population through disease and warfare (Handy 5-6). The first section of the novel concerns a battle for the land over maize planting, an outcome of the spiritual gap between the Mayans and the Spanish. According to the *Popol Vuh*, all human beings were created from maize:

the making, the modeling of our first mother-father,
with yellow corn, white corn for the flesh,
food alone for the human legs and arms,
for our first fathers, the four human works. (164)

It is not surprising then, that in the face of a colonizing culture that plants maize only for profit, the rebel leader Gaspar Ilóm urges his people to plant corn according to need, as did their ancestors. Asturias’s fictional uprising is based on an actual Mayan revolt in 1900; his protagonist’s insurrection takes place “in Cuchumatanes, the heartland and source of the first maize agriculture in highland Maya cosmogony” (Brotherston and de Sá 23). To subdue this Native revolt, Colonel Gonzalo Godoy, Leader of the Army Expeditionary Force in the Field, orders that Ilóm be poisoned (Asturias 18). The poison is delivered by a traitorous tribe member, Tomas Machojón (23). Ilóm, a mythical hero, drinks the river to survive, but the sight of his people massacred by Godoy’s troops leads him to drown himself (25). Godoy’s act of political and military oppression enrages the firefly wizards, “descendants of the great clashers of flint stones” (283). By referring to flint clashers, Asturias associates the “wizards” to the Mayan god Chac, Lightning Bolt, whose fingernails were flint and obsidian (Schele and Freidel 201), giving them divine power over the colonizing soldiers. The figures that Asturias calls “wizards” are what anthropologists and archaeologists label “shamans” in Mayan culture because they have the

ability to change into fireflies, their animal spirits, or *nahuales* (45). The firefly wizards curse all who are connected with the poisoning of Gaspar Ilóm, ultimately defeating the military representatives of the colonizing government and those who would help them. This curse is the novel's first revolutionary tactic in which belief in Mayan spirituality leads to defeat of the Spanish colonizers.

In fulfillment of the curse, the firefly wizards' initial act of vengeance is to kill Machojón, the son of Tomas, the traitorous tribe member. As Machojón rides to ask for the hand of Candelaria Reinos, he is attacked by the firefly wizards: "The candle glow of the fireflies streamed down from his hat, behind his ears, over the collar of his embroidered shirt, over his shoulders, up the sleeves of his jacket, down the backs of his hairy hands, between his fingers, like frozen sweat, like the light at the beginning of the world, a brightness in which everything could be seen, but without definite form" (Asturias 31). This scene is significant for two reasons. First, the comparison of the firefly wizards' light to the beginning of the world suggests a cosmic rebirth with the death of Machojón. Such a reference foreshadows the overturning of a capitalistic maize-growing system by the novel's end. In addition, the death of the young man on his way to becoming betrothed emphasizes the death of the Machojón line since he is Tomas's only son. Fire is an important motif, not only in the killing of Machojón, but also in other acts of revenge by the firefly wizards, as Ariel Dorfman points out: "Señor Tomas, the corn planters, and also Vaca Manuela, are consumed by the fire that they themselves set, which is at the same time the cosmic fire punishing their betrayal" (395). Colonel Godoy also dies by fire, seven years after the death of Gaspar Ilóm, as the firefly wizards predicted, in the Earthshaker, a giant funnel of rocks in the forest (Asturias 93).

These deaths by fire can be contrasted to Gaspar Ilóm's death in the river. According to Mayan cosmology, water is associated with Xibalba, the underworld. In fact, some images found in pyramid ruins depict the actions taking place in Xibalba "as if they were underwater" (Schele and Freidel 417). Hunahpu was one of two hero twins in Mayan cosmology; his defeat of the Lords of Xibalba elevates him to the celestial role of sun god (Tedlock, Glossary 342). The sun is required for the growth of maize, and Hunahpu is also the "embodiment of the sprouting kernel" (Prieto 97), connecting the deity to the creation of humanity since the first people are made from maize. René Prieto draws a number of connections between Gaspar Ilóm and Hunahpu; the most significant is that Gaspar is married to María the Rain. The moon goddess was said to live with the rain gods (97); hence, a connection between María the Rain and the moon goddess would follow the logic of the novel's symbolism since the sun and moon are married in the daily cycle. Even more significantly, María runs away from Gaspar as he dies, with his child on her back, "the maize, the maize of Ilóm" (Asturias 305). Asturias is clearly tying Gaspar to the hero twin who created maize and humanity through his efforts to uphold the sacred traditions of cultivating maize among the Maya.

Men of Maize is fiction that emulates mythistory,⁷ moving from a mythological past to a capitalistic present in much the same way that the *Popol Vuh* moves from an era of deities to human systems of governance. The firefly wizards' vengeful acts are revolts against the military arm of a government not concerned with Mayan land rights, ultimately leading to an economic transition in the society. Even though the novel's champion of a traditional maize-growing economy, Gaspar Ilóm, dies early in the story, his presence and politics continue through the text. The sun god, Hunahpu, initially manifested in Gaspar, is reborn in the figures of Nicho Aquino and Goyo Yic. René Prieto explains, "Gaspar is the living emblem of a revolt that aims

to preserve the traditional nexus between the Indians, the land, and the maize from which they are made, and Goyo becomes the beneficiary of his sacrifice once the portent of this cultural legacy is explained to the reader via Nicho the messenger” (100). Through Gaspar’s death and reincarnation in the character of Goyo Yic, a revolution will be born to fight the colonizers’ capitalistic appropriation of the maize.

Goyo Yic’s *nahual* form operates as a symbol of his revolutionary nature. Harss and Dohmann describe *nahualismo* as “[the] Indian’s yearning for his immemorial past . . . The *nahual* is the man’s protective spirit, a sort of guardian angel; it takes the form of whatever animal the man identified with at birth. His animal-soul, one might call it. Every man longs to be joined in intimate and transcendent union with his *nahual*” (432). Goyo’s *nahual* is the opossum, as evidenced by his nickname “Poppa-Possum” and several descriptive comparisons such as the following: “The moonlight changed him from a man into an animal, an opossum, a female possum, with a pouch in front of him to carry his babies in” (Asturias 124). The “pouch” is a peddler’s tray (124), an occupation Goyo has taken up after his wife, María Tecún, leaves him (99), and after his blindness is cured by a healer (117). Yic’s *nahual* is a manifestation of Hunahpu-Vuch, the opossum and god of dawn (Martin, Notes 372), a clear link back to Gaspar Ilóm, the novel’s first embodiment of Hunahpu. The god receives his nickname of Hunahpu-Vuch during the time that he and his brother are vagabonds just before their final defeat of the Lords of Xibalba (Tedlock, Glossary 342). Goyo, too, is a wanderer, searching for his absent wife, and like Hunahpu-Vuch, his eventual success heralds a new dawn for his people. Finally, Goyo is also united with the sun through his marriage to María Tecún, another female connected to the moon goddess. Prieto points out that Goyo’s repeated lament for his wife, “María TecúúúUUUn!” is “relevant to the thematic development, for in lowland and Chiapan languages

‘U’ is one of the names for the moon” (97). The traditional maize-growing cycle of the Maya is restored when Goyo Yic and María Tecún (sun and moon) return to Pisigüilito to raise maize and to bear children; these two sacred acts are intertwined. Wealth, in the Mayan way, is defined through the number of one’s offspring (Asturias 306), not through material acquisition per the capitalist definition. Asturias extrapolates the significance of this couple’s union as a rebirth for their culture in the novel’s final line: “Old folk, young folk, men and women, they all became ants after the harvest, to carry home the maize: ants, ants, ants, ants . . .” (306). Again, these characters are tied to the Mesoamerican mythic tradition since the ant, the opossum, and the coyote, are the discoverers of maize (Prieto 105). Consequently, Asturias depicts a new dawn to recreate an Indigenous economy that was severed from its roots by colonial conquest. This final image of *Men of Maize*, in which Goyo Yic and María Tecún return to traditional agricultural methods, is Asturias’s prediction of what the proposed agricultural reforms of the late 1940s and early 1950s could do for the Indigenous peoples of Guatemala. In fact, the Agrarian Reform Law was passed in 1952 and was “immensely successful in its primary objective of transferring land from the hands of the large landowners to peasants and rural workers” (Handy 93).

Nicho Aquino is the final incarnation of Hunahpu as revolt against the colonizers’ capitalistic maize-growing. Nicho, the postman, must take a journey into his culture’s past in order to re-learn the interrelatedness of humanity and maize according to Mayan cosmology. Like Gaspar and Goyo, Nicho’s wife has left him, and he is devastated. On his journey to take the mail from the mountains to the capital, he spends the night at the inn of an old woman, Nana Monchona (Asturias 187). The next day, as he continues on his journey, he is accompanied by her husband, an old man with “black hands, hands the color of maize” (192). This old man explains the problem of a capitalistic approach to growing maize:

We are made of maize, and we can't make a business out of what we're made of, out of what our flesh is . . . It's one of the obscure things, the fact that we can feed on maize, which is the flesh of our flesh on the cobs, which are like our children; but everything will end up impoverished and scorched by the sun, by the air, by the clearing fires, if we keep sowing maize to make a business of it, as though it weren't sacred, highly sacred. (192)

The old man eventually reveals himself to be a firefly wizard, and he accompanies the postman, in his *nahual* form of coyote, to the underworld to witness the mythical past of their culture.

Like Goyo, Nicho is linked to the Mayan sun god through his *nahual*. Hunahpu-Utiu, the coyote,⁸ is the hunting god, or god of the night, and counterpart of Hunahpu-Vuch, the opossum, god of the dawn (Martin, Notes 372). This journey is akin to one described in another Mesoamerican creation story, the one taken by Quetzalcoatl, also a sun deity, in the Aztec *Legend of the Sun*, when he goes to the underworld with his *nahual* prior to discovering maize (365). Hence, Nicho's journey is necessary for the coming of the dawn, or the new era which Goyo Yic will usher in. What occurs on Nicho's journey is "a ceremonial reenactment of the steps of man's creation as recorded in the old traditions. First man is made of crumbling mud, then of breakable wood, finally of fruitful corn. Nicho Aquino has borne holy witness to the unfathomable. He has confronted his past [and] assumed the history of his race" (Harss and Dohmann 433). Nicho's identification with the sun god as represented through Gaspar Ilóm and Goyo Yic also manifests in his relationship with his wife, who he thinks has run away. In fact, Nicho learns from the firefly wizard that his wife, Isabra Terrón, fell in a well when she went out for water (Asturias 276). Such water imagery connects her to María the Rain and María Tecún, both manifestations of the moon goddess. Isabra's death is a sacrifice, and it is this knowledge that leads Aquino to sacrifice his humanity and assume his *nahual* form (376), making way for the cultural rebirth to come.

Nicho's and Isabra's sacrifices are necessary for the traditional cycle of maize-growing to overcome the colonizers' capitalistic methods. The theme of sacrifice can be tied to ancient Mayan religious practices. Schele and Freidel explain the need for sacrifice in Mayan culture: "Like the great metaphor of Maya life—the life cycle of maize—the continued well-being of the universe required the active participation of the human community through ritual. As maize cannot seed itself without the intervention of human beings, so the cosmos required sacrificial blood to maintain life" (19). For Christians, bloodletting is associated with the wrathful God of the Old Testament who prefers the offering of a sacrificed animal to a harvested crop (Girard 4). The blood sacrifices of Mesoamerican tribes such as the Mayans and Aztecs were considered by colonizing Europeans as proof of their barbarity, especially since bloodletting often involved human sacrifice, a clear moral wrong according to Christian theology. Yet, such a judgment shows a lack of knowledge of the nature and purpose of Mesoamerican sacrificial practices. Though some bloodletting rituals involved extreme mutilation and death, they could be as simple as pricking a body part to offer a few drops of blood (Schele and Friedel 89). Bloodletting was an inherent aspect of the annual harvest, the center of the community's economy. If this central component goes awry, so does the social fabric of a community. René Girard argues that for cultures whose sacred rituals require bloodletting, "[t]he purpose of the sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric . . . When men no longer live in harmony with one another, the sun still shines and the rain falls, to be sure, but the fields are less well tended, the harvests less abundant" (8).

Like the Mayans' maize-growing cycle, European capitalism also requires sacrifices. Asturias's German character Don Deferic underscores the inadequacies of the capitalistic system while defending Native legends against his wife's Eurocentric views: "The gods have

disappeared, but the legends remain and they, like the gods before them, demand sacrifices.

Gone too are the obsidian knives which tore out the hearts of sacrificial victims, but the knives of absence which wound and madden, remain” (199). These “knives of absence” can be read as the sacrifice resulting from a move away from a communally-oriented agrarian life toward the loneliness of capitalistic exploitation (Martin, Notes 367). Benito Ramos, a soldier who is involved in the massacre of Gaspar Ilóm’s men and is a witness to Colonel Godoy’s death in the Earthshaker, also criticizes capitalism, taking the Mayan side. As a result of the firefly wizards’ curse, he becomes infertile and spends his life considering the battle between the Native people and the maize-growers. He finally concludes that the traditional method of growing maize is more economically efficient than the capitalistic method that overtook it:

You should have seen what this land was like when [the Indians] were cultivating it rationally. You don’t need much arithmetic to work it out. You can do it with your fingers. Maize should be planted as they used to plant it, and still do, to give the family its grub, and not for business. Maize is sustenance, it allows you to get by, more than get by. You show me a rich maizegrower . . . It seems crazy, but we’re all worse off. (237)

Though the cooperatives that were created by Guatemala’s 1952 Agrarian Reform Law were not exactly the traditional agricultural methods described by Ramos above, they were much closer to the old ways than the previous capitalistic methods. The production of all food crops increased substantially after the passage of the Reform Law, resulting in abundant harvests (Handy 95); this suggests that Ramos’s theory of superior Indian agricultural methodology has some basis in fact.

Men of Maize not only represents political and economic revolt against European colonizing efforts, but it also reflects an ideological revolution. Memmi describes what he perceives as the most damaging aspect of colonialism: the removal of the colonized person from his or her history and community (91). When that happens, the colonized person desires to

assimilate into the dominant culture, “to become equal to that splendid model and to resemble him to the point of disappearing in him” (120). The colonized person eventually realizes that assimilation is impossible and at that point, revolts (127). Prieto describes the difficulty of attempting an ideological revolt for the Mayans portrayed in Asturias’s novel:

Mirroring reality, the Indian in Asturias’s novel has been forced to accept a dominant culture, alien to his beliefs, while being simultaneously coerced into suppressing his own convictions in order to become integrated into a society whose values he rejects on principle. If the culture that traditionally defines him is to survive, he must reject the Hispanic superstructure. However, after almost five centuries of colonial rule his sense of identification is such that rejecting the dominant image implies negating at least part of himself. Rather than forsake the foreign culture, the Indian forgets the traditions of his ancestors; perpetually alienated, he becomes a pariah entangled in a destructive cycle that defaces his identity . . . (140)

Despite this difficulty, Asturias paves the way for revolt against the ideologies of machismo, individualism, and the supremacy of patriarchy through his depiction of aspects of Mesoamerican spirituality.

The first cultural element of Spanish colonialism rejected by the Mayans in *Men of Maize* is machismo. Mexican writer Octavio Paz writes, “The *macho* represents the masculine pole of life” (81). This is a particular kind of masculinity, however, upon which Paz elaborates: “One word sums up the aggressiveness, insensitivity, invulnerability, and other attributes of the *macho*: power” (81). It is not difficult to link this image of aggressive masculine power to the model of the Spanish conquistador (82). The epitome of machismo in *Men of Maize* is Colonel Godoy, whose first appearance in the novel is his dramatic entrance into Pisigüilito to proclaim war against Gaspar Ilóm and his men in the mountains above the town (Asturias 12). His proclamation evokes the violence of Spanish colonization. The reader learns that Colonel Godoy likes nothing better than “talking about war” (73) and boisterously demands that his second lieutenant, Secundino Musús, explain to him what fear feels like (73). Clearly these aspects

display his aggressiveness and feeling of invulnerability. An additional example of his sense of imperviousness is the bravado he displays when talking about the firefly wizards' curse:

“[A]ccording to the Indians, the firefly wizards . . . have me sentenced to death come the seventh [year after Gaspar Ilóm's death]. Me snuff it this year? To hell with them!” (86). An added quality of machismo epitomized by Godoy is a sense of humor that “rips and tears [the world]” the violence of which “provokes a great, sinister laugh” (Paz 81). This humor is vengeful, as when Godoy turns Musús's description of fear, that which he claims he does not feel, into an insulting joke: “And if you feel it in front of you and behind you, you shiiiiIt yourself!” (Asturias 81). The ideology of machismo is defeated when Godoy falls prey to the firefly wizards' vengeance. He and his troops are surrounded by three circles of the wizards in various mystical forms inside a giant funnel of rocks in the forest called the Earthshaker. The soldiers burn to death in a fire created by the wizards' power: “Flames in the form of bloodstained hands were painted on the walls of the air. Hands dripping the blood of chickens sacrificed in maizefield masses” (97). This sacrifice of machismo recreates a non-macho patriarchy, that which existed before Spanish colonization among the Maya.

Another revolt against the ideology of machismo is the death of Machojón, Señor Tomas's son. Señor Tomas, though he is of Mayan descent, betrayed his people by involving himself in the plot against Ilóm. Members of his tribe also claim that since his wife, Vaca Manuela, is a Ladina, (the Guatemalan variant of “Mestiza” [Martin, Notes 320]), she “had turned him into a Ladino” (Asturias 18).⁹ Hence, even though Machojón has Mayan heritage, he has been raised to embrace Hispanic culture. Clearly, machismo is invoked by the very name of this family, and he is known as “the most macho of the Machojones” (30). Even the last two syllables of his name, sounding like the Spanish “cojón,” suggest his bravery and virility. The

young man's initial description embodies his masculinity: the wide-brimmed sombrero, the spurs, and the three hundred stallions he has broken (Asturias 26). Both sombreros and spurs are symbols of machismo (Martin, Notes 327, 370), and Machojón's aggressive horsemanship associates him with the brutal Spanish Conquest when the horse was introduced to the Americas. Like Colonel Godoy's death in the Earthshaker, machismo is overcome with the death of the Machojón line by the firefly wizards. Yet, the myth which evolves as a result of Machojón's death triples the subversion of the wizards' act. It is said that Machojón appears riding his horse, dressed in gold, when the colonizing maize-growers burn the forest in order to plant maize. He is described as looking like "the Apostle Santiago himself" (35). Santiago, the patron saint of Spain (Peake 214), becomes the patron saint of the city of Guatemala since he is reported to have appeared during the battle for the town (Martin, Notes 329). The miracle sends the Indians fleeing, ensuring dominance for the colonizers. Martin suggests that Asturias is also conflating Machojón with Pedro de Alvarado, the Spaniard who conquered Guatemala (Notes 329). These associations compound the effect of the firefly wizards' attack on Machojón, resulting in a revolt against machismo that leads back to its very core in the image of the Spanish conquistador.

Individualism is one more colonizing ideology that is overcome through spiritual revolt in *Men of Maize*. Hegel argues that individualist ideology is the product of an industrialized culture (119), the antithesis of the traditional Mayan culture in which spirituality and economy were tied together in the maize-growing cycle. Hilario Sacayón, a muleteer sent to look for Nicho Aquino, the postman-coyote, is an example of "an Indian who forgets the traditions of his ancestors" (140), described by Prieto above, because he has embraced individuality over community. He finds that this ideology cannot be sustained when faced with certain cultural truths. Sacayón is a storyteller, and he claims to have created a story in a drunken fit which has

been told over and over in his village about a love affair between a young woman named Miguelita and a visiting American, Neill. Martin notes that the character Neill is based on U.S. playwright Eugene O'Neill's youthful travels to Latin America (Notes 364). Ironically, Hilario's romantic version of the story describes a smitten wandering sewing machine salesman whose unrequited love for Miguelita drives him to the rough and tumble life of a sailor. O'Neill's biographer Louis Scheaffer paints a very different picture of the playwright whose first job in Buenos Aires was in a Singer Sewing Machine Plant. His mechanical ineptitude and suspicion of machinery landed him a job breaking up old machines, which he quit after a few weeks (172). O'Neill's life in Buenos Aires was mostly a time of drinking and consorting with prostitutes, unlike that of the chaste salesman described by Hilario. Asturias's grounding of Hilario's story in blind romanticism suggests the magnitude of change he must endure in order to embrace cultural truths. Clearly, Hilario idealizes the U.S. author, the product of a culture that privileges individualism, unlike his more community-oriented Native culture.

Hilario demonstrates his own preference of individualism over community by claiming sole authorship of the story of Miguelita and Neill. Though Hilario knows that the kernel of the story originally came from his father's lips, he has embellished it to the point that he is convinced it is his own creation and that he has changed his community's traditions as a result of this story (Asturias 182). Hilario is chastised for his lack of belief that stories are a community invention by Nana Monchona, the old woman who runs the inn where Nicho Aquino had stayed:

We often think we've invented things that other people have forgotten. When you tell a story that no one else tells anymore, you say: I invented this, it's mine. But what you're really doing is remembering—you, through your drunkenness, remembered what the memory of your forefathers left in your blood, because you must realize that you're a part not only of Hilario Sacayón, but of all the Sacayones that have ever lived, and on your mother's side, of all the Arriazas, all folks from round these parts. (204)

Monchona suggests that Hilario's conviction in his individualized inspiration is a form of "conceit" (202) and that he is an "unbeliever" (202) in his culture's stories which are passed down through the oral tradition. Hilario cannot see that cultural truths may be contained in communally-held stories until he journeys over María Tecún ridge searching for Nicho, the beginning of his revolt against the ideology of individualism.

Hilario's journey brings him into physical contact with aspects of a number of cultural stories that are introduced early in the novel and have become a part of the characters' collective memories. The first is an aspect of Machojón's story. It was said that after the firefly wizards attacked him, he became a star in the sky. Hilario, an unbeliever in cultural truths, thinks "that the fireflies were trying to unhorse that fellow and they still haven't unhorsed him" (207). Immediately after this thought, while riding his mule over María Tecún ridge, Hilario ironically faces a flurry of fireflies which he fears will unseat *him* from *his* horse (207). This first trial forces Hilario to accept the defeat of the assimilated Mayan, Machojón, by powerful wizards from their ancient past, proof that Indigenous culture has not been conquered by machismo. This is the germination of Hilario's acceptance that cultural stories contain truths, even if they are not individually authored.

Hilario next must experience the story of María Tecún in order to overcome his individualistic ideology. María Tecún is, of course, the wife of Goyo Yic, but their tale has been mythologized by their culture, similar to the story of Miguelita and Neill. The legend suggests that men whose wives run away (now known as "tecunas") become maddened by their loss and eventually find themselves at a rock on María Tecún ridge in the shape of a woman, presumably their lost love. These men hallucinate that their lost woman is calling to them and blindly jump from the mountain into the abyss (165). The unbelieving Hilario actually hears the repeated and

bone-chilling cries of the blind man who lost his wife (Goyo Yic) as he crosses María Tecún ridge. The muleteer cannot deny his senses: he is forced to accept the existence of the tecunas and their maddened spouses, more proof of the veracity of his culture's stories.

Hilario's final and most convincing trial is seeing a coyote pass before him on María Tecún ridge (209). Now he must accept the story of *nahualismo*. He is searching for Nicho Aquino, a man who is already believed to be a coyote by his townspeople for his quickness in transporting the mail by foot from the village to the capital (166). Hilario thinks the coyote he sees looks familiar but dismisses the thought as foolishness (210). The muleteer will not accept the truth of *nahualismo* until he discovers in the capital that Nicho, who left the village before him, has never arrived with the mail: "Señor Nicho and the coyote he ran across up on María Tecún ridge were the same person: he had him just a few paces away, he had had the impression it was a person, a person he knew" (221). This last realization is overwhelming for Hilario, who finally accepts the full weight of his culture's stories: their basis in truth. The veracity of cultural stories makes Hilario accept his Indian heritage and its communal oral tradition. His epiphany is underscored by his later discussion with Benito Ramos, the former soldier under Colonel Godoy. Ramos constantly reminds Sacayón of his Native heritage by calling him "Half-breed" and lectures him on the superiority of the Indians' military and economic methods, as well as their moral beliefs (232-237). By the time Hilario Sacayón returns to his village, he is a changed man: he rarely drinks, and he never tells the story of Nicho Aquino, coyote-postman (266), understanding that his individual testimony would be a sacrilege against what is already a culturally-accepted truth. Hilario's ideological revolt is remembering and accepting his cultural heritage; he is no longer an individual storyteller, or "an Indian who forgets" his connection to community.

The final colonizing ideology that is defeated through Native spirituality in *Men of Maize* is patriarchal supremacy. Obviously a culture of machismo gives preferential treatment to the male, the seat of power. There are a number of examples of subservient women in the text, exemplifying Deborah Cohn's assertion that in Spanish America, the "main function [of women] is to produce legitimate male heirs" (123). As the intended bride of Machojón, Candelaria Reinoso is the best example of a servant to patriarchy. Machojón clearly enjoyed the role of provider during their courtship as he fondly remembered having to "untie the knot in his handkerchief many times to take out the pesos for all Candelaria Reinoso's fripperies and tidbits" (31). When Candelaria learns of her suitor's death, she is selling meat at her roadside butcher stand, "[w]ith a blood sausage in her left hand and the knife she would use to cut it from the string in her right hand" (34). As soon as she learns of Machojón's fate, she cuts the sausage from the string. This scene suggests sacrifice, particularly since Candelaria is surrounded by animal blood. In ancient Mayan culture, blood for sacrifice could be drawn from any body part, but the most sacred source of blood from a male was his penis (Schele and Freidel 89). Candelaria symbolically castrates her beloved and then sacrifices herself by choosing a virginal life. In fact, when the reader encounters her later in the text, she still holds out hope for Machojón's return despite the many years that have passed (243). Reinoso explains why her life ended with Machojón's: "A man can be many things, a woman must only be the true image of the man she loves" (247). Hence, a woman in a Hispanic patriarchal society does not exist independent of a man. In this case, the firefly wizards' attack on Machojón early in the novel is a revolt against a colonizing ideology as well as a revolt against the politics of colonization as discussed previously. A patriarchal lineage ends through Machojón's death when both a male and female participant in the system are rendered impotent.

Another woman who would seem to represent the oppression of a female in a Hispanic patriarchal society, but surreptitiously does not, is María Tecún. Though Yic is angry for her desertion, the women of Pisigüilito feel sorry for her since she is always pregnant and has to take care of a blind man (107). Gerald Martin explains, “For these women María Tecún is the very model of a wife and mother in a patriarchal society: well-behaved, long-suffering, hard-working, silent, and pale: the Virgin of Sorrows” (Notes 349). Yet, María Tecún has left Goyo Yic for a reason unknown to anyone until she reveals it at the novel’s end: they kept producing so many children that she feared a day would come when they could not take care of all of them or each other (301). María Tecún is not a servant of patriarchy; instead, she is an independent woman who makes decisions based on what she believes is right for herself and for her family. If wealth is defined in terms of offspring in traditional Mayan culture, the novel seems to suggest that María Tecún is aware of the cultural imbalance that has resulted from capitalism, and she will not return to Pisigüilito with Goyo Yic and continue procreating until the traditional maize-growing cycle has been restored. Supporting this interpretation of María Tecún’s strong and resistant nature is her connection to two important Latin American female figures.

First, there is the historical context of the woman named María Tecún. Asturias based his fictional character on a legend about a Quiché Maya woman during Pedro de Alvarado’s conquest of Guatemala. The woman was widowed in the battle for Gumarcaah and was supposed to marry one of the conquistadors, whom she viewed as one of her husband’s murderers. Instead of marrying this man, she ran away and eventually went to the mountain, Pixababah, to pray that her people would no longer suffer. When she discovered she had been followed by the Spaniard who intended to marry her, she climbed to the top of the mountain and jumped off “while letting out a blood-curdling shriek of defiance” (Prieto 271-272). In *Men of*

Maize, Pixababah is known as María Tecún ridge. The rock at the end of the novel, which is purported to be María Tecún, is revealed by the firefly wizard to actually be the La Piojosa Grande, wife of Gaspar Ilóm (Asturias 305). Thus, Asturias conflates María Tecún, the fictional character, María Tecún, the symbol of Native resistance, and La Piojosa Grande, the moon goddess, suggesting a particularly feminine Indigenous revolutionary power. Also, this layering of female characters forecasts the return to the natural maize-growing cycle, since La Piojosa Grande, carries her son, the maize, on her back (305).

Gerald Martin claims that María Tecún's rock represents the loss of tribal culture under a history of colonization. He suggests that "[the] matriarchal civilization lies buried beneath the cultures built on top of it" (Notes 368), connecting the Mayans to other world cultures including the Greeks. Though this is an interesting theory, Mayan culture was traditionally patriarchal (Schele and Friedel 84). Art found at the ruins of the northern Mayan capital of Chichén Itzá, however, does suggest that, for a period at least, leadership positions proceeded from maternal lines, unlike the patrilineal tendency of prior rulers (360). One glyph in the Temple of Warriors represents a woman who "is probably either the matriarch of the principal sodality or a representative of the Moon Goddess Ix-Chel, also known as Lady Rainbow, consort of the high god Itzamna and the patroness of weaving, childbirth, sorcery, and medicine" (366). These glyphs are evidence that even if Mayan culture was patriarchal, it was a different kind of patriarchy than that of the conquering Spaniards since the latter group's macho leaders would not be open to sharing power with women. Consequently, the revolts against a patriarchal ideology in the novel are specific to a Western European patriarchy that is entrenched in Christian beliefs.

The other female figure to whom María Tecún is connected is the Christian Mary, as suggested by how she endures suffering, works tirelessly, and embraces maternalism. In Latin

America, Mary is most strongly connoted as the Virgin of Guadalupe who appeared to Juan Diego, a servant and new Christian convert, in 1531. Diego convinced the Bishop to build a church for the Virgin of Guadalupe on the hill called Tepeyac outside of today's Mexico City (Randall 188). Though this is the most widely known version of the story, Ana Castillo points out that there is a different, Indigenous interpretation of the event:

According to the *Nican Mopohua* [a Nahuatl text], Juan Diego's Nahuatl name before he was baptized was Cuauhtlatohóac. In English this would translate to He Who Speaks Like an Eagle. In Nahuatl, an intrinsically symbolic language, the eagle represented the sun, and the sun was a god. There existed a nobility of elders who were of the eagle. Such a name suggests that Juan Diego, although among the humblest of the new society created by New Spain, may have been considered an elder of his people. (Introduction xviii-xix)

Not only did Don Diego have a dual identity as a colonized subject, but so did the Virgin. A number of scholars and writers argue that the Virgin of Guadalupe is a manifestation of the Aztec goddess, Coatlicue, mother of Huitzilopochtli, the sun God.¹⁰ In this role, the Blessed Mother subverts the structures of power and has been a symbol of the struggle against oppression since her appearance to Juan Diego. Margaret Randall calls her a “guerrilla fighter” who “has graced the flags of liberation armies: from a doomed resistance against colonialism's voracious tentacles to Villa's and Zapata's insurgent troops during the Mexican Revolution” (120). María Tecún, then, is a palimpsest of female figures: mothers and goddesses signaling revolution against the status quo and the coming of a new era.

Like *Men of Maize*, Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Almanac of the Dead* portrays revolt against the political, economic, and ideological systems that resulted from European colonization of the Americas. The political revolution of *Almanac of the Dead* stems from the premise that the land was stolen from Native Americans. For Silko, “dispossession brought about alienation from the land and from the realm of spirits, the most damaging form of disempowerment for

native peoples” (Yuknavitch 108). This echoes Memmi’s suggestion that the worst aspect of colonialism is the removal of the colonized person from his or her history and community, resulting in a loss of cultural memory (103). Silko’s almanac is a fictional counterpart to the four existing Mayan codices. It is important to note that though the Mayan codices had similarities to the Western concept of an almanac—a yearly calendar that also contains astronomical and meteorological information—they were markedly different in their relationship with the sacred. Schele and Freidel explain that Western culture separates physical reality and spiritual reality, the former according scientific principles and the latter according to religious principles. The Maya, on the other hand, “lived in a world that defined the physical world as the material manifestation of the spiritual, and the spiritual as the essence of the material” (65). This worldview is reflected in their codices in which “the patterns of time, like those of the physical world, had form both on the cosmic and the human scale” (84). The struggle over the land, the basis for the revolutionary tactics of *Almanac of the Dead*, is intensified by a connection with the sacred: “Ancient prophecies foretold the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. The ancient prophecies also foretell the disappearance of all things European” (Silko frontispiece). In addition to the Mayan codices, *Almanac of the Dead* also relies on the Mayan *Chilam Balam*, a colonial-era text “named after a famous Maya prophet . . . who lived during the years leading up to the coming of the Spaniards and supposedly foretold their arrival” (*Encounter*, Introduction 1). Silko’s almanac predicts the future, envisioning ““civil strife, civil crisis, civil war”” (*Almanac* 756), the great battle for the Americas in which Native Americans are the victors.

