Native American Literature

Towards a spatialized reading

Helen May Dennis

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Native American Literature

Native American Literature considers a selection of post-war novels by Native American writers, including well known, canonical works such as Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, as well as lesser known but equally enjoyable texts, such as Janet Campbell Hale's *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* and Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms.* Believing in the possibility of communicating across cultural boundaries, *Native American Literature* offers a series of readings that focus on the act of understanding imaginatively texts by Native American and mixed-blood authors that address and educate a global readership.

The book offers introductions to major novels, such as Paula Gunn Allen's *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, Silko's *Ceremony* and Linda Hogan's *Power*, based on strategies of close, attentive reading. Having demonstrated the principle of imaginative, empathetic reading by the general reader, Helen May Dennis builds on these initial readings to explore in more detail the impressive range of narrative strategies employed in this body of works. Her final chapter, on the novels of Louise Erdrich, uses narratology as a tool for analysis. In so doing, she explores Erdrich's sophisticated blend of oral storytelling traditions with aspects of modernist writing, and her remarkable construction of a novel cycle that relates a fictionalized version of Ojibwe history of the late twentieth century.

This book interweaves questions of narratology with a wide-ranging discussion of the themes of felicitous and infelicitous spaces. The author concentrates on the different representations of cultural spaces, on themes of displacement and homelessness, and on the inscription of mixed-blood identity that internalizes the trope of the conflictual frontier zone. In addition, this study dwells on the fragility and power of individual and cultural memory as it is depicted in these novels. The book demonstrates that a judicious mix of imaginative and informed acts of interpretation permit the non-Indian reader to achieve spatialized readings of these novels, i.e. readings that read text in context and in depth. Throughout, the author enacts a practice of cross-cultural reading, which employs a diversity of strategies to respond appropriately to this burgeoning canon of Native American literature.

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2007
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006.

"To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk."

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-96822-0 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN10: 0–415–39702–2 (hbk)
ISBN10: 0–203–96822–0 (ebk)

ISBN13: 978–0–415–39702–5 (hbk)
ISBN13: 978–0–203–96822–2 (ebk)

In memoriam Harold Noel Dennis
6 April 1914–26 September 2005

Remember you used to make rugs. I say
as his fingers stray towards the dry itch of eczema.
Don't scratch. Just rub. I say, then
take his fingers in my hand and gently file the nails.
It always calms him, so I leave one hand for later.
A month later his ashes scratch and dry my cupped hands.

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Thanks to *MELUS*, *The Journal of The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* for permission to reproduce material from pages 2–3 of A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff's 'Ritual and Renewal: Keres Traditions in the Short Fiction of Leslie Silko' (*MELUS* 5.4 (1978): 2–17). Thanks also to A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff for her kind consent.

Thanks to all my students whose conversation and work have stimulated my own reading and thinking: they are too numerous to mention by name.

Finally, thanks to Ian Williams. His constant support and love have made this book possible.

Introduction

In Isleta the rainbow was a crack
in the universe. We saw the barest
of all life that is possible. [. . .]
All the colors of horses
formed the rainbow,
and formed us
watching them.
(Joy Harjo 'Vision')

Native American literature underwent a renaissance around 1968, and the current canon of novels written in the late twentieth century in American English by Native American or mixed-blood authors is diverse, exciting and flourishing. Despite this, very few such novels are accepted as part of the broader American literary canon. A number of factors contribute to this situation, including the contentious area of tribal allegiance versus cross-cultural textual politics. While Arnold Krupat has led the field in advocating a cosmopolitan criticism of Native American texts, Nativist intellectuals have argued stridently for a separatist position.[1] I respect the case for a strong tradition of Native literary criticism, and understand why Robert Allen Warrior and Jace Weaver, among others, call for the development of an autonomous Native American intellectual community. European by birth and inclination, I could never pretend to participate in this essential project. At the same time I would feel dismay if the movement towards establishing intellectual sovereignty for America's First Nations were to preclude me from reading published novels. Common sense tells me that my acts of reading and interpretation contribute to a larger sense of community that implicitly supports the current work of Nativist scholars.

Thus the aim of this study is to consider a selection of novels by Native American writers, with specific reference to issues of understanding and interpretation, focusing on textual matters, and situating myself as a specific, individual European reader. I believe in the precept that a well-written novel will educate its reader as to how to respond to and comprehend its text and context. Therefore, I enact in my critical prose the effort of attention required

to read sympathetically and thus to enter into the imaginative universe of the tribal or mixed-blood author. I cannot pretend to have insider authority on issues of indigenous American culture; however, I do believe in the urgent importance of cross-cultural reading. Positioned, by definition, as an outsider, my study offers a critical paradigm for sympathetic, foreign engagement with Native American literary texts.

The social and cultural position of Native American writers has produced an exciting range of literary texts, which have in common a fascinating synthesis of tribal traditions and modern European or European-American literary formations. There is a strong case for viewing the Native American literary canon in and of itself, since it conveys a shared cultural, historical and tribal identity. This is not to underestimate the rich diversity of tribal and mixed-blood cultural traditions; arguably Native American culture is more heterogeneous than that of any other ethnic group in the United States. And yet it behoves us to consider this body of texts as a literary canon and attempt to understand its specific provenance and its notable characteristics before it can be absorbed into the mainstream of American literature. My intention is not to ghettoize an already marginalized literature, but to make the case for due recognition of its right to inclusion in the broader American literary canon. My implicit argument is that non-Indian, especially European, readers need to approach these novels with a judicious combination of willingness to explore Native American culture and preparedness to learn from the narrative strategies of the texts.

These narrative strategies are themselves hybrid, harnessing tribal oral and visual traditions and arts together with the sophisticated techniques of narrative discourses. The novels I discuss all contain elements that are unfamiliar to European readers, and yet also implicitly address a non-Indian audience. In this study I have tended to respond first to elements of narrative strategy that are familiar to us Europeans, and then suggest the ways in which these reassuringly recognizable features guide us towards an understanding of the culturally unfamiliar. Joy Harjo describes the experience of a vision of a rainbow becoming an educative process, a reminder of reciprocity between the human and the non-human universe. She also describes it as a reminder not to opt for the 'easiest vision', but rather to respond to the profound phenomenon, and the formative process that dialogue with that which is beyond us can instigate. For the European reader and addressee of these texts, a comparable process of dialogue with the unfamiliar can be a moving and expanding experience.

Studies by European-American or European critics of texts written by so-called ethnic authors tend to come with the obligatory apology for being born 'white', and the apology can soon develop into full-scale narcissism. Yet, I would be foolhardy to pretend that I am anything other than European. This might account for certain choices I have made in this study. For example, I engage with the work of Bachelard, long after he has ceased to be 'fashionable', since he speaks to my own cultural formation and imagination. I also draw on the discourses of narratology, since an author like Genette defines the sorts of

concerns and strategies a reader such as myself brings to the reading of these texts. Within the framework which Bachelard and Genette provide, I consider two strands in the dialogue between Native American or mixed-blood novels and a European reader. These are, respectively: textual depictions of felicitous and infelicitous space; and narrative representations of history (or communal memories) and of individual memories (or personal histories). In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette distinguishes between oral narrative and written narrative:

> [T]here is no question here of identifying the status of written narrative (literary or not) with that of oral narrative. The temporality of written narrative is to some extent conditional or instrumental; produced in time, like everything else, written narrative exists in space as space, and the time needed for 'consuming' it is the time needed for *crossing* or *traversing* it, like a road or a field. The narrative text, like every other text, has no other temporality than what it borrows, metonymically, from its own reading.
>
> (34)

He also writes of 'the atemporal space of the narrative as text' (223). This emphasis highlights the difference between the Native American tribal tradition of orality and the European novelistic tradition. All of the novels I consider of necessity mediate between these two conflicting cultural traditions. So it is worth pausing to reflect on the differences before proceeding to respond in the chapters that follow to the ways in which Amerindian novelists create hybridized fictional forms through their textual mediation.

As Walter J. Ong's classic work, *Orality and Literacy*, tells us, oral storytelling and literary production differ in a number of ways. Oral stories tend to be told in a linear fashion. The events of the story are narrated in the order that they occurred. In a literary work it is not necessary to tell the events of the story in the same sequence as they occur. Often writers use the device of flashback or analepsis and slightly less frequently they employ the device of anticipation or prolepsis. Thus they can alter the focus on events to foreground some and relegate others to memories, past histories, filling in of information. And they can keep the reader engaged by occasional titillating anticipatory hints. All of this alters the reading experience to one in which the reader has to engage actively with the reconstruction-inviting strategies of the text.

Oral stories are told 'in time'. They are performed or delivered to an audience, even if that is an audience of one or two only. Thus they have a duration which is the time it takes to tell them. Literary texts do not exist in time. They exist in space. They are a material object that the reader can pick up, put down, read in bits, read all at once, read fast, read very slowly.[2] Readers can move back and forth in the text at their own will. Any sense of time in narrative is imagined, created in the reader's mind through the devices of narration.

Oral stories are sometimes rather stark and stripped down. Often they contain characters already known to the audience, so some information is assumed rather than a full description being given each time the character enters a new story. On the whole, with a few notable exceptions, once a novel is published the text is fixed in that final version. On the whole, and again with some exceptions, authors do not recycle the same story and the same character(s) over and over again. Generally they need to build up characters through the various strategies of characterization and provide description because they would be unwise to assume that their readership 'knew' the character or the location already. Thus there is much more description in literary texts than in oral stories, and there is often more explanation or, at the very least, diegesis (telling) or elucidation through mimesis (showing). One notable exception I shall explore at further length in this study is the work of Louise Erdrich, since she does reproduce some of the characteristics of oral storytelling at the level of plot in terms of re-circulation of characters and stories from one novel to the next. Paradoxically, her work at times also seems closest to European novelistic preoccupations, in her almost Proustian obsession with memory.

Oral stories are retold over and over again. At each time of telling, minor variations can occur. These might be accidental, but they can also be intentional, as the storyteller moulds the story or its moral to suit the occasion and the audience. Oral stories traditionally assume shared value systems and worldviews, so that the audience will understand how to interpret the story to extract its moral message. Thus the form of the story is not 'set in stone' or typeface, but there is an assumed underlying social stability that allows the meaning to circulate.

On the other hand, unlike oral stories that are often performed within a ritualized setting, the literary author has no notion of the setting in which the text will be read, and has no control over the value systems or worldviews of the readership. The author cannot control the interpretation of their text once it is published. It can be subjected to any number of misreadings. Indeed, the critical theory of the 'intentional fallacy' reminds us that to attend to the author's intended meaning limits our understanding of the text. So if the author wants us to comprehend their meaning in a certain way, they can only do so through a variety of textual strategies and devices. Most crucially, they can attempt to create and imply their sense of their reader or addressee and indicate through manipulation of the tone of address the kind of relationship they want to establish between themselves as implied author in the text and us as implied readers of the text.

Despite all this, the conflicting codes of oral and literary traditions can seem to be related parts of a seamless world of imagination and story. And it is not that hard to believe that twentieth-century Native American authors might participate in and appreciate the value of both oral story telling and literary production. It is my assumption that, in choosing to produce literary texts that retain a flavour of the oral storytelling tradition, these authors

deploy a series of textual strategies to draw the unfamiliar reader into some of their cultural topoi and thus familiarize her with their own differing histories. These strategies include the nuanced use of voice and the creation of the implicit reader as confidante and addressee. The reader is invited into a mediating space that includes her in its composition.

The act of reading is always one of entering into a textual space. The sense of the past is always an imaginary feat of mental conjuring. The novel as genre initiates powerful illusion. In Proust's oeuvre, lost time is transformed into remembered places as well as recalled times. So in Native American and mixed-blood novels the narrative device of analepsis (or flashback) plays with the reader's illusion of a recoverable past and typically intertwines with recollection of cultural spaces. Clifford Geertz's definition of 'thick description' involves recognizing the importance of being prepared to enter into the 'imaginative universe' of our cultural other. It is a 'lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs' that hampers the ethnographer's ability to interpret cultural acts adequately (13). Geertz argues that 'the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse' (14). To read any novel presupposes preparedness on the part of the reader to enter into the 'imaginative universe' of the author's text. Thus the adoption of the novelist genre by Amerindian authors utilizes the potential of fiction to inform the reader's imagination, to evoke with a frisson of recognition people and places we cannot know. That fictive initiation into spaces unknown to us is surely preferable to ignorance and indifference. In our global economy the ability to foster understanding across cultural boundaries is a powerful necessity. In the novel the narrated experience of the implicit author enters into dialogue with the imagination of the implicit reader. Despite the occasional misunderstandings that might occur, this process is an important aspect of the cultural exchange and sharing that should shape future human transactions. Thus I would contend that the effect of Amerindian authors publishing novels in American English is to contribute to 'the enlargement of the universe of human discourse'.[3]

I wrote much of this book while travelling and exploring in my own poetry the experience of dwelling on the road in contemporary European sites. Both my sense of place and my feeling of defamiliarization were intensified. Living in an accelerated condition of displacement, I meditated on the double strand of the wisdom of place and the experience of forced and multiple displacements in Native American history. During the writing of this book my father was terminally ill and he died before I sent this monograph to press. As my own father's memory was failing, I strove to understand how Native American, mixed-blood authors transcribed history and recorded fictional versions of individual and tribal remembrance. The tensile connection between memory, forgetting and narrative strategies seems all the more fragile and precarious for the experience of watching my father age and die. Consequently, this has become an even more personal book than I originally planned. It is dedicated to the memory of my father.

1 Preliminaries

Felicitous spaces, infelicitous places and eulogized space

> We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inherent and inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
>
> (Jefferson 235)

Introduction

Happiness can seem a problematic value on which to found a nation. Jefferson's enlightened draft of the Declaration of Independence could read as a permit for self-centred materialism, validating a socially irresponsible pursuit of pleasure rather than placing compassion and altruism at the heart of just governance. Yet, if the pursuit of happiness is an inherent and inalienable right for all men, and I assume that 'men' here is used generically, how might it be undertaken in a socially and spiritually responsible fashion? Literary texts provide an excellent forum for considering the complex issues that arise as one contemplates the tensions inherent in the radical but compromised idealism of the founding fathers and the subsequent political, social and cultural history of the United States of America. Literary texts have the resources to examine and negotiate the impossible balance between the claims of the individual and of the populace with a sensitivity and subtlety not available to other forms of discourse.

I would agree with the Jeffersonian proposition that safety and happiness are the basic rights of all men, women and children and that they should be defended and upheld by governments and people. So, I begin my study by considering the linked notions of safety and happiness as represented in indigenous American women's writing. To do so I turn to what might appear an inappropriate source, the work of a French, male philosopher and phenomenologist, originally published in 1958, namely *La Poétique de l'Espace*. My choice is not as arbitrary as it might at first appear. Gaston Bachelard's text was translated into English in 1964 and subsequently published as a paperback by Boston's Beacon Press in 1969. This version informed the writing of a number of influential American feminist writers and should therefore be considered a key text in the formation of radical (or cultural)

feminism. Writers such as Adrienne Rich, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Judith Fryer and Sandra Cisneros testify to its importance, and arguably it struck a chord which continues to reverberate in the work of other women of color who do not necessarily acknowledge direct attribution. Accordingly, I shall refer mainly to the Maria Jolas translation, published by Beacon Press, in my exposition.

Towards the end of his introduction, Bachelard states the aim of his present volume:

> Indeed, the images I want to examine are the quite simple images of *felicitous space*. In this orientation, these investigations would deserve to be called topophilia. They seek to determine the human value of the sorts of spaces that may be grasped, that may be defended against adverse forces, the space we love. For diverse reasons, and with the differences entailed by poetic shadings, this is eulogized space. Attached to its protective value, which can be a positive one, are also imagined values, which soon become dominant. Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity (*sic*), but with all the partiality of the imagination. Particularly, it nearly always exercises an attraction. For it concentrates being within limits that protect.
>
> (xxxv–vi)

In the original all three key terms are italicized for emphasis: *l'espace heureux*, *des espaces louagés* and *topophilie*. All three are important and suggest related but differing nuances. What is crucial to Bachelard's investigation is the notion that 'the real beginnings of images, if we study them phenomenologically, will give concrete evidence of the values of inhabited space, of the non-I that protects the I'. Moreover, 'all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home' (5). Bachelard examines paradigmatic images of home, and a range of related images of refuge, shelter, protection and security, as imagined or viewed in daydream (*rêverie*). These are associated with the maternal body and *la rêverie* is also considered a feminine activity by Bachelard.[1] French culture puts more emphasis on the daydream, *rêverie* or *onirisme*, than Anglo-Saxon cultures traditionally have; so as readers of the English translation we need to bear in mind the poetic tradition he mainly draws on, with its prioritization of symbolism and surrealism.[2]

Felicitous or eulogized space is thus not mere indifferent space, but inhabited space that protects and renders safe and happy the human self. It is imagined space; that is to say, it is mediated through human consciousness and also the human unconscious. It is not a matter of measurement so much as a meeting of images of containment, dimensionality, interiority and exteriority, with human emotion, desire and aspiration. The home and its analogues provide the human being with a safe place from which to contemplate the cosmos: 'And always in our daydreams the home is a large cradle' (7). There is

much that is seductive in Bachelard's prose, and for cultural feminists reading this text in 1969, or shortly thereafter, one can understand its attraction. The maternal home-maker is implicitly associated with a philosophical discourse on how the human mind imagines our place in the universe; the home and its analogues become central to a treatise on how humans dwell in the cosmos. The spatial orientation is a welcome corrective to the traditional Western emphasis on linear time as the crucial dimension within which we exist. His method validates the non-rational in human experience and takes non-representational art seriously. Not only white feminists, but also women of color might have found much that was empowering in this volume.[3] I have hesitations about his underlying conceptual assumptions, which seem irredeemably dualistic and Cartesian, and I shall return to these at a later stage. But first, I shall outline a few of the ways Bachelard's text informed feminist writing.