The motif of hero twins provides an important backdrop to the political, economic, and ideological revolution of *Almanac of the Dead*. One set of twins comprises the sisters Lecha and Zeta, mestiza women with Yaqui ancestry living in Tucson, AZ (114). Lecha has a shamanistic

gift of premonition, and Zeta is a warrior. Like these two women, the other set of twins, the Chiapas Mayans, El Feo and Tacho (Wacah), comprises a shaman and a warrior. The prominence of twins in the novel can be traced to stories from both Pueblo and Mayan cosmologies. According to Pueblo traditions, Masewi and Uyuyewe are twin war gods, sons of Yellow Woman and the sun (Ruoff 10; Scarberry-Garcia 18). Though the twins embark on many exploits, they are celebrated for their roles as slayers of the monsters that threaten the tribe (Ruoff 10). Both sets of hero twins in *Almanac of the Dead* are fighting to overthrow “monsters”: the power structures of European colonialism, a centuries-old threat to Native Americans.

According to Schele and Freidel, the core of Mayan cosmology is opposition and twinning (416). Silko’s inclusion of two sets of revolutionary twins in *Almanac* is also an allusion to the two sets of hero twins in the *Popol Vuh*, One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu, and the sons of One Hunahpu, Hunahpu and Xbalanque. The first set of twins is killed by the Lords of Xibalba, and the second set defeats the Lords of the Xibalba, ushering in the era of the dawn and the traditional maize-growing cycle (Tedlock 35-46). Girard points out that many societies view twins as threatening to the social structure, and very often, one may be put to death in order to prevent the possibility of violence or social upheaval (56-56). In fact, El Feo and Tacho are separated as children, both for their protection from sorcerers and so that they will not be accused of sorcery themselves, yet they come together as adults (Silko, *Almanac* 469). Paralleling this reunification, Lecha returns to Tucson to live with her sister Zeta after years of traveling around the country as a psychic for hire. The hero twins of the novel must be joined in order for the Native American revolution to occur.

Girard argues that twins may also be seen as harbingers of positive change (58). Like Asturias's connection of Gaspar Ilóm to Hunahpu, Silko links her characters to those in the *Popol Vuh* in order to suggest the coming upheaval of social systems. She intentionally pairs the opposites of shaman and warrior within each of her sets of twins following the Mayan tradition of pairing oppositions "as metaphors for the concept of change, the replacement of one thing by another" (Schele and Freidel 417). Silko also plays with other oppositions: by creating one set of hero twins as female, and the other as male, Silko rewrites the traditional male hero twin stories from Native American traditions. Since Bhabha's third space can be applied to multiple sites of enunciative splitting within modernistic binaries, her pairing of female and male hero twins provides an additional layer of revolt in the novel. *Almanac of the Dead* oscillates between male and female figures of power, a subversion of Western European patriarchy and an elevation of the matrilineal systems of numerous Native American tribes, including Silko's own Laguna Pueblo (Allen, "Does Euro-Think" 11).

Zeta is one character in *Almanac of the Dead* who is exceptionally invested in the political battle for the land. For Zeta, warrior and hero twin, "War had been declared the first day the Spaniards set foot on Native American soil, and the same war had been going on ever since: the war was for the continents called the Americas" (133). Zeta has spent her life finding ways to break as many of the laws of the Euro-American governments as she can. Her individualized revolt has consisted of smuggling guns and drugs across the U.S.-Mexican border (178), and she swears "each shipment of contraband [is] a victory against the United States government" (629). Though breaking laws is a significant resistance in itself, Zeta's contribution to the Native American revolution is more concrete: providing weapons and ammunition for Central American insurgents (179). Zeta's political revolts spring from her

connections to the spirituality of the almanac. Old Yoeme, Zeta and Lecha's Yaqui grandmother, had passed on the old notebooks containing the almanac to her granddaughters. Zeta received the notebook containing drawings and prophecies involving snakes because she had learned to communicate with the reptiles as a child. Yoeme deems the snake notebooks the key to deciphering the mysteries of the almanac. One of the excerpts, from a section entitled "Spirit Snake's Message" claims that "this world is about to end" (135). It is Zeta's belief in this prophecy that inspires her lifework of individualized political revolt.

Another political revolutionary is one of Zeta's mentors in the smuggling business, a Yaqui man named Calabazas, technically an illegal immigrant, who has spent his life transporting goods from his childhood village in the Sonoran mountains of Mexico to his home along the Santa Cruz river in Tucson (237). Calabazas's primary commodity is marijuana, though during the Second World War, he branched out to truck tires and copper wire (238). Unlike Zeta, he refuses to run guns across the border. His argument is self-contradictory: he wants to avoid the politics of guns, but he believes that every successful smuggling operation is a victory in "'the war that had never ended,' the war for the land" (178). Though Zeta believes that Calabazas must eventually accept the politics of his smuggling operation, what she cannot see is his view of a double marginalization by European colonization. Calabazas's Yaqui tribe had been divided into those who had taken shelter in the Sonoran mountains and those who had stayed down in the valleys when the whites came to their land. The family into which Calabazas marries is Yaqui and has farmed land on the Santa Cruz River for centuries. Separation of Native peoples from their tribal lands is but one aspect of the divisiveness of the U.S.-Mexico border (Davidson, Walton and Andrews 149). Calabazas's family is bitter not only about Spanish colonization but also about the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-

American War in the 19th century. It was supposed to “[guarantee] protection for all land titles granted prior to the arrival of the U.S., but the treaty had been violated again and again by whites greedy for the best land” (Silko, *Almanac* 237). Many Native and border scholars concur that the relationship between the United States and land that once belonged to Native Americans and Mexicans can be classified as occupation (Yuknavitch 99) as a result of Manifest Destiny and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.¹¹ Because Calabazas and other Native people perceive their land to be occupied and wrongfully divided, border crossing itself becomes a revolutionary act. As Calabazas explains, “We don’t believe in boundaries. Borders. Nothing like that. We are here thousands of years before the first whites. We are here before maps or quit claims. We know where we belong on this earth. We have always moved freely. North-south. East-west. We pay no attention to what isn’t real. Imaginary lines” (Silko 216). His tirade is indicative of the controversy surrounding the act of crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, a construct which José David Saldívar describes as “a paradigm of crossing, resistance, and circulation” (xiii). Gloria Anzaldúa argues that at the U.S.-Mexico border, “the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture” (3). Viewed in this light, border crossing becomes another manifestation of Bhabha’s performative third space in which new cultural meaning is generated by transgressing the boundary between a polarized United States and Mexico.

Like Zeta, Calabazas’s spiritual views have been informed by his Yaqui ancestors: they had holed up in the Sonoran mountains during his childhood to escape “the blood-drinking Beast” (223). This reference ties Calabazas’s Yaqui beliefs to those of Yoeme, Zeta, and Lecha. According to Silko’s almanac, the current era is known as “Reign of Death-Eye Dog” and is a period of power for the “Destroyers” or “blood worshippers.” Yoeme had taught Zeta and Lecha

that “the people who hated sorcery and bloodshed had fled north to escape the cataclysm prophesied when the ‘blood worshippers’ of Europe met the ‘blood worshippers’ of the Americas. Montezuma and Cortés had been made for one another” (Silko 570). As in *Men of Maize*, the text suggests a connection between the blood sacrifices of Mesoamerican tribes and the conquering Europeans. Unlike his ancestors, Calabazas chooses to leave the mountains and spends his life fighting the destructive hegemonic power structures (the “Destroyers”) through his black market entrepreneurship and illegal border crossings.

Another example of political revolt in *Almanac of the Dead* is the march from Central America to the U.S. border, led by El Feo and Tacho (321). El Feo has spent his life dedicated to preparations for the revolution that will retake the Americas for its Native peoples (470). He believes that the revolution is inevitable because it has been predicted in the prophecies of his people. For El Feo, the revolution will occur at the proper matrix of time and space—no sooner—because time itself is sacred: “The days, years, and centuries were spirit beings who traveled the universe, returning endlessly. The Spirits of the Night and the Spirits of the Day would take care of the people” (523). Similarly, Menardo, a Mexican businessman, describes how his Indian grandfather had shared with him his belief in the sacredness of time: “[t]he only true gods were all the days in the Long Count, and no single epoch or time of a world was vast enough or deep enough to call itself God alone. All the ancestors had understood nothing stayed fixed in the universe” (257-258). The Long Count was the Mayan calendar that measured eras and “counted whole days accumulated since day zero, which they . . . conceived of as the beginning of the current manifestation of the cosmos, the fourth version of creation to exist” (Schele and Freidel 81). This view of the sacredness of time and its spatial nature stands in stark contrast to the linear progressivism of modern Western thought. El Feo’s name can be read as

metonymic of this coming revolution in which the gods of time “return” to the people: his mother names him “ugly” to protect him from the repercussions of his extreme handsomeness. He is both adjectives in one man, a third space between two poles of human attractiveness. Like El Feo, the revolution will be a convergence, this one of time and space.

When the revolution to retake the lands of the Americas begins, El Feo and Tacho lead the way. As the novel progresses, there are reports of local uprisings by Native peoples throughout Central America (332). By the novel’s end, thousands of people have begun to follow El Feo and Tacho in a journey northward according to the message of the macaws: “if the people carried no weapons, then the homeless would have land; the tribes of the Americas would retake the continents from pole to pole” (711). Landslides block the Mexican federal police from diverting the Native people from their goal, suggesting that they are under the protection of spirits: “Those too sick or weak to travel said the mountain spirits were shaking the earth and would not stop until the white man’s cities were destroyed” (710). Nature itself is on the side of the hero twins suggesting a condemnation of industrialized Western society.

Angelita La Escapía is involved with the political revolution of *Almanac of the Dead* through her association with El Feo and Tacho; however, Angelita believes in a Native-based Marxism that does not support El Feo’s nonviolent tactics. Her guerilla training has taught her that even if the marchers are peaceful, governments will stop at nothing to maintain their power (711). To protect the movement, Angelita has collected money and weapons from supporters around the world for the People’s Army (310); additionally, she makes contact with Zeta in Tucson to acquire shoulder-mounted missile launchers. She believes the people will have to defend themselves against government attacks. In contrast to the twins, “Angelita heard from spirits too—only her spirits were furious” (712). Silko has paired another opposition in her

portrayal of Angelita: a Marxist guerrilla fighter working in conjunction with the peaceful hero twins. Considering the complementary nature of oppositions in Mayan cosmology, Silko's pairing suggests that, though spiritual beliefs are necessary for Native peoples to retake the land, they must be girded with military firepower.

Another Native American involved in political revolt is the Barefoot Hopi, a world-renowned spiritual leader of oppressed peoples. His first revolutionary act is to shoot down a helicopter carrying Beverly Hills tourists who come to observe the Snake Dance at Oraibi (617), an ancient summer ceremony largely devoted to prayers for rain (Udall 23). Since much of the ritual is closed to outsiders and involves placing rattlesnakes in the dancer's mouths (26), it has long been fascinating to Euro-Americans. The ceremony became a popular outing for ethnologists and curiosity-seekers in the latter part of the nineteenth century and photographers and film-makers in the early twentieth century (24-32). The vast numbers of visitors and their transgressions during the ceremony have caused numerous conflicts between the tribe and those whose interest is outside of the realm of the sacred. In recent years, the Snake Dance has been closed to visitors (40); therefore, the Barefoot Hopi's revolt is one of many in a long struggle against the colonizing culture to preserve the sanctity of the event. During his stint in prison, the Barefoot Hopi found his philosophic dictum: it is simply to wait. He believes that "a day would come as had not been seen in five thousand years. On this day, a conjunction would occur; everywhere at once, spontaneously, the prisoners, the slaves, and the dispossessed would rise up. The urge to rise up would come to them through their dreams. All at once, all over the world, police and soldiers would be outnumbered" (617). The Hopi's philosophy of waiting depends on a belief in the sacredness of time, as does El Feo's. In order to prepare for the day of revolution, the Barefoot Hopi has traveled the world garnering political and financial support for Native

Americans; his most sympathetic supporters are African nations whose people have already thrown off the chains of European colonialism (616). Silko intentionally connects the colonization of Africa and the Americas: her novel suggests that the pan-African resistance movements which led to the independence of the majority of the continent by the 1960s (Oliver 227) can be emulated by Native Americans of all tribes, resulting in intercontinental decolonization.

All of these separate insurgents come together near the novel's end at The International Holistic Healers Convention. At this event, it is clear that if a Native American revolution occurs in the Americas, it will be supported by many non-Indigenous people, or "Indian lovers" (Silko, *Almanac* 709). In fact, a "busload of Europeans" (709) is among the masses following El Feo and Tacho. This revolution, then, is culturally inclusive, as evidenced by its leaders' willingness to unite with a number of diverse groups. One group is led by Roy (Rambo) and Clinton, two Vietnam veterans, one European American and one African American, who are training a Homeless Army. This army is Roy's brainchild, comprising veterans and other dispossessed individuals living in cardboard houses in a Tucson arroyo. Roy's goal is to lead his army in an uprising against a government that has forgotten them (395). In order to do this, he locates money and shelter for his men (401) and creates individual units within the army (396). As American and Mexican societies erupt in chaos at the novel's end, Roy's unarmed army rises up against the Tucson SWAT teams that raid the homeless camps (741). This event supports the Barefoot Hopi's belief that all dispossessed people would rise up together since the Homeless Army's revolt coincides with the revolutionary tactics of Native Americans in the text.

Another non-Native American organization linked to the revolution is Green Vengeance, an eco-terrorist group. They make a surprise appearance at The International Holistic Healers

Convention as a guest of the Barefoot Hopi. They have come to show footage of six members of their faction blowing up Glen Canyon Dam. This fictional event has occurred in the novel's recent history and has been attributed to "structural failure" (727) by the federal government in an attempt to cover up the eco-terrorists' success. The destruction of Glen Canyon dam is a tip of the hat by Silko to well-known Southwestern writer and curmudgeon, Edward Abbey, whose 1975 novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* has become a classic of environmentalist literature. The "monkeywrenchers"¹² in Abbey's novel successfully blow up the bridge that connects Utah and Arizona at Glen Canyon Dam, but they do not blow up the dam itself. The dam, however, is their goal, memorably detailed by the character Seldom Seen Smith's prayer for God's assistance in the matter: "Remember the cataracts in Forty-Mile Canyon? Well, they flooded out about half of them too. And part of the Escalante's gone now—Davis Gulch, Willow Canyon, Gregory Natural Bridge, Ten-Mile. Listen, are you listenin' to me? There's somethin' you can do for me, God. How about a little old *pre-cision*-type earthquake right under this dam? Okay?" (Abbey 38). Glen Canyon Dam is a particularly potent symbol of colonization that links environmentalists and Native Americans because its creation flooded numerous sacred sites in the vicinity of Rainbow Bridge. The destruction of Glen Canyon dam and the freeing of the Colorado River is a revolutionary tactic that would certainly reduce the continuing influx of Euro-Americans to more desolate areas of the West since the dam is a provider of hydroelectric power for Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming (Harpman 392).

By connecting diverse ethnic and political groups to *Almanac of the Dead*'s prophesied Native American revolution, Silko achieves a pan-tribal and transnational effect. The people marching northward with El Feo and Tacho are of Mayan and European descent; the militaristic revolutionaries readying themselves with guns and bombs are also of Native American and

European descent. Silko attempts to widen the Native American ideological net to include people of any ethnicity who are willing to overturn European and Euro-American physical, economic, and ideological colonization in the continents called the Americas. Thus, the fates of various dispossessed groups are linked together through an underpinning of Indigenous American spirituality. The inclusive nature of this revolution is affirmed by Clinton, also an African American rights activist, who realizes “[nothing] could be black only or brown only or white only anymore” (747) reminiscent of Edward Said’s claim that “[no] one today is purely one thing” (*Culture* 336). Though this approach is laudable for its magnitude, it is also problematic because Silko accepts the binary opposition of “us vs. them”—Native American political, economic, and ideological systems vs. European political, economic, and ideological systems—invented by European colonization. The term “Native American” can be just as troublesome as “Indian” since it is used to lump varied tribal cultures together. For example, grounding the revolution in the cosmology of Mesoamerican tribal peoples privileges their spiritualities over those of the many other tribal peoples who have come to be known as Native American. This concern is reflected by nationalist Native scholars Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Craig Womack when they urge Native authors to write from their own tribal traditions (Womack, *Red* 14-15).

As in *Men of Maize*, the faith-based political revolts of *Almanac of the Dead* are linked to economic revolts. The European systems of capitalism and Marxism are brought to task by the Native political movement, though Marxism fares better due to its communal aspects. Bridgett O’Meara points out that the novel reminds its readers “there is nothing particularly new about efforts to resist the violence of capital, as it currently takes (neo)colonial and (neo)imperial forms” (65). Capitalism can be tied to the bloodletting rituals of ancient Mesoamerican

religions, and sacrifice is a theme in *Almanac of the Dead*, as it is in *Men of Maize*, whether it is the blood sacrifices of the ancient Aztec “Destroyers,” the symbolic sacrifices of Christian worshippers eating the body of their God, or the symbolic sacrifices of capitalists who exchange human labor and natural resources for wealth (O’Meara 39). Two of the more heartless capitalists in the novel die ironic deaths at the hands of revolutionaries, suggesting that the symbolic sacrifices of capitalism are still a form of blood-letting in a society where the wealthy oppress the poor.

One of these capitalists is Menardo, whose shame for his Native heritage has led to overcompensation in his desire to assimilate into the dominant culture (Silko, *Almanac* 259-260). Because he is taunted at school for his flat nose, the young Menardo cuts off relations with the grandfather who tells him stories based in Mayan cosmology (258-259). As an adult he pursues wealth and social status, marrying into an upper-class family descended from Spanish conquistadors (269) and then hiring an architect to build him a “shining white palace” (499) as a symbol of his economic superiority and preference for “whiteness.” When he has an affair with the female architect (284), he sees her as yet another acquisition. The clearest indicator that Menardo has become a man of power is his role in El Grupo, a secret coalition between Menardo, the Tuxtla Gutiérrez police chief, a Mexican general, and the governor of Chiapas (330), suggesting the marriage of capitalism and government. Menardo’s business as a simple insurance salesman has ballooned over the years to include private security forces, equipped by a Tucson arms dealer, another of the novel’s covert gun-smuggling operations (332). Menardo’s ironic death comes when he asks Tacho, his chauffeur, to shoot him as a demonstration of a body armor vest he has acquired from another Tucson smuggler, Mafioso Sonny Blue (503). Menardo had hired Tacho, despite his hatred of Indians, because he has “special abilities to interpret

dreams” (483). Tacho knows that Menardo’s death is coming from hearing about his violent dreams, but the death is an accident; the body armor has failed, representing the inability of capitalistic enterprise to protect Euro-American culture from the Indigenous insurgents (503). Menardo’s death can be interpreted as a sacrifice, according to Native spirituality as represented in *Almanac*. Tacho explains to Menardo the history and need for blood sacrifice:

Blood and its powers had been misused by sorcerers. Long before Europeans ever appeared, the people had already disagreed over the blood and the killing. Those who went North refused to feed the spirits blood anymore. Those tribes and people who had migrated North fled the Destroyers who delighted in blood. Spirits were not satisfied with just any blood. The blood of peasants and the poor was too weak to nourish the spirits. The spirits must be fed with the blood of the rich and the royal. God the Father himself had accepted only Jesus as a worthy sacrifice. (336-337)

This passage is noteworthy for two reasons. First, Tacho, a Mayan from southern Mexico, shares the views of Yoeme and Calabazas’s people, Yaquis from northern Mexico, suggesting the connection between cultures as a result of Silko’s traveling almanac.¹³ Also, the sacrifice of Menardo conflates rich capitalists with royalty, signifying that the Native American revolution of *Almanac of the Dead* is more about class struggle than cultural struggle. In fact, many of the diverse ethnic groups involved in the novel’s revolutionary tactics struggle against classism, especially the Army of the Homeless.

The other capitalist in *Almanac of the Dead* who dies an ironic death is Trigg, a paraplegic Tucson realtor whose goal is to become rich from a biomaterials industry that he believes will eventually help him walk again (389). Silko describes Trigg’s unethical business practices:

Trigg was buying downtown [Tucson] block by shabby block. Trigg had started out with ratty bungalows near the university, and Trigg had got one of the houses rezoned to allow Blood Plasma International to lease the building from Trigg. Naturally Trigg was Blood Plasma International. Trigg bragged . . . that blood-plasma donor centers busted neighborhoods and drove property prices

down without moving in blacks or Mexicans. With property prices down, Trigg came in and cleaned up, buying most property at forty cents on the dollar. (379)

Though Trigg clearly lacks ethics, his crimes are much worse: he is also a sociopath and murderer. Roy, leader of the Homeless Army and Trigg's night security man at the plasma donor center, discovers through another employee that their boss is also running an organ transplant business. Trigg "harvests" his merchandise from unlucky homeless men and women who accept rides, drugs, and sex from him before he kills them without regret to obtain their "biomaterials." For Trigg, this is morally acceptable since he believes his victims are "human debris" (444), embracing the tenet of Enlightenment-era scientific racism in which certain cultural groups are superior over others (Kant 64). Silko drives home the dangers of such an ideology through Serlo's vision of Alternative Earth modules floating above the planet inhabited only by pure-blooded Europeans, the novel's most extreme vision of a deluded racial utopia (*Almanac* 542). When Roy discovers the truth about Trigg's business, he determines the biomaterial industry's mass murder of itinerants will be a rallying cry for his homeless army (445). As the revolution overtakes the Americas at the novel's end, Trigg's dead body is found in one of his company's organ freezers (750). He is another capitalist whose actions are turned against him by the Native revolution. Both Trigg and Menardo have been perverted by capitalism, so absorbed by acquiring material goods that they have no concept of humans as both material and spiritual beings. As Janet Powers argues, "Silko seems intent on showing her readers . . . that the Eurocentric society, and those who imitate them, are lost in a wilderness of destruction. In their frantic pursuit of capital, spiritual connections with each other and with the earth have been abandoned" (266). Like Menardo, Trigg is another sacrificed capitalist. Tacho's explanation of sacrificial protocol suggests that Trigg's death is desired by the spirits

who have been offered the blood of far too many poor and indigent individuals at the hands of this rich man.

Marxism also comes under attack in the novel. Angelita La Escapía is incensed by the manipulation of Marx's theories by those who simply want power, criticizing Stalin and Mao, as well as the Cuban leaders of the Marxist school in Mexico City, from which she graduates at the top of her class (315-316). Marx appeals to Angelita because he

had never forgotten the indigenous peoples of the Americas, or of Africa. Marx had recited the crimes of slaughter and slavery committed by the European colonials who had been sent by their capitalist slave-masters to secure the raw materials of capitalism—human flesh and blood. With the wealth of the New World, the European slave-masters and monarchs had been able to buy weapons and armies to keep down the uprisings of the landless people all across Europe. (315)

Stalinists and Maoists are despicable to Angelita because they let their own people starve, an unforgivable trespass in a communal economy (316). Angelita leads a revolt against the Cuban Marxists, even though they have trained the Indians in guerilla warfare, because they do not accept any history of oppression outside of European totalitarianism (519). Angelita's argument is much like that of Creek/Cherokee Metis activist Ward Churchill who contends that "through wide-eyed participation in Indian liberation struggles on Indian terms Marxists will learn much about themselves with which to alter and enrich their own doctrines and traditions . . . and I extend a basic human faith that such found knowledge can be put to use in better assisting the process of decolonizing Indian nations" (202). In *Almanac of the Dead*, Bartolomeo, one of the leaders of the Cuban Marxist school and Angelita's former lover, is tried for "crimes against history" (531). His elitism has hindered his ability to acknowledge the history of revolution by Indigenous Americans, and at his trial, Angelita recites a meticulous timeline of that history, ending with the following statistics:

1500—72 million people lived in North, Central, and South America
1600—10 million people live in North, Central, and South America.
1500—25 million people live in Mexico.
1600—1 million people live in Mexico. (530)

Though the number of indigenous inhabitants of the American continents has been a subject of debate¹⁴ since Columbus attempted a census on Hispaniola in 1496 (Charles C. Mann 43), Angelita's statistics are supported by anthropological research, resulting in what she terms "the Native American holocaust" (Silko *Almanac* 530).¹⁵ Bartolomeo is hung by the People's Army as a symbolic revolt against an economic system that does not account for Indigenous beliefs (532), yet another blood sacrifice of a person of privilege.

Like *Men of Maize*, *Almanac of the Dead* represents not only political and economic revolution; it also depicts ideological revolt against European colonizing efforts. The ideologies of patriarchal supremacy, Christian hegemony, and the metanarrative¹⁶ of history are overturned in the novel. One ideological revolt against patriarchal supremacy is Trigg's murder; this scene also opens the door to criticism of the text's problematic representation of homosexuality. Trigg's exploitation of homeless men—taking their organs after engaging in sex with them—is only one example of abusive homosexuality in the novel. Beaufrey's controlling relationships with Eric and David are chilly experiments designed to watch both men suffer from the intense emotional pain he causes them: his treatment leads to Eric's suicide (58) and David's self-destruction (565). Silko has been criticized for her portrayal of homosexuality in *Almanac of the Dead* because, as Janet St. Clair claims, "[t]he novel is admittedly full of savage white homosexual men who prey on weak and unsuspecting victims to feed their insatiable lusts for sex, money, and power" (207). Despite this criticism, St. Clair maintains that Silko's purpose is to underscore the egocentrism, phallocentrism, and misogyny inherent in Western society by creating characters which the critic deems "cannibal queers" (207). Using homosexuality as a

metaphor in this way is not palatable, though as St. Clair argues, the text is not meant to be palatable: it is meant to be apocalyptic and shocking. Trigg, in particular, proves this point as a man who is paralyzed from the waist down yet is obsessed with his penis which he forces into erections to prove his masculinity. Ironically, his penis is a false pretense, a sign of absent virility, “hard and dead as a dildo” (659). In the context of the novel’s apocalyptic vision, he is a symbol of those contemporary Euro-American men who, as Silko seems to suggest, tragically know “they are only half men and must strive mightily to conceal so shameful a truth with hollow bravado and sham masculinity” (St. Clair 213). Though Silko’s representations of homosexuality are meant to be a harsh critique of an oppressive Western patriarchy, perhaps even intending to turn scientific racism against itself by portraying white men as barbaric, her depictions buy into modernist gender binaries, perpetuating stereotypes of male homosexuality. Silko might have taken a different tack, drawing from a variety of Native American views of homosexuality since *Almanac of the Dead*’s revolution is pan-tribal and transnational.

Anthropologist Brian Joseph Gilley contends that “historical Native ideas about gender did not employ the gender-binary, bodily-sex-equals-gender view commonly found in European society. Rather, male- and female-bodied persons had a myriad of gender roles that they fulfilled within their society” (8-9). The Diné, for example, use the term *nádleehí* to describe individuals who self-identify as both male and female (Epple 268). In a seminar given at Diné College, anthropologist and Navajo culture instructor Harry Walters discussed how homosexuality was traditionally accepted in Diné culture and associated with the arts. Regarding Inuit culture, anthropologist Saladin d’Anglure proposes the term “third gender” to represent the instability of sexual identity; this mediating space between sexualities represents the site of shamanistic power (237-238). Unfortunately, as Gilley points out, gender diversity and same-sex relations were

both repressed by European colonization: “Indeed, ‘sodomy’ and ‘transvetitism’ among indigenous populations became a central reason to justify the conquest of North America. By contrasting Native licentiousness against their own virtuous Catholicism, the Spanish convinced themselves of the divine nature of their violence against Native peoples and the gender different” (13). It has only been in recent years that Euro-American society has begun to accept the idea of gender roles as constructed rather than biologically determined, thanks to the work of critics like Judith Butler who argues that gender is performed as “a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration” (“Bodily” 94). Silko’s portrayal of homosexuality in *Almanac of the Dead* cracks the foundation of her own revolutionary agenda: she could have used tribal-based third spaces to resist the Western binary opposition of gender, in much the same way that she created a third space of enunciation by using Mesoamerican sacred texts to reinterpret Euro-American colonization. Instead, her portrayal of homosexuality denies the historic gender diversity of Native cultures, reinforcing the dualistic view of gender enforced through Christian hegemony.

Another subversion of the supremacy of patriarchy comes when Zeta executes Greenlee, her arms dealer. Though her plan is to kill him because of his involvement in putting down Central American Native American insurrections, his death is ironically timed after he tells Zeta a racist and sexist joke. Zeta knows that telling such jokes is Greenlee’s way of testing his customers: “His theory had been that anybody who got huffy or hot while he told his nigger or beaner jokes would eventually try to cut his throat” (Silko, *Almanac* 703). Zeta has outsmarted Greenlee for years by going along with his jokes and flirtations, despite her hatred for him, and he has sold her guns without questions about her business practices. Just before Greenlee

reaches the punch line of his joke about a well-endowed Indian chief with an overactive libido being interviewed by a shocked Barbara Walters, Zeta realizes that “everything essential to the world the white man saw was there in one dirty joke; she had laughed again because Freud had accused *women* of penis envy” (704). Zeta kills Greenlee, thereby breaking a key link in the chain of arms used to fight *against* the Native American revolution and ridding the world of one more racist, sexist white male. The outcome of their personal conflict can be read as a larger revolt against patriarchy by matriarchy, a primary cultural divergence between many Native American societies and the European societies who colonized them.¹⁷

Another European ideology that is overturned by the text is the hegemony of Christianity. Three different characters speak to the corruption of Christianity and its exclusive nature. Yoeme claims that the Spanish Inquisition proved the instability of the colonizing Europeans’ religion: “even idiots can understand a church that tortures and kills is a church that can no longer heal” (718). Both Mosca and Angelita rail against spiritual assimilation, each separately realizing the goal had been to quell Indigenous beliefs (519, 623). Angelita describes how the nuns had misunderstood the Natives’ religions: “The nuns had taught the children that the Morning Star, Quetzalcoatl, was really Lucifer, the Devil God had thrown out of heaven. The nuns had terrified the children with the story of the snake in the Garden of Eden to end devotion to Quetzalcoatl” (519). Angelita calls Quetzalcoatl “gentle” (519), a sharp contrast to the Christian snake. Janet Powers explains the power of snakes in Mesoamerican cosmology: “Union of bird and reptile, Quetzalcoatl is identified both as an ancient deity and legendary ruler of the Toltec. As the god of civilization, the feathered serpent represented the forces of good and light; as a ruler, he is credited with the discovery of maize, the arts, and science” (269).¹⁸ In addition, the Olmecs¹⁹ thought of the earth itself as “a coiled serpent” (269). The Mayan

counterpart of Quetzalcoatl, Sovereign Plumed Serpent, is described by the *Popol Vuh* as one of the creators of the world (73). According to this sacred text, Plumed Serpents are “great knowers, great thinkers in their very being” (73). Hence, the symbolism associated with snakes is very different for the European colonizing culture than the Mesoamerican colonized culture in this contact situation. Though snake deities are integral to the text, Yoeme has also taught Zeta and Lecha to respect snakes for their ability to hear messages such as the voices of the dead trying to reach still-living loved ones (Silko, *Almanac* 130). The assimilated Menardo, however, hates snakes, and he dreams of killing a snake just before he dies (340), suggesting the betrayal of his Native culture. The evidence that an ideological revolution has indeed occurred, however, is the appearance of the giant stone snake at Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico. Because the ancient almanac is outlined with plumed serpents and has survived a perilous northward journey during the Spanish Conquest, escaping destruction under the protection of children, the snake image represents a desire for rebellion by Indigenous Americans (Janet Powers 270). The giant stone snake at Laguna Pueblo faces southward, signaling “imminent apocalypse that entails the destruction of the European inhabitants of the land and the return of ancient lands to the ancient people” (Peter Kerry Powers 86). The novel is replete with snake imagery, and Silko insists that her readers accept the value of Native American spirituality and its revolutionary potential by ending the novel with the image of the giant stone snake.

Another ideological revolt contained within *Almanac of the Dead* is the overturning of a hegemonic Euro-American interpretation of history. For example, the Stock Market Crash, an economic disaster for many Americans, is remembered by the Laguna pueblo people as a time of bountiful harvests since the winters had been wet in the Southwest during those years (41). This calamity of the capitalistic colonizers does not even affect the land-based communal economy of

the Native people. Another familiar history, the surrender of the Chiricahua Apache, Geronimo (Goyahkla), is considered the end of nineteenth-century Indian military power (Porter 52); however, Silko's novel details how U.S. soldiers confused the identity of the Apache leader when they heard the war cry "Geronimo!" by Mexican soldiers calling on the aid of St. Jerome (Silko, *Almanac* 224). Hence, various Apache leaders seemed to be the elusive Geronimo. In Silko's novel, Old Pancakes, "a liar and a joker" (230), surrendered to U.S. troops as Geronimo, thinking the bootleggers of Tucson, for whom he was an excellent customer, would come to his rescue. Unfortunately, Old Pancakes did not realize the symbolic significance of Geronimo's capture, and his friends could not convince the military they had the wrong man (230-232). Silko spoofs the dominant cultural history, undermining its militaristic superiority. One of the most pervasive histories told by colonizing Europeans is of the "conquest of the Americas." Calabazas refutes this story from an Indigenous perspective:

From the first moment the Spanish ships scraped against the shore, they had depended on native Americans. The so-called explorers and 'conquistadors' had explored and conquered nothing. The 'explorers' had followed Indian guides kidnapped from coastal villages to lead them as far as they knew, and then the explorers kidnapped more guides. The so-called conquerors merely aligned themselves with forces already in power or forces already gathered to strip power from rivals. The tribes in Mexico had been drifting toward political disaster for hundreds of years before the Europeans had ever appeared. (220)

His argument pokes a hole in the ideology that justified slavery and colonialism: European superiority based on Enlightenment-era theories of race (Said, *Culture* 58). From the Native people's perspective, there is nothing superior about the European "Conquest"; instead, European culture is perceived as violent and self-centered, accidentally stumbling onto a society ripe for new hierarchal models.

These alternative readings of American history are a form of ideological revolt because, for Silko, history is rooted in Native spirituality. As Daria Connelly contends, "a political

analysis emerges out of a Pueblo worldview that is committed to making an account of all time and space, and that is heterogeneous and absorptive” (252). Silko’s almanac sets various histories including personal testimonies, scraps of the fictional codex, documented facts, and statistics, side by side in order to demonstrate the value of such an inclusive history. Consequently, Angelita’s claim about the nature of history becomes a metonym for the novel itself: “History was the sacred text. The most complete history was the most powerful force” (56). Such inclusive history leads to a revolt that is larger than any one ideological foundation. So inclusive is Silko’s revolution that it invites all oppressed Americans to join together under the umbrella of “Native American.” Viewed in this light, Clinton, Roy’s closest unit leader, is an important character to consider because he is a physical and spiritual link between Native Americans and the other kinds of oppressed people who are represented by factions such as the Army of the Homeless. Clinton is an African American, more specifically an African-Native American. As a descendant of African slaves and “wealthy, slave-owning Cherokee Indians” (415), Clinton feels a connection to both kinds of Indigenous ancestry; yet, his slave-owning heritage also ties him to European colonialism. He firmly believes that in Hispaniola, where the first Africans replaced the native Tainos, who all died under the yoke of slavery (406), “certain of the African gods had located themselves in the Americas as well as Africa: the Giant Serpent, the Twin Brothers, the Maize Mother, to name a few. Right then the magic had happened: great American and great African tribal cultures had come together to create a powerful consciousness within all people” (416). Clinton embodies a hybrid third space, both culturally and spiritually, one that more scholars are beginning to examine in detail. Critics Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland stress the connections between African and Native American cultures when they argue “that Native America *has been and continues to be* a critical site in the histories and lives of

African peoples” (3). For Silko’s character Clinton, the combined power of cross-cultural tribal deities can enact political, economic, and ideological change on a revolutionary scale.

Promoting such an inclusive view of faith is itself a subversion of European Christian hegemony.

Both Miguel Angel Asturias and Leslie Marmon Silko divined ancient Mesoamerican texts in order to write their revolutionary novels. They also placed characters in the roles of diviners within their novels, reiterating this theme of divination. In *Men of Maize*, Nicho Aquino is a diviner. Though he is led in his divination by a firefly wizard, his journey through Mayan cosmology and subsequent revelation makes possible the reunion of Goyo Yic and María Tecún (sun and moon) and the rebirth of their culture. In Silko’s text, there are three diviners: Lecha, Tacho (Wacah), and Sterling. Lecha is a seer and the interpreter of the almanac; Tacho is the interpreter of the spirit macaws’ messages; and Sterling is the interpreter of the giant stone snake. Lecha knows the Native American revolution is beginning when her power causes her physical pain “as if [it] were turning its face, and its eyes, to look toward the world that was emerging” (161). Tacho is made aware of the coming upheaval by the arrival of the spirit macaws who tell him “Big changes are coming!” (339). Sterling does not understand the message of the giant snake until he returns to Laguna Pueblo after the revolution has begun in Central America. The snake appears just outside of a uranium mine “so near the tailings it appeared as if it might be fleeing the mountain of wastes” (762). For Silko, the mining of uranium is a symbol of the desecration of the earth. The location of the snake’s appearance hearkens to an epiphany of another of Silko’s protagonists, Tayo, in her 1977 novel, *Ceremony*: “The gray stone was streaked with powdery yellow uranium, bright and alive as pollen; veins of sooty black formed lines with the yellow, making mountain ranges and rivers across the stone. But [the Destroyers] had taken these beautiful rocks from deep within the earth and they had laid them in a monstrous

design, realizing destruction on a scale only *they* could have dreamed” (246). In *Almanac of the Dead*, Sterling remembers how the older members of his tribe had protested against the mine because it was too close to the holy emergence place, but capitalism and tribal politics won out over their arguments (34). The placement of the snake is also suggestive when considering the Mayan perception of a temple as a sacred mountain, the door of which is a cave leading to the supernatural world (Schele and Friedel 71-72). The stone snake, then, is a supernatural being, and the final line of the novel is Sterling’s divination: “The snake was looking south, in the direction from which the twin brothers and the people would come” (763). The almanac predicts the revolution, the macaws provide spiritual guidance, and the snake suggests the geographical location of the battle: the U.S.-Mexican border, a hybrid “in-between” space. These “texts” provide the Native American characters with evidence of their spiritual power, inspiring the revolutions in both novels.

Because of its non-linearity and seeming fragmentation as a result of reliance on Mesoamerican texts unfamiliar to most Western readers, *Men of Maize* never garnered the respect of critics and readers in the way Asturias’s other more well-known novels did.²⁰ Raymond Leslie Williams claims that the novel evokes “effects of the oral tale” (15) as a result of its experimentation with language. Gerald Martin argues that it is one of the few Latin American novels based foremost in the history of the Native peoples, rather than in the history of the colonizing Spaniards. For these reasons—its reliance on Mesoamerican texts, the oral tradition, and its focus on Indigenous experience—*Men of Maize* stands apart from most novels written by Americans of European descent.

Almanac of the Dead also has not reaped the critical acclaim of Leslie Marmon Silko’s other works, being denigrated by some critics who feel that it is too violent or too one-sided in its

depiction of American culture.²¹ Regarding the novel's criticism, Womack quips, "America loves Indian culture; America is much less enthusiastic about Indian land title" (*Red* 11). Though this is certainly a sticky issue, such a comment does not encompass the scope of the novel's offensiveness. Besides Silko's previously mentioned depiction of male homosexuality as sociopathic in its perversion, the novel also contains a plethora of unappealing imagery including bestiality, drug addiction, prostitution, racism, and murder; however, it is less the subject matter that is offensive and more its context. As *Newsweek* declared, "In [*Almanac of the Dead*'s] cosmology, there are good people and there are white people" (Yuknavitch 97). This criticism would be accurate, except for inconsistencies that Silko leaves unresolved in the text. According to the almanac, European culture will be eradicated in the Americas by the time of the novel's revolution; yet, some Europeans and people of European descent, such as Rambo and the busload of German tourists following the male hero twins, are included in the revolution. Furthermore, El Feo describes the Native American revolution as one in which "tribal people would retake ancestral land all over the world" (712). Silko portrays some Europeans and Euro-Americans as tribal peoples, embracing a European paganism that predates Christianity, nationalism and Enlightenment-era rationalism; examples of such people in the novel are the German root doctors and Celtic leech handlers at the International Holistic Healers Convention (716). These inconsistencies suggest that the novel's revolution is aimed specifically at European modernity and the political, economic, and ideological systems that accompanied it.

Another problematic aspect of both texts concerns their depictions of Native American belief systems. This analysis demonstrates the meaningfulness of Mesoamerican sacred texts to both novels' thematic goals, yet it is precisely because of their spiritual contexts that *Men of Maize* and *Almanac of the Dead* are utopic in their representation of revolutionary tactics. The

societies imagined in both novels return to Native American tribal traditions in the Americas, separate from European or Euro-American influence. Like the oral traditions from which they draw their sources, *Men of Maize* and *Almanac of the Dead* contain god-like characters defeating colonialist monsters; this attempted thematic divorce from Euro-America is not born out by our material history because the Americas have comprised hybrid cultures for centuries. Though the community imagined at the end of *Men of Maize* seemed a possibility in 1949, Jacobo Arbenz who had led Guatemala's agricultural reform, was overthrown in 1954; this knowledge changes the reader's ability to accept Asturias's utopian view largely because *Men of Maize* does not directly address the relationship between communism and agricultural reform in Guatemala. Though there were many external pressures on Arbenz's administration, the primary reason he was ousted from power was dissatisfaction from within the country "sparked largely by [a] fear of communism and the activities of rural activists associated with agrarian reform" (Handy 169). Silko, on the other hand, contextualizes the economic aspect of her revolution, exploring communism and its relationship with Native American tribal economies in detail; her novel differs from Asturias's in that she does not depict the end to her revolution, perhaps because she cannot. *Almanac of the Dead* envisions a revolution that uplifts all the oppressed peoples of the world. Sometimes it is described as a tribal revolution; sometimes it is described as a class revolution; it is always a revolution aimed at overthrowing European hegemony in the Americas. Silko's novel envisions an earth-shattering future, one in which the world's tribal peoples overcome the world's colonizing peoples. Yet, as Charles Asselin argues, because the desire to take another's land and resources flows from the intrinsic human characteristics of "greed and aggression," the impulse to colonize the world is as old as the existence of humanity (135). Like all utopian visions, Silko's novel projects an impossible world.

Despite their problems, *Almanac of the Dead* and *Men of Maize* are laudable for their epic elements and their illumination of Native American epistemologies. A reading of these novels as divinations of ancient texts makes the authors' formal strategies more transparent and their efforts more admirable. Notably, both Asturias and Silko give readers clues to their own hermeneutical tactics by creating characters who are diviners. Hence, completing the divination chain, readers must also become "interpreters of difficult texts" in order to make sense of the various cultural codes embedded in the novels. Divination, then, is a theme that ripples outward from the authors of *Men of Maize* and *Almanac of the Dead*, to the characters within the texts, to the readers of the texts, all of whom must embrace diverse Native American spiritualities in order to appreciate these novels. Through this chain of divination, a third space opens between indigenous past and colonized present. European hegemony, whether it is political, economic, or ideological, is overturned in the texts, and by both novels' ends, it has no place in the Americas.

End Notes

¹ Schele and Freidel explain that the term Mesoamerica was invented in 1943 by Paul Kirchhoff. It can be used both culturally and geographically to identify the region of Central America farmed traditionally by indigenous peoples. The eastward border is defined by the influence of Native Mayan speakers and their culture and economy. The region is bordered on the north by the Mexican deserts.

² Chapter One examines how Memmi's depiction of colonizers and colonized suggests a continuous power struggle in which power shifts from one pole to another.

³ In addition to the source cited above, Echevarría describes *Men of Maize* as a novel "whose inner coherence imitated that of [a] sacred [text]" (159).

⁴ Jim Handy's *Revolution in the Countryside: Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*, cited above, explores in detail the complex situation of land ownership and the resulting class and ethnicity struggles in Guatemala prior to the passage of the Reform Law.

⁵ Emiliano Zapata was a leading figure in the Mexican Revolution, supporting the rights of Mexico's indigenous peoples. The Zapatistas reemerged to resist NAFTA, the controversial North American Free Trade Agreement which opened on January 1, 1994, described by Moore as "corporate colonialism" (164).

⁶ Bhabha's third space as a way of breaking through the binary opposition of colonizer and colonized is explained in Chapter One, particularly its performative nature.

⁷ Tedlock describes the etymological roots of "mythistory," a word with a basis in Greek, coming into the English language via Latin. The Greeks connoted the term negatively, finding histories with mythical dimension to be lacking purity. For the Mayans, divinity and humanity are intertwined, and such inseparability is reflected in their cultural stories.

⁸ The coyote form of Hunahpu should not be read as a trickster figure, though Coyote plays such a role in the stories of a number of North American tribes. Trickster figures are discussed at length in Chapter Three.

⁹ According to Handy, the term "Ladino" was a classification signifying "the product of Indian and Spanish miscegenation, but it was also used to identify Indians who no longer fit into 'Indian' society" (7).

¹⁰ See additional essays in *Goddess of the Americas: La Diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe*, cited above.

¹¹ Saldívar, cited below, comprehensively examines the historical perception of the U.S.-Mexico border as "occupied," particularly the chapter "Américo Paredes and Decolonization."

¹² The term "monkeywrenching" suggests sabotage of manmade items or breaking laws deemed environmentally unfriendly by militant environmentalists. The term was coined as a result of Abbey's novel.

¹³ The Yaqui are mentioned in the *Popol Vuh* as being present at the beginning of Mayan history; Tedlock explains that the Yaqui are "speakers of Nahuatl languages, in Mexico. Those languages belong to a family that not only stands apart from Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Tzutuhil, but from Mayan languages in general" (Introduction 49).

¹⁴ Though I've previously discussed Native American demographic statistics pre- and post-Contact in Chapter One, the Charles C. Mann article cited above describes the controversy over such numbers. He discusses the shocking effect of Henry F. Dobyns 1966 article "Estimating American Aboriginal Population: An Appraisal of New Techniques with a New Hemispheric Estimate" in *Current Anthropology*. Dobyns was the first to seriously consider the impact of European diseases on indigenous Americans, arguing that instead of the widely accepted 1.15 million population estimate, there had been 90 million inhabitants of the Americas prior to

European colonialism. His claim that 95% of the aboriginal population died within the first 130 years of contact sparked a debate in the field of anthropology that has continued to rage.

¹⁵ Silko's character seems to be echoing Cherokee sociologist Russell Thornton's argument that the era beginning with the contact situation between Columbus and the Native peoples of the Caribbean to the contemporary legal battles between tribes and Euro-American governments is the "American Indian Holocaust," during which disease, warfare, relocation, and cultural assimilation have oppressed and destroyed tribal peoples.

¹⁶ In *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-François Lyotard explains what he calls "metanarratives," the grand narratives that have marked modernity. Silko critiques the Enlightenment idea of a progressivist history moving toward a uniform end in her novel.

¹⁷ Matriarchal societies within American Indian cultures are discussed more fully in Chapters Three and Four of this project.

¹⁸ The Toltecs are a culture that conquered the Mayans in northern Yucatán and the Guatemalan highlands and are thought to have origins among speakers of Nahuatl languages. The contemporary speakers of such languages are presently concentrated in central Mexico and include Aztec descendants (Tedlock, Introduction 25).

¹⁹ The Olmecs are considered to be the cultural predecessors of the Mayans; the Olmec civilization reached its apex approximately three thousand years ago on the coastal plain of the Gulf of Mexico (Tedlock, Introduction 24).

²⁰ Text translator Gerald Martin describes the difficulty of deciphering *Men of Maize* as similar to the "problems more familiar to students of the classics or of *Ulysses* or *Finnegan's Wake* than of the typical contemporary novel" (Introduction xv).

²¹ Lidia Yuknavitch neatly summarizes the criticism aimed at *Almanac of the Dead* upon its publication. Most telling, perhaps, of the evocative nature of the novel is *Time Magazine's* shift from critique of the text to critique of the author when it labeled Silko "vengeful, very angry, raging, and self-righteous" (97).

CHAPTER THREE: TRICKSTER HERMENEUTICS IN *CHANCERS*, *TRACKS*, AND *GREEN GRASS, RUNNING WATER*

Men of Maize and *Almanac of the Dead* represent political, economic, and ideological revolts based in Native spiritualities against European colonization and its legacy. These texts highlight an oppositional view of the colonizer/colonized relationship and demonstrate how the process of divination generates a third space of representation within Native American revolutions. Anishinaabe writer and theorist Gerald Vizenor's "trickster hermeneutics" can be read as another manifestation of Bhabha's third space. A trickster hermeneutics appropriates Saussurean structuralist theory¹ to redefine the Native American trickster from what anthropology has traditionally labeled as a cultural hero, to a communal, discursive sign ("Trickster" 188). Trickster figures appear in numerous oral stories across many tribal cultures and take varied forms including Coyote, Iktome, Raven, Spider, Rabbit, Wolverine, and Naanabozho (Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor* 137-138). According to anthropologist, Paul Radin, in his 1972 work, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*, most of the trickster stories in North American Native cultures describe the creation or transformation of the world. The trickster figure is a hungry, sexually-driven, amoral wanderer, who is either tricking others or being tricked. A trickster can be connected to divinity, either by being a deity or by having relationships with deities or can be a mortal animal or human (155). Anishinaabe scholar Kimberly Blaeser describes the multifaceted nature of trickster figures: "[Trickster is neither] wholly good nor solely bad; neither completely wise nor only foolish; sometimes the wily perpetrator of tricks, sometimes the vice-ridden buffoon who falls victim to his own pride; sometimes the compassionate tribal benefactor, sometimes the bungler who spoils some aspect of the world for human beings" (*Gerald Vizenor* 139). Vizenor reads the trickster as more than a cultural figure, agreeing with Karl Kroeber's criticism of an anthropological definition. Kroeber

argues that most anthropologists do not understand the aesthetics of the oral tradition in which traditional trickster stories are told, focusing too much on the content, not the communal aspect of the event (Vizenor, “Trickster” 199).

Vizenor’s vision of the trickster is elucidated in his essay, “Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games”:

The trickster is a sign, a communal signification that cannot be separated or understood in isolation; the signifiers are acoustic images bound to four points of view [author, narrator, characters, and reader], and the signified, or the concept the signifier locates in language and social view, is a narrative event or a translation. The listeners and readers become the trickster, a sign, and semiotic being in discourse; the trickster is a comic holotrope in narrative voices, not a model or tragic figuration in isolation. (189)

For Blaeser, Vizenor’s semiotic trickster is “a figure simultaneously old and new, a peripatetic figure who in his wanderings has made the transition from traditional oral tales to contemporary written literature” (*Gerald Vizenor* 136). Despite Vizenor’s critique of anthropological presentations of tricksters, more recent trickster studies by anthropologists support his semiotic reading. Lewis Hyde argues that the trickster is a “boundary crosser” traversing the lines between “right and wrong, sacred and profane, clean and dirty, male and female, young and old [and] living and dead” (7). Here the trickster is envisioned between two poles, like Bhabha’s third space, manifesting only in a ritual, or sacred, setting. Even more suggestive, Anne Doueih names the trickster as a “*sign* [emphasis added] of the sacred” (201).

Reading the trickster as a sacred sign builds a linguistic pathway toward interpretive discourse. Vizenor’s hermeneutics depends upon various aspects of the trickster trope itself. As Kenneth Roemer points out, trickster narratives are one genre of American Indian oral traditions which have been performed and interpreted for centuries (4). Referencing Bakhtin, Vizenor connects the dialogic nature of the trickster sign to the oral tradition. Bakhtinian dialogism

concerns the dialogue of various languages at play within a novel (“Discourse” 314). Vizenor’s interpretation of dialogism traverses the line between written and oral: the author, the narrator, the characters and the audience are all participants in a trickster narrative. Consequently, the oral overlap of trickster discourses from one speaker to another, over generations of storytelling, combined with the textual experience of the written form creates dialogism in the sign (“Trickster” 191). Blaeser summarizes Vizenor’s approach: “Vizenor’s effort is to write in the oral tradition, to invite or require an imaginative response similar to that required in the oral exchange” (29-30).

Oral textuality is but one aspect of Vizenor’s trickster hermeneutics; comedy is another. Though he spends a significant amount of rhetorical energy in “Trickster Discourse” debunking anthropologist Victor Barnouw’s social science theories of Anishinaabe trickster stories (197-200), Vizenor agrees with Radin’s depiction of the trickster as a comic figure (204). Kenneth Lincoln calls the trickster “an antiheroic comic teacher and holy fool” (5) whose tales “inversely educate and amuse Indian people in tribal norms” (155). The comic aspect of the trickster trope is a reflection of a larger comic worldview for Native Americans. As Vizenor tells Joseph Bruchac in a 1987 interview, comedy is inherent in Native literature because of the attitude of the characters: “[T]hat attitude is comic . . . It is something that is alive . . . the way time is handled and resolved, the tension in time, and the sense of comedy or comic spirit through imagination and a collective sense that people prevail and survive, get along, get by” (309). Similarly, Paula Gunn Allen believes that “humor is the best and sharpest weapon we’ve always had against the ravages of conquest and assimilation” (qtd. in Lincoln 7). For Vizenor, what opposes a communal comic discourse is monologue, the worldview from which literary tragedy springs (“Trickster” 191).

In addition to oral textuality and comedy, a trickster hermeneutics will unveil the healing quality of a text. Karl Jung comes under fire in “Trickster Discourse,” for his classification of the trickster as “inert” (205), but Vizenor concurs with Jung that the trickster is a healing figure for its ability to manifest growth in groups and in individuals (206). William Hynes and William Doty argue that tricksters “serve to highlight important social values” (2), while Vizenor claims tricksters are liberators in the role of social antagonists (“Trickster” 192). Cultural healing is critical for colonized societies that have lost or been forced to suppress languages, religions, and other practices as a result of a dominating, colonizing culture. Gay Wilentz believes that individuals can suffer as a result of cultural and social injustice and that some Native peoples use Indigenous healing practices in their texts for the purposes of cultural healing (22). Thus, analyzing Native American literature for oral textuality, comedy, and healing aspects is a way to locate a trickster hermeneutics. A trickster hermeneutical approach to the texts examined in this chapter—Vizenor’s *Chancers*, Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks*, and Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water*—will demonstrate strategies of resistance against colonialism through American Indian spiritualities, manifesting Bhabha’s atemporal and hybrid third space.

A prolific writer spanning the genres of fiction, criticism, poetry and memoir, Vizenor escapes easy categorization, his criticism seeming at times like fiction and his fiction seeming at times like criticism. Because of this genre overlap, it is helpful to examine one of his novels to begin engagement in trickster hermeneutics. *Chancers*, published in 2000, is Vizenor’s most recent novel, and it elaborates on many themes from his earlier writings. The title comes from Vizenor’s notion of “narrative chance” which he argues

teases that sense of a literary presence, that chance to summon any name, to scare and to create in stories more than another terminal creed by mere victimry. Even in the most isolated acts of imagination a writer must create a language game of time, people, places, and seasons, and tease the obvious associations of history.

The author must create a new bundle of metaphors in stories so that a narrative chance might be a presence in the book. (*Postindian* 82)

The “chancers” of the novel play on this concept. They are resurrected human beings, actual physical “presences,” such as Pocahontas, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, and Geronimo. The quote above includes another “Vizenorism,” “terminal creeds,” or “beliefs which seek to fix, to impose static definitions upon the world” (Owens, “Ecstatic” 144). Vizenor’s oeuvre represents a continuous subversion of terminal creeds. The solar dancers of *Chancers* believe in the terminal creed of the Indian as a “noble savage.”² Other “Vizenorisms” appear fictionally in *Chancers*, many of which are explained in his 1994 work, *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*. “Manifest Manners” is an appropriation of “Manifest Destiny,” that U.S. policy of land entitlement that “[caused] the death of millions of tribal people from massacres, diseases, and the loneliness of reservations. These histories are now the simulations of dominance, and the causes of the conditions that have now become manifest manners in literature” (4).

“Survivance” is another kind of narrative chance, though not like the embodied chancers.

Survivance is a concept of both survival and resistance (79), which has resulted in “postindians,” those Natives who have survived European colonial hegemony and its constructed notion of Indianness. Vizenor argues, “We come after the invention [of the Indian], and we are postindians” (*Postindian* 84). Vizenor’s work is heavily influenced by poststructuralist theory, particularly Jean Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulations*. Baudrillard argues that imperialism produces simulations and that simulations always represent absence (3). Hence, an “Indian” for Vizenor is an absence, a simulation perceived through a European worldview. This line of thought invokes Said’s argument that the Occident and Orient are Western ideological constructions (*Orientalism* 5), much like “Indianness.” What actually existed in the pre-Contact

continents now known as the Americas were diverse cultural groups and a myriad of languages, none of which was named “Indian.”

Chancers examines the tension created by the 1991 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). This law demands respect for the burial practices of Native American peoples and requires a change in the practices of scientists who study the human remains of such peoples. The remains of American Indians have been mistreated by Euro-Americans since the Puritan era, and at the time of the act’s passage, 99% of the human remains held by federal institutions were Native American (Grose 625). Such mistreatment is a result of what Pawnee scholar James Riding In has termed “imperial archaeology” which can be understood by tracing “the intimate links between federal law and policy and those fields of science (that is, archaeology and physical anthropology) that have engaged in repeated acts of grave looting and pillaging” (54). NAGPRA provides for the return of these remains to their tribes and requires that artifacts and remains found on tribal lands after November 16, 1990, be repatriated to their descendants or to the tribes if the descendants are unknown. The law also criminalizes the trafficking of American Indian human remains and compels museums and federal agencies to provide an inventory of what remains they hold to tribes who would like to see their return (Womack, “A Single” 6).

Set at the University of California, Berkeley, *Chancers* reflects the controversy over the discovery of the brain of Ishi, the last California Yahi Indian, in a jar in the Smithsonian in the late 1990s. Even though it was common knowledge that the Smithsonian held the remains of Native Americans, this discovery was a shock because it was supposed that Ishi’s brain had been cremated along with the rest of his body after his death in 1917. Ishi was one of the most famous Native Americans of the twentieth century, largely as a result of Theodora Kroeber’s 1961 book,

Ishi in Two Worlds, detailing the massacre of the Yahi people by California settlers and the four years Ishi spent in San Francisco. Kroeber had unique insight into Ishi's world because, even though she never met Ishi, she was the second wife of anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, who had given Ishi a home at the Anthropological Museum at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1911, after he was imprisoned in Oroville, California, because the sheriff did not know how else to protect him from curiosity-seekers who wanted to stare at the "last wild Indian" (Weaver 37).

Ishi's story is troubling. First, there is the history of Yahi-settler relations which Alfred and Theodora Kroeber's sons, Karl and Clifton, contextualize in *Ishi in Three Centuries*: "From the time California became a state, treatment of Native peoples by white citizenry that was brutal, contemptuous, and unfair was encouraged by officials of the California State Government and local politicians. Native Americans have been very badly treated in every part of America, but it is not easy to find a state with a more appalling record than California's" (Introduction xvii). Paula Gunn Allen asserts that the settlement of California during and just after the Gold Rush was "true terrorism [for Native Americans], worse even than the Long Walk of the Diné or the Cherokee Trail of Tears" ("Does Euro-Think" 7). So when Ishi wandered alone from the woods, a seeming "rescue" by anthropologists was perceived by some as humane. Yet, Ishi, whose name means simply "Man" in his native Yana, was a museum exhibit, creating stone tool technology (Shackley 164) and telling tribal stories (Jacknis 235). Louis Owens argues,

the Native person called Ishi was the perfect Indian for colonial European America, the end result of five hundred years of attempts to create something called "Indian." With his family and entire tribe slaughtered, starved, and decimated by disease like countless thousands of the original inhabitants of California, he became the quintessential last Vanishing American, a romantic, artifactual savage who represented neither threat nor obstacle but instead a benign natural resource to be mined for what white America could learn about itself. ("Native" 377)

Such an assessment is supported by the popularity of Theodora Kroeber's book at a time when the United States was still segregated and dominated by racist ideologies.

Vizenor's relationship with Ishi's story is complex. He has written various accounts of Ishi who, as a museum specimen, becomes the best example of simulated Indianness.³ Yet, paradoxically, Ishi is also an example of survivance. As Vizenor points out, Ishi's museum experience has led to knowledge of a tribe that might simply have disappeared with his death: "Ishi was fortunate, in an ironic sense, to have an audience of dedicated and curious listeners for his stories of liberty. He lived by natural reason and the tease of seasons. Today, almost a century later, the audience has increased and the listeners are even more dedicated to understanding, in translation, the survivance of his Wood Duck stories" ("Mr. Ishi" 367-368). To honor the Yahi Indian's memory, Vizenor petitioned the University of California, Berkeley, on numerous occasions to name a building for Ishi; however, his requests were denied. Eventually, an interior court on campus, which makes an appearance in *Chancers*, was dedicated to Ishi (Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor* 59).

Though the controversy over Ishi's brain provides a subtext for *Chancers*, the plot concerns the conflict between two views of American Indian culture, one pole epitomized by a student group at the university called the "solar dancers" and the other by students known as the "round dancers." Oral textuality in the novel is achieved through a trickster narrator, Cedarbird, a professor and visiting writer. Like Ishi, Cedarbird has made a previous appearance in Vizenor's oeuvre, the protagonist of the short story "Four Skin Documents" in *Landfill Meditations* (Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor* 136). Early in *Chancers*, Cedarbird addresses the reader: "Consider me a trickster with a computer, a trickster in the best tradition of transformation, and a secret agent for a virtual ethnic intelligence agency. My stories are sold to many universities,

including this one, and, of course, to every government agency that has anything to do with natives” (11). The novel attempts to be simultaneously oral and written, by speaking to the reader conversationally and by acknowledging the continuance of the story through textual reproduction. The textual reproduction is multiple: Cedarbird’s story will be read both by his editors at Random Nation Books and by the ethnic emissaries. Vizenor is commenting on his own dual role as writer and cultural representative, or “secret agent” (9) as Cedarbird terms it. Direct addresses to the reader tend to make references to the other audiences (the editors and ethnic emissaries) such as in the quote above, but more often the text seems to be a novel written in the third person, presumably the dual novel/report to the ethnic emissaries. These emissaries, claim Cedarbird, prefer the literature of manifest manners, with linearly-constructed plots and simulated Indians (138). By the novel’s end, the identity of the ethnic emissaries is revealed:

You are the emissaries, my readers, not my conscience, but we find a tricky solace in the silent, fugitive pose of words on a computer monitor. By this silence have my stories been turned into the myths of causality and representation, or the ceremonial power of a sand painting? The sacred figures of pollen and sand are ephemeral, and so are the metaphors of creation stories. (139)

Vizenor begins the novel by separating the reader from the ethnic emissaries, drawing him or her into the story as one part of a conversation with the narrator, only to conflate the oral and written audience by the novel’s end. In this way, the trickster narrator achieves dialogism, the effect of which is the realization that the intended audience for both the oral and textual aspects of the novel is one that buys into simulated Indianness. Cedarbird, the trickster narrator, wants to convert his readers/listeners, who prefer the literature of manifest manners and Western aesthetics, so that they instead embrace a postindian reality, imbued with the aesthetics of an ephemeral sacred ceremony.

In addition to oral textuality, a trickster hermeneutical approach to *Chancers* reveals its bawdy comedy. Though the conflict between the round and solar dancers is the central aspect of the plot, parody abounds throughout the text. One example is the Hiawatha Confessions, a coin-operated rolling confessional/animal peep show decorated with portraits from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, including Hiawatha, his love Minnehaha, and the poet (21). Since "The Song of Hiawatha" represents the myth of the "vanishing Indian," it is unpopular with the solar dancers who creatively vandalize it: "Longfellow was scalped at least twice a week in fair weather" (22). The juxtaposition of a dual confessional and animal pornography booth suggests the parody of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque in which the quotidian is inverted (Bakhtin, *Problems* 127). The irony of the Hiawatha Confessions is the choice of lines excerpted from the poem to be heard by the confessor. By choosing to use Hiawatha's vision of the coming Europeans and his message of welcome (*Chancers* 24), Vizenor suggests that what should be confessed are the sins of colonialism. In addition, an animal peep show inverts the kind of brotherly love Hiawatha displays for the natural world into a voyeuristic carnalism. Such obscenity linked with reproduction is another aspect of carnival (Bakhtin, *Problems* 128). This scene's setting on the plaza, a place where all people gather, a place of familiarity and community (128), also supports a carnivalesque reading. Vizenor's use of carnivalistic literary tools is the key to the resistant nature of this scene:

The laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is noncarnival, life are suspended during carnival: what is suspended first of all is hierarchal structure and all the forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it—that is, everything resulting from socio-hierarchal inequality or any other form of inequality among people. (122-123)

Hence, American colonialism is the "socio-hierarchal inequality" being overturned in Vizenor's creation of the "Hiawatha Confessions."

Another manifestation of humorous parody is the existence of the Half Moon Bay Skin Dip, a service designed to help darken light-skinned people so they looked more authentically “Indian.” Mouthy Browne is a light-skinned Native who uses the Skin Dip to get a job in Native services (Vizenor, *Chancers* 71). Pardone de Cozener (or Cozzie), a faculty member in Native studies, is actually of European descent, masquerading as a Native American; he also uses the Skin Dip to darken himself for an authentic Indian appearance (117). This fictional identity subversion service highlights the issue of Indian authenticity discussed by Jana Sequoya Magdaleno. She argues that variations in skin tone among Native Americans result from mixedblood marriages, the children of which are “racially impure.” Racial purity is a medieval European ideology which Native peoples have been forced to embrace to resist assimilation into the dominant culture: “Hence, the notion of ‘blue blood’ is adapted by Indian-identified peoples as the valorization of ‘red blood.’ While the tropological basis of the notion of mixed-blood must be remarked and the irony of its use registered, it is well to keep in mind the brute facts of colonization within which the signifier ‘mixedblood’ functions” (297). The treatment of mixed heritage peoples has varied among different tribal cultures and throughout history, suggesting that the European ideology of racial purity has not been wholly embraced. Magdaleno uses the example of the Lakota word for mixedblood, “Iyeska,” which has a more negative contemporary connotation, yet originally signified an intermediary between sacred and human worlds (297). In *Chancers*, Vizenor resists Native appropriation of racial purity by representing acceptance of Cozzie’s masquerade. Professor Peter Roses, also known as Round Dance and leader of the round dancing movement, argues for the inclusion of Cozzie:

Cozzie is a clown, and native studies needs a recognized fool to survive, said Round Dance. Tricksters and clowns loosen the sleeves of our visions, and, based on the tradition of native clowns, his invention as an *indian* better serves the magic moments of a scapegoat . . . The distance between a fake *indian* and the

sacred is in the translation, the tricky scenes of clowns and scapegoats. So, we dare not turn against our names in translations or we might lose our balances as *indians*, fake or otherwise. (128)

Roses brings up an interesting point: since an “Indian” is an invention, and that invention has turned Native peoples into scapegoats for dominant ideologies, the best person to pose as an Indian is a Euro-American. In this situation, the false signifier of Indian is turned against itself, back onto the culture from which it is derived.