Mad women and attics

> On whatever theoretical horizon we examine it, the house image would appear to have become the topography of our intimate being.
>
> (Bachelard xxxvi)

In her 1973 essay, 'Jane Eyre: The Temptations of a Motherless Woman', Adrienne Rich notes:

> For Jane Eyre, the upper regions are not what Gaston Bachelard calls in *The Poetics of Space* 'the rationality of the roof' as opposed to the unconscious and haunted world of the cellar. Or, (*sic*) the roof is where Jane is visited by an expanding vision, but this vision, this illumination brings her close to the madwoman captive behind the door.
>
> (98)

The main thrust of Rich's essay is to suggest that the heroine Jane Eyre:

> undergoes certain traditional female temptations, and finds that each temptation presents itself along with an alternative – the image of a nurturing or principled or spirited woman on whom she can model herself, or to whom she can look for support.
>
> (91)

So, this is a reading of the novel as a prototypically lesbian feminist, female *Bildungsroman*; emphasizing female solidarity and mutual empowerment, foregrounding female role models in Jane Eyre's journey towards achieved maturity. The emphasis on individual self-creation is central to Rich's argument. Yet she draws on the 1972 edition of Erich Neumann's *The Great Mother: Archetypal Images of the Feminine*, first published in 1955, as well as the

Beacon Press translation of Bachelard. Both these texts invite the reader to consider containing space as archetypically feminine, and as associated with images of the maternal body and its protective, nurturing functions. Concomitantly, both texts also reinforce our culture's proclivity to imagine the intimate female body as a place of refuge, a protective vessel, a safe haven or home.

In their feminist classic, *Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar acknowledge Adrienne Rich's essay repeatedly in their notes for 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress'. They develop the Bachelardian thesis more fully than Rich, arguing that:

> Yet not only is Thornfield more realistically drawn than, say, Otranto or Udolpho, it is more metaphorically radiant than most gothic mansions: it is the house of Jane's life, its floors and walls the architecture of her experience.
>
> (347)

In this house of a woman's life the attic is the most metaphorically, and indeed metonymically, significant.

> These upper regions [. . .] symbolically miniaturize one crucial aspect of the world in which she finds herself. Heavily enigmatic, ancestral relics wall her in; inexplicable locked rooms guard a secret which may have something to do with *her*; distant vistas promise an inaccessible but enviable life. [. . .] Thornfield's attic soon becomes a complex focal point where Jane's own rationality (what she has learned from Miss Temple) and her irrationality (her 'hunger, rebellion and rage') intersect. She never, for instance, articulates her rational desire for liberty so well as when she stands on the battlements of Thornfield, looking out over the world. [. . .] What is somewhat irrational, though, is the restlessness and passion which, as it were, italicize her little meditation on freedom.
>
> (348–49)

The footnote to this passage underlines the engagement with Bachelard, commenced by Rich and continued here by Gilbert and Gubar:

> In *The Poetics of Space* Gaston Bachelard speaks of 'the rationality of the roof' as opposed to 'the irrationality of the cellar'. In the attic, he notes, 'the day's experiences can always efface the fears of the night', while the cellar 'becomes buried madness, walled-in tragedy' (pp. 18–20). Thornfield's attic is, however, in his sense both cellar and attic, the imprisoning lumber-room of the past and the watch-tower from which new prospects are sighted, just as in Jane's mind mad 'restlessness' coexists with 'harmonious' reason.
>
> (680)

Gilbert and Gubar argue that *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography* – to give it its full title as it first appeared – takes Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* as its antecedent text. Considered as written from this English Puritan tradition, it is therefore unsurprising if Brontë transforms houses into emblematic schemata, mirroring her heroine's inner conflicts. Nor is it surprising that Gilbert and Gubar go on to argue that Bertha Mason is Jane Eyre's dark double, voicing the passionate anger that Jane has enough sense to suppress. Drawing on an essay by Claire Rosenfeld, they argue that 'Bertha has functioned as Jane's dark double *throughout* the governess's stay at Thornfield. Specifically, every one of Bertha's appearances – or, more accurately, her manifestations – has been associated with an experience (or repression) of anger on Jane's part' (360). The argument is plausible, and Rosenfeld's thesis that novelists use the double both consciously and unconsciously is well supported by this case. Yet I feel some unease at the direction that this points us towards.

My unease relates to my previous reservation about Bachelard's unproblematized use of philosophical dualism. His study is of 'the values of inhabited space, of the non-I that protects the I'. And this value is measured in human terms:

> [I]f I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace. [. . .] I must show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream.
>
> (6)

The self, specifically the self in reverie, is the central validating entity in his philosophy.[4] Similarly, *Jane Eyre*, the novel, is conceived and published as 'an autobiography', in which the female 'pilgrim's' progress towards a happy ending for herself, but not necessarily for the other female characters, is of paramount importance. In emphasizing this aspect in their reading, Gilbert and Gubar not only put the case for a feminist revision of literary criticism, they also demonstrated the fundamentally self-centred individualism of this Anglo and Anglican tradition. When other characters become players in the central protagonist's own psychodrama, their integrity and autonomy are sacrificed to ensure her optimistic outcome. This is not just gynocentric, but at a deeper philosophical level is, generically speaking, fundamentally anthropocentric too.

We start musing on primitiveness

> But we must lose our earthly Paradise in order actually to live in it, to experience it in the reality of its images, in the absolute sublimation that transcends all passion.
>
> (Bachelard 33)

Judith Fryer's excellent study of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather acknowledges the conceptual debt to Bachelard in its title, *Felicitous Space: the Imaginative Structures of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather*. Fryer's use of Bachelard is profound, not just a superficial borrowing, and it opens up some illuminating readings of the two American women novelists. I would describe it as the work that undertook the task of cultural translation, from French culture into North American culture.

Bachelard himself admits that his work is bounded by the limits of his own, localized knowledge:

> I myself can only meditate upon things in my own country, having learned the dialectics of fields and woods from my unforgettable friend, Gaston Roupnel [*La Campagne Française*].
>
> (188)

The admission is endearing, and yet it doesn't quite belie the fact that Bachelard consistently employs a universalizing discourse. Drawing on mainly French and German literary texts, he posits a phenomenology of the poetics of space which claims universal application. The exempla are culture-bound, but the conclusions are expressed in a generalizing fashion, including concepts of childhood, shelter, daydreaming, the cosmos, etc. In particular, Bachelard invokes a notion of the significance of 'origins' without interrogating the assumptions implicit in it sufficiently. For example:

> [E]very great image has an unfathomable oneiric depth to which the personal past adds special color. Consequently it is not until late in life that we really revere an image, when we discover that its roots plunge well beyond the history that is fixed in our memories. [. . .] Poetry [. . .] offers us images as we should have imagined them during the 'original impulse' of youth. Primal images, simple engravings are but so many invitations to start imagining again. They give us back areas of being, houses in which the human being's certainty of being is concentrated, and we have the impression that, by living in such images as these, in images that are as stabilizing as these are, we could start a new life, a life that would be our own, that would belong to us in our very depths. When we look at images of this kind, when we read the images in Bachelin's book, *we start musing on primitiveness*. And because of this very simple primitiveness, restored, desired and experienced through simple images, an album of pictures of huts would constitute a textbook of simple exercises for the phenomenology of the imagination.
>
> (33)

I quote this passage at length, since Fryer draws on it to elucidate Thea's response to the Arizona cliff dwellings in *The Song of the Lark* (293–301). Her elucidation of Cather's aesthetic in relation to the Four Corners area of the

American Southwest radiates with intelligence about the interactions of desire and landscape, and provides one of the best commentaries I know on this and the other two southwestern novels by Cather. Fryer's thesis is as follows:

> Center implies circumference, a place in space. To find the center of one's boundless desire, to give it form, is to begin in a space that is felicitous, one that frees the imagination. For Cather the American Southwest is such a liberating space, one to which she returns as to a touchstone. Both metaphoric and actual, the Southwest becomes her spiritual center, a place that can be both sensed and touched, one that concentrates being within limits that protect.
>
> (293)

Fryer emphasizes the positive aspects of Thea's stay at Panther Canyon (based on Walnut Canyon, near Flagstaff), including her discovery, which Fryer links to Cather's own stylistic development, that:

> Desire, in works of art, must be concentrated within form. Form is the envelope and the sheath of the precious element itself – the ancient pottery, for Indian women, in which life-giving water is carried from the stream; the vessel, for Thea Kronborg, that can be made of one's throat and nostrils and held on one's breast; the creation, for Willa Cather, whose own interlude in the Southwest informs Thea's, of four walls to contain one's passion.
>
> (292)

Fryer's prose reverberates with echoes of Bachelard's French, far more eloquently than Jolas's at times jarring translation. Thus:

> The dwelling itself is a form: the cliff-dwellings of the Southwest are for Thea houses of secret rooms, abodes of an unforgettable past, with nooks and corners that invite curling up. Protected by the overhanging cliff, Thea's rock room encloses infinite space.
>
> (293–94)

In a footnote, Fryer elaborates further on the significance of 'curling up':

> This activity, Bachelard suggests, belongs to the phenomenology of the verb 'to inhabit': only those who curl up can *inhabit* with intensity. *The Poetics of Space*, p. xxxiv.
>
> (384)

Thea's sojourn in Panther Canyon fulfils the same function as Bachelin's hut dream annotated by Bachelard:

> he is living in the round house, the primitive hut, of prehistoric man. [. . .] the hut appears to be the tap-root of the function of inhabiting. [. . .] it is so simple that it no longer belongs to our memories – which at times are too full of imagery – but to legend; it is a center of legend. (31)

And here my disquiet has to surface. A French philosopher, born in Bar-sur-Aube, compellingly compares sublimation and transcendence with mature musings on primitiveness. Elsewhere in the text translated by Jolas as 'primitivity', primitiveness is equated with a recovery of origins, an elaborate *nostos* or profound home-coming to a protective space immemorial that transcends individual memory and taps into a connective, collective and cosmic source. Fryer in her reading of Thea's interlude in Arizona – and implicitly she refers to Cather's own 1912 vacation there too – translates Bachelard's European phenomenology to an American cultural and topographical context. Yet her interpretation of Cather is more literary appreciation than criticism, for the issue of the morality of such cultural appropriation of 'the Ancient People' is notably absent.[5] Yet in terms of the plot of the novel, Thea is here to take a rest cure, to discover, or rediscover, the source of her own art, in order to go back to the world of opera and continue her successful career. Her perceptions are not those of the Anasazi, and her relation to these 'lost' people is quintessentially romanticist.

In the later chapters of *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard draws consistently on Baudelaire and comes close to a recapitulation of the Kantian sublime. And this is my problem. In Bachelard's phenomenology there is much that is endearing and inspiring, in the attention to space and dimensionality, to the range of sense perceptions, not just the visual, and in the evocation of human imagination as correspondingly dimensional and spatial. (*Pace* the post-modern world of surfaces and reflections.) At his best he invites us to be more responsive to dwellings and landscape and to contemplate *being* as *dwelling*.[6] This is an orientation that is conducive to an ecologically responsible existence. Yet in his insistence on 'the dual universe of the Cosmos and the depth of the human spirit' (198) he confirms the European humanist tradition that would always conceive of human kind as separate and superior to its environment and to its fellow dwellers in the cosmos. In a nutshell, Thea's stay at Walnut Canyon can also be read as a moral tale and salutary warning to the European critic: Thea and Cather could be said to have appropriated the cliff-dwelling site, the perceptions and the orientation of 'the Ancient People' for their own romantic agenda. Yet it is difficult to see how they can do otherwise given their ethnic and cultural identities. I am left wondering whether a flawed European American appreciation of the lost civilization that was Anasazi culture is preferable to none at all.

Nestling up ever closer to meaning

> Home is also the imagined location that can be more readily fixed in a mental landscape than in actual geography.
>
> (Rosemary Marangoly George)

I want to complicate the argument in a couple of ways before concentrating on Native American women writers and their depictions of homes, shelters, huts and houses. I believe that women of color continue to refract the imaginative constructs and indeed implicit ethical values from Bachelard, even though home takes on different connotations for displaced and diasporic peoples. Then I shall start my investigation of the specific range of meanings attached to space and place in the writings of Native American authors, beginning with an analysis of Paula Gunn Allen's *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*. It is my belief that ultimately my introductory remarks on Bachelard will throw the writings of Native American women into sharper relief, highlighting the challenges they face in addressing their readership in American English.

In her essay entitled 'Home', from which this section's heading is taken, Toni Morrison engages with the metaphor of 'Home' as a descriptor of 'a-world-in-which-race-does-*not*-matter,' as opposed to the metaphor of 'house' as the 'racial construction' one has to live in (3). By sustaining this metaphor throughout her essay, Morrison moves into a realm of conceptual discourse about the ideology of race and how to counter it effectively as an author. She admits that her 'confrontation is piecemeal and very slow. Unlike the successful advancement of an argument, narration requires the active complicity of a reader willing to step outside established boundaries of the racial imaginary' (8–9). To encourage this she allows binary opposites to both co-exist and cancel one another out, in a discursive strategy reminiscent of Bachelard's musings on miniature and vast, or enclosed and cosmic spaces. She quotes from her then work in progress, *Paradise*; and in this context one is struck by how Bachelardian this passage is, with the proviso that it imagines a safe home for the racial other – something that it never occurs to Bachelard to consider:

> In my current project I want to see whether or not race-specific, race-free language is both possible and meaningful in narration. And I want to inhabit, walk around, a site clear of racial detritus; a place where race both matters and is rendered impotent; a place 'already made for me, both snug and wide open. With a doorway never needing to be closed, a view slanted for light and bright autumn leaves but not rain. Where moonlight can be counted on if the sky is clear and stars no matter what. And below, just yonder, a river called Treason to rely on.' I want to imagine not the threat of freedom, or its tentative panting fragility, but the concrete thrill of borderlessness – a kind of out of doors safety where 'a sleepless woman

> could always rise from her bed, wrap a shawl around her shoulders and sit on the steps in the moonlight'.
>
> (9)

Morrison continues the quotation – and it stands in the final version of *Paradise* (8–9) – then comments:

> That description is meant to evoke not only the safety and freedom outside the race house, but to suggest contemporary searches and yearnings for social space that is psychically and physically safe.
>
> (10)

Which is to say, Toni Morrison invokes a notion of felicitous space in order to articulate and validate the desires and yearnings of the racialized other. Her conceptual structure is similar to Bachelard's: in terms of the yearning for safety and protection both within habitations and walking along the road in expansive space, and also in terms of its association with the maternal – in her evocation this is imagined as shared mothering of a colicky baby. Yet her description is dissimilar in that she consciously uses it to evoke and realize in the process of writing a politically different, imaginary home.[7]

For displaced peoples, and historically few have been more systematically displaced and relocated by force than the indigenous first nations of the North American land mass, home is imagined location or ideally 'inscape'. The term is Gerard Manley Hopkins', but Morrison employs it in contradistinction to imaginary landscape: 'imaginary landscape, never inscape; Utopia, never home', in which the second concept is valorized each time (10). Fryer posits the following definitions: 'the unique configuration of the sensuously transient' and the catching of 'the inner landscape in the outer' (382). Reading Morrison's evocation – and putting its further novelistic complexities to one side for my present purposes – I am reminded of the luminously obvious fact that traditionally women's role has been to imagine home as an actual ongoing, daily process. It is what women as home-makers do: they imagine and transform houses into homes. Cultural feminism has considered this process as one of the secondary arts of transformation more often associated with women's work, and has constructed womanist discourses from it that posit an inevitably politicized, alternative imaginary inscape of being as dwelling.