Comedy can also be found in the act of “round dancing” as theorized by Round Dance, the narrator’s mentor. Round Dance’s name mirrors the physical motions of his Native American literature lectures: “By turns he teased the characters of native literature and touched by eye and gesture every student in the circle . . . My circuit is natural reason, he said, and the center is a hurricane, a trace of my presence, nothing more” (*Chancers* 81). By modeling reason after the natural form of the hurricane, Round Dance invokes the Mayan god of the same name.⁴ This natural and spiritually-centered reason subverts the European Enlightenment definition of reason, the source of which is the human mind. Round dancing is spatial, non-linear, and entertaining, none of which are adjectives that typically describe Western reason. Round Dance is best known for his numerous affairs with blonde students during his “orifice-hours” (82). The solar dancers believe that a Native American seeking a blonde, the Petrarchan definition of beauty, is a cultural betrayer; whereas, Round Dance argues otherwise: “Naturally, my native sense of presence is motion, and that, my friend, is the name of natural reason . . . Trickster stories are imagic moments, holosexual moves in many directions at the same time, and the sexual teases are natural reason in the gentle eye of a hurricane moving to the wild, elusive margins” (83). For Round Dance, sexuality has no limitations, and he subverts the European construction of Indianness by arguing in favor of a dynamic Native culture. Porter explains that

this static perception of Indianness is based in early colonial encounters in which “civilizing” tactics seemed to dilute “authentic” Native behavior (45). The difference between Porter’s explanation and Vizenor’s own definition of a “terminal creed” is that, for Vizenor, both Indians and non-Indians have adopted a static, false definition of Indianness that does not account for cultural change or difference.

The ironic portrayal of the separatist solar dancers is one of the primary sources of comedy in the text. These characters are described as “a ruck of urban warriors moved by the *wiindigoo* cannibal, [who] created their own demonic ceremonies and totemic nicknames. They carried raccoon medicine pouches packed with wing bones, feathers, vitamins, cedar punk, sunstones, and sage” (25). Bad Mouth, the most negative of the solar dancers, inspires their rage to “[conjure] the wicked *wiindigoo*, the cannibal monsters of *anishinaabe* stories. These students of animus and native rage became the new *windigoo* of the concrete, the ominous simulacra of tradition who sacrificed the thieves and academic abusers of native bones” (26). One reason Bad Mouth is so upset is because she will not graduate due to her failing grade in a class on the Sun Dance Religion (28). Vizenor’s depiction invokes the pan-tribal movement that embraces the Sun Dance, a former religious ceremony of certain Plains tribes, as a key signifier of Indian identity. Traditionally, the Sun Dance was performed by individuals who sacrificed their bodies in order to receive supernatural powers which were necessary to overcome serious problems they were facing (Lyon 312). Luther Standing Bear was a child when he attended the last Lakota Sun Dance and describes the ritual:

From the pole two rawhide ropes were suspended. The candidate would now be lifted up and the buckskin string tied to the rawhide rope. The candidate was now hanging from his breasts, but the rope was long enough for him to remain on the ground. Although the blood was running down from the knife incision, the candidate would smile, although every one knew he must be suffering intense pain. (131)

The U.S. government banned the Sun Dance in 1882 as another step toward assimilating Native peoples; that ban lasted approximately forty years. Since the reinstatement of the Sun Dance by numerous tribes, “the dance serves to reconfirm Native American identity, and participants dance for varying reasons” (Lyon 312). The solar dancers of *Chancers* practice the ritual of self-sacrifice, but their vengeful need to sacrifice others and its ultimate undoing of their group undermines the intent of the traditional Sun Dance, which is about self-sacrifice for the betterment of the tribe (Standing Bear 126). In addition, Cedarbird’s critique of the separatist solar dancers as “simulacra of tradition” (26) is reminiscent of Vizenor’s own critique of certain leaders of the militant American Indian Movement (AIM), such as Dennis Banks, whose “posturing for the media works to reinforce and perpetuate the romantic Indian stereotype, the tribal simulation” (Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor* 61).

Significantly, each of the solar dancers in *Chancers* is a “cross-blood,” despite their convictions that Indianness is fixed and one-dimensional. Womack discusses the shift from early twentieth century representations of people of both European and Native descent as “tragic victim[s] torn between two worlds” to cultural mediators in Native criticism of the 1980s (Womack, “A Single” 71). In Vizenor’s lexicon, “cross-blood” replaces the term “mixed-blood,” furthering this reinscription; the cultural in-betweenness of “cross-bloods” is linked to the comic mode of representation (71). For example, the “Indian” names of many of these characters suggest qualities that defy the cultural authenticity which they purport to epitomize: Fast Food, Touch Tone, Injun Time, Fine Print, and Token White (Vizenor, *Chancers* 30). Instead, these names suggest the hybridity of American Indian culture. Round Dance elicits hatred from the solar dancers because he mocks their one-dimensional definition of Indianness. The best example of this humorous depiction occurs in a scene in which the solar dancers argue

with Round Dance's interpretation of a Native American text, shouting stereotypical binaristic ideologies at him and having their ideas confronted and refuted at every turn (84-96). Bad Mouth claims that "*indians* are oral" (86), and Round Dance replies, "Not when you read" (86). This illustrates how the assumptions of European colonizers were disseminated among the colonized peoples of the Americas and became the dominant discourse as a result of Euro-American cultural hegemony. It is untrue that indigenous Americans are or have been solely oral as evidenced by ancient Mayan hieroglyphic texts and the alphabetic writings of Mayans and other tribes that began in the sixteenth century and continue until this day. Cedarbird, the trickster narrator, explains how this type of ironic humor is tied to the aesthetics of Indigenous American storytelling: "Start with the name *indian*, the occidental invention of the *indian*, the *nominis umbra*, or the shadow name that has no substance, and you have five centuries of satire in one causal, common noun. So, in the real case of the native solar dancers, the *wiindigoo*, and the beheaded provost, satire is the true mode of espionage, an authentic trickster story" (13). The espionage of which Cedarbird speaks is the subversion of the construct called Indian which is overturned when the solar dancers destroy themselves at the novel's end.

Besides its oral and comic aspects, a trickster hermeneutics highlights the healing quality of survivance in *Chancers*. Though the central conflict between the solar and round dancers is ideological, the plot centers on a series of gruesome murders by the solar dancers that are attempts to avenge the violation of Native American remains by academics and administrators associated with the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology at the University of California (14). The solar dancers engage in human sacrifice in order to resurrect Native chancers. They do so by using a device called the Mikawi Generator, located in the Azhetaa Center. In anishinaabe, "*azheta*" means "go backwards" (72), and the Generator makes the dead

“go backwards” on the road to the afterlife. Cedarbird argues that his classification of the solar dancers as a new kind of *windigoo*, resulting from “five centuries of abuse and cultural dominance. The hatred, [he believes], was a blood feud that may never end. The native students have their own fears . . . of being devoured by giants, the academic *wiindigoo* on campus. So, the antidote was to become a solar dancer and devour the evil enemy” (27). The solar dancers are one example of how the text uses Native spirituality as a way to resist colonialism; however, their method does not support Native survivance since all of the solar dancers are either killed or renounce their belief in solar dancing by the novel’s end.

Ironically, survivance manifests in the character of Token White, emphasizing the resistant nature of the text and hearkening back to Cedarbird’s declaration of satire as espionage (13). Token White is the only solar dancer who is not an American Indian (she is instead an American of mixed European descent, as suggested by her name), who secretly shifts her ideological leanings to the round dancers. Survivance can be traced through Token White’s evolution as a character. Her initiation as a solar dancer occurs early in the novel as a result of an incident she witnesses while working as a student research assistant at the Museum of Anthropology. There, among the bones of deceased Native people, Snow Boy, an osteologist, and Ruby Blue Welcome, “a senior lecturer on native religions” (16), have numerous, furtive sexual encounters. Token White is “aroused, sickened, and disconcerted by the scene, and, at the same time, she resented their brazen abuse of native remains. That night was the start of her conversion. She would become a solar dancer and liberate the native dancers” (61). This bizarre scene reflects the larger issues surrounding NAGPRA. Token White’s position as a research assistant is to help inventory Native bones (which she deems sacred) for burial under NAGPRA (58). Witnessing the desecration of the human remains leads to the character’s

radicalization: she will eventually be the solar dancer who kills both Snow Boy and Ruby Blue Welcome. Snow Boy represents the traditional scientific view of human bones as objects to be studied, but Vizenor portrays him with a twist: his birth to an archaeologist at a “remote excavation in Ethiopia” (56) has led to a life of obsession with human bones, so much that he is sexually aroused in the presence of Native American bones. He needs bones, much like the scientists who resist repatriation of Native human remains under NAGPRA because they believe “the taking of human remains occurred legally under preexisting policies and laws, and their scientific interest in them trumps any ethical or legal claims made by Native Americans” (Running In 59). Ruby Blue Welcome, the only American Indian depicted in the scene, is a feminist who emasculates Native American men with her raunchy puppet Four Skins and proclaims Native women as the true bearers of Native culture (Vizenor, *Chancers* 20). Her sexual escapades with the married osteologist seem to fill the loneliness of her life as an unpopular academic who spends her evenings watching westerns in the company of her dogs and her puppet (53). She exhibits no concern about desecrating the bones of Native peoples, possibly because she does not respect her own body. She seems to represent the larger apathy of the American public toward NAGPRA. As James Riding In notes, NAGPRA has not provided a comprehensive solution to the problem of unrepatriated Native human remains. For example, there is the unresolved issue of those remains deemed “culturally unidentifiable,” those of approximately 200,000 individuals (57). Museums have still not completed their required inventories, and “supported by the scientific community, often claim that present-day Indians are not related to those remains because they want to keep large collections for the purpose of study” (57). Riding In has proposed a number of solutions for the decolonization of NAGPRA which

he deems necessary because, “[Native American] burial places are sacred sites, and tampering with the dead is considered an act of desecration and sacrilege, if not outright witchcraft” (64).

Token White’s conversion to a solar dancer is her attempt to revolt against the abuse of American Indian remains, but she is unlike the others in the group who are underachievers with negative attitudes (Vizenor, *Chancers* 34). Token White is a strong addition to the solar dancers: she is an excellent archer (“a shaman of archery” [114] according to Cedarbird), and she claims to be the sister of Ishi in a former life. In fact, she believes that Ishi taught her to hunt and to make bows and arrows (39). Token White’s apogee as a solar dancer occurs when she kills Hildie, the provost, who not only refuses to permit Ishi’s cremated brain from being buried on campus at Ishi Court, but who also conceals the fact that the brain is being held at the Smithsonian (113-114). Token White can be read as a symbol of the impact that Theodora Kroeber’s bestseller, *Ishi in Two Worlds*, had on Euro-America. Anthropologist Orin Starn describes Kroeber’s compelling narrative: “she reconstructed the massacres of Yahi by whites at Three Knolls, Kingsley Cave, and Campo Seco in a straightforward, almost understated way that made the tale of destruction of Ishi’s people all the more terrible” (59). Kroeber wrote *Ishi in Two Worlds* during the Civil Rights Movement, and its timeliness may also account for its popularity. Starn suggests that “[t]he happy conclusion to her telling of Ishi’s story modeled an innocent white liberalism that wanted to acknowledge this country’s crimes against blacks and Indians—and yet also to find newly liberated peoples grateful and eager to grasp well-meaning white hands outstretched now in friendship and reconciliation” (60). Hence, like her participation in the Native Studies program, Token White’s imagined kinship with Ishi reflects a larger desire by Euro-America to resist its own history of violent domination.

Despite her questionable genealogical kinship to Ishi, Token White's transformation from vengeful and separatist solar dancer to a passionate and culturally inclusive round dancer results in Native survivance. She passes on Ishi's stories, she continues his knowledge of tool-making and archery, and she is the only graduate in the field of Native studies. By the end of the novel, the other solar dancers lose sight of their common goal to resurrect the Native chancers, instead turning against one another. This is inevitable, suggested by a quote which Round Dance had cited to his solar dancer students during one of their class discussions of Vizenor's novel *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*: "Your stories of *indians* are terminal creeds . . . and *indians* are perfect victims when they lose their sense of humor and irony. Racial pride is the absence of irony, and separations are terminal stories" (Vizenor, *Chancers* 95). The story of the separatist solar dancers is also a terminal one.

Chancers ends with a graduation ceremony attended by Natives and non-Natives, living people and resurrected chancers including Ishi, Alfred Kroeber, and Phoebe Hearst (158-159). This physical presence of contemporary and historical Natives and non-Natives coming together at the academic ceremony becomes metonymic of the novel itself, which the trickster narrator had compared to a sand painting early in the novel, as quoted previously. Sand paintings are ritual creations within larger Diné healing ceremonials. Esther Pasztory describes the ceremony: "The sick person is seated in the center of the painting while the chant is sung over him. When the ritual is concluded, the sand is carefully collected and ritually disposed of" (238). Cedarbird underscores the connection between his story and this kind of healing ceremonial when he says, "My emissaries, you are the barren masks, erased at the end of each ethnic document. My stories are virtual, an elusive native presence" (139). Hence, survivance occurs in another way: it exists within the representations of the story (such as Token White's transformation) and by the

existence of the story itself. *Chancers* seems to suggest that the only possibility for healing the wounds of European colonization is this combination of survival and resistance.

Oral textuality, comedy, and healing can also be located in Turtle Mountain Ojibwe author Louise Erdrich's novel, *Tracks*, through the lens of a trickster hermeneutics. This trickster narrator is Nanapush, the name playing on the Anishinaabe woodland trickster Naanabozho (Vizenor, "Trickster" 187).⁵ Naanabozho, also called Nanabush and Wenabozho, is like many tricksters in that he is known as a fool, a hero, and a creator figure (Gross 130). Nanapush's father chose his name "[b]ecause it's got to do with trickery and living in the bush" (Erdrich, *Tracks* 33). Unlike *Chancers*, *Tracks* contains two narrators, both Native American, Nanapush representing traditional tribal beliefs and Pauline representing European American beliefs. Nanapush's narrative is directed to his spiritual daughter, Lulu, affirming the dialogic nature of the trickster sign. In contrast, Pauline's narrative is directed to no one, suggesting an individualized monologue in keeping with her ideological and spiritual assimilation. As previously noted, Vizenor suggests that monologue and literary tragedy are connected, and in the case of Pauline, her monologic nature does lead to personal tragedy.

Oral textuality manifests not only through the story that Nanapush tells Lulu, but also through the stories he tells her he has told to others. Nanapush describes the power of his spoken words when Father Damien, the local priest came to visit: "I talked both languages in streams that ran alongside each other, over every rock, around every obstacle. The sound of my own voice convinced me I was alive. I kept Father Damien listening all night . . . Occasionally, he took in air, as if to add observations of his own, but I pushed him under with my words" (7). As Nancy Peterson points out, the oral textuality of this novel plays an important role in resisting dominant Euro-American discourse. Nanapush's story contains references to actual historical

events such as the smallpox outbreaks of 1869 to 1870, the tuberculosis epidemic from 1891-1901 (985), and the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 (986). She argues, “Nanapush’s speech is revisionist because it defamiliarizes the popular narrative of American history as progress by showing the costs of that ‘progress’ to native peoples” (985). Underscoring this point is how he intersperses tribal words such as “Nadouissieux,” (Erdrich, *Tracks* 1) “Anishinabe” (1), and “Ogimaakwe” (7) within the dominant language and how he moves from the plural first-person “We” (1-2), to the singular first-person “I” (2). Both of these examples demonstrate how progress to one culture became genocide to another.

The oral textuality of *Tracks* can be linked back to Vizenor’s concept of the semiotic trickster. Catherine Rainwater illuminates conflicting codes in Erdrich’s works which she divides into two categories: those derived from Western European tradition and those derived from Native American tradition. One of the areas in which codes conflict in Erdrich’s works is religion, specifically between Christianity and Anishinaabe faith (406). Such a clash manifests as a result of the dueling narratives of Nanapush, a shaman, and Pauline, a nun. Rainwater argues that these types of conflicting codes

produce a state of marginality in the reader, who must at some point in the reading cease to apply the conventional expectations associated with ordinary narrativity. The reader must pause “between worlds” to discover the arbitrary structural principles of both. This primary value—epistemological insight—which Erdrich’s text associates with marginality might then be adopted through a revision of narrativity. (422)

What Rainwater reads as marginality and the epistemological insight gained by experiencing a conflict of codes might also be described through the semiotic process that Vizenor describes in “Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games.” Vizenor stresses the communal experience of trickster discourse, claiming that “[the] listeners and readers become the trickster, a sign, and semiotic being in discourse” (189). Each of these processes can also be read as

manifestations of Bhabha's hybrid third space, displacing the polarity of colonizer/colonized relations.

In addition to its oral textuality, a trickster hermeneutics reveals the comedic aspects of *Tracks*. Much humor is derived through the sexually-charged interactions between Nanapush and Margaret Kashpaw before they become lovers. When Margaret's son Eli impregnates Fleur, the mother wants to know where he learned the knowledge to please a woman. She confronts Nanapush who slyly insults her sexual prowess. The following exchange is the result: "'Old man,' she scorned, 'two wrinkled berries and a twig.' 'A twig can grow,' I offered" (48).

A similar conversation occurs when Nanapush visits Fleur's house, and Pauline is there spreading rumors about Fleur's past. Since Margaret has not yet fully accepted her son's lover, she welcomes Pauline's gossip. Nanapush's affection for Fleur drives him to insult the women, and Margaret replies in similar fashion: "'In the old days,' said Margaret quickly, 'even the white-haired ones could do more than talk.' 'You should see me in the morning,' I boasted" (53). Here Nanapush's humor demonstrates the profane sexuality associated with many trickster figures.

The exchanges between Margaret and Nanapush prove the old man's quick wit, but his verbal parries with Pauline as she tries to convert the traditional Anishinaabe provide both entertainment and a clear resistance to the spiritual domination of Christianity. Pauline has become a novice to escape the actual sin of bearing a child out of wedlock and her perceived sin of being an Indian (137). Pauline is obsessive about her spiritual cleansing, performing a variety of mortifications to prove her worthiness to God. One mortification is wearing undergarments made from potato sacks so that her private parts chafe (143). Upon learning this, Nanapush observes that such an experience might feel like "the beard of a Frenchman" (144). Pauline

protests that she suffers as homage to Christ (144). Another day, Pauline arrives at Fleur's wearing her shoes on the wrong feet. A discussion of her chosen mortifications leads Nanapush to note that she never uses the bathroom (146-147). Pauline is deeply embarrassed because controlling her bodily functions is her secret sacrifice, and she curses Nanapush, forgetting her role as Christian witness (148). Despite her anger, Pauline returns to Fleur's again, trying to persuade Margaret, Nanapush, Fleur, and Eli to accept Christianity. Instead, Nanapush offers cup after cup of strong, sweet sassafras to Pauline, and then he tells a story:

There was once a little rain. It fell on a girl's head a drop at a time . . . The rain got stronger. It began to fall in lines. You know how water hisses down on the lake. It fell like that. It fell and fell. More rain. Then that girl began to float. She was in a deep flood that dragged her all around the earth until she saw something sticking out of the waves. She swam over and clung to it. (149)

As the story progresses, so does Pauline's discomfort, until she forced to run to the privy, her most cherished mortification ruined by Nanapush's humorous words (149). In the face of communal trickster stories which are meant to entertain and to teach, the individualized path of tragic martyrdom chosen by Pauline is brought into question. More significantly, her need to assimilate the other Anishinaabe makes her the brunt of the trickster's jokes.

In addition to its oral textuality and comedic aspects, *Tracks* also illustrates the possibility for Native American culture to heal from the wounds of European and American colonization. Much of the plot traces land conflicts resulting from a series of actions by the U.S. government to regulate indigenous American land beginning with the Dawes Act, what Kay Givens McGowan argues was "intended to destroy the Native communities" (63). The Dawes Act divided tribally-held land into allotments with the goal of converting tribes from the communal method of hunting and gathering to the individualistic and capitalistic method of private farming. The allotments were to be held in trust and not to be taxed for twenty-five years so that the

Native peoples could ease into a new economic system, but the Burke Act was passed in 1906, shortening the trust period for those deemed “competent.” Competency resulted in the issuance of a fee patent, instead of a trust patent, which meant that allotments could be sold, leased or taken away. The final piece of this disenfranchisement puzzle came with the 1917 “Declaration of Policy” in which Cato Sells, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, declared that Native people with more than one-half white blood would be declared competent, resulting in fee patents for their allotments and U.S. citizenship. This series of actions caused Native Americans to lose 91 million acres of land. Some of the losses resulted from people’s inability to pay taxes when the trust period ended, some resulted from the swindling of people unaware of their land’s value, and some was taken away as collateral on unpaid debts (Peterson 986-987).

Tracks climaxes with the loss of Pillager land to the lumber company as a result of the Kashpaws’ betrayal of Fleur in favor of their family’s allotment. Their betrayal shocks Nanapush and drives Fleur to attempt suicide and eventually leave her ancestral land. It might seem difficult, given these details, to argue that this narrative can heal the wounds of colonialism, especially since scholars like Gloria Bird argue that the novel actually perpetuates the tropes of colonialism, particularly the savagism of Native Americans (42).

As with colonialist literature, the purpose of the subtext is, among other things, to impose the construct of barbarity or savagery on indigenous peoples, paving the way for their subjection and colonization. By the end of *Tracks*, we are left with Nanapush entering into the politics and institutionalization of reservation life; Margaret, Nector, and Eli have all betrayed Fleur; all of their allotment lands have been lost to save the Kashpaws; Lulu is sent away to government school; Fleur’s trees have been destroyed; Fleur has left; and Moses disappears from the text. All of the relationships that have been established from the beginning of the novel have deteriorated. (46)

Despite this strong argument, a trickster hermeneutics reveals that the novel ends on a note of hope for a continued survivance of the Anishinaabe. Though it is true that Nanapush shifts from

shaman to bureaucrat, he does so with the goal of bringing Lulu back home from the government boarding school. He succeeds by producing her birth certificate, the one on which he had claimed himself as her father (Erdrich, *Tracks* 225), another form of trickery with words. Nanapush then has the authority to do as he wishes, and Lulu returns to the tribe.

In order to read the final image of the novel, Lulu's return, as a sign of tribal survivance and therefore, healing, it is helpful to explore the motif of tree imagery. Earlier in the novel Nanapush declares to Father Damien that the tribe could survive the impact of colonialism: "We Indians are like a forest . . . The trees left standing get more sun, grow thick" (184). Later though, in his role as tribal chairman, Nanapush has lost this boastfulness: "I began to see what we were becoming, and the years have borne me out: a tribe of file cabinets and triplicates, a tribe of single-space documents, directives, policy. A tribe of pressed trees" (225). Despite this, when Lulu returns from boarding school wearing the orange dress of a runaway, Nanapush and Margaret can see that her spirit, as fierce as her mother Fleur's, has not been oppressed. In the final line, Nanapush tells her, "We gave against your rush like creaking oaks, held on, braced ourselves together in the fierce dry wind" (226), symbolically suggesting tribal survivance. Yet this scene is indicative not only of a symbolic survivance, but also of a literal tribal survivance. The Indian boarding school experience of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was designed to assimilate Native Americans into the dominant Euro-American culture. McGowan asserts that the abuse endured by Native children during the boarding school era led to a chain of effects that began with the dissolution of American Indian families and tribes and resulted in the contemporary struggles of Native peoples: "The problems around parenting issues in Indian country today are a direct result of the Indian Boarding School era, which began in 1879 with the Carlisle Indian School and continues in a limited way up to the present. The trauma induced by

this system contributed to the rise of alcoholism, suicide, and mental illness still prevalent in Indian country today” (64). The goal of the founder of the first Indian boarding school, Richard H. Pratt, was to “[k]ill the Indian and save the man!” (qtd. in Porter 52). In *Tracks*, both the “man” (girl) and the Indian were saved by the tricky machinations of Nanapush.

Tribal survivance continues through Lulu in Erdrich’s other novels connecting the Kashpaw and Nanapush clans, *Love Medicine* and *The Bingo Palace*. Despite the loss of her mother, homes, lovers, and sons, Lulu lives and fights the forces that would oppress her. Her oldest son, Gerry Nanapush, bears the trickiness of his father, Moses Pillager, and his spiritual grandfather, Nanapush. As Lulu says, “In and out of prison, yet inspiring the Indian people, that was his life. Like myself he could not hold his wildness in” (Erdrich, *Love Medicine* 288). This text confirms that Nanapush has laid a path to survivance for his tribe by saving Lulu from the government boarding school.

Like *Chancers* and *Tracks*, Cherokee Thomas King’s novel *Green Grass, Running Water*, exhibits oral textuality, comedy and healing aspects through a trickster hermeneutical analysis. In the novel, retired literature professor, Eli Stands Alone, attempts to help his middle-aged nephew, Lionel, find himself by telling him the story of how he returned to the Blackfoot reservation in Alberta, Canada. As Eli’s story meanders, Lionel impatiently asks, “So why’d you come home?” and Eli answers, “Can’t just tell you that straight out. Wouldn’t make any sense. Wouldn’t be much of a story” (400). This exchange is metonymic of the novel’s oral textuality. *Green Grass, Running Water* is a creation story in four parts with numerous narrator-creators. One narrator is Coyote, a well-known Native American trickster to a number of Western North American tribes, who often plays the dual role of selfish-buffoon and culture hero (Carroll 113). There is also an unnamed first-person narrator and four Native female deity narrators: First

Woman (Diné), Changing Woman (Diné), Thought Woman (Pueblo) and Old Woman (Blackfoot). The story of contemporary Blackfoot characters Lionel, Alberta Frank, and Charlie Looking Bear, is interspersed with four different variations of Coyote and the deities' revision of hegemonic Euro-American narratives including the *Bible*, history, canonical literature, and Hollywood films. This is typical of King's narrative style, which Davidson, Walton, and Andrews argue "operate[s] in the spaces between the oral and the written, offering a generous but thorough inquiry into the construction of history, culture, race, gender, sexuality, and genre" (11).

Coyote embodies the oral textuality of Vizenor's semiotic trickster by his representation, not as an embodied character, "but rather as a linguistic construct sent forth to disrupt our acceptance of certain 'old stories'—stories that collude in the oppression of Native Americans" (Smith 516). The novel begins with a familiar "old story," an allusion to the Biblical Book of Genesis: "So. In the beginning, there was nothing. Just the water" (King 1). The next image is Coyote sleeping, and he has a dream with which he has a conversation. Coyote's dream wants to be Coyote too, but Coyote explains to his dream that it cannot be Coyote, but it can be a dog. The dog changes its name to god and then to G O D, asserting itself like a bully. Coyote observes, "That Dog Dream has everything backward" (2). Coyote's accidental creation of the Christian God undermines the monotheistic foundation of the religion as well as the omnipotence of its sole deity. In addition, the negative portrayal of the Christian God links the violence of Christianity in its complicity with European colonization. Such complicity can be traced back to Pope Alexander VI's papal bull, *Inter Caetera*, calling for both the conquest of Indian nations and conversion of their peoples (Womack, "A Single" 9). The scene in which Coyote

accidentally creates the Christian God foreshadows the extent to which the novel will subvert the most prevalent Euro-American creation story.

The female creator narrators wear masks so they may subvert the “old stories”—or Western hegemonic narratives—of the text and play a role in the plot strand of the contemporary Blackfoot characters. These deities are disguised as four old Indian men named The Lone Ranger, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe, and Hawkeye, who have escaped from a mental hospital in the United States (14). These same Indians once escaped from imprisonment at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida, where they were sent after the U.S. Army’s 1874 campaign against the southern Plains tribes (15). In order to escape, the deities needed the disguises of the characters above in order to pass through American society undetected. Each of these fictional personages is the European or American half of a pair coupled with an aboriginal Other: Tonto, Queequeg, Friday, and Chingachgook. By taking the identity of the colonizer, these deities resist their subjugation by the U.S. military. Carlton Smith asserts,

Here these names [The Lone Ranger, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe, and Hawkeye] refer to Indians—not the “white” halves of what Leslie Fielder long ago described as the frontier couple. “Uncoupled” from works that produced and grounded their former signification/indentifications, the names playfully reveal the way the Other functions as an indelible component within discovery and frontier narratives, servicing the psycho-social construction of the Euro-American self. (525)

This division of the frontier couple with an Indigenous appropriation of the Euro-American self is reminiscent of W.E.B. Dubois’s discussion of “double consciousness” in *The Souls of Black Folk*. DuBois’s model of multiple identities has been adopted by minorities other than African Americans in situations of cultural dominance and has been particularly useful for postcolonial theory (Singh and Schmidt 21). In this context, the “disguises” worn by the Native Americans give them more than just the physical freedom to pass through American society: the female deities are also given the freedom to speak, or tell stories, in a culture dominated by a patriarchal,

monologic theology. This domination is evidenced by the Indians' imprisonment in a mental institution overseen by Dr. Joseph Hovaugh and the necessity of escape. Robin Ridington points out that the doctor's name is one of the novel's many plays on words: J. Hovaugh or Jehovah (348-349). Such wordplay is indicative of the text's oral nature because it requires "an internal 'sounding' in order to catch the written joke" (Davidson, Walton, and Andrews 110). With this wordplay, King seems to suggest that the female deities of Native American cosmologies have been imprisoned by the patriarchal, monologic G O D of Christianity. Paula Gunn Allen speaks to such subjugation of American Indian matriarchies by Western patriarchy in *The Sacred Hoop*:

In the centuries since the first attempts at colonization in the early 1500s, the invaders have exerted every effort to remove Indian women from every position of authority, to obliterate all records pertaining to gynocratic social systems [woman-centered tribal societies], and to ensure that no American and few American Indians would remember that gynocracy was the primary social order of Indian America prior to 1800. (3)

King writes resistance into the female deities' "imprisonment," suggesting Native survivance since they find ways to leave the asylum when they need to "fix the world" (King 133).

According to Dr. Hovaugh, this is not the first time the Indians have escaped, their other disappearances coinciding with natural disasters such as the eruptions of Mt. St. Helens in 1980 and Krakatau in 1883 (47-48). This simulated imprisonment is symbolic of Euro-American hegemony over Native American culture: the façade of a dominant power structure exists, but true control is impossible.

Though the gender of the female deities' masks gives them the freedom to exert power within a patriarchal society, there is a doubled resistance behind their cross-gendered masking. Unlike Silko's avoidance of troubled gender/sexuality issues in *Almanac of the Dead*, King embraces Judith Butler's conception of gender as construct,⁶ offering "an ironic commentary on the limits of Judeo-Christian religions and alters the rigidity of the sex/gender systems that

underpin them” (Davidson, Walton, and Andrews 180) through his portrayal of the cross-dressing deities. “Two-Spirit People” is a term created by Native Americans to describe how some tribal cultures view gender multiply, rather than dualistically, such as “women, men, two-spirit/womanly-males, and . . . two-spirit/womanly-females” (Lang 103). According to Davidson, Walton, and Andrews, both the U.S. and Canadian governments, like the Spanish conquistadors before them, have “repeatedly tried to eradicate ‘two-spirit’ members of Native North American tribes, in order to civilize the community and to find a place within normative (meaning heterosexual) conceptions of gender identity” (180). The multiply-gendered deities in *Green Grass, Running Water* author a creation story that posits possibilities for human existence that are not limited by the boundaries of one gender or another.

Each section of *Green Grass, Running Water* displays its oral textuality through narrative strategy and content: Coyote, one narrator, converses with the first-person narrator, and each of the female creators also co-narrates this postcolonial creation story. The first section is a retelling of the Garden of Eden story in which First Woman lives with “Ahdamn.” This humorous jab at the Christian Adam subverts the dominant religion in two ways. First, “Ahdamn” is something one might say in frustration, such as the frustration that practitioners of female-centered spiritualities might feel at being forced to assimilate into a patriarchal system. Secondly, “Ahdamn” is something one might say in the face of an accident, which appears to be what “Ahdamn” is since Coyote says “I don’t know where he comes from” (40). Unlike the Christian story in which the first male is primary and wrought in the image of God, “Ahdamn” is simply a companion of First Woman and exerts no dominance over her. First Woman and Ahdamn quickly come into conflict with G O D and decide to leave the garden as a result of the “Christian rule” that they are not allowed to eat anything. It all belongs to G O D (73), a

reflection of Christianity's complicity with imperialistic powers who saw places and people as objects to be taken, regardless of others' concepts of ownership. Eventually, the two are imprisoned in Ft. Marion but break out in the guises of the Lone Ranger and Tonto (106), appropriating the Hollywood stereotype of dominant cowboy hero and submissive Indian sidekick. Ahdamn's masking as Tonto, Spanish for "fool," invokes the violence of the conquistadors; hence, the Christian first man must masquerade in the disparaging clothes constructed for Native American peoples at the outset of cultural contact. Since Coyote has bumbled by permitting First Woman to be captured by representatives of colonial domination, the first-person narrator insists that Coyote begin the story again (107). Such foolishness is typical of the trickster, but the first-person narrator forces him to re-tell the story again and again throughout the novel until the various hegemonic Western discourses are overcome.