Imagining 'home' need not be a bourgeois prerogative, as the extract from *Paradise* indicates. Indeed, it can be an activity consciously counter to that of privileged ethnic and class groups. In 'From a Writer's Notebook', Sandra Cisneros comments specifically on Bachelard in relation to the barrio inhabited by (often illegal) Chicano immigrants:

> During a seminar title (*sic*) 'On Memory and the Imagination' when the class was heatedly discussing Gustav (*sic*) Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* and the metaphor of a house – *a house, a house*, it hit me. What did I know

> except third-floor flats. Surely my classmates know nothing about that. That's precisely what I chose to write: about third-floor flats, and fear of rats, and drunk husbands sending rocks through windows, anything as far from the poetic as possible. And this is when I discovered the voice I'd been suppressing all along without realizing it.
>
> (72–73)

The book was, of course, *The House on Mango Street*, and even though its subject matter could be described as 'as far from the poetic as possible', its eventual form is a series of lyrical prose poems, linked to form a novel of life in the barrio as experienced by an adolescent girl. The book can be read as a series of meditations on Chicana women dwelling in actual houses, not those of the poetic imagination, and its pared down style contains potent and disturbing representations of their lives. My intention here is not to do justice to the complete work, but rather to highlight the continuing influence of Bachelard on North American women's writing, whether critical, critical/creative or fictional. Thus, Cisneros rejects his philosophical position, and describes the moment of finding her subject and her voice as one of opposition to his French, provincial, bourgeois culture and as defining herself as different from her privileged fellow students. Yet, even then, in positioning herself as culturally and socially other to it, Cisneros situates herself in a dialectical relation to his poetics of space. When we turn to the text of *The House on Mango Street* we find that Bachelard is not so much rejected as transformed and translated to inflect Chicana sexual/textual politics. At the heart of the novel is the willed aspiration for not just 'a room of one's own' but 'A House of My Own'.[8] The simple lyricism with which it is evoked resonates with the complex desire for felicitous space:

> Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man's house. Not a daddy's. A house of my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick up after.
>
> Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem.
>
> (108)

Conclusion

Thus far I have traced some of the locations of Bachelard's continuing influence. I have indicated my sense of the problematic aspects of his philosophical assumptions. These include: Cartesian dualism, an unquestioning acceptance of a European romantic position and the associated philosophies of transcendentalism and the sublime, his Eurocentric reading of the primitive, and his method of reasoning by analogy from French provincial and bourgeois culture to generate universalizing precepts. I have argued that despite all of these

potential objections to his work, the volume has been consistently influential on a variety of feminist critics and women authors. The concept of felicitous space speaks to the female literary imagination and is translated by American women writers in eloquent and profound ways. It has proved to be a useful concept and one well worth appropriating for women's culture, whether Anglo-American, Chicana or African-American. It remains to be seen if felicitous space translates so well into the culture of Native American women's writing.

In so doing I have the following questions in mind. Can we apply Morrison's sense of inscape in the Native American context? Is it an imagined felicitous space that has the potential to be made actual both politically and historically? Is Morrison's objection to Utopian thinking that it always takes place in a parallel universe, in a place other than where we are starting from? Does inscape only work with a Western or Westernized sense of time as linear and progressive and space as bound by the laws of science? Does it become redundant when time is conceived of as cyclical and space is conceived of as sacred and ceremonial as well as physical and material? Which is to say: in pueblo belief systems this world has emerged from three (or four) previous worlds, so the notion of parallel but unreal or inaccessible universes of Utopian thinking is irrelevant.[9] One further consideration has to do with the different valence of the concept and function of story in Native American culture. In this respect the prose essays of both Leslie Marmon Silko and Linda Hogan provide essential definitions that will affect our understanding. But first I want to examine the work of Paula Gunn Allen, which I shall argue works from the negative version of felicitous space, offering us a reflection on its fragility and unattainability, especially for the half-breed Indian woman.

2 Tribal feminism after modernism

Paula Gunn Allen, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, 1983

> With my own novel, I had difficulty with at least two publishers because I chose Indian time over industrial time as a structuring device.
>
> (*The Sacred Hoop* 152)

Introduction

Both Paula Gunn Allen and Leslie Marmon Silko are mixed-blood writers from Laguna Pueblo, in New Mexico. They both draw on traditional tribal stories – for example, Keres myths, Navajo sand painting and chantways, Spider Woman stories of the Hopi Indians – as well as local oral traditions of storytelling and gossip. Concomitantly, they both draw on canonical modernist texts, for example T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* or the writings of Gertrude Stein. As Louis Owens has demonstrated, these are mixed-blood authors of mixed-blood narratives. Consequently, for the non-Indian reader familiar and unfamiliar literary forms and narrative techniques jostle and combine in their novels. Although the European reader needs to inform herself about Native American culture, geography and history to fully understand this literature, it is possible, indeed desirable, to attend closely to the narrative techniques and substantive contents of the novels themselves. Written in American English and marketed for a wider audience than tribal peoples, these novels address their implied readers in such a way as to extend and deepen non-Indian knowledge and comprehension of tribal and mixed-blood cultural and political issues. Paula Gunn Allen's novel, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, was published later than Silko's *Ceremony*, yet it has not achieved the canonical status of that text. However, it provides a good starting point for an initial exploration of the ways in which mixed-blood novels raise issues and implicitly invite the reader to respond to them. Specifically, this text combines familiar and unfamiliar materials and techniques, allowing the Westernized reader to approach that which is alien through comprehension of that which is *heimlich*.

Paula Gunn Allen provides her own introduction to this novel in *The Sacred Hoop* (first published 1986). Her position makes it particularly difficult for

the non-Indian reader. For she suggests that non-Indian readers have such a different worldview that they will be unable to empathize with the belief systems that inform American Indian literature. Thus she argues against the use of sacred materials in the classroom:

> [T]hese works do not make good classroom materials for a variety of reasons: they are arcane; they may cause resentment among Indian students; and they create questions and digressions that are usually beyond the competence of the teacher or of the academic setting. Frequently they lead to ridicule, disrespect, and belittlement; non-Indian students are not inclined by training or culture to view the sacred as that which has power beyond that of economics, history, or politics.
>
> (75)[1]

Yet she presents a reading of her own novel that depends on knowledge and understanding of the structures of Native American myth and ritual; and she offers an interpretation of it that is based on her sense of Native American philosophy of being. So, the European reader is somewhat wrong footed from the start. She cannot understand because she isn't an American Indian woman; her own interpretation will be erroneous because it is based on Western ideological and philosophical paradigms. While I respect Paula Gunn Allen's position, I have to state the obvious here: by publishing a work of fiction, she has released her novel into the public domain, the literary market place. She can no more adjudicate over her readers' responses than Samuel Beckett or James Joyce. And while her own explanation of the novel is helpful in indicating its author's intentions, it cannot be the only legitimate reading.

In fact her exposition of the novel in *The Sacred Hoop* (99–100) reads much more positively than my experience of the novel; and it is more specific about both places and time of story than the narrative itself. For example, the initial scenario is described thus: 'Living in Albuquerque with her two children, Ephanie suffers a mental breakdown after her husband abandons her'. Yet, Albuquerque is not mentioned by name in the novel, it is merely referred to as 'the city'. Thus one needs to acquire some local knowledge of the region to identify it. Also, the novel is very imprecise about time and duration – this inability to relate to time is one of Ephanie's symptoms. So it is interesting to be informed that Part IV takes place 'years later'. Paula Gunn Allen's account of the novel clearly privileges tribal traditions as the solution to Ephanie's chronic crisis of identity. And the novel includes sections which recount the relevant myths, so one must assume that these are not so sacred that they fall into the category of taboo for the non-Indian. Thus the reader can get a long way by working out the mythic patterns and paradigms and seeing how they are analogous to Ephanie's predicament. I shall start by indicating how some of this might work. However, I shall then go on to indicate the other acknowledged influences on the novel and suggest that these complicate its texture and the message Paula Gunn Allen conveys.

Once for each of the directions

In *The Sacred Hoop*, Allen quotes Lame Deer on the symbolism and potency of the number four:

> *Four* is the number that is most wakan, most sacred. Four stands for Tatuye Tope – the four quarters of the earth. One of its chief symbols is Umane [. . .] It represents the unused earth force.
>
> (72)

In her discussion of traditional American Indian literature she explains the interconnectedness of myth, ritual and texts. One aspect of this is the use of repetition in chants. Her exposition is useful, since it helps to orientate those readers who are more likely to think of the trinity and the pentangle as sacred numbers, rather than four and variations on four:

> Repetition is of two kinds, incremental and simple. In the first, variations will occur. A stanza may be repeated in its entirety four times – once for each of the directions – or six times – once for each lateral direction plus above and below – or seven times – once for each direction plus the center 'where we stand'.
>
> (64)

The variations (six and seven) serve as a reminder that the Native American conceptualization of space differs from the Western sense of space. Moreover, Native American belief systems place more emphasis on space than on time, certainly on the Western, linear sense of time. Again, Paula Gunn Allen's succinct explanation is useful not only for understanding her own novel, but in approaching a number of Native American works of fiction, e.g. Silko's *Ceremony*:

> Another difference between these two ways of perceiving reality lies in the tendency of the American Indian 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.
>
> (59)

So, in terms of the narrative structure of *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, we can note that it is divided into four parts. The first is located in Albuquerque, the second in San Francisco, the third in Oregon and the fourth in San Francisco. The four directions that Ephanie's search for psychic congruence take, according to Allen herself, are: 'New Mexican colonial history, her intercultural family life, tribal tradition, and personal emotion

and perception'. This scheme is helpful as long as we avoid imposing it too rigidly on the text. Clearly we should not see this as a sequential pattern to be superimposed on the four parts of the book, but as a set of organizing principles that weave their way throughout the text. Yet, it can be argued that the novel ends by prioritizing the last two directions, as a means of solving the problems caused by the first two directions or situations. Furthermore, we need to remember that Ephanie is 'half breed' and note that the two pairs of directions denote the conflicting pull of different cultural codes within her personality.

Composition is the difference

In the Acknowledgements for *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* is the following paragraph, which suggests that a further cultural context needs to be considered if we are to fully appreciate the texture and orientation of this novel. The emphasis shifts away from entering the tradition of Ephanie's tribal foremothers, and towards Allen's indebtedness to the lesbian modernist author, Gertrude Stein, the radical feminist theologian, Mary Daly, and the support of feminist groups. The time of story in the novel might be elusive, but the cultural context of the author of the narrative is very precisely second wave feminism of the seventies and early eighties:[2]

> Without the encouragement and good cheer of feminist audiences who welcomed portions of the manuscript at readings so enthusiastically, I'm certain I wouldn't have had the courage to finish it, and I want to thank all who contributed energy to the endeavor in that way, and the vision of a strong woman's culture they create and recreate so powerfully in their work and lives. Here too, go thanks to Gertrude Stein and Mary Daly whose way with words have taught me much.

The Woman Who Owned the Shadows contains much that is recognizably second wave feminist, rather than tribalist. Allen tends towards essentialism, and this informs her exposition of tribalism, but arguably emerges equally from her cultural feminist agenda. The novel exhibits various radical feminist characteristics, including: an essentialist depiction of gender, the implicit belief that the primary oppression is sexual oppression (i.e. the oppression of women by men), the turn to female friendship when heterosexual relationships fail, the seeking out and revalidation of the gynaecocratic traditions of the foremothers, a privatization of experience (typified in the feminist slogan 'the personal is political'). The trouble with 'the personal is political' is that it can boomerang, so that individual women find themselves bearing and internalizing the effects of a more generalized, social malaise. The intention behind the slogan was, of course, the opposite. It was an indication that the methodology of feminism had to be the activity of consciousness-raising, in which women shared the experience of examining subjective emotion and

behaviour in order to understand how patriarchy functioned, and in order to recover and invent a gynocentric culture of strong women.[3]

Given that Allen tells us how important her first feminist audiences were in the composition of the novel, I would argue that this is a novel whose methodology is that of consciousness raising. The careful notation of the various phases of emotional and mental breakdown, the honest scrutiny of the female self's abjection, anger and disempowerment seem to predominate in much of the novel. There is a striving to access repressed memories and a willingness to use various media to achieve full self-knowledge, including the therapy group, the shared psychic reading, and the academic study of Native American myth and ritual. Apart from the last activity, all of this is characteristic of the methodology of second wave feminism. In which case, the self-examination to see how the forces of patriarchal oppression have affected the individual is the first stage of the process. The next stage is that of sharing and comparing personal experience with that of other women, as Allen is at pains to tell us she did, and finally together making intellectual and articulate sense of it.[4] Feminist theorists argued it had to be this way, because male discourses inevitably suppressed acknowledgement of women's experience, and assumed that the norm was always male. For this reason the methodology of consciousness-raising involved not only recovering female experience but also rediscovering a female language in which to articulate it. Feminist writers looked to literary foremothers for viable models to draw on; many looked to the modernist authors Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein, both of whom have been credited with developing a more female use of language that was more subtle in its responsiveness to the stream of consciousness.[5]

Gertrude Stein uses repetition as a syntactical device. Sometimes simple repetition, sometimes repetition with variation. Reading her, the meaning accrues gradually, and is constantly modified. A strong characteristic of her work is the use of verb tenses that suggest that every thought and every action flows into the next. There are very few end-stopped paragraphs or sections in her work, until death. Technically, she uses the continuous past and the continuous present to convey an action that was or is ongoing. This is the linguistic equivalent of the philosophy of the stream of consciousness, and it corresponds in an essentialist model to a feminine mode of perception and being.[6]

Ephanie's dysfunctional relationship with clock time is introduced as a theme right at the start of the novel. It is linked with her deranged state, and with her identity crisis:

> Ephanie. Too strange a name, deranging her from the time she first understood its strangeness. Her body, choppy and short, sturdy, was at odds with her name. Ephanie was for someone tall and serene. Someone filled with grace. But like her it was a split name, a name half of this and half of that: Epiphany. Effie. An almost name. An almost event. Proper at

> that for her, a halfblood. A halfbreed. Which was the source of her derangement. Ranging despair. Disarrangement.
>
> But she wasn't deranged just now. Only distracted. It seemed so late, so early, so indeterminate when she got up. [. . .] She began to dig, habitually. Down into herself. Trying to find a point that would give her the time. Clocks evaded her. When she looked at one she forgot to register what it said. Resistance.
>
> (3–4)

The series of permutations on words (i.e. 'halfblood', 'halfbreed', 'derangement', 'ranging despair', 'disarrangement', 'deranged') are reminiscent both of Gertrude Stein's style and of Mary Daly's habit of coining neologisms to signify a revisionary, radical feminist analysis of patriarchal institutions and ideologies. One aspect of this novel that this passage exemplifies is the elusiveness of both the implied author and the narrator. As readers we have no way of knowing what the authorial position is; it seems to merge into Ephanie's own stream of consciousness. In this respect it might be inaccurate to describe this as indirect free style, since that presupposes a clear distinction between an articulate implied author or heterodiegetic narrator and a sentient protagonist.[7] Rather the use of third person narration here seems to represent a strong empathy between implied author and protagonist, not a careful distancing.

Cynthia McDaniel describes this fiction as a 'semi-autobiographical novel' (30) and this could account for the blurring of definitions. The classical differentiation between author/implied author and narrator is inappropriate in this case, since they merge into one shadowy entity. If we consider this as semi-autobiography for a moment, we can see how the novel is a politicized text. As Linda Anderson explains:

> The idea that autobiography can become 'the text of the oppressed', articulating through one person's experience, experiences which may be representative of a particular marginalized group, is an important one: autobiography becomes both a way of testifying to oppression and empowering the subject through their cultural inscription and recognition.
>
> (104)

However, rather than argue the case that this is autobiographical fiction, I would prefer to suggest that Allen writes with a sense of the connection between individual lives. As she states at the end of her exposition of this novel in *The Sacred Hoop*: 'Entry into the narrative tradition enables individuals to realize that the significance of their own lives stems in large part from their interlocking connections with the lives of all the others who share a particular psychospiritual tradition' (100). So we cannot look to the implied author of the novel to explain and articulate Ephanie's derangement/estrangement from a separate, analytical position. She shares and participates in

Ephanie's quest for psychic balance, as does the implied reader. This passage gives us some pointers: the predicament is partly due to abandonment by her husband, but digging deeper Ephanie also attributes it to her mestiza identity. As a 'halfbreed' she experiences her sense of personal identity as a site of cultural conflict. So her relation to time, or failure to exist with a sense of clock time, is connected to her being the site of two different ways of conceptualizing time. At the start of the novel, Ephanie is poised between clock time that she resists registering, just as she resists traumatic memories, and ceremonial time that will take her a lifetime to fully enter.

When she does enter ceremonial time, it is through the attainment of the personal psychic experience she has been working towards. As a halfblood she can only enter the tribal tradition of her grandmother in a solitary way. The encounter with the spirit woman doesn't take place in a shared, communal tribal ritual, but as a personal vision in her bedroom in San Francisco.[8] Thus, despite her essentialist exposition in *The Sacred Hoop*, the novel acknowledges that the ceremonies must change with changing times and as a consequence of the dislocation of the mestiza. It is not only dislocation that Ephanie experiences – and this is foregrounded in the novel by the description of travelling that becomes a nightmare of endurance – but also separation and loss. Again, at the start of the novel, this is stated as an important theme: 'She knew that much of what had gone before was missing' (4). This is followed by an evocation of being encouraged to 'Jump'. At this point it is unclear what the context is, and it stands as an unattached fragment – perhaps of memory – in the text. It relates to the memory that is initially repressed but finally retrieved, namely that of falling from the apple tree at the time of her puberty.

The Fall

When we first read this evocation the implied author/narrator refrains from explaining why this particular memory is so crucial. However, I believe it is the key memory for Ephanie – and here I almost wrote Epiphany, since that is what it is – because it is a re-enactment of the Christian Fall. It is returned to more than once in the course of the novel, but described fully in Part IV (198–206). The passage starts with Ephanie and Elena searching for a *snake* with which to tease Stephen. While the girls feel comfortable with snakes, Stephen harbours a deep dread of them. It is not clear if it is a coincidence – the implication is that Stephen plans the challenge to get even with her – but Stephen calls them away to the *apple tree* and dares them to undertake a dangerous jump. Elena refuses, but Ephanie takes up the gauntlet (picking up his gloves to hold onto the rope with) and proceeds to jump. The bough breaks and down she *falls*, to be told in hospital she was lucky not to have broken her neck. The effect of this is that 'After she fell' – note the postlapsarian analogue – she is transformed into a typical, urban, Westernized American teenager:

> After she fell the sun went out. She went carefully from then on. She sang long plaintive songs of love, of romance, dreamed of leaving

> Guadalupe for some place else. [. . .] Someplace nice. With vacuum cleaners and carpets and drapes. With sofas instead of couches, refrigerators instead of iceboxes, shopping centers instead of general trading stores. [. . .]
>
> After she fell she had begun rising early to attend morning Mass. Had given up grandiose daydreams for Lent. Had forgotten how to spin dreams, imaginings about her life, her future self, her present delights. Had cut herself off from the sweet spring of her own being. Bless me father for I have sinned. But I won't sin anymore, she vowed.
>
> (203)

Thus at puberty she renounces the dream way of her grandmother and espouses Christian practice, which is marked in the text as following the law of the father. *The Sacred Hoop* offers a clear account of Allen's views on this:

> The American Indian universe is based on dynamic self-esteem, while the Christian universe is based primarily on a sense of separation and loss. For the American Indian, the ability of all creatures to share in the process of ongoing creation makes all things sacred.
>
> In Paradise, God created a perfect environment for his creatures. He arranged it to their benefit, asking only that they forbear from eating the fruit of one particular tree. In essence, they were left with only one means of exercising their creative capacities and their ability to make their own decisions and choices. Essentially, they were thus prevented from exercising their intelligence while remaining loyal to the creator. To act in a way that was congruent with their natural curiosity and love of exploration and discovery, they were forced to disobey God and thus be exiled from the perfect place he had made for them. [. . .]
>
> The Cheyenne's creator is somewhat wiser. He gives his creatures needs so that they can exert their intelligence and knowledge to satisfy those needs by working together to solve common problems or attain common goals.
>
> (57–58)

Thus, at a crucial moment for a young girl, the time of puberty that is a time of transformation into the powerful container of life and the potential for life, the rite of initiation that she is called to participate in by Stephen (her not so benevolent male double) is not that of the empowering, wise pueblo belief system, nor that of Cheyenne belief, but that of the punitive god of the Christian tradition. And Allen makes it clear in her account of the Paradise story that God set Adam and Eve up to fall in a particularly treacherous way. So, this rite of passage leads Ephanie away from her tribal identity, although it continues to beckon as a half-open door in her dreams. Her halfbreed, mestiza identity situates her in a liminal position. She first sees and enters the doorway in her vision (78), and later she is on the threshold, she is the doorway (174). This liminal position eventually allows her to turn away from Christian 'salvation' and enter the dream ways of her maternal ancestors and the

mythological spirit women of her Pueblo. The experience of separation and loss is thus finally overcome not by Western, philosophical paradigms, such as eulogized space, but by taking the opposite direction and entering Native American ceremonial space and time:

> It was another arrangement of the four corners that composed the Universe, the four days of sacredness that women remembered in their bodies' blood every month. [. . .] Ephanie saw moving patterns that imaged what the woman was saying. Saw the corners lying flat, like on paper, then taking on dimensions, forming the four-armed cross, ancient symbol of the Milky Way, found on rocks and in drawings of every land. Saw the square of glossy, deeply gleaming blackness that was the door to the place of the Spider. Saw held within it the patterned stars, the whirling suns, the deep, black brilliance of the center of the sun. Saw the perfect creation space from which earth and her seven sisters had sprung at the bidding of the Grandmothers, long ago so far, before time like a clock entered and took hold.
>
> (206–07)

Since Paula Gunn Allen believes that Native American society was matriarchal until European colonizers insinuated patriarchal systems, the feminine and the tribal correspond in this novel; as do the masculine and the Western, industrialized, Christian, capitalist economy. Hence her novel can recover gynocentric myth from Native American traditions, and at the same time be influenced by Mary Daly's work as a feminist theologian.[9] Thus, to counter the mythos of the Fall, Eve style, the narrative recovers the alternative myth, the Sky Woman story of the Seneca.[10] In this myth male treachery and trickery again results in a woman falling. But here the fall is the prelude to creation. The mythic story tells of Sky Woman's falling and falling, until waterfowl rescue her by catching her in their wings. They place her on 'turtle grandmother's back' and then sacrifice their own lives in creating a mud island with the turtle shell as its foundation. This grows around Sky Woman, making her safe. She then becomes pregnant, in a version of the immaculate conception story, so that the myth is clearly a creation myth:

> She gave birth to a daughter there on Turtle's back, far away from the lodge of her mother and far, far away from the devastated tree of light. It was a death tree, or so Ephanie always believed.
>
> (39)

So initially Ephanie interprets this creation myth as a negative tumbling into the abyss. She is wrong of course. This is 'the tree of light (which embodies the power of woman)' as Allen points out in her *Sacred Hoop* synopsis of the myth. It will take Ephanie to the end of the novel to figure this out, and to discover that the Native American creation story, that she starts by interpreting as a

story of negative falling through the abyss, is actually a story celebrating female survival, fertility and procreativity against the odds.

Conclusion

This is not an easy novel, and it does require the non-Indian reader to attend to tribal myths, particularly of Spider Woman/Thought Woman, and the Senecan and pueblo creation stories. Narrative theory tends to emphasize the time of telling and the time of story, and consequently the distinction between implied author/narrator and protagonist. Yet this distinction is not foregrounded in *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*. On the other hand, narrative theory has less to say about the space of telling and the space of the story, which would be more pertinent here. Drawing on the conventions of Native American, traditional, oral literature, the telling to an audience is most important for the generation of meaning. And although the story is set out as a progressive quest to recover psychic balance, the experience of the reader trying to make sense of it is far more cyclical than that suggests. One needs to move back and forth in this story as in a woven web, making connections across the text. Then and only then can one begin to appreciate the more positive spin that Paula Gunn Allen puts on this story of separation, loss and recovery.

3 Ephanie's case

> She said they couldn't think as completely as an Indian. That we must be patient with them because they were like children. They made things simple so that they could understand. She used to say, 'Poor things, they're so simple, they're just like children.'
>
> (*The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* 70)

Against adverse forces

In this chapter I shall consider further *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* in the light of Bachelard's three descriptors of felicitous space, since these assist the interpretation of narrated space in Paula Gunn Allen's novel. The middle term of his three qualifiers opens up a sense of threat to felicitous space, and it is this threat that Allen explores in her 1983 text:

> They seek to determine the human value of the sorts of spaces [1] that may be grasped, [2] that may be defended against adverse forces, [3] the space we love.
>
> (xxxv)

Neither the time of telling nor the time of the story is precisely notated in *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*. Instead the space of the story is foregrounded, or to be more precise the spaces. The space of telling is not that clear, so that the reader doesn't sense an authorial voice that is detached from the story and its protagonist, Ephanie. Thus, in order to understand the novel the reader has to enter the different cultural spaces and make sense of their patterns and connections. These include a series of domestic spaces, the depths of memory that Ephanie both digs into and resists, and the spaces of American Indian myth and ritual. These latter are experienced as stories retrieved by academic study, as dreams and memories of maternal ancestors and as visionary, ceremonial space culminating in the epiphany that Ephanie experiences when she is visited in her bedroom by the Spirit Woman.

Paula Gunn Allen's own account of the novel, in *The Sacred Hoop* (99–100) has the limitation of being a statement of authorial intention. It doesn't

always correspond to the text; since it is more categorical about some aspects of Ephanie's story than the text itself, and in this respect should be considered as a supplement to it. Also, and crucially, it doesn't allow for reader responses, whereas I believe that the methodology of the text opens the novel up to the feminist audiences mentioned in its Acknowledgements, and subsequently to addressees situated beyond the boundaries of authorial readings.

The four locations of the novel: Albuquerque, San Francisco, Seattle, San Francisco are not that precisely described. I feel that 'New Mexican colonial history, [and] her intercultural family life', are implied rather than fully explored within the body of the novel. However, let's accept the author's emphasis in her 'supplement' on the sacred significance of the figure *four* and recognize that the structure of the novel uses it as an organizational principle. This would reinforce a reading of the novel as a spatial construction, rather like a four-dimensional spider's web, and clearly the inclusion of the fourth or spiritual dimension is an important aspect of Ephanie's achievement of psychic balance and harmony. Yet this is also a female quest novel, in which, as in Adrienne Rich's reading of *Jane Eyre*, the female protagonist moves through different locations, finds strength in female friendship in each, and by the end of the novel achieves personal equilibrium and maturity. I now examine the depiction of domestic spaces, and how they intersect with the landscapes of memory and ceremonial space.

The protagonist's mestiza identity complicates the author's essentialist exposition. Indeed, Allen recognizes this herself when she states that one of Ephanie's four directions is that of 'personal emotion and perception'. Ephanie doesn't enter ceremonial time and space through the traditional, tribal, communal ritual but by personal study and reflection. In this respect the novel fits in a radical feminist literary canon as well as a Native American canon. After the Prologue that tells the pueblo creation story of Grandmother Spider, Uretsete and Naotsete, who 'set everything in place', the novel opens with a description of Ephanie alone in domestic space, in a place that Allen identifies as Albuquerque in her gloss:

> In opening the door let the dingy light pass through, as if on its way to a quiet dark place. The sun was gray that morning. The color of bored conversation. Inevitably. The winter insinuated itself into every corner. Dreamlike. Would not be completely banished no matter how many fires tended. How many wines drunk slowly beside their glow. The time of quiet, of rest. She could see how the house, its people settled in, grew subdued. As gray as the light that came through the door. The old blue door she had just opened. Ancient sign of entering. Springing a dream momentarily free. For her to look at. But she let it slip away. Distracted by the cold.
>
> Her children were gone then. Staying at her mother's in the village, Guadalupe. She didn't have even them to keep her still. Connected to time. To place.
>
> (3)

The only indicator of time is the imprecise 'then'. This tells us precious little about the date of the events of the story, and also makes it difficult for us to know if this is a recalled narrative, told with authorial hindsight, or a simultaneous story,[1] where the author/narrator does not occupy a privileged position. (Indeed, 'then' could be phatic utterance in this context, rather than an adverb of time.) Toni Morrison has investigated the implications of assumed narrative authority and reliability in *Jazz*; and posited an alternative model of the fallibility of the talking book.[2] One senses a related refusal to assume superior knowledge in the tentative opening of this narrative. It is as if author, protagonist and implied reader all enter this wintery, narrative space uncertainly. Ephanie is placed in a liminal position, opening the door and entering; but ignoring the further door that opens onto her dream. The implied reader is offered a major trope of the novel in the opening paragraph, and some hints about the psycho-drama that will need to play itself out before the protagonist achieves a resolution of – or at least reconciliation with – the predicament that accompanies her mestiza identity. This trope is figured in the depiction of the opening door that Ephanie is distracted from entering through.

She only manages to enter through that dream door in Part 2, when she is in San Francisco and has the support of her white friend, Teresa. She accesses it through the use of a crystal ball. At first she describes her vision in the past tense. Significantly, Teresa tells Ephanie to switch to the present tense, which implies a switch to an American Indian concept of time as cyclical, not linear and progressive – but which also invokes the European novel's use of the historical present (78). When she does this she goes through the blue door and it opens onto a grassy hill, flooded with blue light, and where she feels 'very happy'. She walks towards trees with big leaves:

> 'Now I see that there's a lot of people there. It's like a picnic or something. We go up to them and now I'm looking at a woman. It's Grandma Campbell. Oh, boy.' Ephanie brushed away the tears that were coursing down her cheeks. She could hardly control her voice, its trembling. She felt so safe, so good, so warm. 'Now', she said quietly, struggling to make her voice loud enough for Teresa to hear, 'she's holding me.'
>
> (78–79)

At this point in the narrative this reads as eulogized space. That is to say, it is evoked through memory and imagination to compensate or balance the sense of separation and loss that Ephanie feels so deeply in her own life. It is a safe, protective and warm place, inhabited by her tribal grandmother, whose embrace offers comfort. Paula Gunn Allen believes that non-Indian culture is predicated on a myth of separation and loss, unlike American Indian culture that is based on 'the ability of all creatures to share in the process of ongoing creation [that] makes all things sacred' (*Sacred Hoop* 57). Nevertheless, at this second stage in the four-part narration it feels as if the experience of separation

and loss predominates, despite the consolation of this vision of matriarchal protection.

Infelicitous places

San Francisco is described as a city of pain, in a description that is all about the emotional tenor of place rather than its physical geography. The compass points are invoked, not for exact realism of description but to suggest the witchery that has overwhelmed the city and its inhabitants:

> And all around her she sensed what was growing, south, north, west and east joined together, fused together in fear and rage, the mute twin angels binding them above and below. [. . .] The pall of despair that like a curse shrouded everything of brightness, of clarity. All over the land it grew and hovered.
>
> (72)

On the next page we are given some further explanation of the cause of this:

> And death hung like dirty air over the land where once had walked the peaceful ones in the land of California. [. . .] Where the ancient ones had set their eyes westward and the white ones, the strangers, had followed, destroying everything in their path. For two hundred miles in front of them they had spewed death. Of the animals. Of the birds. Of the reptiles. Of the insects. Of the plants and herbs and grasses and the trees. Of the people who died, who still danced and sang and fished. Who gathered wild grass seed. Who lived there still, though in another space.
>
> (73)

This passage typifies the position of 'ecological Indian', especially since it posits an essentialist view of race in regard to ecological responsibility. That is, white men are the destroyers, whereas American Indians lived in harmony and balance with nature, and continue to do so in another parallel layer of space. Allen complicates this further by introducing the figure of La Malinche, as the only archetype that Ephanie feels she could identify with. As a mestiza she feels no sympathy for the white colonizer, but she is rejected by her tribal people, who do not allow half-breeds to enter fully into the ceremonies and rituals of clan life. Since this rejection affects her so deeply she can understand why La Malinche chose to betray 'her' people, the people who had enslaved her. So, at this stage of the narrative the belief in another kind of space, where 'the people who died, who still danced and sang and fished', is posited. Yet Ephanie has too many issues to do with her mixed-blood identity and her identity as an abused woman and abject mother to simply enter it and resolve her personal and cultural conflicts thus. To put this another way, at this stage the narrative does not subscribe to the Ghost Dance religion's belief

in regeneration and resurgence. There is no simplistic solution for the displaced, mixed-blood protagonist.

The narrative turns instead to the spaces of recurrent nightmares, nightmares so awful that Ephanie requires therapy to deal with them. Two spaces recur in these nightmares: that of a museum, and that of the familial home. Both are terrifying. Both, however, illustrate the feminist slogan that 'the personal is political'. In her museum dream, she walks around the museum spaces, unrecognized and unacknowledged. She wanders around lost and unable to find an exit. Instead, 'walls appeared in the place that a doorway had been, where stairs that had once led down now only rose, obstructing her from getting by' (83). In her dreams Ephanie is trapped inside the colonizers' public spaces, the museums that all too often have been literally mausoleums of indigenous peoples and their sacred artefacts. Arguably, the installation of indigenous peoples' human remains, burial artefacts and possessions, sacred objects and secular utensils in museum displays has contributed to the phenomenon of the 'vanishing Indian'. The reasoning goes that American Indians are primitive and fascinating curiosities that must be captured before they disappear, so that the historical record can be preserved intact.[3] However, with a progressive view of time and history, it is inevitable that they will vanish, either through extinction or through assimilation. Allen's analysis in *The Sacred Hoop* of the novels of D'Arcy McNickle, librarian/curator at the Newberry Library, emphasizes how an earlier generation of Native American novelists found it impossible to envisage an alternative outcome: 'The resolution for both his novels is the colonial solution to the Indian dilemma: resignation to inevitable extinction' (84).