The second section of the book features Ishmael, or Changing Woman, as a co-narrator who falls from the sky into Noah's Ark. Once again, Christian rules cause conflict when Changing Woman speaks to animals and refuses to be Noah's wife. Noah banishes her from the ark and leaves her on an island to be picked up by the Pequod, Captain Ahab's ship from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Coyote perceptively points out that Ahab "looks like that G O D guy" (219). Like the delusional G O D, unaware that he is Coyote's dream, Ahab believes that he is seeking a great white male whale, when everyone on his ship, including Changing Woman can see that the whale is female and black. When they see "Moby-Jane," the crew cries, "Blackwhaleblackwhaleblackwhalesbianblackwhalesbianblackwhale" (220). Like her white male counterpart, Moby-Jane sinks the ship, and Changing Woman rides on her back to the "very warm" and "very wet" (248) waters off the coast of Florida. Yonic imagery suggests that the two females engage in sexual activity before Moby-Jane must return to sea to a never-ending

cycle of sinking the Pequod. Unfortunately, once on land, Changing Woman is imprisoned in Fort Marion, yet another mistake by Coyote, who has to begin the tale-telling again (250). This section is rich in its representation of resistance against hegemonic discourse. Not only does the Indigenous creator reject the Christian rule of not speaking to the animals aboard the ark, but she also rejects heterosexuality (Noah) in favor of companionship and pleasure (Moby-Jane). This revisionist version of *Moby Dick* upsets the patriarchal hierarchy of Western culture and the heterosexual dictum of Christianity. Furthermore, the transformation of the whale's gender and race adds a new dimension to the following interpretation of Captain Ahab from Said's *Culture and Imperialism*: "Captain Ahab is an allegorical representation of the American world quest; he is obsessed, compelling, unstoppable, completely wrapped up in his own rhetorical justification and his sense of cosmic symbolism" (288). Hence, King points out the history of racial and gender discrimination that have underpinned the American quest for domination.

The third section of *Green Grass, Running Water* is co-narrated by Thought Woman, or Robinson Crusoe. In this chapter, King collapses the Judeo-Christian hierarchal structure with that of the Canadian government by introducing the character of A.A. Gabriel whose business card reads "Canadian Security and Intelligence Service" on one side and "Heavenly Host" (298) on the other. This conflation suggests the complicity of colonial governments and the Christian church in their mutual desire to assimilate American Indians. Like the other female creators, Thought Woman upsets the power structure by refusing to follow Christian rules, in this case engage in a virgin birth or be "Mary" (301). This resistance is indicative of Thought Woman's ability to create without having to be the female vessel of a male deity. This is supported by Paula Gunn Allen's assertion that for Keres (Laguna Pueblo) theology, Thought Woman is "She Who Thinks rather than She Who Bears" (*The Sacred* 15), a deity who creates through thought.

Later in the chapter Thought Woman floats to Robinson Crusoe's island. She finds the fictional figure obsessively making lists, ready to place her in the role of his indigenous Other, Friday. He explains, "as a civilized white man, it has been difficult not having someone of color around whom I could educate and protect" (325). Like many colonizing Europeans, both Daniel Defoe's and Thomas King's Robinson Crusoes make the assumption that the Indigenous people they are either conquering or enslaving have no language or culture, and it is their duty to teach such people. Generally, this impulse did not stem from a desire to engage in intercultural exchange; rather, the intent was to control, as evidenced by the following passage from one of Christopher Columbus's letters to the Spanish monarchs about the Arawak Indians he encountered in the New World:

They should be good servants, and very intelligent, for I observed that they soon repeat anything that is said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians, for they appeared to me to have no religion. God willing, when I make my departure I will bring half a dozen back to their majesties so that they can learn to speak. (qtd. in Asselin 138)

Columbus's letters and journals reflect a larger colonial discourse surrounding the acquisition of wealth by imperial powers who needed to find a way to make the Indigenous peoples they encountered useful. As Columbus points out, two effective tools toward this end are religion and language. King rewrites this narrative of domination by giving Thought Woman the agency to do what neither Friday in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* nor Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* could do: she rejects Crusoe's imperialistic advances and floats away (326). Even though Thought Woman resists gender and racial oppression and boldly appropriates the character of one of her attempted oppressors, she still washes ashore on a Florida beach to be imprisoned at Fort Marion (361). Bumbling Coyote's story must begin again in order to achieve the larger resistance that the novel attempts.

Old Woman co-narrates the fourth section of the novel, wearing the mask of Hawkeye, the “Indian name” of James Fenimore Cooper’s protagonist, Natty Bumppo in *The Leatherstocking Tales*. Like Thought Woman, Old Woman floats around on water until she encounters Young Man Walking on Water (387), clearly a reference to a scene involving Jesus in the Biblical Book of Matthew. Once again, the female deity gets in trouble for not following the rules. When she inquires about the nature of these rules, she is told that they are, “Christian rules” (388) by Young Man Walking on Water. He continues, “And the first rule is no one can help me. The second rule is that no one can tell me anything. Third, no one is allowed to be in two places at once. Except me” (388). Despite these rules, Young Man Walking on Water cannot stop increasingly turbulent waves from rocking a boat full of men, presumably his disciples. Instead, Old Woman sings to the waves and calms the waters, but Jesus degrades her methodology and her gender, taking credit for her work. The men in the boat decide to follow him as a spiritual leader (391). This revisionist scene overturns the perception of a miracle-working benevolent Jesus, suggesting instead a deceitful and controlling figure. This deceitful and controlling version of Christianity is what would have been perceived by practitioners of Native American spiritualities who were forced to adopt a new religion by missionaries and colonial governments. After the conflict with Young Man Walking on Water, Old Woman continues on her way, nonplussed by her interaction with the male deity, suggesting that omnipotence is not what she seeks.

Old Woman next encounters her Euro-American counterpart, Nasty Bumppo, a play on Natty Bumppo, and a dialogue ensues:

Indians can run fast. Indians can endure pain. Indians have quick reflexes.
Indians don’t talk much. Indians have good eyesight. Indians have agile bodies.
These are all Indian gifts, says Nasty Bumppo.
Interesting, says Old Woman.

Whites are patient. Whites are spiritual. Whites are cognitive. Whites are philosophical. Whites are sophisticated. Whites are sensitive. These are all white gifts, says Nasty Bumppo. (434)

These “gifts” are actually the stereotypical binary oppositions born of scientific racist theories that were used as justifications to oppress Native American peoples. King’s re-naming of Cooper’s protagonist is a critique of the treatment of Native peoples by whites, particularly of the attempted genocide of Eastern woodlands tribes such as the Mahicans. Barbara Alice Mann describes how the American Revolution, which took place during the same era as Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*, was known as “The Holocaust” for the Iroquois (69).⁷ Ironically, Nasty Bumppo disproves his assertion of white patience and sensitivity by attempting to kill Old Woman for no clear reason. The soldiers who falsely accuse Old Woman of killing Nasty and imprison her in Fort Marion clearly do not demonstrate their supposed cognitive or philosophical gifts. Once again, Coyote has not told the story correctly since another American Indian deity is imprisoned.

James Cox argues that the repetitious narrative form of *Green Grass, Running Water*, which changes in syntax, action, and characterization depending on the narrator/speaker, reflects the novel’s rootedness in a fluid oral tradition rather than a fixed written one. Such a narrative approach also illuminates the assumptions of a hegemonic Euro-American discourse that has insisted on the primacy of Western patriarchal narratives over indigenous American matriarchal narratives for their supposed superiority.

King illustrates that there is more than one plot in the story of Native and non-Native relations, and suggests that the imposition of a monolithic plot of doom is an act of domination that silences stories and lives. By revising and subverting the Judeo-Christian myth in Genesis and the story of Noah, and by critiquing or undermining the power of Gabriel and Jesus, King draws our attention to the narrative construction of belief systems and emphasizes that authorial choice rather than divine sanction informed the production of narratives that plot the European conquest of Native America. (230-231)

None of the stories told by the female deities is given primacy over another, nor are they subjugated by any dominant Euro-American ideology. But because of the interplay of Coyote with these narrators, there is another narrative strand in the text that will demonstrate a larger resistance than any one of the previously discussed stories: the story of the contemporary Blackfoot characters. This plot strand will become the new creation story that finally can overturn five centuries of hegemonic Euro-American discourses. Each of the narrators (Coyote, the female deities, and the first-person narrator) has contributed to this overarching resistant narrative reflecting the novel's complicated oral textuality.

In addition to oral textuality, *Green Grass, Running Water* is replete with comedy. Naming is a fertile source of humor, previously demonstrated by the female deities' choice of disguises and by King's "J. Hovaugh" or "Ahdamn" puns. The Garden of Eden scene contains a metonym for the way signs are humorously disrupted in the text: "You are a microwave oven, Ahdamn tells the Elk. Nope, says that Elk. Try again. You are a garage sale, Ahdamn tells the Bear. We got to get you some glasses, says the Bear. You are a telephone book, Ahdamn tells the Cedar Tree. You're getting closer, says the Cedar Tree" (41). This scene demonstrates a rift between Ahdamn's perception of signifiers and signifieds. Joy Porter claims that this rift is a satirical poke at "the European renaming and hierarchizing process Columbus began through juxtaposing Christian and Native origin myths" (44). This is supported by King's renaming of the explorer himself as Crystal Bell Cologne. If the signified of Cristobal Colon is a thirteenth-century Italian sailor known for his discovery of two new continents, replacing the signifier with its near homonym, Crystal Bell Cologne, a retired Italian actor who played the role of an Indian in numerous Hollywood Westerns (Ridington 350), the sign wavers from this ironic replacement. Instead of the discoverer of the "New World" whose actions set forth a chain of events that

resulted in the near genocide of Native Americans, the character is a Euro-American whose success is solely a result of simulating that cultural destruction from within an Indigenous façade. The fact that the name sounds like a cheap perfume deflates the explorer's historical importance. Another play on names is Henry Dawes, not only an inattentive college student in Alberta Frank's Native American history class, but also the author of the Dawes Act of 1887 which began the privatization of Indigenous land (350). The contemporary Dawes sleeps through much of the lecture, suggesting a similar inattentiveness by his historical counterpart whose action led to significant land loss by Native peoples as previously discussed in Erdrich's *Tracks*.

Another humorous aspect of the text is Coyote's playfulness which leads to unexpected outcomes. For example, in the section of the book in which the A.A. Gabriel seeks a "Mary," and Thought Woman refuses, Coyote begins to sing (King 370). Later in this same chapter, Latisha, Lionel's sister, suggests to Alberta that she might be pregnant (393). Alberta finds this unlikely because even though she is in relationships with both Charlie and Lionel, she can't bring herself to commit to either one. What she really wants is a child and goes so far as to begin the process of artificial insemination, but she has not yet made it through the layers of bureaucracy (201). As the narrative progresses, however, all physical signs suggest that Alberta is pregnant. At the novel's end, Coyote admits that he was the cause of her pregnancy, just like he had been the cause of an immaculate conception long ago. Hawkeye (Old Woman) claims, "We haven't straightened out *that* mess yet!" (456). Like the accidental creation of G O D from a dog, Coyote accidentally creates the Christ child. This is one more subversion of Christian hegemony by denying the omnipotence of God. Here Coyote is a manifestation of the sacred trickster who is both a buffoon and a hero because of his acts of resistance against the dominant culture. His

singing and dancing also lead to the earthquake that destroys the Grand Baleen Dam, signaling the climax of the plot strand that concerns the contemporary Blackfoot characters and the creation of an Indigenous-centered worldview (450).

Like the other novels analyzed in this chapter, *Green Grass, Running Water* exhibits healing qualities. As the four old Indians suggest, their escape from the mental institution is an attempt to “fix the world” (133). Two young Blackfoot men, Charlie and Lionel, are in need of “fixing” because of their assimilation into Euro-American culture, particularly their influence by Hollywood stereotypes of Indians. Charlie Looking Bear has assimilated into the dominant society by becoming a lawyer and a materialist, interested only in his own personal gain. This is a result of his father’s failure as a Hollywood actor and his later relationship with Buffalo Bill Bursum. Charlie’s father, Portland Looking Bear, is only a minimally successful Indian actor playing Indian roles until he adopts a more “authentic” Indian name, Iron Eyes Screeching Eagle. Portland’s increasing success epitomizes Vizenor’s description of simulated Indianness: the more he adopts the mask of the Hollywood Indian, simply an updated version of the European colonizers’ view of a static Indian identity, the more “absent” his actual Native identity becomes. Portland’s career nearly ends when he refuses to wear a fake nose that would make him look “more Indian” (170). As Blanca Schorcht contends, “Whites are fascinated with Native culture; they want to play Indian and take pictures of Indians, but the Native identity that they want reflected back at them is more Indian than the Natives actually are” (75). Evidence of this is the success of Buffalo Bill Bursum’s electronics store on the edge of the reservations. Buffalo Bill, like his historical counterpart, sells simulations of Indians, though his are in the form of Western films that can be rented and viewed on the ultimate simulation-makers, televisions, which he also sells. Bursum had employed Charlie as a youth and believes that “[p]ower and control . . . were

outside the range of the Indian imagination . . . [but] Charlie had made great strides in trying to master this fundamental cultural tenet” (King 141). Charlie is healed from his assimilated worldview when the four old Indians (the female creators in their male, European Other disguises) “fix” one of the Hollywood Westerns starring John Wayne in which his father had also acted. For once, the Indians beat the U.S. Cavalry (358). Charlie stops mourning his father’s failure to become a famous Hollywood actor and becomes proud of his father’s newfound, on-screen dignity, moving away from his own self-centered existence.

The Sun Dance is the event of the narrative toward which all the characters are drawn and which becomes a place of healing for Lionel. Lionel is a middle-aged man, employed by Buffalo Bill, with seemingly no direction and no options. He dreamed of being John Wayne as a child: “Not the actor, but the character. Not the man, but the hero. The John Wayne who cleaned up cattle towns and made them safe for decent folk. The John Wayne who shot guns out of the hands of outlaws. The John Wayne who saved stagecoaches and wagon trains from Indian attacks” (265). Despite his father’s argument that there were many great Blackfoot leaders, Lionel has bought into the hegemonic Hollywood dynamic: John Wayne, the ultimate heroic cowboy, will always be a subject; whereas, an Indian, the savage enemy, will always be an object. Ibis Gomez-Vega discusses Lionel’s identity crisis in terms of the traditional initiation ceremonies in Blackfoot/Gros Ventre society for males in their mid-thirties:

At the age of thirty-nine, Lionel should be well on his way to figure out who he is and where he belongs in the world. That he still has no clue is one of the reasons why the four old Indians escape the asylum and make the journey to the Blackfoot reservation bringing with them an old leather coat worn by John Wayne in one of the movies they “fixed.” The coat, with a bullet hole still in it (since in the “revised” version of the movie John Wayne is shot by the Indians), eventually becomes too small for Lionel. (12)

The coat to which Gomez-Vega refers is meant to replace Lionel's orange blazer which he wears in Buffalo Bill's Indian simulation store. Lionel wears the leather coat and unwillingly accompanies his Uncle Eli to the Sun Dance, an event which he has not attended in many years. Carlton Smith explains that the "Sun Dance is a sacred rite of transformation, of revision. And the Sun Dance is communal, a shared experience celebrating the plurality of voices of its participants" (528). By participating in the communal event of the Sun Dance and rejecting his dead-end job off the reservation, Lionel comes to terms with himself and his role in the larger community, thus "outgrowing" the John Wayne coat, a symbol of his childhood desire to wear a mask of the dominant culture.

Alberta's pregnancy is another instance of healing in *Green Grass, Running Water*. Her inability to trust men likely comes from the distress she experienced as a child because of her father's alcoholism. Her father's personal pain is associated with the oppression of Blackfoot culture, particularly in the scene in which Alberta's family is crossing the U.S./Canada border to attend a powwow. During the border crossing, their ceremonial outfits are confiscated by the U.S. border guard since they contain eagle feathers (King 284). Eagle feathers are illegal to possess in the United States unless they are being used for a Native religious ceremony, allowable by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA). Despite the passage of AIRFA in 1978, tribal peoples still struggle for the right to obtain and use eagle feathers in ceremonies (Michaelson 126). The scene involving Alberta's family's loss of their sacred outfits is not one of bureaucratic efficacy; rather, they are victims to a cruel degradation of their cultural beliefs (King 284). Eventually, the Canadian government is able to get the items back from the U.S. officials and return them to the family, but only after the eagle feathers have been removed, and the outfits have been soiled by someone's dirty boots (314). This scene of

traumatic border crossing reveals the problem of national boundaries being overlaid on tribes for whom such boundaries act as cultural dividers; this is the same dilemma discussed in *Almanac of the Dead* by Calabazas, the “illegal” Mexican immigrant living in Tucson whose Yaqui family has traveled the region of what is now the U.S.-Mexican border for centuries prior to colonization. Davidson, Walton, and Andrew claim that Thomas King’s “focus on the forty-ninth parallel is, indeed, timely and relevant because it speaks to the issues of tribal identity and nationality that are at the centre of recent governmental negotiations in both Canada and the United States” (12). Border studies⁸ has grown from the complex issues arising from cultures surrounding the U.S./Mexico border, yet King’s project is to draw readers’ eyes northward to the other border “that embodies its own set of contradictions and conflicts” (12). Alberta’s pregnancy helps her to replace the painful memories of family from her childhood with a new beginning, and she of course, is the “Mary” of the text, as a result of Coyote’s immaculate conception. Since she has refused both Lionel and Charlie, Alberta will be both mother and father to her child, like the female creator deities in the novel, resisting gendered boundaries. Her personal healing reflects a larger tribal healing, her name a symbol of her geographical location, the governmentally-drawn province of Alberta, suggesting a Native American reappropriation of the land.

The most significant healing event in the text is Coyote’s earthquake, which leads to the destruction of the Grand Baleen Dam on the Blackfoot Reservation. King’s dam operates as a dual signifier referencing both the Great Whale project in northern Quebec (Cox 238) and the white whale of *Moby Dick*. The damming of the Great Whale River was opposed by the Quebec Cree, and the project was eventually dropped in 1994, an event which James Cox claims King is celebrating in *Green Grass, Running Water*. King’s Grand Baleen is also Ahab’s white object of

obsession, “a monstrous creation of European American imagination that promises destruction and doom” (239). The fictional dam is controversial because when it begins operation, it would flood the home that Eli Stands Alone’s mother, Lionel’s grandmother, built by hand. In protest, Eli moves back into his mother’s home and refuses to leave (King 123). Eli’s resistance is the model for both Charlie’s and Lionel’s embrace of traditional Blackfoot culture. In a satirical poke at Columbus’s voyage, three vehicles have floated away on various bodies of water during the course of the story, a Nissan, a Pinto, and a Karmann-Ghia, to eventually sail across Parliament Lake and crash into the dam during the earthquake caused by Coyote’s dancing (448). This is another of King’s humorous name games, the cars suggesting the Spanish ships, the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. As Cox argues, “The cumulative revisions of different genres of domination and conquest—from origin stories employed as tools of domination to literary narratives—suggest King’s interest in revising the entire dominative history of white-Native relations” (237). *Green Grass, Running Water* is a creation story, attempting to re-create the history of European colonization of the Americas. The title refers to the oft-cited and oft-broken promise toward Native Americans that treaties would be honored, “[a]s long as the grass is green and the waters run” (King 296). Buffalo Bill Bursum spouts a colonizer’s perception of the phrase: “[I]t didn’t mean anything. It was a metaphor. Eli knew that. Every Indian on the reserve knew that. Treaties were hardly sacred documents. They were contracts, and no one signed a contract for eternity” (296). These words encapsulate the cultural disconnect between Europeans and Indigenous Americans. The destruction of the dam in King’s novel symbolizes overturning the hegemony of Euro-American ideologies. The water does not run when it is dammed; hence, breaking the dam can begin to heal a history of broken treaties. Nature, too, can

heal when the dam is broken since the name “Parliament Lake” represents the Canadian government’s attempt to control the boundaries of the natural world.

Gerald Vizenor’s *Chancers*, Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks*, and Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water* are trickster narratives exhibiting oral textuality, comedy, and healing elements. Though Vizenor draws heavily from both poststructuralist theory and traditional Anishinaabe cosmology to construct this and other theories about the colonization of Native Americans and resulting cultural conflicts, his trickster hermeneutics is a theoretical approach springing from Indigenous aesthetics. Critics have noted how his conceptions of tricksters parallel ideas about oppression and resistance set forth by Homi Bhabha. Carlton Smith discusses how orality is a significant method of resistance against colonialism for Bhabha: “Orality . . . resists hegemony and encourages more ‘hybrid’ and communal world-views” (527-528). Hence, the oral nature of Vizenor’s semiotic trickster underscores the resistance of trickster narratives.

My project focuses on the role of the semiotic trickster as a creator of Bhabha’s third space; Elvira Pulitano makes a similar, but divergent argument in *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*: “Vizenor’s trickster hermeneutics negotiates between two different epistemologies, and within this context it functions as the perfect embodiment of Bhabha’s third space” (178). Though Pulitano claims she is focusing on epistemological difference, she locates the third space within the mixed-blood trickster of Vizenor’s *Earthdivers: Tribal Narratives on Mixed Descent*. Vizenor’s 1981 work borrows a theme from Anishinaabe creation stories to form a metaphor about living in the United States as a descendent of both Europeans and Native Americans. He asserts that “Métis tricksters . . . are the metaphors between new sources of opposition and colonial ideas about savagism and civilization” (xi). Pulitano believes that “Vizenor’s trickster would seem to embody Bhabha’s notion of hybridity, dismantling . . .

essentialist notions of identity and pure origins [and becoming] a position of power from which to construct a new identity” (178). My argument rests on the performative nature of Bhabha’s third space which is generated by acts of divination in the previous chapter or by acts of tale-telling in this one. Pulitano’s argument places the resistance of the three novels examined in this chapter in an alternate but parallel third space of personal identity: *Chancers*, *Tracks*, and *Green Grass, Running Water* are all creations of mixed-blood authors. Gerald Vizenor’s mother was European-American while his father was a mixed-blood descendent of the Crane clan of the White Earth Anishinaabeg (Blaeser, “Gerald Vizenor’s” 258). Louise Erdrich’s father was of German descent, while her mother had both Ojibwe and French heritage (Van Dyke 99). Thomas King is descended from Greek, German and Cherokee ancestry (Schorcht ix). Following Vizenor’s metaphor, these authors, in the role of mixed-blood tricksters, are involved in the same process of creation as Wenabojo who dove down below a world of water to bring up pieces of earth for the other creatures to live on, eventually creating the land as we know it (Vizenor, *Earthdivers* xii). Wenabojo, the trickster, is the boundary crosser between two worlds, the one who draws them together. This, too, is the job of these métis trickster-authors whose novels span the gaps between colonizer and colonized and between author and reader, to create new spaces in the discourse of American literature.

End Notes

¹ In his *Course in General Linguistics*, Ferdinand de Saussure introduces the science of semiology in which he defines a sign as the totality of a signifier, or concept, and a signified, the sound-image which names the concept.

² The “noble savage” trope has roots in eighteenth century European Romanticism, often attributed to Jean Jacques Rousseau’s theories of humankind, particularly *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*.

³ Prior to *Chancers*, Vizenor's writings on Ishi appear in *Manifest Manners* and *Ishi and the Wood Ducks: Postindian Trickster Comedies*. Blaeser details Vizenor's relationship with Ishi in *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* (58-59).

⁴ According to the *Popol Vuh*, Huracán is the Mayan god of storms who could "spin and dance like the whirlwind" (Martin, Notes 343).

⁵ Naanabozho figures prominently in Vizenor's work as well. Blaeser cites the following examples: *The People Named Chippewa*, *Earthdivers*, *Wordarrows*, and *Dead Voices* (Gerald Vizenor 30).

⁶ See *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*.

⁷ Chapter Two examines other reference to European colonization as a Holocaust to Indigenous Americans.

⁸ Chapter Two contains a more comprehensive examination of border studies within the analysis of *Almanac of the Dead*.

CHAPTER FOUR: CEREMONIES AS SACRED SPACES OF RESISTANCE IN *FOOLS CROW*, *HOUSE MADE OF DAWN*, AND *SHELL SHAKER*

In previous chapters, I argued that Homi Bhabha's conception of a third space operates as a model of hybridity within novelistic representations of resistance in Native America. In Chapter Two, that third space is produced through the divination of sacred Mesoamerican texts; in Chapter Three, it manifests through Vizenor's trickster hermeneutics. In Chapter Four, ceremonies, loci of healing for many Native American peoples, create this third space in their production of new meanings for the cultures and characters depicted. According to Bhabha, "The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address" (51). James Welch's *Fools Crow*, N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, and LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker* are novels which reflect ruptures between traditional tribal pasts and colonized tribal presents; ceremonial events in each of these texts generate new visions of reality which can be read as anticolonial resistance within atemporal and sacred third spaces.¹

Paula Gunn Allen claims that ceremonies and myths are bases of American Indian literature: "The ceremony is the ritualized enactment of a specialized perception of a cosmic relationship, while the myth is a prose record of that relationship" (*The Sacred* 61). Ceremonies are complex rituals which comprise songs, dances, prayers, chants or numerous other components depending on their tribal context and purpose. They unify individuals with their communities and communities with larger spiritual realms (62). It must be clear to the non-Indian reader of texts such as those examined in this chapter, that ceremonies are spiritual events and should not be taken lightly. Allen elaborates on the religious nature of ceremony and its relationship with American Indian literature:

The structures [of ceremonial-based Native literatures] that embody expressed and implied relationships between human and nonhuman beings, as well as the symbols that signify and articulate them, are designed to integrate the various orders of consciousness. Entities other than the human participants are present at ceremonial enactments, and the ceremony is composed for their participation as well as for that of the human beings who are there. Some tribes understand that the human participants include members of the tribe who are not physically present and that the community as a community, not simply the separate persons in attendance, enact the ceremony. (63)

It is understood, therefore, that in addition to human beings (present or not), other beings such as deities or other spiritual entities may participate in ceremonial events. There may be an audience for the ceremony whose participation is assumed and simply requires their attention (64). Such participation requires faith, or at the very least, for non-Indian readers of ceremonial-based texts, an acceptance of a non-empiricist perspective.

At this point, it is helpful to differentiate between the achievements of writers like Welch, Momaday, and Howe and those of Latin American magical realist authors such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Jorge Luis Borges and Isabel Allende. The “magical realist” label has been applied to Native American novels based in Indigenous American belief systems by some critics. Lois Parkinson Zamora has suggested that both *Ceremony* and *Tracks* are magically real texts (“Magical Romance” 502), and R.F. Gish classifies *Fools Crow* similarly (349). The growth of world literatures exhibiting magically real characteristics is fascinating, and there are considerable debates in which magical realism is defined and texts are classified as such, particularly with consideration of postmodern and postcolonial discourse.² However, this label is not appropriate for literatures with spiritual bases in Native American religions. Magical realism is a twentieth-century phenomenon, an outgrowth of Latin American culture in which Europeans, their descendants, and Indigenous American cultures had interacted for centuries. Stephen Slemon argues that magic and realism are binary oppositions and that the tension between them

reflects real tensions within postcolonial cultures (409-411). I would argue that for those critics who classify Native American literatures as magically real, the former signifier represents the epistemologies of the colonized culture and the latter of the colonizer. What is problematic in this schema is the historical prejudice against actual European magic practitioners by both religious and scientific institutions because magic has connotations of being “demonic, evil and fearful, as medieval or backward, as unscientific, irrational or uncivilized, as something ‘other’” (Jolly 8-9). Therefore, affixing the magical realism label to Native literatures continues the oppression and degradation of American Indian religious practices which began with the first colonizing Christians in the Americas. In the United States, Native Americans were only given the same right that other Americans had since the country’s beginning—the right to freely practice their own spiritual beliefs—in 1978 with the passage of the Indian Freedom of Religion Act (McGowan 64). Kathleen Mullen Sands has described *Fools Crow* as “realism of a tribal nature, a reality imbued with mythic forces and figures” (84). Yet the word “myth,” too, can be problematic since, as Allen argues, “current dictionary definitions of *myth* reinforce a bias that enables the current paradigm of our technocratic social science-based society to prevail over tribal or poetic views just as it enables an earlier Christian biblical paradigm to prevail over the pagan one” (102). Despite this, when the application of the word “mythic” suggests an ordering of the universe, it then becomes a way of engaging with American Indian cultures (104). Hence, unlike the magical realist classification, Sands’s categorization of *Fools Crow* does not fall into a Eurocentric trap.

Louis Owens describes *Fools Crow*, published in 1986 by Blackfeet author James Welch, as “the most profound act of recovery in American literature” (Owens, *Other* 166). The novel is set from approximately 1867 to 1870, following the growth of the title character as he and his

tribe endure such tragedies as a smallpox epidemic and the 1870 Marias River Massacre in which 173 Blackfeet, mostly women and children, were killed by the U.S. Cavalry. Welch has particular interest in the latter event since his great-grandmother survived the massacre and passed down its story to his father (Gish 352). Though the plot occurs in media res of Euro-America's Western expansion, many scholars have commented on the novel's ability to recreate the traditional Pikuni (Blackfeet) worldview, even as colonization squeezed the tribe from its lands. The German translator of the text, Andrea Opitz, argues that "[T]he novel reappropriates the now-colonized land, both decolonizing it for whites and re-imagining it in a precolonial state for Native Americans" (127).

One of Welch's decolonization tools is language: he abrogates and appropriates English in order to create a world that seems to approximate Pikuni pre-Contact existence. Abrogation and appropriation of language are common processes of postcolonial writers. Abrogation is a form of resistance that occurs when the standard form of the language, as prescribed by the hegemonic culture, is rejected. Appropriation occurs when a language is reformed in order to represent a particular cultural experience (Ashcroft et al. 37-38). Welch appropriates English syntax and lexicon in order to re-center one space of U.S. history, shifting away from the perspective of the dominant narrative of Manifest Destiny into the perspective of one band (the Lone Eaters), of one tribe (the Pikuni), whose culture and economy were irrevocably changed through interaction with a colonizing Euro-American culture. Welch syntactically appropriates English by using declarative sentences and avoiding complex constructions (Opitz 130), especially in his use of dialogue. An example of this occurs when the young White Man's Dog (later to become known as Fools Crow) returns from a secret raid on the Crow. His worried mother chastises him: "Oh, you are a no-good-one! You run off with these other bad ones, you

sneak off at night, you don't tell your own mother, you would let her die of grief—" (Welch 39).

Three Bears uses the same grammatical structure when agreeing to support Heavy Shield

Woman's desire to be Sacred Vow Woman at the Sun Dance: "We will smoke this pipe . . . We will pray for our sister's success" (103).

Welch's lexical appropriation is even more effective in conveying a Pikuni worldview. By renaming nouns that have correlative meanings in English, while still using a skeleton of English language, Welch demonstrates the epistemological shifts between the colonizers and the colonized in the novel. "Head-and-tail" robes are buffalo skins, and there is no need to clarify what animal's head and tail is being referenced because buffalo are central to the Pikuni economy. "Skinned-tree houses" are those in which the colonizers live, named as such because it is not the practice of the Pikuni to live in dwellings made from "skinned trees"; rather, they live in lodges made from buffalo hides. The most telling appropriation of English by Welch is the designation of the U.S. Cavalry: "blue-coated seizers." This signifier suggests the wide epistemological gap between the Pikunis and the colonizers of western North America. For Euro-Americans, the settlement of the West was the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny; for the Blackfeet Indians, it was the seizure of their homelands.

Within this framework of decolonization, Welch depicts the struggle between colonizer and colonized, seizers versus Pikunis, contrasting the methods of Native revolt, and ultimately creating a sacred space in which a lasting resistance is possible. The U.S. approach to dealing with the Blackfeet tribe, as portrayed in the novel, reflected an overall practice of disenfranchisement and extermination of Native American peoples in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Many new Indian nations were brought under the purview of the U.S. after it brokered treaties with Britain in 1846, Mexico in 1848, and made the Gadsden Purchase in 1853

(Porter 51). Treaty-making was also a method of land acquisition that the U.S. practiced with various Indian societies, beginning in 1778 and ending in 1868. According to Francis Paul Prucha, the 367 treaties that have been made with Native tribes recognize their sovereign status and afford them a degree of protection, though the U.S. government's history of following such agreements is spotty (1-2). Joy Porter expounds on this point: "US/Indian treaties have an ugly history, not least because the concept of buying and selling is alien to traditional Indian thinking and because the treaties struck were repeatedly broken or renegotiated to meet the pressure for new land for non-Indian settlement. Treaty-making with war as an alternative created bitter divisions within Indian societies often geared toward consensus government" (50). In *Fools Crow*, the Pikunis' trust of the Napikwans (whites) is already marred by a broken peace treaty. As Fox Eyes remembers, "They spoke high words that day, but they proved to be two-faced" (138). Tragically, encroachment on their land was not the worst injustice suffered by Native peoples. Genocidal acts including the systematic destruction of Indian food supplies, such as the buffalo, and massacres like the one detailed in Welch's novel or the 1864 Sand Creek, Colorado, massacre of Cheyenne (Porter 53), speak to the degree to which Euro-American settlers believed they were more entitled to exist on North American soil than the Native peoples they encountered there.