In Part 2 Ephanie experiences both terror and despair, as her dream illustrates. The splendour of gilded, marble halls is not a secure and protective place for an American Indian or half-breed woman. As the dream indicates, although indigenous peoples are put on display to be gazed at and explained away in talks and film shows, the real Native American feels ignored and trapped in these curatorial spaces. For Ephanie, as representative of her people, these are places where American Indians are curated but not cared for or cured. The text goes on to describe one particular dream, which later becomes the subject of the therapist's notes, where Ephanie's sense of being invisible and uncared for in a space devoted to exhibiting her as a primitive curio impacts on her behaviour as a mother. As in life she is a frequently absent and inadequate mother, so in her dream her mother and her children 'never looked her way' and then 'they had vanished as though they had not been there at all' (83). Most significantly, the 'ancient sign of entering' (3), the symbolic doorway of ancient and matriarchal religions,[4] is walled off; the museum housing the evidence of Native American culture denies egress into the ceremonial space that is integral to that culture.

Near the end of Part 2 the text provides the therapist's notes for a house nightmare. Immediately preceding it in the previous chapter a recurring dream is mentioned that is elusive on waking. A face appears in it that she

knows only in her dream, from whose ancient mouth comes chanting. In her dream she knows the words of the chant and their meaning, but never remembers them upon waking (108–9). So the text hints at the power of the ancient ones to protect against adverse forces, but Ephanie's access to the ceremonial space they dwell in is cut off still. Instead, she dreams of a house that should be the maternal home, but is in fact a place of terror. Ephanie tells the therapist, and the dream is narrated in dialogue, that she is afraid of her violent mother and she wants to escape (111). The therapist invites Ephanie to 'Be the kitchen'. Her response indicates that this is the opposite of eulogized or felicitious space, it is uneasy space that lacks the ability to protect and render happy:

> EPHANIE: 'I'm a very large room, I don't have much furniture. I'm in an old house. I have a lot of doors. They all can close. One goes to the outside and . . . I'm empty. I'm clean. No one uses me. I want my counters to shrink. I want to hold my breath. I want to pull back. I don't want to be seen, I'm thinking that I'm kind of shabby, that I don't shine very good and I can't look like she wants me to. I'm an Indian kitchen. I'm in a house on the reservation. An old kitchen, not very good. Not strong or pretty. Not like those houses they have in town. I'm like that, kind of battered and hopeless. I'm very clean but I'm too old and tired to really shine.'
>
> (109–10)

The kitchen internalizes/interiorizes the dominant culture's disdain of reservation life. Superficially all right, it is clean after all, it lacks the ability to be the heart of a home rather than a room in a house. In the chapter 'House and Universe', Bachelard defines the home as felicitous space as one that can protect us and encourage our sense of self-worth:

> Come what may the house helps us to say: I will be an inhabitant of the world, in spite of the world. [. . .] A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space.
>
> (46–47)

Yet Ephanie's dream house is shrinking and empty, inhabited in the scenario of her dream by a mad mother afraid of an unnameable threat lurking in the corners of the room, and by her dead baby son, Tommy, who is covered in shit.[5] Moreover, the kitchen wants to hold its breath, and the doors close. The door that 'goes to the outside' opens onto textual ellipsis.

This is again diametrically opposite to Bachelard's commentary on the felicitous relation between house and universe:

> 'My house,' writes Georges Spyridaki, 'is diaphanous, but it is not of glass. It is more of the nature of vapor. Its walls contract and expand as I desire. At times, I draw them close about me like protective armor . . .

> But at others, I let the walls of my house blossom out in their own space, which is infinitely extensible.'
>
> Spyridaki's house breathes. [. . .] which amounts to saying that we live in it in alternative security and adventure.

Further down the same page, but now commenting on another poet, Bachelard concludes:

> Thus, an immense cosmic house is a potential of every dream of houses. [. . .] A house that is as dynamic as this allows the poet to inhabit the universe. Or, to put it differently, the universe comes to inhabit his house. (51)

This European phenomenology of the cosmic house is posited on a great sense of cultural and personal assurance. Ephanie, as third in the line of culturally displaced American Indian women, dreams of a reservation kitchen that is inhabited by women who are too terrified to nurture their children adequately, and that neither protects confidently nor allows egress to the universe and the cosmos.[6] At this stage of the narrative the outcome seems bleak, indeed tragic, as in McNickle's novels. And clearly the text is political not just personal, since this deep, ontological and cosmic infelicity is attributed to the loss of tribal identities, the colonization of American Indian value systems, and the despised position of the half-breed woman.

To summarize, in the first two parts of *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* domestic spaces and dream spaces are enclosing but claustrophobic, and suffused with feelings of isolation, insecurity, displacement and fear. The mixed-blood family background does not provide memories and images of a Bachelardian, eulogized space, a secure familial home that provides safe access to the universe. Rather, the nightmare spaces are analogous to the American Indian experience of being identified by the dominant culture as the 'vanishing' Indian preserved as a museum exhibit and are similes for the distress and tension felt by the victims of federal policies of assimilation through schooling and of tribal policies of ostracizing mixed-breed families.

Under the guidance of Spider Woman

When we move to Part 3, elements that will be necessary for Ephanie to achieve a congruent personality become more frequent.[7] These include repeated reference to the sacred figure *four*, increased use of the term 'home' and the introduction of verbal phrases such as 'she knew that', 'she grew to understand', 'she realized' (132, 135, 153, 157, 158, 164). The therapeutic process of self-reflection and reflection on her cultural origins has moved into a phase where Ephanie begins to comprehend far more and make sense of the inherent (and inherited) complexities and contradictions. For the first time, Ephanie herself gives us a clear indicator of the duration of the story:

> 'Of course. Even though it's been three years I don't think the effects have gone away. But still.'
>
> (145)

Not only does Ephanie have a far clearer sense of her own cultural identity, but also she is prepared and able to articulate it, as in the visit to Teresa's friends in Colorado (136–46). And yet, this is also the part of the novel where Ephanie attempts suicide. So, Ephanie has moved beyond the initial state of mental breakdown and is becoming both analytical and articulate about her situation. Yet it is significant that as a half-breed woman in Seattle, the protagonist can at times understand why her life has turned out this way, but can still suffer the indignity of existing in infelicitous space.

Felicitous space is invoked through the dream of the katsina. The authenticity of the vision is vouched for by the fact that Ephanie cannot find any scholarly record of an identical katsina, and by the fact that she was barred from participating in ceremonies involving katsinas because of her half-breed status. We are told that the dream happened long ago, so its position in Part 3 indicates that it is only at this stage in the process that Ephanie understands its message and is receptive to its implications for her. The katsina shows her an image of four rivers converging, symbolizing the coming together of four books in the shape of a cross. They merge as a four-in-one symbol of infinity. Ephanie understands the significance of the dream much later:

> In her small quiet alone room, hunched within her books and papers, she read something and understood something that made it clear. The katsina was showing her the origin. The place of the mother. Shipap. The place of memory, the place of dream. [. . .] The place that first and finally is home.
>
> (130)

One distinct difference between this eulogized space and the felicitious space that Bachelard codifies, is that Ephanie is shown a place that exists in communal, tribal belief systems and that is conveyed through the stories and rituals of the oral tradition. 'The place of the mother' is not the product of an individual poetic consciousness but an originary part of a shared cosmology. Although the text emphasizes that this is an authentic vision and suggests that Ephanie has to resort to 'her books and papers' to understand its significance, the dream contains much that pueblo mothers pass on to their daughters through the oral tradition – where that is still functional.

Here is Allen's own account in *The Sacred Hoop* of how it works. In it she makes explicit the link between stories and cultural identity:

> My mother told me stories all the time, though I often did not recognize them as that. [. . .] And in all those stories she told me who I was, who I was supposed to be, whom I came from, and who would follow me.

> In this way she taught me the meaning of the words she said, that all life is a circle and everything has a place within it. That's what she said and what she showed me in the things she did and the way she lives (*sic*).
>
> (46)

The stories tell the daughter who she is and what her place is in the circle of being. Crucially, it is in Part 3 that Ephanie acts as a functional and adequate mother to her own daughter by beginning to pass on the knowledge she has acquired so painfully, but that will be essential for Agnes' understanding of her own place in the world. She does so by writing a letter, passing on in a jocular, conversational style the insights that she has arrived at so painfully. The letter from mother to daughter becomes an example of Indian humor and Indian storytelling, entertaining while conveying a serious, moral message about environmental and tribal degradation. She ends by saying:

> When you guys come here we'll go to the museum. The natural history museum. That's where they put Indians.
>
> Love to you my dear one,
> Mom
>
> (158)

The letter functions in the text to indicate how much Ephanie has recovered. The stories she reminds Agnes of are those of colonization, ecological devastation and destruction of indigenous belief systems and cultural practices. In the first two parts of the novel she experiences these psychically, as nightmare or psychiatric dysfunction. Now she understands and passes on her analysis to her daughter in a twentieth-century equivalent of the oral tradition: letter writing. Yet the space she writes from is still infelicitous much of the time.

So, to balance this account of Part 3 I shall briefly look at how its infelicity is described.

A room of one's own

Virginia Woolf concluded 'that it is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry' (100). Ephanie has 'a room of one's own', but it is symptomatic of her isolation. The 'lock on the door' is psychic as well as material. Instead of a felicitous space that allows secure exchange with 'the world beyond', the 'universe' in Bachelard's terminology, Ephanie's rented rooms enclose her and turn her in on herself. Woolf's analysis of the predicament of the female author, presented through her double Mary Beton, addresses issues of sexual inequality, but not those of ethnicity. Ephanie's response to her malaise has been to establish herself in a room of her own, and buy time to read, think and write. In this respect she has taken the feminist option.[8] However, Allen's depiction of it refutes the European sensibility that finds nooks and corners reassuring and

advocates just such self-contained refuges as beneficial to women in particular. Rather it is a kind of cultural limbo, where liminality means stasis. Thus Allen associates the claustrophobic aspects of the tiny apartment with culturally negative attitudes towards Indians (147). Ephanie finds herself identifying with persuasive images of vanishing/vanished Indians as well as with the women of her immediate family who suffered irreversible deracination.

As she ponders all this, she realizes how isolated even her childhood 'home' was, because of the way her family was covertly ostracized. Her memories of 'home' are of a place she cannot return to and that provided little comfort and solace then, and hence reinforce her sense of isolation in a summer rental now:

> She didn't like solitude. The shadows, the noises the building made, frightened her. She was most afraid to go to her closet, one that was too large for a closet, too small for a room. One with a highhigh ceiling. With a heavy pipe that ran across the narrow width, high above her head. She always thought she could hear voices from there.
>
> (152)

She associates the sounds with a childhood bogeyman, the koko man, 'the katsina who initiated everyone into being one of the people' – but not her. Bachelard contends that: 'every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination' (136). Corners are 'happy/sad' places, sites of 'the dialectics of full and empty', places for meditation 'upon life and death' (140). He quotes Milosz's 'corner dreamer':

> 'Here the meditative spider lives powerful and happy.'
>
> (140)

In *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* it's not that straightforward. The meditative spider is both the producer of cobwebs that Ephanie vacuums up in Part 1 and grandmother spider, who watches Ephanie undergo her own solitary initiation and survive to finally be 'one of the people' (34, 164).[9] This closet, with its disproportional height, belittles and frightens Ephanie. Its dimensions offer no sense of security or protection, indeed the voices it contains are menacing reminders of what has been lost, polluted and destroyed. Its ambivalent status, too small for a room but too big for a closet, is analogous to Ephanie's own self image: neither Indian nor white-woman, site of isolated, haunting fear. So it is appropriate that she hangs herself from the heavy pipe and dangles like a spider on its tensile filament. Only by trying to become a 'good Indian' can she finally reject the dominant cultural perception of the iconic, vanished savage, and gain access instead to the tribal traditions denied her in childhood.

So, in Part 4 Ephanie's liminality is transformed into a powerful site of connection and equilibrium. She arrives at a condition she describes as

knowing that 'she was the place where the inside and the outside came together. An open doorway' (174). By unlocking the psychic door, she feels called home by 'a Grandmother hand, voice, to guide her' (175). Here, Allen overlays the radical feminist belief that 'the personal is political' with her mestiza protagonist's achievement, which is to inhabit her liminal identity as a position of potential for transformation of cultural attitudes and values. Through the personal, psychic therapy and the cultural work she has undertaken she now *is* the 'Ancient sign of entering'. Allen uses the methods of cultural feminism, and the imaginative and mythic association of the female self with symbols of doorways/entrances and containers/caves continues that tradition. It could, of course, be critiqued for fixing contemporary women as individuals-in-process into archetypal roles and attributes. Yet within the context of the novel and Ephanie's quest for equilibrium, the archetypes are invoked and appear as confirmation of her personal achievement. They bear witness to a dynamic process of self-help in which Ephanie has worked towards her own personal congruence of conflictual cultural codes.

As I suggested in the previous chapter, when she recapitulates the 'woman who fell from the sky' story, it is part of her psychological breakthrough, as she realizes by working with symbols of the 'fall' how Stephen betrayed her into an assimilated identity in her adolescence.[10] Yet, even here, her thoughts are expressed in spatial metaphors:

> Nothing was that did not live nestled within everything else. And this was how the stories went, what they had been for. To fit a life into. To make sense. Nothing left out because there was no place else to go.
>
> (191)

Here we find imagery of the doorway – place of ingress and egress – and of lives 'nestled' harmoniously within the larger whole. The passage implies that even the most abject personal experience has representative value, and that isolated acts of ritual initiation into understanding connect to cosmic patterns of knowledge. The Bachelardian notion of felicitous space begins to appear amateur in comparison with the mestiza's achieved knowledge of how everything connects. Ephanie arrives at epiphanic understanding of an interconnected universe, where stories are not just past histories but vital analogies for dwellers in the fourth world.[11] The cosmos and its inhabitants together make felicitous space and the stories are the visible threads of connection holding it all together. Thus the dualism of 'I' enclosed by 'not-I' becomes redundant.

The consolation that Ephanie 'ached for' (175) is given to her in the penultimate chapter of the novel. She is visited by the spirit woman and 'in the living shadows that swirled around the spirit woman's face' (207) has a vision of the connectedness of the Universe. This vision supersedes Bachelard's Cartesian concept of home and universe. It takes place in Ephanie's bedroom, but it shows her a four-dimensional dance of creation in a universe not bound by linear time. Her access to it was by isolated meditation,

not tribal initiation; but this does not invalidate it. On the contrary, it strengthens the proposition that everything is connected.

Conclusion

Paula Gunn Allen's novel adopts a high-risk strategy, not dissimilar to that of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Superficially, her protagonist is the embodiment of a series of contemporary stereotypical views of mixed-blood people. She is socially isolated, she is abused, raped and violated by the men in her life, she is an absent and inadequate mother who falls into mental breakdown. She attends therapy, she uses New Age props, such as the crystal ball and the Tarot pack, she is restless and rootless, haunted and sad. The third generation of women to have their lives disrupted by federal government policies and by tribal attitudes towards mixed-race marriages, she can't go back 'home' and she seems unable to move on. And yet, as a mestiza woman she 'bridges the difference' between ancient and contemporary culture, between tribal and non-Indian peoples. She becomes a place of congruence and a site of a vision of cosmic inter-connection that modern physics could almost endorse.

In *The Sacred Hoop* Allen comments in typically categorical style:

> The closest analogy in Western thought is the Einsteinian understanding of matter as a special state or condition of energy. Yet even this concept falls short of the American Indian understanding, for Einsteinian energy is believed to be unintelligent, while energy according to the Indian view is intelligence manifested in yet another way.
>
> (60)

While this confrontational prose might risk alienating the 'Western' reader, I would argue that the experimental/experiential method of *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* has the opposite effect. The reader who works sympathetically and imaginatively with the text is allowed to share Ephanie's vision of 'an ordered, balanced, and living whole' (*Sacred Hoop* 59). Moreover, by the time the 'Grandmother hand, voice, to guide her' in the shape of the spirit woman finally manifests in Ephanie's story, the reader has empathized with the protagonist and feels strong emotional connection with her quest for balance and harmony. No longer the stereotypical 'other', Ephanie implicitly and representatively offers her hand and voice to guide the reader into American Indian cosmology. Narrator, protagonist and reader entered the text hesitantly and ignorantly. At the end they can connect:

> I am Entering
> Not alone
>
> (213)

4 Narrative as ritual

Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*, 1977

> He was not crazy; he had never been crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time.
>
> (*Ceremony* 246)

Introduction

In this chapter I offer an initial reading of *Ceremony*, emphasizing the ways in which the text itself educates the reader who is unfamiliar with the pueblo culture of the American Southwest. I return to *Ceremony* in the following chapter to analyse aspects of the text that most resonate with a poetics of space.

In several interviews, now reprinted in *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*, Silko reveals much about the processes of writing. For her it is a very intuitive process, and this could be baffling to the reader who expects the author to consciously know and control what happens in the text. She talks about two 'stillborn' fragments that were precursors to the discovery that *Ceremony* would have a male protagonist and thus implicitly a male narrator.

> When I tried to write *Ceremony* I got two, what I call 'stillborn', novels. They're stillborn at about sixty-five pages. [. . .] Part of one of the 'stillborn' pieces is in *Ceremony* – the part about the kid in Gallup, the little boy that has no name and doesn't call his mother 'Mother'.
>
> (39)

In this interview she emphasizes that the discarded material is not necessarily wasted, but is rather a necessary part of the composition process. As an author one needs to be prepared to be flexible and change direction if something doesn't work. In another interview five years later, this time with her Italian translator, Laura Coltelli, she refers again to the 'stillborn' novels.

> When I was writing *Ceremony*, I just had this compulsion to do Helen-Jean. But the other part, about Gallup, is the only surviving part of what I

> call stillborn novels. [. . .] I figured nothing's going to happen with this anyway, and I really like the Gallup section, and in a strict sense it sort of hangs off like feathers or something. It's tied to it, and it belongs there, but its relationship is different. I put that in for exactly the same reason, vis-à-vis structure, as I did the Helen-Jean part.
>
> (56–57)[1]

So the novel presents some surprises, especially as regards structure. There are a number of fragments that seem to relate imaginatively to the overall themes, but that don't seem to connect at the level of characterization and plot construction. Even more unnerving is the fact that the novel has no chapter or part divisions; it is just a continuous narrative for 262 pages – except that it interrupts the prose narration with a series of mythic stories that are set out on the page as poetry; that is lines of varying length that are arranged around the central axis of the page, rather than in relation to the left-hand or right-hand margin. The effect is not dissimilar to George Herbert's 'poems yielding "an ocular representation"' – for example 'The Altar' – and also seems visually to resemble a series of totem poles.[2] Furthermore, the text also includes a visual image of 'Old Betonie's stars' to reinforce the transition from historical to ceremonial time that Tayo finds himself making after the healing scalp ritual.

Silko has a powerful visual imagination. Her father was a photographer, and she has included her own photographs as well as a number by her grandfather and her father in her texts.[3] Moreover, she recounts the story of her interrupting the writing of *Almanac of the Dead* to paint a large mural of a giant snake.[4] In *Ceremony* an important structuring device is the use of Navajo sand painting, in which both form and colour are significant. As well as a visual imagination, Silko believes in the power of stories to locate people, to endow them with a sense of place, and to remind them of their place in the cosmic order. Coming from Laguna Pueblo, she belongs to a community of indigenous people who were not displaced, relocated or terminated by federal agencies. Hence, as an author she has a very strong sense of connection between her family home, traditional stories and the function of storytelling. This sense of individual and communal identity grounded on local self-recognition, where space combined with memory defines place, is somewhat complicated by Silko's own mixed-blood inheritance. And Tayo's status as a mixed-blood child, subject to maternal and familial emotional abuse and neglect, is a central aspect of the narrative structures and themes of *Ceremony*. Since Tayo is the main narrative focalizer, the issues of his mixed-blood identity, his unhappy childhood and his ongoing post-traumatic shock disorder are revealed obliquely through stream of consciousness and multiple flashbacks. Clearly the reader has to read the novel linearly from start to finish. Yet subsequent readings should attend to aspects other than the linear narrative, and try out ways of responding to the poetic structures of the text. Some readers find it helpful to read through the 'poetic' sections to establish their sense of the traditional, mythic story that is recounted through them. I

shall start from the fragments, the 'stories within the story', and work out how they connect to the main narrative. Then I shall consider the placing of the traditional, tribal stories and the ceremony at the heart of the novel.

Narratives within narratives

In *Conversations . . .* Silko says that she 'did not plan the structure of *Ceremony*, at least not consciously' (121). However, we may assume that certain cultural tendencies will have affected the structure at a pre-conscious level. Allen's analysis of her uncle's transcription of a Laguna-Acoma Keres Yellow Woman story leads to an illuminating comparison between Western European and traditional tribal unconscious assumptions about form and structure. It throws light on Allen's own novel, and also on prior texts in the Native American literary canon, such as Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Silko's *Ceremony*.

> [T]he tendency to equal distribution of value among all elements in a field, whether the field is social, spiritual, or aesthetic (and the distinction is moot when tribal materials are under discussion), is an integral part of tribal consciousness and is reflected in tribal social and aesthetic systems all over the Americas. In this structural framework, no single element is foregrounded, leaving the others to supply 'background'. Thus, properly speaking, there are no heroes, no villains, no chorus, no setting (in the sense of inert ground against which dramas are played out). There are no minor characters, and foreground slips from one focal point to another until all the pertinent elements in the ritual conversation have had their say.
>
> (241)

Not every characteristic of tribal narrative and art enumerated by Allen is applicable to Silko's text. She is after all a university-educated, highly literate author, drawing on a whole range of novelistic conventions as well as on traditional storytelling. Yet it helps to bear in mind Allen's distinction between 'inclusive-field perception' and 'excluding foreground-background perceptions' (243). Rather than exclude the old stories, Silko advocates openness to them, as in Irmer and Schmidt's *Conversation with* her:

> Something in writing *Ceremony* that I had to discover for myself was indeed that the old stories still have in their deepest level a content that can give the individual a possibility to understand.
>
> (147)

Thus, *Ceremony*'s narrative structure is a hybrid of old stories and post-war expression. In terms of narrative technique, it mainly uses a type of free indirect style, with the protagonist, Tayo, as focalizer. However, as well as the

interspersed 'poetic' text, there are a number of features that complicate this narrative style. At one point in the ceremony, the author interjects a 'NOTE ON BEAR PEOPLE AND WITCHES' (131) indicating that she is aware that she needs to explicate tribal culture for her audience. As Robert and Tayo approach Gallup there is a paragraph of directly reported speech (107). There's no telling if this is Tayo in conversation much later, or a disembodied fragment of overheard conversation spoken by what the Western reader might term 'a minor character', or the author speaking, or something spoken to the author. Yet, if one thinks of it as a necessary 'element in the ritual conversation' that needs to be spoken, rather than look for classical unity of character and action, it seems to make appropriate sense.

Other focalizers in the text include Night Swan, the small boy in Gallup, and Helen-Jean. Silko doesn't identify the small boy with Tayo in conversation. Rather she says that 'basically what happened to Tayo's mother is what happened to Helen-Jean, is what happened to – on and on down the line' (56). The effect of this is to render Tayo's experience as more symptomatic of post-war society. Concurrently, she depicts the representative experiences of Native American women and children through the stories within stories, and by narrative attention to Tayo's aunt and grandmother. They are described in Tayo's flashback sequences, and through his focalization, but also by the author's directly reporting their speech. Thus we gain a sense of the complexity of pressures on mid twentieth-century tribal life, and how some of the coping mechanisms serve to further undermine individual and clan identity. Arguably, the reader could start with any one of the apparently unrelated stories within the main story and by analysing it make sense of the issues and preoccupations of the work as a whole. If one looks for a web of interconnected meaning rather than Aristotelian unity of character and action, the 'fragments' are necessary filaments of the design. I use the figure of the spider's web to allude to the Keres tradition of Spider Woman stories; but one might also compare Silko's tendency to compose through analogy with the aesthetic principles of Transcendentalism, which also used correspondence and analogy as philosophical and poetical devices.[5]

Narrative time can be the most disorientating aspect of the novel, especially at the start. Yet the basic sequence or framework of the plot is very simple. The novel starts in late May, with Tayo down on the ranch looking after the family's livestock, and ends a year later, with Tayo still spending time on the ranch but also integrated into his family group. In the intervening year he undergoes two cures, one with Ku'oosh and one with Betonie. The second ceremony is effective, and part of it involves him retrieving the speckled, hybrid cattle that his Uncle had purchased but which were stolen by a white landowner. Tayo is one of a number of World War Two veterans who have returned suffering various degrees of post-traumatic shock syndrome. Read linearly, the first piece of plot action is that his friend Harley visits him on the ranch, and together they go off on a drinking spree – a pattern that will be repeated (with a difference) later in the novel after the ceremony has taken

place. The narration is disorientating for the reader because the first one hundred pages or so do not follow the conventions of linear narrative. Even putting the interspersed poetic text to one side for the time being, it is evident that Tayo's focalization draws us into spiralling layers of flashback. Toni Morrison in conversation about the narrative technique of *Beloved* expresses eloquently the ways in which consciousness is always multiple and how memories flash across the conscious mind all the time. As in *Beloved* so in *Ceremony*, this phenomenon is exacerbated by the protagonist's traumatic past. Tayo not only feels shame for being the bastard, breed son of a mother who neglected him, abandoned him and died young – the suggestion is of alcohol abuse; he also feels guilt for not protecting his sibling cousin, Rocky, and watching him die on the Bataan Death March. Moreover, he senses a kinship with his Japanese adversaries that leads him to shoulder the burden of guilt for his Uncle Josiah's death. He feels he is responsible for the six-year drought plaguing the reservation lands because he cursed the rain on the Death March. The Los Angeles War Veterans' Hospital has discharged him without adequate treatment, and altogether he has a lifetime of neglect, confusion and trauma swirling around in his mind. He has adopted the same coping mechanisms as his peer group: alcohol abuse, unproductive brooding on the past and occasional eruptions of senseless violence. Put in context, the multiple flashbacks seem surprisingly coherent!

A further complication is Silko's use of ceremonial time. While the Western reader might expect events of the story to unravel in chronological time, Silko's narrative shifts in and out of ceremonial time, especially in the latter part of the novel. I shall distinguish between the two by referring to chronological (clock) time as historical time, and to events that occur in mythic spaces as happening in ceremonial time. Allen, Silko and a number of other commentators draw attention to the fact that Native Americans favour a sense of time as cyclical rather than linear. Silko reminds us that the Mayans believed that the days all had individual characteristics and eventually they all came round again. Radin, amongst others, believes that modern Native American culture is derived from pre-Columbian Mayan civilization. Several commentators, including Allen and Silko, point out that modern post-Einsteinian physics supports the traditional tribal sense of time as not being a straight line. Thus the story undergoes a series of transitions, as Tayo moves between historical and ceremonial time and space. In the next section I shall discuss this in more detail by bringing in the further dimension of the text, the use of poetic procedures in a novelistic context.

To summarize thus far: the novel has a very simple basic plot line and one main narrative focalizer, Tayo. This narrative structure is complicated by multiple flashbacks, by apparently unrelated stories within stories, by intermittent shifts to other focalizers and even occasional authorial intervention. It moves recurrently, and you might feel without due notice, from historical to ceremonial time and back again. It also contains passages of

what looks like poetry, that mostly but not entirely recount traditional Keres stories. In short, it can be confusing if approached as a realist novel, and might be better read as a long, post-modernist text, which employs devices from both narrative fiction and modernist poetry, including the extensive use of analogy and correspondence.

Traditional myth and ritual

Traditional stories are always modified according to 'context', as Kroeber points out, building on the work of the folklorist, Alan Dundes.[6] The 'context' that Dundes and Kroeber had in mind was that of the situation of the telling. Dundes indicates how that can affect the texture of the story, and Kroeber *et al.* demonstrate how conscious this process could be.[7] We also know that story cycles were never told complete and in a fixed order, but again according to the perceived needs of the specific occasion and audience present at the telling. Thus a little information about traditional American Indian texts could be misleading. The context of shared tribal beliefs, ethics and knowledge of other related stories would be missing, and it is that which is so important to the generation of meaning and understanding:

> [T]he 'meaning' really, is no more *in* the texture than it is *in* the structure. Actually both structure and texture unite to provide an excitement of meaning which already exists elsewhere, in the shared ideas and customs of people raised in an intensely traditional society.
>
> (Toelken and Scott 110)

However, a fundamental shift has taken place from the type of traditional storytelling situation Toelken and Scott comment on here to the relationship between Silko as 'storyteller' and her readership. The 'context' has shifted to that of readers reading and responding to the published text by an individual author. The author cannot control who buys and reads the novel, and has no guarantee that her reader will share a 'recognizable cluster of beliefs' with her (110). And yet, to appreciate what is going on in *Ceremony* the non-Indian reader is invited to enter the mindset of traditional peoples, just as the author, Silko, has assimilated the literature of Western civilization.

Silko's own prose, collected in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*, provides a helpful guide to her specific sense of Laguna Pueblo culture, grounded as it is in a stable sense of place. I take 'place' to be created when experience charges the landscape with meaning. And in the case of Laguna Pueblo the traditional stories, which are sometimes close to what we would call 'gossip', recall and convey shared experiences of and in the local landscape. In the absence of that local knowledge one should at least consult a decent map of the area to locate Laguna's relation to Gallup, Mount Taylor and White Sands.[8] Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop* is also an invaluable resource in trying to gain some understanding of Native American cultural

ideology. The fact that both writers are mixed-blood, and both come from Laguna Pueblo, makes Allen's work particularly pertinent.

Allen writes repeatedly about *Ceremony*, but more than that she is an important theorist of tribal feminism. In her reading of *Ceremony* she does tend to over-emphasize the mythic structure at the expense of attending to the complex subtlety of narrative style (118–26). However, her definition of myth is particularly helpful, as long as we see that myth is only a part of the narrative structure:

> So, while μυθοσ is translated as 'fable', it is more accurately translated as 'ritual', that is as a language construct that contains the power to transform something (or someone) from one state or condition to another. (103)

This notion of the transformative power of myth and ritual is absolutely central to the story of *Ceremony*. It underpins a plot that is fundamentally optimistic, believing in 'survivance' and in the possibility of a cure for post World War Two malaise. And the cure is effected both at the individual level of the protagonist, Tayo, and at the social level of the community and its relation to the reservation land. This underlying optimism places Silko in a transcendentalist tradition, reinforced in her next two novels by her invocation of the Ghost Dance religion. Indeed, Allen's further definitions of myth also reflect the visionary basis of the Ghost Dance:

> Myth is a kind of story that allows a holistic image to pervade and shape consciousness, thus providing a coherent and empowering matrix for action and relationship. [. . .] Briefly stated, myth and ritual are based on visionary experience. (105, 107)

Allen also states that 'American Indian myths depend for their magic on relationship and participation' (105). Given that magic works by analogy and the text of *Ceremony* is also constructed through a series of analogues and what Allen terms 'accretive structuring' (95), the first basic premise to grasp in approaching this text is that it functions as ritual as well as literary novel.

My understanding of the relation between myth and ritual is that myth has to do with utterance, the mouthing or telling of the mythopoeic vision, whereas ritual enacts the vision. Ritual can pre-enact, in order to give shape to future events and possibly even affect their outcome, and re-enact in order to celebrate and commemorate events that have occurred. Ritual functions through symbolic expression, and can also enact symbolically events in the surrounding environment, including seasonal and planting cycles, to mark them and to effect a consonance between human societies and their environs. Ritual also enacts symbolically the social organization, the emotional experience and the ethical and philosophical beliefs of the tribe (I use this

word in its widest sense, rather as T. S. Eliot does). Stories can often be aetiological myths, that is to say narratives that take the elements of ritual – the actions performed, the symbols used, etc. – and weave them into a continuous tale, in order to explain them. Hence myth, ritual and story are intimately related in traditional societies. (In the postmodern world one might argue that the same is true, it's just that the myths now take on a different form and appear in different media – billboard advertising, TV soap operas, rap artists' lyrics and Madonna videos.) One further feature of myth, ritual and traditional storytelling is that they characteristically express meaning by focusing on a representative figure. For example, the hero is representative of his family, tribe, nation state, or, to take an American Indian example, the katsina doll in the pueblo ritual represents a specific spirit being, who in turn might represent symbolically a certain elemental or cosmic force. Thus Tayo goes to Betonie for a ritual cure only to find himself promoted to central protagonist in a much larger ceremony to combat witchery. By analogy, his individual malaise is representative of a much more widespread social and historical malaise, which Betonie has the wit to realize, given his relaxed and flexible attitude to traditional ritual performance.

Commentators have noticed similarities between traditional story and Tayo's story. For example, Paula Gunn Allen notes:

> A [. . .] tale that bears striking similarity to *Ceremony* [. . .] is the Hopi story of Tayo, a boy who brought rain back to the Hopi people after a severe drought, as recounted in G. M. Mullett, *Spider Woman Stories*. 7–43.
>
> (275)

The stories that Silko incorporates into the 'mythopoetic' sections of the novel are traditional 'clan stories' as Allen describes them. Yet we can assume that both Allen and Silko know these stories as oral narratives and as written up versions. Allen refers to Mullett's collection as source in the note cited above, and in *Conversations* Silko alludes to the work of Parsons as one source for the first Ck'o'yo magician story in the novel. It can be reassuring to consult these sources, just as it can be reassuring when studying *The Waste Land* to consult Frazier's *The Golden Bough* and Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. But study of possible source materials doesn't necessarily explain the way the text in question operates. Rather I shall consider the 'mythopoetic' sections as Silko presents and arranges them.