Fools Crow is set against a backdrop of broken treaties and genocidal acts. As General Sully, the U.S. Cavalry representative with whom the Pikuni chiefs meet, declares, "the Blackfeet were to be eliminated by any means possible, or at least forced into a position they would never peacefully accept" (Welch 277). Since this position is not formally conveyed to the Pikunis, there are many debates among the tribe about how to best deal with the Napikwans' settlement of their land. Along this spectrum of approaches, one pole is represented by Little

Dog of the Black Patched Moccasin band who attempts to assimilate into the Napikwan society. This approach is unsuccessful for two reasons: the cultural gap is too broad, and there are not enough willing Pikunis. As a result, Little Dog is killed by members of his band for his continued attempts to pacify the Napikwans (96). At the other pole is Owl Child, who “had made the Napikwans cry the most” (60). Owl Child’s methods of raiding white settlers’ homes and killing their inhabitants are not embraced by most of the Pikunis, primarily because his actions bring the vengeance of the U.S. Cavalry back on the tribe. What is most damaging about Owl Child’s actions, however, emerges in an epiphany Fools Crow has when he seeks out Fast Horse, a childhood friend, who had joined Owl Child’s marauding band:

The thought came into his mind without warning, the sudden understanding of what Fast Horse found so attractive in running with Owl Child. It was this freedom from responsibility, from accountability to the group, that was so alluring. As long as one thought of himself as part of the group, he would be responsible to and for that group. If one cut the ties, he had the freedom to roam, to think only of himself and not worry about the consequences of his actions. So it was for Owl Child and Fast Horse to roam. And so it was for the Pikunis to suffer. (Welch 211)

Ironically, despite his hatred of the Napikwans, Owl Child has embraced a particularly Euro-American existence, as he is more concerned for his individual welfare than for that of the tribe. This damages his people because he continues to lure away young men who might have continued tribal traditions, the best example being Fast Horse, who was to become the keeper of the Beaver Medicine bundle, the key artifact of the most powerful medicine of the Pikunis (7). In shamanistic societies such as the Blackfeet, “supernatural power is often believed to reside in objects rather than in persons” (Pasztory 240). Because Fast Horse has such an important role within the Pikuni religious system, his relinquishment of tribal responsibility symbolizes the larger loss of traditional beliefs by Native peoples under colonialist systems. As Allen argues, colonialism “affects a people’s understanding of their universe, their place within that universe,

the kinds of values they must embrace and actions they must make to remain safe and whole within that universe. In short, colonization alters both the individual's and the group's sense of identity" (*The Sacred* 90).

Fast Horse's abandonment of his sacred responsibility leaves a gap in the tribe that Fools Crow fills. Their roles have reversed since childhood when Fast Horse seemed destined to be a leader in the tribe, and Fools Crow felt as though he had no luck (7). Originally called White Man's Dog, he earns the more heroic name Fools Crow from his participation in a successful raid against the Crow early in the novel. During this same raid, Fast Horse selfishly exposes the Pikunis' position, leading to tragedy for their leader, Yellow Kidney, which initiates the younger man's decline (73). Conversely, Fools Crow grows into a model young tribal member, showing bravery against enemies, providing meat and skins to Yellow Kidney's family, and demonstrating interest in cultural traditions. When he becomes apprentice to the many-faces man (medicine man) Mik-api, his journey into the mysteries of the sacred begin. His first vision quest is to find his power animal, Skunk Bear (Wolverine), who later helps him overcome personal struggles. As his healing abilities grow, Fools Crow is able to cure One Spot when he is bitten by a rabid wolf (267). Welch's pairing of Fast Horse and Fools Crow, childhood friends whose paths diverge as adults, echoes the twinning motifs discussed in Chapter Two. Unlike Fast Horse, Fools Crow chooses to be accountable to the group. Pairing these two young men underscores the damage caused to tribal relationships as a result of Euro-American colonization.

In between the two poles of coping with the colonization of the land—assimilation or individualistic violence—*Fools Crow*, represents other, more moderate approaches. The leader whose voice seems most respected, and who most influences the young hero Fools Crow, is his father, Rides-at-the-door. This warrior is an experienced leader and has a complex

understanding of his historical moment as demonstrated by advice he gives his sons: “Any day the seizers could ride into our camps and wipe us out. It is said that already many tribes in the east have been wiped away . . . For this reason we must leave them alone, even allow them some of our hunting ground to raise their whitehorns . . . If we treat wisely with them, we will be able to save enough for ourselves and our children” (89). His wisdom later becomes important in quelling a number of young warriors’ desire to fight the Napikwans: “It is natural for the Pikuni men to wish to fight. We have always fought our enemies. We now engage in the biggest fight of all—the fight for our survival. If we must do it without weapons, so be it. But if the Napikwans mistake our desire for peace for weakness, then let them beware, for the Pikunis will fight them to the death” (177). Rides-at-the-door’s philosophy is one manifestation of Gerald Vizenor’s conception of survivance.³ Survival of the tribe, at the expense of individual desires, is of utmost importance to Rides-at-the-door, but survival does not have to be of an assimilationist nature. Rides-at-the-door advocates strength, and strength is found within the tribal culture; hence, if the culture can be maintained, the tribe can remain strong in the face of any tragedy.

This lesson in survivance is critical in shaping the character of Fools Crow, giving him the strength to understand and act, particularly after he returns from his vision quest in the latter part of the novel.⁴ Though the novel contains many depictions of sacred events, including the Sun Dance and various curing ceremonies, it is Fools Crow’s final vision quest that can be read as resistance against colonialism and a manifestation of Bhabha’s third space. In Chapter 29 of *Fools Crow*, the protagonist leaves his family for seven days because Nitsokan, dream helper, has instructed him to do so; Fools Crow hopes his journey will “help the Lone Eaters find a direction” (316). Vision quests typically require preparation and a willingness to journey to an

isolated place for a period of time (Lyon, "Vision quest" 361-362). Such is the case for Fools Crow, who must journey as a beggar, taking no food, and wearing a deathlike mask painted on his face. After traveling for a prescribed number of days and nights, he comes to an unfamiliar place, in which "Sun Chief never seemed to move from his position directly overhead" (Welch 327). Here Fools Crow meets his spiritual guide: Feather Woman.⁵ According to Pikuni oral tradition, So-at-sa-ki, or Feather Woman, had once been married to Morning Star and lived in the sky with him and his parents, Sun Chief and Night Red Light. Feather Woman was banished from this life for digging the sacred turnip, creating a hole in the sky. Her banishment results in eternal sorrow: she mourns the loss of her husband, whom she is forced to watch rise each morning (111). Fools Crow's vision comes from a yellow skin upon which Feather Woman paints the future of the Pikunis. He sees the death of his people from smallpox; he sees a prairie empty of buffalo; and he sees young Blackfeet children at a government school isolated from their white counterparts (356-359). This vision represents the sacred third space of the novel: tribal past and colonized present come together. Linear time is not relevant in the vision, underscoring Allen's claim that "[t]he traditional tribal concept of time is of timelessness, as the concept of space is of multidimensionality. In the ceremonial world the tribes inhabit, time and space are mythic" (147). In this space, both Fools Crow and the reader see what is and what will be for the Pikunis. Fools Crow's decisions following his vision become resistant acts that work toward healing the wounds of colonialism.

One of these resistant acts is Fools Crow's strong words to the survivors of the Marias River Massacre. He listens to the few surviving women's story of being ambushed by U.S. soldiers and responds, "You will have much to teach the young ones about the Napikwans" (385). Despite the grimness of the scene, his concern is for the future of the tribe, as he was

taught by his own father and as he has seen through his own vision quest. Fools Crow's other acts of resistance are ensuring the survival of his family in the face of a genocidal culture which he understands more than others of his tribe and educating his son, Butterfly, in the Pikuni ways. The final scene is of the Thunder Pipe Ceremony, in which the tribe prays for that which nourishes them: "good health, abundance, and the ability to fulfill vows" (388). Fools Crow has embraced the philosophy of survivance, which Vizenor argues sustains Native Americans to this day. Survival and resistance, however, cannot be achieved without hope, which is the final lesson Fools Crow conveys: "For even though he was, like Feather Woman, burdened with the knowledge of his people, their lives and the lives of their children, he knew they would survive, for they were the chosen ones" (390). The novel's climactic vision quest gives Fools Crow hope that the Pikunis will continue despite colonialism, which is not an end for the tribe, merely a disruption. Fools Crow's hope can heal his people since "[v]ision is a way of becoming whole, of affirming one's special place in the universe . . . [I]t renews all: the visionary and his relatives and friends, even the generations long dead and those yet unborn" (Allen, *The Sacred* 116).

The third space opened up by Fools Crow's vision also enables the reader to engage in resistance against the hegemonic narrative of colonizer/colonized relations in the United States. Opitz argues that

Fools Crow does not simply offer an alternative vision but an alternative space in which the reader dwells. As receptor of the information and vessel for the foreign, fictive world, the reader becomes an active participant in the story. The reader's participation in the text merges the Euro-American idea of text, as an individual's account of history, with the Native American concept of understanding self as part of the whole, part of a community. Slowly, one's perception of one's surroundings changes due to the acquisition of a 'new' language. (129)

Fools Crow feels "strange" when he embarks upon his vision quest, and "when he looked at familiar landmarks he saw them as a stranger would, in a different place, in another time" (317).

The reader, too, feels strange, upon submergence in the Pikuni worldview. For example, the idea that what one culture calls “soldiers” another would call “seizers” might initially be unsettling, despite what the reader might intellectually understand about colonization, because this is not the familiar story of Manifest Destiny. Hence, the non-Indian reader can experience Fools Crow’s vision and his subsequent embracing of survivance as personal philosophy because the text itself is a form of vision quest. This idea is supported by Karl Kroeber’s description of stories as social interactions in which audiences and storytellers create meaning together. Because stories are determined by community interaction, their very existence is predicated by both their telling and the responses of their listeners (“An Introduction” 11). In the case of Welch’s ceremonial-based story, the audience is a participant in the vision quest through attention to ritual acts, like the audiences of Native American ceremonial events as described by Allen above.

Critic Lori Burlingame argues that the text subverts the hegemonic narrative of European American and Native American relations in another way, by engaging in a form of “retroactive prophecy,” a term coined by Jarold Ramsey. According to Ramsey, a text which creates a fictional prophecy collapses linear time between pre-Contact and post-Contact Native cultures, allowing events that occurred during and after colonization to be absorbed into a coherent, cosmological plan. *Almanac of the Dead*, discussed in Chapter Two, is another example of such retroactive prophecy since Silko’s fictional codex predicts both the arrival and disappearance of European culture. Burlingame believes that retroactive prophecy empowers Native peoples “through self-responsibility and cultural awareness and reconnection. In reinscribing the past, they are in effect reclaiming the future and subverting Hollywood and literary stereotypes about the ‘vanishing American.’ They also counter popular contemporary stereotypes, which depict Native peoples as hapless victims and nothing more” (2). In *Fools Crow*, Feather Woman

accepts the blame for the Pikunis' suffering at the hands of the Napikwans as a result of her transgression against the societal rules. This is a lesson of taking responsibility for one's actions, one which Welch conveys many times over in the novel. Fools Crow is honest about his actions, and when he believes he has made a mistake, such as when he kills the Napikwan according to Raven's instruction, he seeks the counsel of his elders (172). Fast Horse, on the other hand, does not take responsibility for his boasting during the Crow raid, which inflicts much pain on Yellow Kidney and the Lone Eaters band (74). Of the two young men, Fools Crow will find success and happiness within the tribe while Fast Horse will be banished, as was Feather Woman (82). In addition, Fools Crow makes a point of distinguishing himself from those he terms "stand-around-the-fort Indians" who were always looking for handouts when the Pikunis came to trade (95); these few irresponsible individuals reinforce a stereotype of Indians seeking handouts that pervades U.S. culture even today. Fools Crow's vision bolsters the novel's lesson of personal responsibility, demonstrating its necessity for tribal survivance.

Another text in which an American Indian ceremonial event creates an atemporal and resistant third space is N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*. Recipient of the 1969 Pulitzer Prize, this novel marks the beginning of the Native American Literary Renaissance for many scholars ("Historical Overview" xxiii). *House Made of Dawn* influenced numerous Native American novels to follow, including *Ceremony*, *Fools Crow* and *Shell Shaker*, yet the placement of its analysis within this chapter reflects the spectrum of decolonizing tactics used by these authors: Welch's novel is set during the initial contact situation of Blackfeet and Euro-American culture; Momaday's novel is set during the early to mid-twentieth century, an era of high assimilation in the U.S.; and Howe's novel moves from initial contact between European

colonizers and the Choctaw peoples to the current era in which contemporary Native peoples consciously strive toward personal and tribal sovereignty.

House Made of Dawn reflects Momaday's belief in the creative power of language and its essential significance in human existence (Momaday, "The Man" 636). The novel's Kiowa peyote priest, Tosamah spreads this belief to his congregation: "[I]n words and in language, and there only . . . [could a storyteller] have whole and consummate being . . . And the simple act of listening is crucial to the concept of language, more crucial even than reading and writing, and language in turn is crucial to human society" (83-84). Through Tosamah, Momaday conveys the power of the oral tradition in its ability to create existence. The author expands upon this point in an interview with Bettye Givens: "Language is so creative in itself, it is intrinsically so powerful that storytellers, people who use language, are in possession of a great power. When the storyteller tells his listener a story, he creates his listener, he creates a story. He creates himself in the process. It's an entirely creative process." The power of language through storytelling is critical to the analyses of all the novels in this chapter; however, Momaday's theories of language articulate, from a Native American perspective, how a third space may be opened up through these acts of enunciation. Ceremonies, like novels, are creative. *House Made of Dawn* is a ceremony in the form of a novel, one "designed to heal" (Moss 67), transforming both the protagonist and the reader in the process.

Like Welch, Momaday subverts the English language in his text. Words from various Native languages are interspersed throughout the novel for specific effect, and ceremonial chants are translated into English, conveying non-Western syntactic strategies. Momaday frames this novel with the words "Dypaloh" and "Qtsedaba," words used at Jemez Pueblo to begin and end traditional stories, "placing his story solidly within oral tradition" (Scarberry-Garcia 8). Similar

to the novels examined through a trickster hermeneutics lens in Chapter Three, *House Made of Dawn* exhibits oral textuality. Hence, Momaday's act of creation through words is newly generated upon each reading of the novel, providing infinite possibilities for ceremonial healing. Another usage of Native language is the designation of Chapter One's setting as "Walatowa," the tribal name for Jemez Pueblo, meaning "the people in the canyon" (Moss 68). This place designation re-centers the land and the story which occurs on it, shifting from a colonized American perspective to a tribal perspective.

Later in the novel, Momaday uses the Diné (Navajo) word "'Tségihi,' the name of a canyon north of the San Juan River in Navajo Country" (Scarberry-Garcia 7). "Tségihi" opens the Navajo Night Chant, a healing ceremony with which the Diné character, Ben Benally, attempts to cure Abel, the mixed-blood Towan (Jemez) protagonist of the novel. The novel's title is taken from the Night Chant, a complex series of songs and rituals lasting more than eight days (Moss 66). For a complete analysis of Momaday's linguistic resistance through non-Western syntactic strategies, it is helpful to read the entirety of Ben's excerpted version of the ceremony.

Tségihi.
House made of dawn,
House made of evening light,
House made of dark cloud,
House made of male rain,
House made of dark mist,
House made of female rain,
House made of pollen,
House made of grasshoppers,
Dark cloud is at the door.
The trail out of it is dark cloud.
The zigzag lightning stands high upon it.
Male deity!
Your offering I make.
I have prepared a smoke for you.
Restore my feet for me,

Restore my legs for me,
 Restore my body for me,
 Restore my mind for me.
 This very day take out your spell for me.
 Your spell remove for me.
 You have taken it away for me;
 Far off it has gone.
 Happily I recover.
 Happily my interior becomes cool
 Happily I go forth.
 My interior feeling cool, may I walk.
 No longer sore, may I walk.
 Impervious to pain, may I walk.
 With lively feelings, may I walk.
 As it used to be long ago, may I walk.
 Happily may I walk.
 Happily, with abundant dark clouds, may I walk.
 Happily, with abundant showers, may I walk.
 Happily, with abundant plants, may I walk.
 Happily, on a trail of pollen, may I walk.
 Happily may I walk.
 Being as it used to be long ago, may I walk.
 May it be beautiful before me,
 May it be beautiful behind me,
 May it be beautiful below me,
 May it be beautiful above me,
 May it be beautiful all around me.
 In beauty it is finished. (Momaday, *House* 129-130)

Benally sings for Abel in an attempt to help him restore “hózhó,” the complex Diné philosophy of a state of beauty; Susan Scarberry-Garcia explains that “[t]he one-sung-over (patient) achieves this state of beauty through prayer acts of a chantway healing ceremonial” (128). The Night Chant ceremonial is part of the larger Blessingway teachings (Gorman 17), one tenet of which is balance, both within one’s mind and one’s perspective of the outside world (Dennison). Though the content of the Night Chant is significant within the larger healing ceremony Momaday is attempting in *House Made of Dawn* and will be examined more closely later, the chant’s syntactic features are a form of resistance against a Western concept of language. The chant repeats prepositional phrases, verbs, and adjectives in sets of four to give power to the words,

invoking the holiness of the four sacred directions, the central idea of balance in Dinetah.⁶ The repetition of the chant also can be connected to Momaday's philosophy of spoken words as creative acts. Linda Hogan argues that the chant's repetitive nature underscores and increases its healing propensity: "Various forms of verbal repetition intensify the rhythm, and as description and rhythm build, words become a form of internal energy for the listener" (169). Repetitive language enables a healing ceremonial to reach far beyond an ailing individual, according to Allen:

Repetition has an entrancing effect . . . It is hypnotic, and a hypnotic state of consciousness is the aim of the ceremony. The participants' attention must become diffused. This distractions of ordinary life must be put to rest and emotions redirected and integrated into a ceremonial context so that the greater awareness can come into full consciousness and functioning. In this way the participants become literally one with the universe, for they lose consciousness of mere individuality and share the consciousness that characterizes most orders of being. (*The Sacred* 63)

Like *Fools Crow*, *House Made of Dawn* is attempting a larger ceremony than that which is contained within its pages. By experiencing the Night Chant, readers participate in Abel's healing ceremony as they do in *Fools Crow*'s vision quest and thus arrive at the heightened state of awareness described by Allen above.

The ceremony that is the novel *House Made of Dawn* is designed to cure Abel of the sickness which has left him out of balance with the world. The source of his sickness is one that has been debated by scholars since the novel's publication. The most obvious cause is his experience as a soldier in World War II, from which Abel returns traumatized, as evidenced by his drunken, nearly comatose, arrival at Jemez (Momaday, *House* 9). Another source of Abel's sickness is his broken family: Abel never knows his father, an "outsider" (11) from a neighboring tribe, and both his mother and brother die when he is a child. Consequently, Abel is raised by his grandfather, Francisco, who trains him in the traditional ways but cannot force him

to make the connections with tribal belief systems that would heal his sense of alienation.

Clearly, both of these factors contribute to Abel's illness; however, I would also argue that Euro-American colonization has created an imbalance within society that is reflected in Abel's actions.

Momaday's depiction of Abel's war trauma personalizes the experience of approximately 25,000 American Indians who served in World War II (Bernstein 40). Over one third of capable Native American men between the ages of 18 and 50 were involved in military action, and as historian Alison Bernstein points out, the war "represented the first large-scale exodus of Indian men from the reservations since the defeat of their ancestors, and an unparalleled opportunity to compete in the white world in an arena where their talents and reputations as fighters inspired respect" (40). This respect often manifested in the nickname "Chief," a painful reminder to Native peoples of a tribal past destroyed by European colonization. Bernstein notes that the war was the first extended contact many American Indians had with whites and was also the first opportunity many whites had to meet American Indians (40). It was a cultural contact situation under the larger stress of one of the most destructive wars in human history.

An example of the cultural misunderstanding that ensued from this intense contact scenario is demonstrated when Abel stands trial for murder of an albino at Jemez, and one of his white comrades testifies on his mental condition during the war:

And that's when the chief here got up, sir. Oh Jesus, he just all of a sudden got up and started jumping around and *yelling* at that goddamn tank, and it was maybe thirty, forty yards is all down the hill. Oh Jesus, sir. He was giving it the finger and whooping it up and doing a goddamn *war dance*, sir. Me and Mitch, we just groaned. We couldn't *believe* what was going on. And here *he* was, hopping around with his finger up in the air and giving it to that tank in Sioux or Algonquin or something, for crissake. (Momaday, *House* 103)

There are number of points to be made regarding this passage. First, the repeated references to Jesus Christ firmly center the speaker's position within a Christian worldview. The entire

testimony, which is only excerpted here and is a little over the length of a page in the novel, contains a total of ten references to Jesus, suggesting the nerve-wracking nature of the event for the narrating soldier, the importance of which will be explained below. In addition, the soldier's attribution of Abel's language as "Sioux or Algonquin" demonstrates the binaristic tendency of the colonizing culture to lump all Native peoples into one group (an "us vs. them" mentality) with little interest in learning about the specifics of any particular culture.⁷ These details are intended to make it clear to the reader that the speaker is entrenched within a Euro-American perspective so that the context of the passage, the question being answered, is the most damning evidence of the wide divide between Abel and his white counterparts. Bowker, the soldier speaking, is answering the question of whether or not Abel was afraid of the tank. Bowker, because of his preconceived notions about "Indian chiefs," answers "No" (102). This response upsets Abel who grows "angry and confused that this white man should talk about him, account for him, as if he were not there" (102). Yet, for the white man, Abel, *an individual*, is not there. He is an Indian, a Western construct, one defined by war dances and gibberish language. The irony of the passage is that a fearful Abel is remembering the courtroom scene while lying on the beach after taking a terrible beating from the cop, Martinez. The juxtaposition of these scenes suggests that Abel's actual response to the tank is one of fear, just like his white counterpart whose terror is demonstrated by his abundant references to Jesus. Abel's war flashback early in the novel never names the tank for what it is; rather, it is described by its sound, "low and incessant" (22), and its paradoxical mechanical presence within the natural world, "black and massive, looming there in front of the sun" (22). The courtroom scene reflects the larger history of Euro-American narratives being overlaid on Native American experience; Momaday's

depiction of Abel's war experience and his outrage at its inaccurate retelling subverts such hegemonic narratives.

Abel's sickness as a result of familial loss has led to disconnection with his traditional tribal beliefs. Francisco teaches both Abel and his brother Vidal critical cosmological lessons such as "the long journey of the sun on the black mesa, how it rode in the seasons and the years, and [that] they must live according to the sun appearing, for only then could they reckon where they were, where all things were, in time" (173). Such information is essential for a people who adhere to a solar calendar, as do the Jemez (64). Francisco, like Momaday, knows the value and importance of the oral tradition, so he tells the boys of their customs "carefully, slowly, and at length, because they were old and true, and they could be lost forever as easily as one generation is lost to the next" (173). Yet, despite his grandfather's teachings, Abel remains disconnected from his cultural traditions. From his perspective Francisco simply tells him, "You ought to do this and that" (21), a reflection of Abel's youthful desire to make his own choices. When he leaves Walatowa for the war, Abel is so excited by the strangeness of his journey and fearful of the awfulness of his destination that "[o]nly when it was too late did he remember to look back in the direction of the fields" (21). This scene symbolizes his alienation from the land, the center of the Pueblo universe, as described by Momaday. Robert Nelson argues that the novel's landscape is much more than a traditional aspect of literary setting: "[it] has a life of its own that precedes and also contextualizes the other, secondary forms of life, including human lives, that have learned to coexist with the nature of this place over the centuries" (45). Abel's disconnection from his tribal beliefs is therefore a result of his broken family and leads to estrangement from the land itself.

Abel's cultural alienation manifests even before he goes to war when he commits the sacred crime of killing an eagle (Momaday, *House* 20). Abel has been permitted to accompany the important Eagle Watchers Society because of his vision of an eagle carrying a snake. Abel has the strength and intelligence to capture a golden eagle, but then he strangles it (20). This is disrespectful of Towan tradition in which a caged eagle is kept within the pueblo (51).

According to Maria Moss, killing the eagle is a crime because "its strength [is] unavailable to the people" (85). Since the novel also represents traditional Navajo beliefs, it is helpful to examine the incident from that tribal tradition. For the Diné, killing an eagle breaks a sacred hunting rule resulting in the Holy People's infliction of disease on the transgressor (Luckert 153); therefore, Abel's spiritual illness might be the result of this act from either cultural standpoint. Yet another reading of Abel's vision, this time from an Aztec perspective, suggests that killing the eagle is an act of resistance against European colonialism. According to Gloria Anzaldúa, the God of War, Huitzilopochtli, led the Aztec people out of the region that is now the U.S. Southwest in 1168 A.D. (4-5). They settled in the place that became Tenochtitlán (later Mexico City) because they saw an eagle perched on a cactus with a serpent writhing in its beak.⁸ "The eagle symbolizes the spirit (as the sun, the father); the serpent symbolizes the soul (as the earth, the mother). Together, they symbolize the struggle between the spiritual/celestial/male and the underworld/earth/feminine" (5). Anzaldúa reads the snake as a sacrifice of matriarchy to patriarchy in the ancient Americas. From this perspective, Abel's killing of the eagle might also suggest the subversion of European patriarchal culture; therefore, his illness may be interpreted as a consequence of the colonizers' encroachment on the land.

Robert Nelson's argument that Abel's illness comes from a lack of connection to the land links his actions to both eagles and snakes in the novel:

To be whole in his life at [Walatowa], Abel must become willing to be held by the land, which is to say “possessed” by it as much as he would possess it. The eagle holds the land whole and entire in its vision: eagle medicine is about possessing the land, and this Abel is willing to do from the outset. Snake medicine, however, is about being possessed *by* the land, and Abel needs a good dose of this medicine to make his spirit whole. A return to wholeness and healing, for Abel, depends on his ability to accept both of these aspects of place by making room in his vision of his own identity for both avatars of holding—both eagle and snake. (42)

In his diseased state, Abel struggles with snakes. Two characters who are associated with snake imagery are the albino at Jemez and Martinez, the corrupt L.A. cop. The albino is described as “inhuman” (Momaday, *House* 72), and when Abel fights with him he feels “the scales of the lips and the hot slippery point of the tongue” (73). Abel is convinced he is evil (72) and feels that killing the albino is justified, “the most natural thing in the world” (90), which it is from an epistemological standpoint in which annihilating evil is acceptable (Moss 85). As Abel listens to the testimony of the priest attempting to explain his actions from the Pueblo perspective as he understands it, the accused cannot grasp why the simplicity of his act is not apparent to those around him: “They must know that he would kill the white man again, if he had the chance, that there could be no hesitation whatsoever. For he would know what the white man was, and he would kill him if he could. A man kills such an enemy if he can” (Momaday, *House* 91). Momaday’s description of the albino, especially this passage, invites a reading of the “white man” as symbolic of Euro-America and its oppression of Native Americans as evil. Critic Christopher Douglas argues, “The albino’s presence is suggested to be a kind of disharmony in the system caused by the advent of the package of Western modernity, colonialism, and Christianity” (11). In this light, removing the albino from the Pueblo world is symbolic of annihilating all that colonialism brought with it: wars with killing machines, court rooms with legal systems unsympathetic to a Pueblo perspective, and Christian priests who would convert indigenous people from their traditional belief systems.

Martinez, nicknamed “Culebra” (Spanish for “snake”) by the relocated Native peoples in Los Angeles, the other character associated with snakes, also represents an oppressive colonizing culture. After his imprisonment, Abel is one of many Native Americans involved in the Voluntary Relocation Program which encouraged the movement of Indians from reservations into urban areas (Bernstein 168). The program operated under the assumption that the “integration” (assimilation) of Native Americans into European American society was inevitable; therefore, encouraging their movement into urban areas would give them better job opportunities (169). The program was conceived by Commissioner Myer who had headed the War Relocation Program, in which Japanese-Americans were interned in rural camps (168) and which has since been condemned as a misguided concern with national security to the detriment of U.S. citizens’ freedom. Similarly misguided, the Voluntary Relocation Program had been intended to help improve the lives of Native Americans, many of whom, like Abel, did not succeed in urban centers and simply returned to their respective reservations. Though government statistics show that the return rate was thirty percent, some private estimates have put the number as high as sixty percent (169).

Abel seems less capable of assimilating into U.S. urban life than some of his counterparts and becomes prey for Martinez, a cop who targets relocated Native peoples, stealing their money and indiscriminately inflicting violence on them (Momaday, *House* 153). After Abel has lost numerous jobs and is falling so deeply into alcoholism that Ben kicks him out of their apartment, he decides to confront Martinez. The confrontation ends badly for Abel who wakes up on the beach, broken, bleeding and bruised from the beating he has taken (88). Scarberry-Garcia argues that Martinez is an embodiment of the albino, “one of the gliding ones who may be killed with a knife but who has supernatural power to be remanifested as culebra later in Los Angeles” (43).

This pairing of the albino and Martinez connects both to the snake spirit and Abel's inability to cope with evil. His grandfather Francisco acknowledges that "evil had long since found him out and knew who he was" (Momaday, *House* 59-60), and rather than fear it, he knows that the only way to deal with is through sacred means (60).

Abel's healing ceremony begins after his fear of evil, as manifested in the snake spirit, has nearly gotten him killed. The first evidence that Abel is changing is his awareness of the annual spawning of grunion on the very beach on which he lies helpless. The fish are connected to the physical world in a way that Abel has never been, their actions tied to "the phase of the moon and the rise and fall of the tides" (87). He is filled with "longing" by this natural act (87), suggesting that Abel is ready to acknowledge his own ties to the physical land that comprises the sacred space of Towan beliefs and the natural cycles of celestial bodies. Abel's painful awakening is woven with memories of the teachings of John Big Bluff Tosamah, Kiowa Priest of the Sun. Tosamah's sermon on the nature of language delineates one difference between Western Christian beliefs and Native American (specifically Kiowa) beliefs. Though he agrees that language, or "the Word" is the beginning of creation as described in the Biblical Gospel of John, Tosamah believes that St. John stumbled after his initial epiphany: "Now, brothers and sisters, old John was a white man, and the white man has his ways. Oh gracious me, he has his ways. He talks about the Word. He talks through it and around it. He builds upon it with syllables, with prefixes and suffixes and hyphens and accents. He adds and divides and multiplies the Word. And in all of this he subtracts the truth" (83). Tosamah instead offers the example of his grandmother, a storyteller, who understood that through language "she could have whole and consummate being" (83) and that "the act of listening is crucial to the concept of language, more crucial even than reading and writing, and language in turn is crucial to human

society” (84). Abel, broken and battered and alone on the beach, truly disconnected from all the people he has ever known, finally begins to *listen*.

On the beach, Abel also remembers specific details of a peyote ceremony held by Tosamah which he attended but in which he did not participate; yet, the very memory of the ceremony seems to act as a sign of his own healing. According to Weston LaBarre, ingesting peyote in a ritualized setting under the guidance of the pan-tribal Native American Church is a path to achieve spiritual visions (Scarberry-Garcia 106). Abel has a number of visions in his battered state: of women he has loved and who have loved him (Angela, Milly, and Fat Josie), of his trial, and of his youth with his brother Vidal, his mother, and his grandfather. The memories force Abel to acknowledge that he is sick: “He tried to think where the trouble had begun, what the trouble was. There was trouble; he could admit that to himself, but he had no real insight into his own situation” (93). The use of peyote as a ritual tool can be traced to the Huichol tribe of northern Mexico whose ancient peyote hunt “is a ritualized group vision-quest” (Pasztory 237). The peyote hunt is the most significant tribal ritual of the Huichols, the purpose being to leave behind their human natures and achieve communion with the universe as gods (Myerhoff 242). Significantly, during the peyote hunt, Huichols “achieve a spiritual relation to their physical environment . . . The very landscape is sanctified—the caves, springs, mountains, rivers, cactus groves—and the features of the mythical world are elevated to cosmic significance . . . Man *is* nature, he is an extension of it” (260). The Native American Church peyote ceremony which Abel remembers ends with an image that suggests his journey to healing has begun: “In the four directions did the Priest of the Sun, standing painted in the street, serve notice that something holy was going on in the universe” (Momaday, *House* 101). Abel’s memory intersects with his epiphany, and like the Huichol peyote hunt participants, he begins to

see himself as a part of the natural world, finally embracing the childhood lessons his grandfather had tried to teach him.

The previously discussed Night Chant is another factor in Abel's multi-faceted healing ceremonial. Abel asks Ben to sing it to him along with other traditional songs when they get drunk as a way of reconnecting to their closely related backgrounds. Besides the geographical similarities between their Southwestern homelands, the Navajo, whose language is of Athabascan origin,⁹ were highly influenced by Pueblo tribes when they arrived in the Southwest approximately eight hundred years ago (Pasztor 237). The novel acknowledges the meaningful relationship between the Diné and Towan peoples as demonstrated by Francisco's comment about them when they visit for the Festival of Santiago: "The *Diné*, of all people, knew how to be beautiful" (68). As previously discussed, the Night Chant is designed to cure one of emotional imbalance, or sickness; to reflect that intent, the imagery within is balanced. Dawn is paired with evening, dark cloud and male rain with dark mist and female rain (Moss 92). The request for restoration of various parts of the body works to heal the various illnesses to Abel's psyche: those of colonialism, those of war, and those of personal loss. As the prayer progresses, beauty, or balance, increasingly surrounds the patient.

The context of the Night Chant within Navajo cosmology also significantly informs the text and its larger critique of Euro-American colonization. According to Scarberry-Garcia, the part of the Night Chant used in the novel "was sung by two boys, the Stricken Twins . . . mythic reflections of the Navajo Twin War Gods, Monster Slayer . . . and Born for Water" (18). These Diné twins are thought to have developed from interactions with Pueblo cultures and their stories of Masewi and Uyuyewe, the twin war gods discussed in Chapter Two (18). Some compelling scholarship has explored the role of Abel as one of these two mythic hero twins. Susan

Scarberry-Garcia argues that Abel and his older brother, Vidal, represent the Stricken Twins, and that the novel's healing ceremony allows for a reunification of the two brothers within Abel (37).¹⁰ Taking a different tack, Maria Moss argues that Abel is Monster Slayer and Ben Benally is his little brother in the War Gods paradigm (90). Like the mythic hero twins, Abel does not know his father and is given sacred instruction in the holy places of the earth by his grandfather (69-70). Monster Slayer and his brother slew "most of the evil beings that had made life miserable for the Diné people" (Begay 66); similarly, Abel kills the albino, the image of whiteness and all it represents in the history of European colonization, and he confronts both the tank and Martinez, one a symbol of destructive Western modernity and the other of the violence inherent under a colonizing system. Abel is a modern Monster Slayer, battling the evil of colonialism, that which has left the world out of balance.¹¹

It seems clear that Momaday intends these twinning motifs, resulting in multiple layers of textual resonance; yet, the most relevant pairing, in terms of resistance against Western ideological colonization, is the Biblical allusion to Cain and Abel. Cain, who kills his brother Abel because his sacrifice has been preferred by God, can be read as "a paradigm of sinful humanity struggling to master nature and the elements in a Darwinian fight for survival, whereas his brother Abel reminds us of pre-lapsarian innocence and harmony with God and nature" (Inbinder 190). From a postcolonial perspective, Cain represents a Western European colonizing force whose system of faith advocates control of all living things by humanity; like Cain, European colonizers killed their brothers, the indigenous peoples of the Americas. The Biblical Abel's innocence and dark fate represents the innocence of Native Americans in the face of the brutality and disease brought by the Europeans. Abel, the protagonist of *House Made of Dawn* becomes a metonym, then, for the larger colonizer/colonized struggle in the Americas. It is

important to note, however, that Abel's designation should not be read as an acknowledgment of a successful Euro-American conquest of the Americas, i.e. as a "vanishing Indian." As Christopher Douglass points out, the belief that humanity is fallen is Christian, one that was not introduced into the Americas until 1492: "pagan world views understood [violence and death] as having their places in the system of which humans are a part" (11). Instead, Momaday's Biblical allusion can instead be interpreted as an invitation to Christian readers of the text, or to anyone more familiar with Western ideologies than with Native American beliefs, to participate in the healing ceremony within. Such a reading of *House Made of Dawn* subverts the Christian story since Abel, the victim of brotherly violence, does not die; instead, his healing provides a symbol of hope for all Native peoples who have experienced the violence of colonialism. The continuation of his life suggests the continuation of Native America, more evidence of survivance.

Abel's healing ritual reaches completion upon his return to Walatowa. The narrative of *House Made of Dawn* is circular, beginning and ending with Abel's participation in the ritual dawn run for hunting and good harvests. The death of Francisco, his teacher in the traditional ways, spurs his grandson to run. Abel begins to understand the meaning of the race as he lies on the beach during his night of visions:

[The runners] were whole and indispensable in what they did; everything in creation referred to them. Because of them, perspective, proportion, design in the universe. Meaning because of them. They ran with great dignity and calm, not in the hope of anything, but hopelessly; neither in fear nor hatred nor despair of evil, but simply in recognition and with respect. Evil was. Evil was abroad in the night; they must venture out to the confrontation; they must reckon dues and divide the world. (92)

The run is a ceremonial act to maintain balance, that which Abel needs personally, and that which the world needs. Scarberry-Garcia argues that the run is an offering of Abel's suffering

body, his very life, to his people (124). The fact that he sings the Night Chant as he runs suggests that Ben's healing ceremony has worked since "the one-sung-over repeats this prayer after the medicine man or singer" (10). The circular ceremonial of the text can be read as indicative of Bhabha's atemporal third space since Abel is simultaneously running alone and yet with others of his tribe; it is a run in which the runners focus on "the clear pool of eternity" (185). Nelson agrees that the race occurs "in a universe where mythic time and ordinary time are not so much separate as versions of one another" (43).

The healing ceremony that is *House Made of Dawn* is complex and hybrid in order to reflect the state of U.S. culture, a result of the interactions of Indigenous Americans, European colonizers, and the many other cultures that constitute it. Abel's healing is generated through diverse sacred rituals and traditions: the Towan running ritual, the Diné Night Chant, stories of the Kiowa, a peyote ceremony of the Native American Church, and interpretation of the Biblical word. Momaday's novel seems to suggest that balance can be restored through an acknowledgment of cultural hybridity. Like Momaday himself, a Kiowa who spent his youth on many different reservations because of his parents' employment by the BIA (Hager 188), the novel can be classified as pan-tribal; yet, the inclusion of Biblical allusion is evidence that Momaday was seeking an even greater participation in this ceremony. *House Made of Dawn* is a healing ceremony to bring balance to the United States, a country separated from the land by modern industrialization and its people divided by a history of violence and cultural misunderstanding.

Another novel in which ceremonial resistance generates a third space is Choctaw author LeAnne Howe's 2001 *Shell Shaker*. This text collapses the divide between tribal past and colonized present through the actions of Shakbatina, a ceremonial shell shaker whose self

sacrifice on behalf of her daughter becomes an act that resonates across centuries to unite history and the dispersed bands of the Choctaw tribe. Shakbatina's narrative frames the novel, sections of which are set in the present, while others are set in the eighteenth century; the novel establishes parallels between characters from both eras, creating an atemporal third space, especially when Shakbatina's ceremonial acts help her to transcend time. The novel is painstakingly researched: Howe uses primary and secondary historical and linguistic sources to create verisimilitude for the sections of the novel which are set in the past. The novel is important for its cultural singularity. As Ken McCullough asserts, "Although there has been significant scholarship on this historical period in the southeast, between the arrival of DeSoto and Removal, no one has written a work of the imagination (of this magnitude) set in this period" (61).

Though McCullough's point about a dearth of fictional work concerning pre-Removal Southeastern tribes is important, there is another reason that Howe's novel is vital: all of the powerful tribes of what is now the southeastern U.S., including the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee, and the Seminole were matriarchies (McGowan 53). These civilizations provided stark structural contrasts to the Western patriarchal system that came to define U.S. culture until the feminist movement. In fact, the early U.S. feminists, "emerging from a socioeconomic culture in which most women owned nothing and were defined as legal appendages of their husbands, were awed by Haudenosaunee [Iroquois] culture, in which women owned the home and much of the means of production" (Johansen ix). In addition to many Eastern American Indians, Southwestern tribes including the Diné and numerous Pueblo cultures organized themselves as matriarchies. Though matriarchal systems still exist within some Native American tribes, Western patriarchy engulfed many of these societies. This is a central tenet of

Allen's *The Sacred Hoop*, the subtitle of which, *Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, speaks to the need for reinscribing matriarchy, or "gynocracy" to use Allen's language. McGowan argues that "[b]oth the economic trauma and the sociopolitical disruption being visited on the Southeast worked against matriarchy" (57). Despite such claims, in my recent interview with the author, LeAnne Howe disagrees that patriarchy has supplanted matriarchy, at least not in Choctaw culture. *Shell Shaker* can be read as resistant from either perspective: as a purely representational text or as a reinscription of matriarchy in the Americas. Even read representationally, the novel overturns the hegemony of dominant patriarchal narratives in U.S. culture.

The historical events upon which Howe's novel is based involve acts of deceit and war between colonizing Europeans and colonized Native tribes; between differing Native tribes; and between members of the Chahta (Choctaw) people themselves. In an interview with Golda Sargento, Howe discusses her approach to the novel's historical context: "In writing *Shell Shaker*, I wanted to remain faithful to some of the events in the eighteenth century that continue to influence the Choctaw present. Daniel Boorstein has labeled some of these events as 'pseudo-events,' meaning that there is agreement that something happened in history, but a disagreement as to its significance, or how it plays out within a specific cultural group." Howe weaves history with tribal tradition and imagination to rewrite these events of the Choctaw colonization era. The earliest mentioned conflict is the 1540 battle between Hernando de Soto and the Choctaw leader, Tuscalusa (Howe, "Author's Note" 226). Howe's fictional representation of the meeting is a creation story, in which a woman becomes the first shell shaker, both mythic and powerful, through her ceremonial act of love. Shell shakers are traditionally women in Eastern woodland tribes who "stomp dance" at various ceremonies, providing rhythmic accompaniment to the

singing and dancing with their turtle shell leg rattles. Contemporary stomp dancers tend to wear condensed milk can rattles rather than the traditional turtle shells, to a similar rhythmic effect (Howard 1). The first shell shaker, of whom Howe writes, is the wife of Tuscalusa and who Shakbatina calls Grandmother of Birds. Because Tuscalusa has heard that de Soto is a dangerous enemy, an Osano (bloodsucker), he prepares for a battle with the Spanish in order to lure the invaders away from his people. According to Shakbatina,

It was then our grandmother did an extraordinary thing. She built a fire and she strapped the empty shells of turtles around each ankle. She didn't sing aloud because she was afraid the children would hear sorrow in her voice, so she only moved her lips in silent prayers. For four days and nights she never stopped dancing around the fire, extolling the heroics of the man she loved. Amazingly, the fire did not go out. *Miko Luak*, fire's spirit, was so spellbound by her story that he would not leave for fear of missing important details of Tuscalusa's courage. (Howe, *Shell Shaker* 2)

Grandmother's ankles bleed from the continuous dancing, and this sacrifice moves the fire's spirit to take her prayers to the Autumnal Equinox, *Itilauichi*, who in turn, gives her a song to "make things even" (2). This ceremony is passed down through the women of the novel (matrilineally) and operates as a tool for "evening" out personal, social and cultural injustices. In the case of Tuscalusa's battle with de Soto, the Choctaw men were defeated and their bodies mutilated. Grandmother does not mourn her husband; rather, she sings the song given to her by *Itilauichi*, and she and her sisters take flight in the form of birds to found the seven original Choctaw towns. She also begins a tradition of peace-making, and her descendents are known as Inholahtha (peacemakers) (6).

Grandmother of Bird's creation story forms the base from which a line of Choctaw women draw their power. Shakbatina details the next historical event, which Howe deems the most significant of the eighteenth century, "the assassination of war chief Red Shoes, in June of 1747. He is murdered after the sun goes down, on the evening of the summer solstice, his head

is taken, and soon afterwards a Choctaw civil war ensues” (“An Interview”). Red Shoes claims he is *Imataha Chitto*, the leader who can unite the Choctaw people against the invading Europeans. Instead, he unites his warriors of the western Choctaw towns with the British (Howe, *Shell Shaker* 72), much to the chagrin of Shakbatina, whose eastern Choctaw neighbors are allied with the French (14). These relationships demonstrate the political complexity of Native American and European colonizing interactions, a result of the enormous variety of Indigenous peoples on the American continents, the differences between the diverse European powers who had stakes in the Americas, and the extensive time period over which the Americas were colonized. These historical alliances play out in the contemporary scenes of the novel. For example, French culture is preferred by Isaac and Adair. He thinks the French have better food than the English (53), and she, as a New Orleans resident, ruminates on the connected French/Choctaw history of Louisiana (41). In addition, a number of characters draw connections between the Choctaw and the Irish because they were both colonized by the English. Auda imagines that war-torn Belfast “is probably not so different than Durant” (27), the Oklahoma town in which many of the contemporary scenes are set. More significantly, Chief Redford McAlester uses tribal money from gaming revenues to support the Irish Republican Army’s terrorist acts against the English “for crimes they committed against the Choctaw two hundred and fifty years ago” (141). These contemporary alliances with historical enemies of the English suggest that, from the American Indian perspective, the United States is not so far from its colonial past. Indeed, Native peoples are still fighting for sovereignty in their homelands. Howe explains in my recent conversation with her how the geographical references in *Shell Shaker* are meant to jog the collective memories of contemporary readers:

Louisiana is our ancient homelands Every place name in the state is Choctaw—
Atchafalaya is one good example. And what did we do when we come to

Oklahoma or come to Indian Territory? Every place name that is in Louisiana and in Mississippi is then transferred and then renamed in the state of Oklahoma . . . And that's to remind us and remind the people who live in our territories today who are visitors who this land belongs to in the lower Mississippi Valley.

One result of colonial interactions in *Shell Shaker* is Shakbatina's hatred of the English: Her body is ravaged from the smallpox she endured after trading with them. She says, "They had traded me disease for our corn. It was in their blankets, the ones I brought back to Yanabi Town. This disease destroyed many of our people and knapped my body like a piece of flint" (10). Though there is evidence that some tribes were accidentally exposed to smallpox in trading situations, such as the Blackfeet (Vernon 182), there is also speculation that smallpox was used as a biological warfare technique by the British. Historian Francis Parkman published now infamous letters between English officer Sir Jeffrey Amherst and his subordinate Colonel Henry Bouquet in which they discuss the possibility of introducing smallpox to Indian tribes and the effectiveness of infecting blankets for that purpose in response to Pontiac's 1763 rebellion. Parkman comments that there "is not direct evidence that Bouquet carried into effect the shameful plan of infecting the Indians, though a few months after, the small-pox was known to have made havoc among the tribes of the Ohio" (649). As in *Fools Crow*, smallpox is but one way tribes were afflicted by colonial expansion.

Not only does Shakbatina endure the physical ravages of smallpox, but she is also emotionally torn. As head of her clan, she is responsible for leading trading expeditions to other Choctaw villages; however, because of her illness, she is unable to barter with the Red Fox people, sending her daughter Anoleta instead. Anoleta, one of the wives of Red Shoes, is wrongly accused of murdering another of his wives, a Red Fox woman, leading to rising hostility with the possibility of war between the two villages. As an Inholahtha woman, Shakbatina seeks peace within the tribe, so she offers her own death in place of her daughter's to assuage the

tensions (Howe, *Shell Shaker* 5). This self-sacrifice is reminiscent of Grandmother of Birds' self-sacrifice on behalf of her beloved.

Though Shakbatina follows the Inholahtha way, she is bitter and desires revenge against her enemies. She urges Anoleta to enlist the aid of Jean Baptiste Bienville in their war against Red Shoes and the English, a deepening of the alliance between the French and the eastern bands of Choctaw. She also fantasizes about making the English pay for the pain she has endured from the smallpox: "I'd often dreamed of hanging [their] intestines in the trees so everyone could see their shit" (10). Such an act would unveil the evil she believes exists within the English to all who might judge otherwise from exterior appearances. As a child, Shakbatina had painted her face red in the tradition of a warrior, much to the shame of her mother, who works to instill in the child her heritage of peacemaking. Yet, Shakbatina cannot forget her warrior beliefs, and when she offers her body as sacrifice to the Red Fox clan, she wears white, the color of peace, and paints her face red, the color of war. She has split herself in two, a foreshadowing of the coming split of the Choctaw people during the Removal period and Trail of Tears. She believes that representing herself in this way is a message to her people: "we must fight to survive" (15). This is a message to ensure tribal survivance.

Shakbatina's division of herself, one side dedicated to war and the other to peace, is another manifestation of double consciousness.¹² The division of self experienced by minority cultures is seen by DuBois as splitting into a national and cultural consciousness (2). Culturally, Shakbatina is a peacemaker, but in the face of a dominating colonizer, she becomes a warmaker. The tendency towards resistance will continue under a national rule that is hostile to her culture's sovereignty. Shakbatina's division of self also gives her the power to transcend time. Like all traditional Choctaws, a bone-picking ceremony follows her death. Bone-picking emphasizes the

holiness of the bones of the dead, signifying the individual's lived past and eternal existence (Howe, *Shell Shaker* 178). It also suggests the symbiotic relationship between people and the earth. Howe explains, "Things are made right when we are returned to the earth as food for the planet. Life continues" ("The Story" 36). Shakbatina pledges that she will not leave her people: "When released by the bone-picking, I will grow and sprout up like green corn. From the mound I will watch over our people. Do not cry for me, I am a fast grower" (*Shell Shaker* 8). She keeps her pledge and arrives on the 1991 Autumnal Equinox to help Auda Billy, who has been raped by her former lover and the current Choctaw tribal leader, Redford McAlester. Shakbatina extends herself to her descendant, uniting colonized present and tribal past, in a shell shaking ceremony: "Auda watches the spirit woman with turtle shells strapped to her ankles. She's big-breasted and wears a deerskin dress, bloodied at the neck and hem. Smoke rises from the turtle shells and forms a constellation on the ceiling. Auda knows the dance. Every spring she shakes shells with the other Indian women in Southeastern Oklahoma" (18). The ceremony has already linked the women symbolically through its continued practice, but Shakbatina's dancing creates a physical link between the two, resulting in Bhabha's atemporal third space. Shakbatina's presence will help Auda heal the tribal wounds of yesterday and today, by collapsing past and present.

Shakbatina's arrival in the present leads to the final death of Red Shoes, as embodied by corrupt politician Redford McAlester. One theme of the novel is that the historical division of the tribe has led to a continuous process of division among the Choctaw. Shakbatina confesses to killing McAlester through Auda's body, repeating history, yet also healing it. Shakbatina's dance sets into motion a series of events which leads to a spiritual encounter between McAlester and Auda, or Red Shoes and Anoleta, in which the original crime that led to Shakbatina's death

is confessed: Red Shoes is the killer of his Red Fox wife (200). Yet, these two characters are not the only contemporary embodiments of historical figures. Nearly every member of the Billy family has a role in the original civil war between the Choctaws, and Auda's family helps her to deliver the spirit of Red Shoes to the Nanih Waiya, the cradle of Choctawan civilization (161). The burial of Red Shoes is the final act of Shakbatina's ceremony which will begin to heal the wounds inflicted on the Choctaw people by colonizing Europeans.

Like Welch, Howe uses language to prepare the reader for immersion in the ceremonial process. Rather than appropriating English, Howe integrates Choctaw words into the narrative as a decolonizing tactic: the English are referred to as "Inkilish okla" and the French as "Filanchi okla" (23). Similarly, place names of locales in pre-Removal Choctaw lands are called by their original names such as Yanabi Town or the Nanih Waiya. According to Howe's "Author Notes," Yanabi Town is in what is now known as Kemper County, Mississippi, west of the Sucarnoochee River, and the Nanih Waiya is to the northwest of this region (227). As a Choctaw scholar, Howe also takes liberties with the language, reasoning that certain phrases used by early eighteenth century Choctaws may have fallen out of use. For example, her Choctaw translation of Autumnal Equinox is the verb *Itilauichi*, which means "to even," based on historical Choctaw calendar names and the fact that annual events were often associated with ceremonials (225). This signifier takes on symbolic weight when Grandmother of the Birds sings the song given to her by *Itilauichi* to rescue her people from the colonizing Spaniards: she is "evening out" the deaths of Tuscalusa's men by protecting those who remained behind, ensuring tribal survivance.

Because Howe's novel is predominantly set in the present, she has rhetorical possibilities for a decolonizing use of language that Welch does not. Her characters converse freely about the

situation of colonization, educating the reader in the process. Auda Billy is a professor of Choctaw history, undermining the dominant narrative of European/Native American relations. In a reading to promote her newly-published history book, Auda shocks her mostly Euro-American audience by the asking the question, “How would you know whether America was sparsely populated at contact, unless that was the propaganda you’d been taught in the colonizer’s schools?” (44). Another frank exploration of the topic occurs in the Billy kitchen when Adair argues that consumerism is a lesson taught to Native peoples by the English and French, one which her aunts, Dovie and Delores had internalized as children from their mother’s love of a colonial style dining room table: “If you think foreigners’ things, ideas, and religions are better than what your own culture has, then you’re internally colonized. Then you don’t care about your own things, culture, or land” (162). Like Auda, the history professor, Howe rewrites the story of European/Choctaw relations, re-centering the reader into a Choctawan worldview as preparation for the healing ceremony to come.

Central to the healing ceremony is the figure of the *Imataha Chitto*, the Choctaw leader who would unite the tribe. Despite his claims, Red Shoes’ actions prove that he is not this figure; more significantly, the *Imataha Chitto* would not be a man since Choctaw society is traditionally matriarchal. Though tribal traditions have changed during the colonization process, Isaac notes that his sister Susan, Auda’s mother, still follows the matrilineal tradition by caring for the personal possessions of their powerful ancestor, a shell shaker (60). Howe’s presentation of strong female figures reclaiming their roles as leaders in a matriarchal society is another way she subverts a predominantly patriarchal Euro-American culture. The murder of McAlester following his act of sexual violence against Auda suggests that the women, who hold the power in Choctaw society, will not succumb to a colonizing male superstructure.

Aunt Delores is the *Imataha Chitto*, uniter of her tribe. She succeeds in this role because she has experienced her people's varied stages of history: tribalism, dispersal, colonization, and decolonization. In the eighteenth century, she is Mantema, the *Imataha Chitto* who is bayoneted to death in the battle against Red Shoes and the Inkilish Okla. During her childhood in the twentieth century, she first runs away from a government boarding school and then again away from her tribe in Oklahoma with her sister. Delores and Dovie become actresses in California who bill themselves as "The Love Maidens of The Five Civilized Tribes" (117). Even though Delores despises her Indianness (155), she is willing to exploit it, buying into the role of a Hollywood stereotype, for material gain. That changes when her mother dies, and she returns to the tribe and learns the bone picking ceremony from Nowatima, Susan and Isaac Billy's grandmother, a descendent of Shakbatina. Before Nowatima teaches Delores the ceremonial songs she tells the story of the Choctaw removal from their ancestral homelands to Indian Territory. Delores bears witness:

That was before our people made the whites change the name to Oklahoma, home of red people. Some laid down on the roads to die. They were resigned. As we passed them by they gave away their shoes. We were surrounded day and night by our enemies. It was very unsanitary to our personages. No way to make a toilet. We all had fevers. Millions of flies ate from our flesh. They left many scars on my body. (148)¹³

After Delores learns the bone picking ceremony from Nowatima, she conducts her mother's funeral in the traditional way and begins to sing for others, creating a resurgence of interest in Choctaw traditions. Delores has come full circle from her tribal self, through an internally colonized self, to a decolonized self, inspiring others in her tribe to embrace their cultural beliefs. Delores believes that "her role as modern *foní miko*, bone picker, is the only useful thing she's ever done" (146). This adherence to and faith in her cultural traditions leads to her vision of what must be done with the body of Redford McAlester in order for tribal healing to commence.

The third space of the novel, in which past and present take on new meaning, is the ceremony held at the Nanih Waiya (161). Delores receives her vision as she kneads dough, the dough becoming the fertile mud of this Choctaw “sacred space” (161). She learns that McAlester’s body must be buried there, in Mississippi, so that the tribe can begin to heal from centuries of psychic and physical division. Delores says, “Somehow I know it will reunite the two Choctaw communities: the ones in Oklahoma with the ones in Mississippi. We’ve been separated too long . . . Each of us has only half a heart until we’re rejoined” (166). As the novel comes full circle and the healing begins, the spirits of Auda and Redford, Anoleta and Red Shoes, arrive at the sacred space in which seven shell shaking Choctaw women, from Oklahoma, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Alabama, transform themselves into birds. Red Shoes, Red McAlester, is buried in the mound of the Nanih Waiya, and Delores and Isaac Billy sacrifice themselves so that his spirit will stay put in the healing mud at the center of Choctaw sacred space. This return to the novel’s original ceremony by Grandmother of the Birds is a way of unifying all the Choctaw peoples, as LeAnne Howe explains in my recent interview with her: “Those scenes were really about trying to recover some of the larger confederacy that was—and you just have to think about it in terms of alliances—that’s really what I was trying to use in hope that this book, read by my own community, will help them remember what the confederacy was like and bring it back into existence.” Such reunification resists the colonialist and genocidal policy that removed Southeastern tribes from their homelands. The scene also proves what the U.S. government tried to deny until the twentieth century: Removal failed.¹⁴ McGowan explains that “for all the federal muscle used in trying to force Southeastern peoples off their land, remnant bands of every nation escaped Removal, remaining in their traditional homelands,

living in traditional ways. In the twenty-first century, the Cherokees, Choctaws, Muscogeese, and Seminoles still have communities and a few reservations in their homelands” (62).

As Shakbatina knows, unification of the Choctaws would have been the most dangerous scenario for the English colonizers; her survivance has made this unification possible. The implication is that a contemporary unification of the Choctaws is a step toward decolonization, continuing resistance against the descendants of English colonists. At the novel’s end, Shakbatina acknowledges, “My story is an enormous undertaking. Hundreds of years in the making until past and present collide into a single moment” (222). This atemporal third space is one that is open to all readers, of Choctaw or European descent, evidenced by Shakbatina’s narrative framing device: “*Ano ma Chahta sia hoke oke*. Call me Shakbatina, a Shell Shaker.” When the ceremony is finished, she ends the story similarly: “*Hekano*, I am finished talking.” The frame suggests that whether you speak Choctaw or English, you may participate in the novel and the ceremony within. Thus, like Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn*, *Shell Shaker* invites contemporary readers from all backgrounds into its ceremony for the purpose of healing a fragmented cultural history.

The Native American ceremonies examined in this chapter reflect varying cultural traditions through multiple stages of North American colonization. *Fools Crow*’s depiction of a nineteenth century vision quest prepares the protagonist for a future of cultural devastation that may only be endured by hope and a commitment to tribal survivance; *House Made of Dawn*’s ceremony is the text itself, designed to heal both its modern protagonist and American culture as a whole; *Shell Shaker*’s century-crossing ceremony heals a tribe’s division caused by colonial intrigue, betrayal, and Removal, suggesting a route for contemporary Native peoples to decolonize. Each of these novels uses linguistic and thematic devices to invite readers,

regardless of cultural background, into their ceremonial third spaces. Through this process, colonizer and colonized are released from binaristic modes of thinking, that which has divided colonized societies and may continue to do so unless hybrid third spaces are acknowledged as one location of cultural meaning.

My reading of these novels is somewhat controversial, considering that for most Native American peoples, truly sacred materials should not be used by those without proper training in ceremonial practices, nor would such sacred materials be included in popular literatures (Allen, *The Sacred* 75). The texts analyzed in this chapter do not operate as traditional Native American ceremonials; instead, they are post-colonial ceremonial events, much like those described by Old Betonie in Silko's *Ceremony*: "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" (126). In previous chapters, I have argued that the authors have expanded their purpose beyond the traditional Western role of writers. In Chapter Two, Asturias and Silko act as diviners of sacred Mesoamerican texts, and in Chapter Three, Vizenor, Erdrich and King are trickster-storytellers. In this chapter, Welch, Momaday, and Howe also expand the role of writer by creating novels that act as myths. Allen explains that "[m]yth is a story of a vision; it is a presentation of that vision told in terms of the vision's symbols, characters, chronology, and import. It is a vehicle of transmission, of sharing, of renewal, and as such plays an integral part in the ongoing psychic life of a people" (*The Sacred* 116). James Welch, N. Scott Momaday, and LeAnne Howe are writers and visionaries, conveying myths of tribal survivance and cultural unification in order to demonstrate how all the peoples of the Americas may heal from the rifts of colonization.

End Notes

¹ Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* is another text which would meet these criteria; however, since Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* was analyzed in Chapter Two, and since extensive criticism has been devoted to *Ceremony*, I have not included a complete discussion of it here, though I do reference it.

² *Magical Realism: Theory, History, and Community*, cited here, is an excellent starting point for exploring the growth of magical realism in world literatures.

³ Survivance, Vizenor's coined term for survival and resistance, is comprehensively applied in Chapter Three.

⁴ Vision quests are used among Plains cultures such as the Blackfeet. These rituals are often embarked upon to find one's helper animal spirit, such as Fools Crow's journey to find Skunk Bear. For individuals with great power, such as medicine men, a vision quest may be undertaken for various reasons with the intention of receiving spiritual instruction (Lyon, "Vision quest" 361-362).

⁵ Fools Crow's encounter with Feather Woman resonates with familiarity for readers of Silko's *Ceremony*. Though Feather Woman is a spiritual guide like Tseh, her alienation and pain can be contrasted to Tseh's more positive creatrix qualities.

⁶ The sacredness of the number four to Diné culture is discussed in Chapter One.

⁷ Ironically, a Native American language was a critical tactical tool in the Pacific Theatre of World War II. Marine Corps Code Talkers, Navajos using their own language, reduced "the time used for encoding and decoding messages by half" (Bernstein 49).

⁸ This image is central on the Mexican flag.

⁹ The nearest linguistic relatives of the Navajo are small hunting groups living in Canada and Alaska (Pasztor 237).

¹⁰ Susan Scarberry-Garcia also cites an earlier study made by Joseph DeFlyer (21).

¹¹ Silko's *Ceremony* echoes this twinning motif. As Scarberry-Garcia notes, Tayo and Rocky evoke the Pueblo War Twins (133), and Tayo, like Abel, must fight colonialist monsters alone, after the death of his "twin."

¹² The relevance of double consciousness to postcolonial theory is examined in Chapter Three.

¹³ Nowatima's oral history is supported by statistics from the era: fifteen percent of the Choctaw population died during their removal from Mississippi in 1836, about six thousand out of forty

thousand people. Other Southeastern tribes also suffered severe mortality rates, some as high as fifty percent (McGowan 61).

¹⁴ In her essay, “Slow Runners,” Barbara Alice Mann details how one result of Jacksonian-era removal was that remaining members of Eastern tribes were not documented as Indian for the larger purpose of disenfranchising Native peoples (82).

CHAPTER FIVE: CRITIQUING A THIRD SPACE MODEL

In the introduction of this project, I argue that Homi Bhabha's third space model can act as an interpretive lens for the novels discussed because their depictions of Native American spirituality as resistance against European and Euro-American colonialism create openings into the colonizer/colonized relationship that defy binaristic power struggles. Ania Loomba summarizes Bhabha's position: "In discursive terms, there is no neat binary opposition between the coloniser and the colonised, both are caught up in a complex reciprocity and colonial subjects can negotiate the cracks of dominant discourses in a variety of ways" (232). Bhabha believes that third spaces are useful when analyzing cultural productions of colonial and postcolonial societies, specifically, because

the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter'—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. (56)

The word "hybridity" is problematic for Native American literary separatists¹ who argue for a culturally and historically specific hermeneutics and privilege the interpretations of certain Native American critics who they believe can speak with more accuracy about tribal cultures. There is an activism inherent in the literary separatist agenda: "we are not mere victims but active agents in history, innovators of new ways, of Indian ways, of thinking and being and speaking and authoring in this world created by colonial contact" (Womack, *Red* 6). Pulitano critiques Native literary separatism, calling it "tribalcentric" (13), and argues that five hundred years of colonization has left American Indian literatures "heteroglot and hybridized" (13). Evidence of this is that most texts are written "in English by authors possessing consistently high levels of education" (8). Pulitano argues in favor of postcolonial theoretical applications for the

study of American Indian literatures because they are hybrid like so many formerly colonized (and still colonized) world cultures (11). Womack rebuts Pulitano in *Reasoning Together* (2008):

How can we deny their [both Native and non-Native scholars who embrace hybridity] compelling case that Indians have been influenced by non-Indians? We cannot . . . Does anyone know of a culture that *isn't* influenced by those with whom it has come in contact? Why do the hybridity theorists claim this as a central feature of their theorizing? Are there more mature ways of understanding our intellectual legacy that might move us beyond this static moment when we are giving a huge amount of our energy that restates, over and over again, the obvious—like none of us have ever been told at least a thousand times and in a thousand different ways that “these days Indians drive pickups”? (Womack, “Theorizing” 383)

Womack makes a good point. There are still substantial epistemological differences between Native American cultures and European American cultures even if we all wear similar clothes and drive similar vehicles. My defense of the third space model rests on the presumption that both Pulitano and Womack do not consider the performative aspect of hybridity theory as strenuously as they might. Pulitano, in fact, describes Bhabha’s theorizing as a “dense and overblown . . . opaque discourse” (178), yet one might make the same argument about Vizenor, whose oeuvre becomes her standard for a truly revolutionary Native American literature (186).