The arrangement of the stories and their fragmentary telling is surely as important as the content of each story. The novel is prefaced by a description of Thought Woman. Ts'its'tsi'nako is not a Western muse figure; she is fundamental to Laguna life. Also known as Thought-creating Woman and as Grandmother Spider, Allen states that her thoughts result in 'physical manifestation of phenomena [. . .] or philosophical-sociological systems' (122). Just as the artist cannot view landscape as if he/she were separate from it

and not a part of it, so the author cannot narrate a story as if she is not implicated in it: she is part of the web-like texture of the story. The novel is framed by prayer to the sunrise, a traditional part of Navajo religious practice, as well as pueblo. The two contemporary anonymous voices remind us that the oral tradition continues to thrive in Laguna, and that the narrative style can be closer to gossip than to the literary renditions of Western, classic folk stories. The first clan story is of Reed Woman and Corn Woman, and is told as an aetiological myth, explaining the causes of drought. Forty pages further on a second and more complex mythic story of drought is begun. It is then told in fragmentary interludes throughout the novel and not completed until near the end. Quite far into the text a third story about drought is told mainly in one telling, to be completed after the second one. This doubling of myths is not uncommon in traditional arenas of telling, but here it alerts the reader to a characteristic of the text's structure. This is not a unified text, and just as there are three aetiological stories about drought, so Tayo undergoes several healing rituals before his cure is completed. Not only are there three mythic stories of drought, but there are also two stories of a human being transformed into an 'in between' entity: first the bear/child and then the coyote/man. In both cases the chantway describes the elements of the ritual to bring him back to human identity.

All of these stories or chantways are interwoven, both with each other and with the main story of the novel. Their arrangement provides a paradigm for the holistic structure of the novel. A few moments' contemplation will doubtless open up some of the analogies that are put into play by this narrative structure, and to spell them all out in detail would be somewhat tedious. However, one example would be that the paradigmatic structure of the three drought stories is: 1, simplest and shortest; 2, longest, involving most interludes, and told in the most fragmentary fashion; 3, the most coherent, told in one set, apart from its concluding coda, that functions as a coda to the whole text as well. One could then map onto this paradigm the tripartite nature of Tayo's cure: 1, the first, ineffective ceremony with old man Ku'oosh; 2, the ceremony with Betonie; 3, the continuation of that ceremony beyond the ritual and into a larger, cosmic healing ceremony. And of course, part of Tayo's cure involves reconciliation with his identity as a 'half-breed'. According to A. Lavonne Brown Ruoff, it annoys Native Americans intensely when they are defined by their 'in between' status.[9] Yet, as Owens has pointed out, the Native American Literary Renaissance was really a 'mixedblood' renaissance, in that most Native American literary texts are by mixed-blood authors, and address issues of cultural hybridity and identity. As Tayo says early on: 'I'm half-breed. I'll be the first to say it. I'll speak for both sides' (42). Thus the stories of bear/child, coyote/man, and the fragment of arrow boy and the witches, all foreground liminal entities, who are 'betwixt and between' unified identities. A further part of Tayo's cure is to comprehend the positive aspects of this liminal position, and see it as advantageous in situations that require 'cultural transitions' and imaginative transformations.[10] So the

aetiological stories and chantways offer hypostasized narratives, all of which contain necessary elements that need to be interwoven or combined to complete the ceremony. It cannot be told or enacted in one unified, linear, single-focus narrative.

If the traditional stories are fragmented and interwoven to such an extent we should not expect the complex, confused contemporary moment to be told in a unified, linear fashion. Again Allen provides a powerful theoretical statement that might just help the reader get her bearings:

> In the western mind, shadows highlight the foreground. In contrast, in the tribal view the mutual relationships among shadows and light in all their varying degrees of intensity create a living web of definition and depth, and significance arises from their interplay. Traditional and contemporary tribal arts and crafts testify powerfully to the importance of balance among all elements in tribal perception, aesthetics, and social systems. (244)

This resonates with the narrative strategies of Allen's own novel, discussed in the previous two chapters, and highlights the potential for a radical political agenda embedded in the stylistics employed by these two authors.

In the next section I think about the ways in which Silko synthesizes tribal traditions by alluding to the Navajo art of sand painting. I then investigate how the description of the sand paintings is used as a structuring device or motif in the third part of the ceremony. I do so by working with the information provided by the text, not through recourse to rare and difficult-to-find volumes of ethnography.[11] I also consider the ways in which concepts of transition and transformation are incorporated into the text's structure.

Navajo sand painting

Betonie's healing ceremony is eclectic and synthetic. It is made up of many elements gathered from many different locations and cultural traditions; to be effective in a complex and confused world it must synthesize different tribal traditions and elements of the post-World War Two industrialized society. Tayo is a product of all of these and must live and survive in this hybrid, conflictual world. At the heart of the ceremony is the ritual use of a chantway and of sand painting. Sand painting is a traditional Navajo art form, rather than a pueblo, or Keres, art of transformation. Betonie, like Tayo, is mixed-blood, and this allows him access to the liminal cultural position; on the threshold of various cultures he can fuse and synthesize their elements as appropriate to Tayo's specific set of experiences. In the following chapter, I investigate the ways in which the stories within stories, including the 'still born' fragment, reveal that Tayo's malaise doesn't just begin with the Bataan Death March in the Philippines; since it can be traced right back to his childhood and the emotional neglect he suffered throughout it. Here I

consider the sand painting as Silko describes it and then trace how its elements are played out in the subsequent story.

They said
Prepare hard oak
scrub oak
piñon
juniper and wild rose twigs
Make hoops
tie bundles of weeds into hoops.
Make four bundles
tie them with yucca
spruce mixed with charcoal from burned weeds
snakeweed and gramma grass and rock sage.
Make four bundles.
The rainbows were crossed.
They had been his former means of travel.
Their purpose was
To restore this to him.
They made Pollen Boy right in the center of
the white corn painting.
His eyes were blue pollen
his mouth was blue pollen
his neck was too
There were pinches of blue pollen
at his joints.

He sat in the center of the white corn sand painting. The rainbows crossed were in the painting behind him. Betonie's helper scraped the sand away and buried the bottoms of the hoops in little trenches so that they were standing up and spaced apart, with the hard oak closest to him and the wild rose hoop in front of the door. The old man painted a dark mountain range beside the farthest hoop, the next, closer, he painted blue, and moving toward him, he knelt and made the yellow mountains; and in front of him, Betonie painted the white mountain range.

The helper worked in the shadows beyond the dark mountain range; he worked with the black sand, making bear prints side by side. Along the right side of the bear footprints, the old man painted paw prints in blue, and then yellow, and finally white. They finished it together, with a big rainbow arching wide above all the mountain ranges. Betonie gave him a basket with prayer sticks to hold.

(141–42)

The chantway tells of the ritual to heal the coyote/man; aided by the 'four old Bear People' who are the 'only possible hope / they have the power to restore

the mind'. It is only one chant in the ritual, because Tayo will also have to combat the larger, destructive witchery let loose in the world. However, this traditional story provides the symbolic framework for the cure. When Tayo is seated in the centre of the sand painting, Betonie comes forward and unexpectedly cuts him across the top of his head. So the central ritual foregrounds a sequence of colours: black/dark, blue, yellow, and white; involves receiving an unexpected scalp wound; and walking through hoops from the Dark Mountain down and back to home.

Betonie's wisdom is that in the contemporary world all things are interrelated, they cannot be kept discrete any more. So, equally important is the dream Tayo has immediately after the ceremony and the realization on waking that 'there were no boundaries: the world below and the sand paintings inside became the same that night. The mountains from all the directions had been gathered there that night' (145). As Tayo is about to leave, Betonie tells him one more thing:

> 'One night or nine nights won't do it any more', the medicine man said; 'the ceremony isn't finished yet'. He was drawing in the dirt with his finger. 'Remember these stars', he said. 'I've seen them and I've seen the spotted cattle; I've seen a mountain and I've seen a woman.'
>
> (152)

Drawing in the dirt with his finger is a variant on sand painting, since both are transient, the latter being erased once the ceremony is performed. Betonie is a shaman, and hence has visionary insight. He is not just bound by historical, chronological time, but perceives events in ceremonial time. In Western terms we might call him a prophet figure, since he foretells in essence the events that Tayo then finds himself acting out. So, the principle of ritual working through analogy becomes the structuring device of the novel.

Central to this structuring device is the function of transitions. And indeed the chantway and the sand painting emphasize transition as the most significant feature. In terms of the novel and its appearance on the page, transitions take the place of more conventional chapter divisions. So the reader needs to be alert to the transitions; they are the only boundaries and demarcations left in a confused world. They allow us to distinguish between events and see how the analogies operate. One crucial transition is when Tayo comes down from Betonie on the mountain, meets up with Harley, Leroi and Helen-Jean, and is almost sucked back into his previous coping mechanisms, but instead 'vomit[s] out everything – all the past, all his life' (168). This is a necessary purging before he can enact the ceremony that the ritual pre-enacted symbolically. It is emphasized in the novel in indirect free style, through Tayo as focalizer, but with reference back to Betonie:

> Old Betonie might explain it this way – Tayo didn't know for sure: there were transitions that had to be made in order to become whole again, in

> order to be the people our Mother would remember; transitions, like the boy walking in bear country being called back softly.
>
> (170)

There then follows the coherent second story of Ck'o'yo magician, the Gambler – third mythic story of drought – ending with the words, 'Your other, the earth is crying for you. / Come home, children, come home'. The subsequent blank space on the page is the only indication of a major transition having occurred: Tayo has now entered ceremonial time and encounters Ts'eh, the Mountain Spirit woman, who will guide and heal him. With her he walks into the stinging sand, alert to the 'designs woven . . . in four colors' (177), and into a ranch house whose pine door, burning juniper wood and smell of mountain sage 'stirred old memories'. Analogies with elements of the scalp-cutting ritual abound, but the reader not familiar with the notion of ceremonial time may still have difficulty in working out quite what is happening here. The transition is sudden, unexpected and disorientating. Silko, however, provides us with a chart:

> He got up from the table and walked back through the rooms. He pushed the porch screen door wide open and looked up at the sky: Old Betonie's stars were there.
>
> (178–79)

What was a design scratched in the dirt has been realized in a cosmic alignment. The healing lovemaking that follows also connects with his past experiences, since Night Swan has been linked with Ts'eh through her association with the ritual colour blue.

Further analogies include Ts'eh examining various bundles and pouches that appear to be sacred medicine bundles. As she does so, she repeats the arrangement of colours employed at the scalp-cutting ceremony:

> She reached into a flour sack by her feet and brought out bundles of freshly gathered plants. She sniffed them and blew on them before she matched the plants with the stones, putting a sprig of blue-gray mountain sage with the blue stone. The dark yellow plant from the rocky mesa top smelled like wet tobacco; she laid it beside the ocher sandstone. And then she pulled out a long vine covered with tiny white flowers with six sharp petals like fallen stars. She shook the vine gently, and small black ants that had been clinging to the leathery green vine fell to the floor.
>
> (183–84)

Tayo begins to recognize that 'Betonie's vision was a story he could feel happening –' (186), but even he experiences some scepticism as the speckled cattle he is in search of fail to materialize:

> All the rest – old Betonie and his stargazing, the woman in her storm-pattern blanket – all that was crazy, the kind of old-time superstition the teachers at Indian school used to warn him and Rocky about.
>
> (194)

Immediately following this he is overcome with fatigue, collapses into pine needles and another transition is effected.

The ritual is enacted on the mountain. The hunter's helper, the mountain lion, appears and Tayo knows the right ceremony to perform to secure his help. Elements of the chantway and sand painting abound: the yellow pollen Tayo sprinkles in the mountain lion's paw-prints, the blue of the sky and of the cowboy's bandanna, the smell of mountain sage, black pebbles and black dirt, dark earth, and the white of the snow that will cover his tracks. He again receives a head wound, this time falling from his horse, and although he is captured he is abandoned, since the cowboys leave him to hunt the mountain lion. Slowly he recovers sufficiently to walk back down the mountain, eating piñons as he goes. Clearly he has found the cattle in historical time, yet his way down leads him back to Ts'eh's house, where she has safely corralled the cattle. Thus historical and ceremonial time intersect both by analogy and through specific transitional encounters in the text.

After he has recovered the cattle, Tayo's scepticism is abated; he too has recovered. Further transitions occur in the story, but Tayo has now achieved a perspective that gives him assurance of survivance. He is no longer implicated in the destructive, hopeless cycle of loss and despair that he participated in at the start of the novel. One way of measuring that is to compare the reflections just before the first transition to ceremonial time to Tayo's calm contemplation a year later. Then he dwells bitterly on the trope of the Vanishing Indian:

> Every day they had to look at the land, from horizon to horizon, and every day the loss was with them; it was the dead unburied, and the mourning of the lost going on forever. So they tried to sink the loss in booze, and silence their grief with war stories about their courage, defending the land they had already lost.
>
> (169)

Now he is ostensibly in the same place, both physically and metaphorically, as at the start of the novel, but emotionally and spiritually he is transformed:

> The dreams had been terror at loss, at something lost forever; but nothing was lost; all was retained between the sky and the earth, and within himself. He had lost nothing.
>
> (219)

He goes outside and walks, delighting in the late May landscape: 'As far as he could see, in all directions, the world was alive' (221). And then Ts'eh appears

again. Tayo has learnt to accept the intersection of historic and ceremonial time/space, and not to be distressed by her disappearances, since 'the feeling he had, the love he felt from her, remained' (217). Thus she reappears for a season and then leaves him again with tasks to complete for her. Through his vision quest he has become not only the hero of a contemporary story that is suspiciously like prior traditional stories, for stories like the days all come back round, but also an initiate of Ts'eh. No longer a bothersome young man, worrying his relatives and the tribal elders, he has not only been cured by Betonie but has also been initiated by him into shamanic experience and perception – 'the transition was completed' (255). Although he is a mixed-blood, and thus traditionally would not be initiated into the sacred beliefs, he is accepted into the kiva by the elders and celebrated for the part he has played in this ceremony.

Paula Gunn Allen has suggested that Silko revealed traditional, sacred knowledge that should have been kept secret from non-Indians. Silko's response in conversation is characteristically forthright:

> I feel confident that I've never divulged anything that was kept secret. So much of that ownership stuff and talking like that is [. . .] such a Western European kind of thing. And even the anthropologists that Paula is relying on, so much of that material that they work off of was gathered by ethnologists. Even the terminology in English, the way of talking about it, is a secondhand kind of thing. You just can't worry about it. You'd end up just being silent. They want to silence you. [. . .] That's not the Pueblo way. But of course, people have been hiding and closing down things and closing up for so long, they're forgetting the older, more open and expansive way. (178)

Western European readers cannot *know* the traditional stories as Paula Gunn Allen and Leslie Marmon Silko do, but actually both writers use the traditional Keres stories and translate (transform) them from oral culture to literary text. And both writers use white anthropologists' collections of the stories. Silko in particular signals that part of what she is doing is recovering the stories from out of print and inaccessible volumes.[12] Yet, both in *Ceremony* and in *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, the text itself tells us the stories and gives us enough to make sense of them. The difficulties Western readers encounter in approaching these texts are not necessarily ignorance of the stories and their 'meanings' so much as the other demands the novels place on us. Yet both novels guide us into the different mindset and educate us in a different way of perceiving relations of time and space and events. Given attentive reading, the novels reveal their structural devices, their aesthetic principles and their cultural values. In reading *Ceremony* I have implicitly focused thus far on devices more often associated in the Western mind with modernist poetry. Indeed, this may be one reason why Velie and Zamir read *Ceremony* as a type of Grail quest legend, and Zamir in particular argues for the

influence of Eliot's *The Waste Land* on this novel. I could further suggest similarities between Silko's use of 'subject rhymes' (i.e. motifs that recur not as aural rhymes but as repetition with difference) and use of transitions demarcating the boundaries between sacred and secular spaces, and the poetics of Ezra Pound's *Cantos*. Perhaps as Western readers we shall find the novel more comprehensible if we abandon expectations of classic linear plot construction, and read it rather as if it were a modernist long poem or post-modernist fiction.[13]

Conclusion

I have concentrated on the problems facing non-Indian readers who feel unease and a sense of unfamiliarity on first reading this novel. I have suggested that careful attention to the text itself can guide the reader through the culturally unfamiliar material. The narrative strategies and structures provide evidence of Laguna Pueblo culture and of Keres traditional aesthetics and belief systems. Furthermore, Silko's novel bears witness to the social and cultural problems of American Indians in the Southwest in the immediate post World War Two years. The text reflects and engages with the poverty, economic marginality, racism and rejection that Native Americans suffer. In fictional form Silko depicts strikingly the disruptive effects of advanced, industrial capitalism on a community whose land is rich in uranium. She also depicts the cultural malaise that can be attributed to over a century of unsympathetic federal government policies towards American Indians. At the same time, she is able to draw strength and inspiration from the stability of her specific local culture.