Bhabha’s theory of the third space is tied to his concern with cultural identity: “Cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in relation of Self to Other” (52).

This project’s emphasis has been on the performative nature of third spaces, what Bhabha claims creates hybridity or, “the inbetween space,” in which he locates culture. This performative aspect is semiotic: “The reason a cultural text or system of meaning cannot be sufficient unto itself is that the act of cultural enunciation—the *place of utterance*—is crossed by the *différance* of writing” (52).² This “enunciative split” (53), as Bhabha terms it, creates the third space, the space which he then also links to other perceived binaries of Western thought such as

past/present and colonizer/colonized. It is this linguistic focus that has troubled some critics of Bhabha, who argue that he is “too focused on discourse, not events” (Loomba 96); such an emphasis on discourse can result in a universalization of the colonial encounter (178). In some cases, however, a semiotic model is helpful, especially in this analysis in which specific performances of spirituality are linked to linguistic acts such as the divination of sacred texts, the tale-telling of trickster-creators, and ceremonial rituals. As Bhabha’s model is rooted in the dynamics of colonial encounters, so, too, are the texts in this project which represent resistance against colonialist systems in the Americas.

At the conclusion of Chapter Two, I acknowledge Pulitano’s classification of the mixed-blood trickster as generating a parallel third space to Vizenor’s semiotic trickster; however, I disagree with her reading of Native literatures as completely hybridized. Her reading is problematic for its focus on racial and cultural mixing rather than acts of cross-cultural contact. Though she agrees that Vizenor’s trickster, like Bhabha’s notion of hybridity, is born from language, she calls Vizenor “one of the preeminent postcolonial (or not so ‘post’) theorists of our time” (178) because his theory of a mixedblood trickster who engages with both Western and Native epistemologies is put into practice in his creative work. Such a reading can suggest a privileging of the mixedblood identity, ultimately creating barriers for those who do not culturally identify as “mixed.” Pulitano is attempting to apply hybridity theory in a similar way as Caribbean theorists such as Françoise Lionnet for whom the process of Creolization can celebrate “the mutual contamination of styles while pointing out how the former colonized culture has, by borrowing from the metropolitan culture, succeeded in the process to subvert and indigenize it” (8). This is a difficult application considering the still-colonized status of Native peoples who continue to seek sovereignty in the realms of politics, art, and personal decision-

making (Womack, “A Single” 75). Yet, the generation of a third space between two sovereign entities would seem to represent the real possibility for creating locations of understanding between cultures since such “inbetween” spaces represent the “cutting edge[s] of translation and negotiation” (Bhabha 56). The possibility of such cross-cultural understanding can be traced to Bhabha’s connection of his own third space theory and the ruminations of Wilson Harris, whom he quotes in *The Location of Culture*: “I have been stressing a certain void or misgiving attending every assimilation of contraries—I have been stressing this in order to expose what seems to me a fantastic mythological congruence of elements” (56). These are early ponderings by the Guyanese writer on “the womb of space,” a universalized spatial model that seems to prefigure Bhabha’s own third space. Harris argues that diverse cultures must find ways to “translate” their experiences for one another:

The word *chasm* is adopted therefore . . . to imply that within the gulfs that divide cultures—gulfs which some societies seek to bypass by the logic of an institutional division of humanity or by the practice of ethnic cleansing—there exists . . . a storage of creative possibility that, once tapped, may energize the unfinished genesis of the imagination. In that energy eclipsed bridges and potential bridges exist between divorced or separated or closed orders and worlds, bridges that are sometimes precarious, never absolute, but which I think engender a profound awareness of the numinous solidity of space, inner space/outer space, space as a womb of simultaneous densities and transparencies in the language of originality. (Harris 239)

Harris points out the dire end to which separatism can lead humanity and locates the womb of space as a storehouse of creativity and inter-cultural communication. There are many parallels between his model and Bhabha’s spatial model: both are ways of transcending binary systems; both exist outside of linear time; and both create possibilities for understanding between two cultures, or to put it semiotically, between the “I” and the “you” in a statement.

Thomas King, whose *Green Grass, Running Water* I discuss in Chapter Three, is another Native critic who resists the application of postcolonial theory to American Indian literatures. In

his essay, “Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial,” he argues that designating Native literatures as “postcolonial” emphasizes “the colonial moment, which has virtually nothing to do with the Native cultural traditions that preceded it” (7), cutting such literatures off from their cultural histories. My use of Bhabha’s hermeneutics suggests that postcolonial criticism need not separate the pre-colonial, colonial, nor post-colonial moment. The atemporal quality of the third space suggests that the pre-colonial also contains cultural weight in such a reading—this project could not have been achieved had I not considered pre-colonial Native American spiritual traditions and aesthetics. The authors of *Border Crossings: Thomas King’s Cultural Inversions* speak of the “inbetweenness” of the author from a personal standpoint—his mixed Native/Euro-American ancestry—and from a narrative standpoint—his crossings of the border between the oral and written (Davidson, Walton, and Andrews 10-11). King is an author who plays with what Bhabha calls the “borderline engagements of cultural difference” (3), specifically in his symbolization of the U.S./Canada border.

LeAnne Howe also rejects hybridity theory, arguing in my recent interview with her that “[i]t’s not applicable . . . because ‘I’ and ‘you’ are two things you cannot say in Choctaw language . . . If you can’t say it, how can it be a space between, and how can it be a hybridity if it cannot be spoken in a tribal language?” Of course, Howe, like the authors Pulitano references, writes her novels in English, though as Chapter Four points out, she intersperses Choctaw language within those texts. Howe suggests that there are models within Choctaw culture to consider that do not rely on Western semiotics, but rather rely on traditional practices of tribal negotiation in which groups operate in threes, rather than in dualistic relationships. This is an interesting perspective, but it does not negate the possibility that third spaces can be useful models in the analysis of Native American literatures. Howe’s own theory of tribalogy³ is

rife with possibilities for generating third spaces. Howe explains that “Native stories by Native authors . . . seem to pull together all the elements of the storyteller’s tribe . . . and connect these in past, present, and future milieu. The Native propensity for bringing things together, for making consensus, and for symbiotically connecting one thing to another becomes a theory about the way American Indians tell stories” (“Blind Bread” 330). Howe’s example of the creation of the United States by the act of tribal storytelling suggests the generation of a third space. The Haudenosaunee’s story of their united confederacy inspired the U.S. Founding Fathers whose vision, in turn, resulted in the creation of a nation. That vision is atemporal, one that is a part of the collective memory of U.S. citizens, past and present.

Though the third space model has been useful in the novelistic critiques of my current project, it certainly would not apply to all analyses of texts that concern Native American spirituality. As Bhabha focuses his third space model on the realm of colonizer/colonized relations, so too have I positioned myself within that discourse. Yet, as Loomba has pointed out, the universalized hybridity that the third space model suggests seems “undifferentiated by gender, class or location” (178). This raises a question: can third spaces exist outside of the realm of colonizer/colonized relations, even outside of the realm of cultural relations in which Wilson Harris’s “womb of space” is situated? In Chapter Two of this project, I describe a chain of divination that links the authors of *Men of Maize* and *Almanac of the Dead* who interpreted Mayan sacred texts, to the characters within the novels who also interpret texts and events, to the very readers of the novels who interpret these “difficult” texts. Extending the chain of divination to readers suggests an opening of Bhabha’s third space in a context that is solely linguistic, in a sense taking the third space model back to its semiotic roots.

In *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Wolfgang Iser postulates that meaning is not inherent within a text; rather, it is generated through the act of reading (9). Iser describes this process as a way to overcome a binary opposition between the artistic and the aesthetic qualities of a text:

the artistic pole is the author's text and the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader. In view of this polarity, it is clear that the work itself cannot be identical with the text or with the concretization, but must be situated somewhere between the two. It must inevitably be virtual in character, as it cannot be reduced to the reality of the text or to the subjectivity of the reader, and it is from this virtuality that it derives its dynamism. As the reader passes through the various perspectives offered by the text and relates the different views and patterns to one another he sets the work in motion, and so sets himself in motion, too. (21)

The creation of meaning occurs when text and reader come together in a manner that is tied to the speech act, specifically, the performative utterance. Relying on J.L. Austin's definition,⁴ Iser explains that the performative utterance "brings about a change within its situational context" through the speech act itself (56). One kind of utterance, the illocutionary act, shares properties with fictional language: it contains its own set of conventions; it requires techniques on the part of the reader to understand its processes; and it has a performative aspect in the sense that the reader must create textual meaning (61-62). Through his analysis of linguistics and reader reception, Iser concludes, "Textual structures and structured acts of comprehension are . . . the two poles in the act of communication" (107). Yet, the text also must be able to "activate the individual reader's faculties of perceiving and processing" in order to achieve a "dynamic *interaction* between text and reader" (107). Hence, the creation of meaning through textual and reader interplay suggests another kind of third space. This stance can be justified by examining Bhabha's own placement of his model within language theory, as Iser positions reader-response theory.

My reading of hybridity, then, is one that requires linguistic performance to transform the perceived binaries of modernistic thought. This project highlights how the hegemonic representations of Native American peoples are subverted through depictions of spiritual resistance against colonialist systems. The sacred acts discussed herein, based in language, open up the colonizer/colonized opposition, revealing a new reading of American Indian literatures. Iser argues that “it is in the reader that the text comes to life” (19). The third spaces created by *Men of Maize*; *Almanac of the Dead*; *Chancers*; *Tracks*; *Green Grass, Running Water*; *Fools Crow*; *House Made of Dawn*; and *Shell Shaker*, generate meaning beyond the act of reading, however. It is in the interaction between text and reader that Native American spiritual resistance becomes manifested and not simply represented. Such a manifestation can occur regardless of the reader’s cultural background. In my previous chapters, the third space that is activated between colonizer/colonized epistemologies differs from this parallel place in which reader and text resist the hegemonic narrative of European colonization. Third spaces, then, can be produced multiply within texts, and this particular doubling emphasizes the resistant natures of novels examined in this project. Iser’s reader-response theory corresponds with Karl Kroeber’s research on the American Indian oral tradition. Kroeber explains, “Stories enable audiences to join with storytellers in assessing the significance of what they tell. A story does not exist without a response to it, because it is a social, not a private event . . . They are, consequently, the favorite human discourse for *exploring* the practices and beliefs that make up the cultural context shared by storytellers and their audiences” (“An Introduction” 11). Therefore, Bhabha’s third space intersects with traditional Native aesthetics through the act of storytelling itself.

End Notes

¹ Craig Womack created the term in *Red On Red: Native American Literary Separatism*, published in 1999, cited here and previously in this project. The collection *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*, also cited here and published in 2008, is another example of Native literary separatist theory.

² Bhabha is here referring to Jacques Derrida's discussion of the French verb *différer* which translates into English as both "to differ" and "to defer." *Différence* suggests the noun which translates as "difference" in English; however, Derrida proposes an alternate extension of the verb in its noun form: *différance*, a way of discussing the process in which the meaning of language is ever-deferred through the chain of signification. See *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*.

³ Tribalography is also discussed in Chapter One.

⁴ From *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW WITH LEANNE HOWE

This interview took place on April 18, 2008, at the Society for the Study of Southern Literature Biennial Conference in Williamsburg, VA

KS: Thank you so much for granting my interview. Could you talk a little bit about how you wrote *Shell Shaker* and its focus on Choctaw history?

LH: There are no Non-Natives, almost none, in *Shell Shaker*, and that's on purpose because this is a discussion that we have with one another. I wanted that from the beginning. I had a huge section of the novel that I removed. I had written a lot about the French about 1690-1724, and those chapters where I do a lot with French characters are removed because ultimately I wanted this to be our story, and yet at the same time there is Bienville, there are the FBI, there are those of us who are collaborators in this process of colonization and those who work against it which is typical of reservation or Indian community life, indigenous community life, however you want to say that, so that was the work that *Shell Shaker* did. I'm conscious of the fact that there are spirits. There are walk-ons who are non-Natives. Certainly the Italians are underdeveloped characters. It's not about them. It's about the situation that we have been put in. And there's a reason there's Italians. First of all, the Genovese family was involved, did try to infiltrate, but the Italians are not integral to this work in other ways. Mainly, it's a book that interrogates us.

KS: I'd to ask you some questions about the ceremonial aspect of *Shell Shaker*. Did you intend for Shakbatina's ceremony to be a healing ritual, and how did you see it working to heal on both individual and cultural levels?

LH: Which ceremony?

KS: The one in which she travels through time to help Auda.

LH: Don't you mean her bone-picking ceremony, which comes later? There are multiple stages of ceremony in Shakbatina as a character, the first of which is her own death which is in the first chapter. That, too, is a ritual that when her head is bashed in by the Chickasaws that sends a message of cleanliness, and also it's a position of making a path white between the two tribes. You should investigate Lex Talionis—it's the French pronunciation—it's blood revenge. There's a lot been written about that, but that's the first chapter of the book. Nevertheless, that exact scene, her death for the other woman, is in itself a ceremony and a ritualized ceremony for that. So, each step of the way for her is a continuation of ceremony. So when you see her there, her sacrifice for herself, the next step is she intends to watch over her community, then you see her again in this moment of bone-picking with her husband who's also from a different moiety (that's an old fashioned term). That is also a ceremony of continuing to heal that releases her to move into yet another ceremony where she exacts revenge against the chief who walks out in front of the eighteen wheeler—Tonica. So when you see this beginning and ending, that is the ceremony that's at work in this book.

KS: So, then she is the porcupine woman?

LH: No, no she is not. She has her own ceremonies. If you look at the map—there is a twin map that is going on. The ceremony and the rituals of taking the porcupine and embroidering it. In fact, Divine Sarah also talks about that. She is tied to her through this act of having the skin of the porcupine on these belts. If you look at Choctaw belts, we have these beautiful sashes that are from—a long time ago. Let's just put it that way. The porcupines when we were further north were part of that. Porcupine Divine Sarah is the representation of that tie between the ceremony that's done. She smoked her skin. That's a ceremony in itself. That's a ritualized map that's made that we wear on our belts and what that means, where the land was, where these

animals came from, ties Big Mother Porcupine both to Shakbatina into the future. So those are twin maps that you have to work out. They both move in a certain direction to exact peace. So they're not the same, they're not the same people, and they don't represent the same things.

KS: Can you talk a little bit about traditional shell shaking ceremonies?

LH: Not all Choctaws, certainly not now, we don't shake shells. Some communities did. When you look at our communities—give me a piece of paper—when you look at our confederacy a long time ago, you see [Howe draws a map that covers most of the Southeastern U.S.] this, this handle here, along the coast, and we'll pretend this is the Mississippi, [Howe draws] and this would be part of Louisiana up into what would become the Tensaw or Tennessee here. So, you see this confederacy all the way over into here. These are fabrics that changed over time, depending what time and place you are, so when you think about the Choctawan confederacy, we stretch from here to here, and certainly here in Mobile—Mabila would be here, both a language and a place—so up in here are groups of townships, you could think of them as daughter villages. Look at these old maps of Patricia Galloway. I think she's done a wonderful job, especially in the De Soto era. We deeply disagree over some things, but I think her work on the maps that she's done and translations are excellent. Some of these communities shake shells; some do not. Today, Choctaws, because of our alliances with Chickasaws and Creeks, some communities and some people do shake shells, but by in large we do not anymore, so that is something that since Removal has changed, but I'm also suggesting certainly that the sisters that came through and began shaking shells were Choctawan. That's the point of those scenes.

KS: The seven sisters?

LH: And the birds, and we have the seven sisters in the sky and so forth and so on. There are essences of these older, older people and older, older ways, previous to Removal, that's what that

scene is about. Those scenes were really about trying to recover some of the larger Confederacy that was—and you just have to think about it in terms of alliances. That’s really what I was trying to use in hope that this book and this text, read by my own community, will help them remember what the confederacy was like and bring that back into existence. And that’s the way these stories work.

KS: Actually that flows into my next question, and it kind of comes back to what you had said originally about having put only Choctaw characters in the book. In *Shell Shaker*, Adair discusses how the Choctaw people have been internally colonized, and there’s a really great discussion of that related to the table. Do you see your books as artistic productions that use decolonization tactics? The example that I see is your use of Choctaw words which strikes me as a way of re-centering the text from a Euro-American to a Choctaw perspective. If so, what other tactics would you say present a decolonizing or decolonized mindset?

LH: Well, I think the table is one, and that’s just one small piece. This is also a process that goes on in *Evidence of Red*. It’s also a process that I’m at work on in *Miko Kings*. For instance, if you look at how this is situated with the discussion when Bienville walks in the camp where Haya is speaking to Anoleta. Haya is a child, and Bienville comes back into, walks into camp and begins speaking, and I believe that Haya says, “He’s speaking very well,” trying to compliment him because he speaks in Choctaw. Shakbatina has already situated Bienville as speaking Choctaw in baby talk—he talks like a baby. That’s another place—they’re actually positioned throughout the text. No, they didn’t speak our language perfectly, they spoke like babies, and we treated them like babies, and tried to give them things. That is also tied into another conversation where Dolores is trying to talk about Nanih Waiya and the people when they’re stuffed into these mounds, and you see all these trade goods that are given to them. The

archaeologists and anthropologists say, “Oh, he must be an honored leader” because look at all the things that we have given him. In the way white people think about goods and consumerism means that you are part of a hierarchy. Well, actually, more from our community it means that you’re selfish, and you give them everything in death to keep them locked into these mounds. That’s another intervention in discussing why they misread us at every step of the way. “Oh, look at all the shells and jewelry around him,” and when you go to these places and make these statements, they never once considered what that might have been from a Native point of view. Our word for Nahola means “stingy.” The Lakota word is “greasy” because they will eat the best and take it away from you every time. So these are interventions where I’m trying to say, “You’ve misread the mounds, you’ve misread what that burial ceremony might be, you’ve misread how we treated you because you act like babies—I want, I want, I want.” So, every chapter, I think what I’ve tried to say is, “You’ve misread us.” So, Delores does the same thing. When Isaac is telling the story of those birds, and the incident at Fort Rosalie, the retelling of that event is misread. The Natchez come to give these amazing swans [to Chépart], and they [the French] shoot them because they’re worthless waterfowl. That comes right out of the documents about how that incident occurred. That is another instance where I’m saying, “You’ve misread what these ‘worthless waterfowl’ meant to the Natchez people. That’s a bird reserve, and you’ve killed them.” So, Isaac retells that narrative to say, “This is the truth of this story,” and the Natchez, of course, move into our communities, and the Chickasaws—why? Because we preserve, we had to be that fani miko and preserve their culture, and part of that now is melded into us.

KS: What does fani miko mean?

LH: It’s a speaker for the opposing tribe.

KS: Your concept of tribalogy suggests an aesthetics of unification to me, the idea that diverse lands and periods of time, people, can come together through storytelling, such as the story of the Haudenosaunee's confederation that inspired the U.S. founding fathers. Both of your novels are layered with movements toward unification. Do you see your novels as forms of tribalogy, and how is this different from or intersect with a Western approach to the novel form?

LH: Because I take the decision that Native literature, American Indian literature, First Nations literature is foundational. I think American novelists are moving toward our understanding of literature and how we tell stories. Look at all the novels that do exactly what Native novels have always done. They take a community of people. The discussion of *Paradise* could be one example, last night, that Toni Morrison in her work is teeing off of this foundations of Native literature which used community to tell a story, not a single protagonist. I made this lecture at UIC a few years ago that in fact, if you begin to position Native literature as foundational, what you see is American novelists, wholly American novelists, Black and white, Asian, moving toward our ways of telling a story. Here's a good example. Take a look for instance at the novels in the last twenty-five years, American novels, that began to use a splintered storytelling style. They're not linear. This is the land teaching people how to understand and talk through that. So, when I look at particular literatures from the last twenty-five years, they're just catching up. That's the difference. So, in some ways Native literature is moving toward a more, and has for quite some time, has moved toward a tribal, tribalogy place. We're foundational, not different, but foundational. And that's the way that we can then see the growth of the American aesthetic. It's based on us, not the other way around.

KS: Both of your novels deal with intersections between historical and contemporary figures. In *Shell Shaker*, this is possible through this series of century-crossing ceremonies, and in *Miko Kings* it's possible through a physics that is connected to Choctawan linguistic elements. I'm not sure if you would put it that way.

LH: That's right.

KS: These events suggest a permeability of history and time. How do these intersections of past and present represent a Choctawan worldview?

LH: Mainly because Choctaw language is always present tense. That's one thing. It's another reason why I consciously write in present tense even though I'm writing about the past. For almost all of us that are Native-centric, the past is ever present whether it's through the ceremonies, ghosts, land, because the land is past tense and present tense all at the same time. The land actually is a wonderful space in physics that is all things at once, past, present, and future, so for me, I can't imagine a worldview without it. And I think because the American narrative is very young, the national narratives are very, very young, Americans in and of themselves have trouble so far articulating that in the national narrative. Because for them, if you think of it, for non-Natives, their national narrative begins in 1776, ultimately. That's yesterday. That's not even yesterday. So, that I think is a place that we are going. I think Americans are going to grow toward our aesthetic. They always have. Look at American Indian art. American Indian art created the aesthetic of American art. It doesn't exist without us. Especially beginning at the turn of the last century. To define itself explicitly not as Euro-centric but as Native-centric in America, and the art movement coming out the Southwest creates American art, especially modern art. Good Lord. So, it's the same. The literary studies are moving toward our aesthetic, not the other way around.

KS: Regarding language, Ezol says in *Miko Kings* that Choctaws and Europeans have different views of time because Choctaw language represents time differently, and Lena says that Ezol based her hypothesis on language theory. This reminds me of Saussurian linguistics in which each language brings into being through description an external world. Is Ezol's theory coming primarily from traditional Choctawan cosmology, or do you see her as a syncretic character who's blending the scientific theories of her era with Choctawan epistemologies?

LH: No. It comes through verbs. This is certainly part of the Choctawan aesthetic. I'm saying flat-out that speech acts create the world around us. And those are primary. We can look at verbs and verb tenses as a way, especially in Choctaw, as a way of moving the mountain through the act of speaking. And that speech act is as powerful as number theory to nuclear physics. Non-Indians put all their faith in numbers, and we, I think, on the other hand, put our faith in speech. That's why if you speak of death to an individual or a thing, you make it happen. So we don't speak of some things because it's that powerful, and especially the voices of women. In that way, my narrative as I see it goes back to Choctaw women in *Shell Shaker*. I'm trying to say, the power of speech is evoked through the difference in the way we use language and verbs. So, that's it.

KS: This leads into a couple of my questions about women and matriarchies. Women are key figures in both of your novels. Isaac in *Shell Shaker* discusses the traditional matrilineal system of Choctaw culture. In *Miko Kings*, the Four Mothers Society is an important political organization. How has the patriarchal structure of the colonizing European culture impacted the matriarchal culture of the Choctaws historically and in the present?

LH: I probably don't think it has. I do think—one of my colleagues Michelene Pesantubbee disagrees with me—we've always put males out in front to sacrifice themselves with a different

group. Whites are just a different group that we intend to trade with, only we have become surrounded. But yet, there isn't an organization—this is where Michelene and I really don't agree—there isn't a group or an organizing group that in Choctaw at home it's not run by women. You want something done, go to the women. I see that as a continuance of something. Who's at the head of the family? I am. I'm the oldest girl. This remains true today. Certainly with my aunts. Now, I don't mean to suggest essentialism in that. I can only see my own family and my own navel. I think we still are people that have maintained that cultural stability, especially as the way that we reckon family and kinship. And men. But primarily women.

KS: By emphasizing matriarchs in your novels, could this also be read as a decolonization tactic in the sense that it reminds, maybe not Choctaw readers, but definitely Euro-American readers of the power of matriarchal culture?

LH: Well, I'm speaking to both, I guess. I don't necessarily think that I'm just speaking to—actually I don't. I don't think I'm just speaking to whites.

KS: I guess the reason I couched the question that way is because I was originally assuming to some extent that patriarchy had overwhelmed matriarchy, and so I was wondering is this a way to remind Choctaws of matriarchal culture as well, or really do you see it more as a representational aesthetics?

LH: Yeah. Actually I do. I mean how would you say that we don't?

KS: I had read an article by Kay Givens McGowan that suggested that for those Southeastern tribes that were matriarchal, patriarchy has subsumed them. I'm paraphrasing or possibly summarizing, but there's a quote to that extent.

LH: I think Michelene assumes that—and also incorrectly—assumes that we had at one time a beloved woman society, and now it collapsed. I don't see that, and I don't think she does the

documentation at all. I don't think she spent any time with our documents, nor does she spend any time in our community. Yes and no. But, not to take anything away from her scholarship, but this is where we deeply disagree. No, I don't see that. And I read it very differently that we are subsumed by patriarchy. I don't know.

KS: That's not your experience.

LH: Well, no, and we don't reckon kin. We will say, "Okay, if your relatives were on the Dawes rolls," we will recognize you, and that has changed, I think, over time from men to women to both people, both parents. But culturally, it's funny, I was with a group of women who are Chickasaws who are going to China, and they're probably there already to take our cultural ways. Who represents our people? Women. What group is out there? Women. Who is the matriarch of the language? Women. Who sets the grounds? Women. Who blesses? Women. Who is at the center of their family? Women. Oh yeah, and how would you explain Wilma Mankiller's twelve years as chief? Joyce Dugan's eight years—six years as chief—how do we explain that? Matriarchy is dead? Stacy Leeds just running for chief. Half of our council women and one of our council women running for chief.

KS: Thank you. Okay we're going to shift gears a little bit. In *Miko Kings*, the relationship between Justina Maurepas and Hope Little Leader exemplifies the common history of oppression shared by African Americans and Native Americans, especially their meeting at the Hampton Normal School for Blacks and Indians. Why did you want to develop this theme in this novel, a novel that on the surface focuses on the roots of baseball and the culture of America's first peoples?

LH: Baseball is a diplomacy game and is a game that also had, especially at its roots, is intertribal. It's diplomacy. It's a love affair: men and women meet there from different tribes. It

made sense to me that they would fall in love as have several American Indians, the Owl family, at Hampton. And I wanted to have that character resonate with New Orleans again. This is really back to trying to say, that area, that space, that time is wholly Choctaw, certainly Choctawan, and her cousin is Houma, Beau Hash, and so for me, our relationships with Blacks and Indians were prevalent in the eighteenth century as they are today, and that's really what I was trying to say about that love affair. What was the rest of the question? What am I trying to say with Blacks and Indians?

KS: If you want to talk more about representing the relationship between Blacks and Indians, I'd love to hear what you think about it.

LH: I mainly wanted to say, "This is not new." That love affairs between Blacks and Indians is certainly—as is whites and Indians—is certainly longstanding—has existed since we began taking in slaves from the French. That's about 1720. And that it's not a big deal. I also wanted to say at the same time, coming into Indian Territory, there were the Klansmen and the people wanting to penalize us and then scare the shit out of Blacks in that place. So they're really attacking both Choctaws and Blacks in that place, and I wanted to show that we are both alive in that place without any weapons, so when those KKK people attacked the house, the Choctaws go out and tried to chase them down and face them with both a baseball bat and a gun. So that was the reason. And also it's another reason why Ezol begins reading *Evangeline*, reading the text from *Evangeline* to Justina because she's trying to say that we will always be passing each other in these spaces.

KS: Characters from Louisiana and events taking place in Louisiana figure prominently in both of your novels. Is this a way to remind readers of the traditional homelands and trading routes of

the Choctaw or do you have other Louisiana connections as well or other reasons for bringing that setting in?

LH: Louisiana is our ancient homelands. Every place name in the state is Choctaw. Atchafalaya is one good example. And what did we do when we come to Oklahoma or come to Indian Territory? Every place name that is in Louisiana and in Mississippi is then transferred and then renamed in the state of Oklahoma. Even the names of people. Tanny Hill where my family is from is also Tanny Hill, Mississippi. And so Tupelo, Mississippi, becomes Tupelo in Indian Territory. Every place name is then renamed. Nanih Waiya in Mississippi at Tushkahoma. Why is that important? Because when we brought our earth, when we brought our people, we also brought the names with us. Those are thousands of years old. Those place names. So that, the falaya, all of that is renamed in our homelands. And that's to remind us and remind the people who live in our territories today, who are visitors, who this land belongs to in the lower Mississippi valley.

KS: In *Miko Kings*, there's a character known as an "Ohoyo Holba," "like a woman but not," who has healing powers. Can you discuss the traditional role of homosexuals and/or transvestites in Choctaw culture and contrast that to the role of gays and lesbians in contemporary U.S. society?

LH: I don't think they work at all. I'm trying to say that "Ohoyo Holba" was not necessarily thought of as a homosexual because they weren't just involved with other men. They were also involved with our community in very special ways. They are healers. They're people that protected our children because they embodied more than one thing. And what is part of Choctawan ceremony is that we revere things that are unusual. So, when you look at the spirit that's connected in Ohoyo Holba, and when they put on that dress, they are exactly saying "the

embodiment of many.” And that is very different from any discussion—we don’t have homosexual discussions attached to Ohoyo Holba. It’s a different way of thinking about things. So that is what I was trying to say. Kerwin is a ballplayer, he is a healer, he is attempting to try to find his own way in a contemporary society who doesn’t recognize the spaces, so I really don’t think that they’re analogues to each other. I think that mainstream culture has a very different idea about even “two spirit,” even the rhetoric of “two spirit” doesn’t really get at—I think people like Wesley Thomas say that over and over and over. In writing about two spirits, it’s very limiting. For instance, he’s Navajo. He’s coming out of Navajo culture in writing about two spirits, but it will not resolve this question of what they were, what they are, and how they exist in our cultures today. I see also, with the intrusion of Christianity ever present, that pain of homophobia in our communities today, and this troubles me a lot. The more Christian Choctaws have become, the more homophobic they become. I really think this is the next area in which I want to argue with my own community. Let us think clearly about our traditions in this way. This is probably the next step I think I’ll be working with my own community. I didn’t grow up that way. I grew up with a lot of people who could be Ohoyo Holba or half-boys, alla nokni, so that’s another designation, and it wasn’t a problem, at least in my mind. So this is a place that I’m going to be moving into next to argue with my own community.

KS: I’m curious about your thoughts on applying Homi Bhabha’s Third Space to Native literatures. My concept of it is that in the statement “I” and “you,” there’s a gap between us. And that gap is the third space, it’s atemporal, it’s the hybrid space, it’s the space where things come together.

LH: I don’t think it works at all. It’s not applicable. The end. Why? Because “I” and “you” are two things you cannot say in Choctaw language for instance. It doesn’t equate into our

languages. If you can't say it, how can it be a space between, and how can it be a hybridity if it cannot be spoken in a tribal language?

KS: Does one say "we"?

LH: When you're with a group of people, you also have to realize that Native languages are bounded. We have to be able to see each other speak in these terms, so there is the "we." There is only the "we." Not only the "we," but if I'm speaking, I also speak as Christine's girl, not as myself, so that is also, the spaces that I reside in, and she resides in me, so that is in itself not a space of hybridity. I think that he does some interesting things, but I don't know why you would rely on that as text to interrogate us because I don't agree that that's a hybridity. Choctaws are most famous for doing this. [Howe draws an image with three points that she describes as like "a footstool."] You see this— it's never a binary. And in our relationships with other people, where these treaty negotiations happen—I'm not talking about whites don't exist in these discussions at this point. I'm talking about in the 1600's—this is what you find in the Southeast when you delve into the Spanish records. You find these wonderful relationships—it's a triangle. And those then pivot around a whole cluster of what I would call mound cultures in this lower Mississippi valley. They then touch each other. Right around what would have been those Seven Sister communities, and if you keep going east up to the Alabamas, there's three hundred different groups that work and operate in that little space there, often ceremonially different. Some of the languages tend soft, the Cushattas, those are different language groups, all pivoting with each other in these little triangles that relate to trade, ballgame, etc. So they are very vibrant with intertribal relationships. That's what I think is most important. There are no binaries. What is Indigenous theory, and how did it work in our communities? I think we're making good headway about defining that. I also think it's helpful for the United States to look at those

epistemologies as a governance because we're interested in uniting, not dividing. In that way, we can be helpful to helping get us out of this nightmare of binaries the Bush administration has terrorized the world in. Where to look? For me it would be looking in the Southeast. Why are we obsessed with this? Because we were successful for ten thousand years in this space of making relationships. They're not a paradise. They are fraught with these tensions, but in fact, they existed here.

VITA

Kirstin Lea Squint was born in San Angelo, Texas, and raised on a farm in north central Kentucky. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, with a minor in French, from Eureka College in 1995 and a Master of Arts degree in English with an emphasis in fiction writing from Miami University of Ohio in 1998. She has been teaching for more than ten years, her career beginning in a high school on the Navajo Reservation in 1997. After five years of working in community colleges, she entered the doctoral program in comparative literature at Louisiana State University. She has published poetry in *Eureka Literary Magazine*, fiction in *The Power of Words: A Diverse Gathering of Acclaimed Authors*, and scholarly work in *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction*, *Postcolonial Text*, the *CLA Journal* and *Mississippi Quarterly* (forthcoming). Kirstin will graduate with her Doctor of Philosophy degree in December, 2008, and continue in her position at Southern University, Baton Rouge, where she has been teaching composition and literature for three years.