Silko's writing is highly political, in the broadest sense. She feels that she can be more effective as a writer than as an AIM activist.[14] Thus a further dimension of this novel is her engagement with the actuality, the economics and the politics of the atom bomb. It only dawns on Tayo towards the very end of the novel; and consequently most readers only realize the significance of Tayo's and Laguna's location at the same time:

> He had been so close to it, caught up in it for so long that its simplicity struck him deep inside his chest: Trinity Site, where they exploded the first atomic bomb, was only three hundred miles to the southeast, at White Sands. And the top-secret laboratories where the bomb had been created were deep in the Jemez Mountains, on land the Government took from Cochiti Pueblo: Los Alamos, only a hundred miles northeast of him now, still surrounded by high electric fences and the ponderosa pine and tawny sandrock of the Jemez mountain canyon where the shrine of the twin mountain lions had always been. There was no end to it; it knew no boundaries; and he had arrived at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the earth, had been laid.
>
> (245–46)

Yet the issues of environmental degradation, invisible but deadly threats to human health, political and military exploitation of tribal people and their land, are written into the very texture of this novel. Just when the reader thought they had grasped the complex, intuitive structuring of this novel, this further dimension is opened up to resonate through all the old stories and stories within stories to connect them at a deeper and frighteningly real level. Bitter ironies emerge in the coincidence of the story of the Ck'o'yo witch summoning up the white destruction, Tayo's initial sense of being invisible 'white smoke' in a white fog, and the above-ground nuclear tests that were conducted at White Sands.

I have argued that the novel's structuring principles are those of analogies and transitions. By the end of the novel the transitions from the chronological time of the story to the ceremonial time and space of Tayo's encounters with Ts'eh are just the beginning of a ripple effect that extends beyond the novel itself. *Ceremony* becomes a further story within a story or analogue for the complexities of the atomic age. It cannot be neatly kept within its binding, for, like radiation, the politics of atomic power know 'no boundaries'. As old Grandma says:

> 'It seems like I already heard these stories before . . . only thing is, the names sound different.'
>
> (260)

Thus the ceremony that is *Ceremony* can be read as a highly optimistic, indeed romantic, myth of individual and tribal salvation; in which the representative protagonist transforms his liminal status into a facilitating threshold experience. Tayo's cure balances the destruction of his peers who are caught in the whirling spirals of negation and despair. This mixed-blood narrative suggests that ritual transformation can be effective; that the land and its powers will change people in time. Yet just as the novel reaches closure, the alarm is sounded; and no amount of transcendental awareness can cast a fog over the perception that in 1945 the US military released the most destructive power yet known to mankind.

5 The world of story in the writings of Leslie Marmon Silko and Linda Hogan

> Interrelationships in the Pueblo landscape are complex and fragile.
>
> ('Interior and Exterior Landscapes' 29)

> It took a long time to explain the fragility and intricacy because no word exists alone, and the reason for choosing each word had to be explained with a story about why it must be said this certain way.
>
> (*Ceremony* 35–36)

> The motion is in natural reason, totemic stories, and other associations with humans and the earth; transmotion is survivance, not an absolute power over people or territories.
>
> (Vizenor 189)

Dwelling/being in the landscape

Those basic rights to ontological well-being that Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* takes for granted are precisely the rights that Native Americans have witnessed the diminishment of in their own communities. His poetics of 'inscape' resound with an assurance denied communities that have either suffered enforced displacement or environmental degradation – or indeed both. So in this chapter I move to alternative worldviews, as expounded in particular by Silko and Hogan; but in order to throw them into sharper relief I begin by returning to Bachelard's chapter on 'Nests'.

> Thus, well-being takes us back to the primitiveness of the refuge. Physically, the creature endowed with a sense of refuge, huddles up to itself, takes cover, hides away, lies snug, concealed. [. . .] If we return to the old home as to a nest, it is because memories are dreams, because the home of other days has become a great image of lost intimacy. [. . .] If we go deeper into daydreams of nests, we soon encounter a sort of paradox of sensibility. A nest – and this we *understand* right away – is a precarious thing, and yet it sets us to *daydreaming of security*.
>
> (91, 100, 102)

It is the sense of fragility and precariousness that I want to hold on to here. It underpins the philosophy of Hogan's essays and novels and it is an increasingly significant aspect of Silko's oeuvre. The sense of fragility and precariousness is because of these writers' engagement with the complex and often distressing realities of contemporary society. In offering an exposition of the distinctive characteristics of their approaches to narrative, one needs to take on board Vizenor's sense of transmotion and survivance and not to place their narrative styles in a museum, sealed off from the tensions of actual political engagement. Thus the traditional aspects of their work are never ossified but constantly transmuted in response to the political and ecological urgency that they register.

The renowned critic, Susan Stanford Friedman, draws on the work of Kristeva to develop a paradigm of spatialized textual interpretation. Her article on 'Spatialization' argues for a spatialized reading of the text that attends to both the horizontal and the vertical axis:

> The notion of a vertical axis embedded in the horizontal suggests the ways in which historical, literary, and psychic intertextualities constitute more than resonances attached to the text associatively, suggestively, or randomly. Instead, they initiate *stories* themselves – dialogic narratives 'told' by the reader in collusion with a writer who inscribes them in the text consciously or unconsciously. [. . .] Such spatialized readings also allow us as readers to construct a 'story' of the fluidly interactive relationship between the surface and palimpsestic depths of a given text – taking into account all the historical, literary and psychic resonances that are embedded within the horizontal narrative and waiting to be narrated in the reading process.
>
> (19–20)

Friedman's article goes a long way to providing a theoretical model of reading as a dialogic process demanding active responses to the 'call' of the text.[1] Yet it still posits a horizontal axis that represents a process of reading the story linearly, and a vertical axis that enables interaction of the text with its multiple contexts. I would argue two points in response to that model. First, that we need to reconceptualize the Native American literary text as generated in and by the space created by the author *and* her audience. Second, that we need to think of the 'horizontal' axis not in two-dimensional terms, but as a three-dimensional space encouraging the reader to comprehend the story by weaving back and forth within it. We need, that is, to get away from the linear model for both the writing and the reading of texts.[2] In general terms, Friedman's elucidation of the 'vertical' access is facilitating. It acknowledges the importance of 'dialogic engagement' with both oral traditions and literary antecedents, and of allowing 'an analysis of the text in dialogue with its historical and social coordinates, as Kristeva advocates', and of reading 'textual gaps, silences, knots, and aporias [. . .] to gain some sort of

access to the textual unconscious' (16–17). It helps to qualify and complicate Bachelard's poetics by bringing these 'vertical' dimensions to bear on fictional texts in an engaged manner. Yet I feel Friedman's invocation of stories initiated by the reader still falls short of Silko's and Hogan's sense of 'story'.

In 'Interior and Exterior Landscapes', Silko tells us that the specific place of a story is far more important to pueblo people than the time of the story. She reminds us that the European sense of landscape involves a belief in the separation of humans from their environment that is antipathetic to the pueblo worldview:

> So long as the human consciousness remains *within* the hills, canyons, cliffs and the plants, clouds, and sky, the term *landscape*, as it has entered the English language, is misleading. 'A portion of territory the eye can comprehend in a single view' does not correctly describe the relationship between the human being and his or her surroundings. This assumes the viewer is somehow *outside* or *separate from* the territory she or he surveys. Viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on. (27)

This sense of existing within the landscape rather than viewing it from an implicitly superior vantage-point is analogous to the sense of being *involved* in the stories rather than merely consuming them:

> The oral narrative, or story, became the medium through which the complex of Pueblo knowledge and belief was maintained. Whatever the event or the subject, the ancient people perceived the world and themselves within that world as part of an ancient, continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories. (30–31)

Linda Hogan expresses the same orientation in an even more uncompromising manner. In her collection of prose writings, entitled *Dwellings*, she consistently connects an awareness of space and place with a sense of language that moves beyond bounded definitions of its function:

> There is a still place, a gap between worlds, spoken by the tribal knowings of thousands of years. In it are silent flyings that stand aside from human struggles and the designs of our own makings. [. . .]
>
> Bats hear their way through the world. They hear the sounds that exist at the edges of our lives. Leaping through blue twilight they cry out a thin language, then listen for its echo to return. It is a dusky world of songs a pitch above our own. For them, the world throws back a language, the empty space rising between hills speaks an open secret then lets the bats pass through, here or there, in the dark air. Everything answers, the corner of a house, the shaking leaves on a wind-blown tree, the solid voice

> of bricks. A fence post talks back. An insect is located. A wall sings out its presence. There are currents of air loud as ocean waves, a music of trees, stones, charred stovepipes. Even our noisy silences speak out in a dark dimension of sound that is undetected by our limited hearing in the loud, vibrant land in which we live. [. . .] While we can't say what language is much beyond saying that it is a set of signs and symbols that communicates meaning, we know it is the most highly regarded human ability. [. . .] Without language, we humans have no way of knowing what lies beneath the surface of one another. And yet there are communications that take place on a level that goes deeper than our somewhat limited human spoken languages. [. . .] And there is even more a deep-moving underground language in us. Its currents pass between us and the rest of nature. (12, 26, 57)

Language is thus defined by Hogan not only as a system of communication using a set of arbitrary signs and syntax, but also as a means of communication between humans and between humans and the rest of nature. In her conception of language not only do we speak to one another, but the world also speaks to us. The spaces between phenomena resound with significant silences and with articulate speech. For Hogan dwelling in the world involves attending to frequencies of articulation beyond our normal range.

In her title essay, 'Dwellings', Hogan describes her own sense of felicitous space, again incorporating that balance between stories and silence. I quote at length, since this passage strikes me as a fully Americanized rendering of Bachelard's poetics, drawing on a 'native' literary tradition that includes Thoreau as well as traditional tribal belief systems:

> [The bees] were flying an invisible map through air, a map charted by landmarks, the slant of light, and a *circling story* they told one another about the direction of food held inside the center of yellow flowers.
>
> Sitting in the hot sun, watching the small bees fly in and out around the hill, hearing the summer birds, the light breeze, *I felt right in the world*. I belonged there. I thought of my own dwelling places, those real and those imagined. Once I lived in a town called Manitou, which means 'Great Spirit', and where the hot mineral springwater gurgled beneath the streets and rose up into open wells. *I felt safe there*. With the underground movement of water and heat a constant reminder of other life, of what lives beneath us, it seemed to be the center of the world.
>
> A few years after that, I wanted silence. My daydreams were full of places I longed to be, shelters and solitudes. I wanted a room apart from others, a hidden cabin to rest in. I wanted to be in a redwood forest with trees so tall the owls called out in the daytime. I daydreamed of living in a vapor cave a few hours away from here. Underground, warm, and moist, I thought it would be the perfect world for staying out of cold winter, for escaping the noise of living.

> And how often I've wanted to escape to a wilderness where a human hand has not been in everything. But those were only *dreams of peace, of comfort, of a nest inside stone or woods, a sanctuary where a dream or life wouldn't be invaded*.
>
> (118–19 – my emphases)

This passage resonates with Bachelard's motifs (I have emphasized the most striking in my citation). Hogan describes her felicitous spaces as both remembered and daydreamed. They are places where she remembers experiencing a sense of belonging, of feeling right and feeling safe; or they are places she daydreams about, where she would be protected against adverse forces, and these she describes as a nest or sanctuary. Moreover, her daydream of the underground vapor cave suggests the comfort of the maternal body, an identification she makes explicit in 'The Caves', when she describes them as 'not a place for men [. . .] a feminine world, a womb of earth, a germinal place for brooding' (31).

Thus, in their non-fiction, both Silko and Hogan offer powerful statements about the interconnection between place and story, the world and language. Their philosophies demand that we take this connection seriously, not just as an idea or analogy or correspondence, but as the right way of being and dwelling in this world. Thus stories are told not for amusement, but to hold the fabric of human society together and to remind us of our place in the larger landscape. Stories are also told as rituals or ceremonies of healing. Language and stories are thus respected as immensely powerful. Both in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* and in *Dwellings*, the authors reveal a sense of the linkage between story and place as necessary to psychic health. And both volumes offer positive definitions of felicitous space that 'never deteriorate [. . .] into Cartesian duality, cutting off the human from the natural world' (37), as Silko puts it.

Consequently Toni Morrison's sense of 'inscape' is a relevant concept for these two authors. 'Inscape' is necessary for Native American women writers, as they remind us of a way of dwelling in the world that is different from the dominant, European mode of being. Like Morrison, they too articulate a preferable and arguably saner way of situating the human than that which generally pertains around us. They too express the belief that this is not mere Utopian fantasy, but a statement of what can be actualized – given the force of their imagination and the power of their language and of their stories. They demonstrate that they both remember – either personally or through their tribal traditions – places and ways of being in places that enhance well-being, that protect and heal. They also indicate that they are conscious of being in an adversarial position in advocating the importance of continuing to respect and protect such places. And here they move beyond Bachelard's poetics, since for them the relation to felicitous space is always and everywhere a mutual exchange: felicitous space offers human beings shelter and protection as well as access to the cosmic; human beings should offer to felicitous space their

protection and their awareness of the cosmic. The breakdown of that mutually healing relationship is addressed implicitly by Silko and Hogan in their non-fictional prose. It is described with eloquent articulation in their fictional works, as I shall indicate through a further discussion of *Ceremony* and then through an initial reading of Hogan's *Power* in the following chapter.

Ceremony: 'That boy needs a medicine man'

Tayo is an unlikely cultural hero. Yet Shamoon Zamir has argued that an important antecedent literary text for *Ceremony* is Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Such a suggestion might assist the Westernized reader to come to terms with the ceremonial, ritual and mythic aspects of the text. Yet the challenge is to read the mythic as one thread in the contemporary complexity. Zamir's essay is also useful in alerting us to the textual engagement with the politics of the atomic age and of uranium mining on and in Laguna Pueblo sacred places. However, I want to concentrate rather on the mixed-blood character of Tayo, and consider his life-story as it is embedded in the text. I would argue that his malaise is not only the sickness of a returning World War Two veteran suffering post-traumatic shock syndrome, it is also that of a half-breed child who has never experienced the sense of ontological well-being that a secure and protective familial home confers. I am concerned not to neglect these more 'domestic' issues in favour of more overtly 'political' targets.

Homelessness is a recurrent concern in Silko's novels. In her recent novel, *Gardens in the Dunes*, the last members of the Sand Lizard tribe sometimes live in a precarious encampment down by the river at Needles, which is recurrently raided by Indian Agents and police – the novel is set at the turn of the last century. At other times Sister Salt lives as a camp follower to the Colorado River Dam construction crews, and the sisters can only stay in their tribal homeland, the gardens in the dunes of the book's title, by evading the round-up of indigenous, tribal peoples onto dismal reservations. Thus in this novel Silko reminds us of the historical processes of the late nineteenth century that have impacted so disastrously on modern and contemporary social cohesion and stability for Native American tribes. In *Almanac of the Dead*, her largest canvas thus far, Silko broadens the sense of the provenance of the homeless, sheltering around the arroyos of Tucson and elsewhere in the country. She describes a whole army of homeless, displaced, rootless persons, who may or may not be veterans of the Vietnam conflict. But homelessness is already an urgent concern prior to these later novels.

In *Ceremony* she tells the story of a homeless Indian mother and her young child. They live in a makeshift shack on the arroyo, beneath the bridge at Gallup. The mother survives through prostitution, and the child's memories are of prowling 'for garbage in the alleys behind the houses', of playing 'for hours under the tables' of bars, and eating and sleeping under the tables while 'he waited for her to come back', of being thrown out of the shack to sleep under an old quilt in scooped out sand when men stayed the night, and hiding

in the tamarics, 'breathing hard, his heart pounding, smelling the shit on his bare feet', during a police raid (108–13). The tamaric bushes provide some protection and shelter for a small child, and this section of flashback to early childhood ends with him waiting in this place of relative safety:

> He crawled deeper into the tamaric bushes and pulled his knees up to his belly. He looked at the stars, through the top branches of the willows. He would wait for her, and she would come back to him.
>
> (113)

If we read the plot linearly, we might be somewhat inattentive towards this child and his plight, since we are interested at this point in the story in what will happen when Tayo visits old Betonie in Gallup. This reads as an interlude, as if the author got temporarily distracted. However, if we read the plot spatially, we might notice how important the trope of the child, curled up in the vegetation, looking up at the stars and waiting for her to come back, is to the ceremony that is about to happen.[3] However 'shitty' his situation is – and I use the colloquialism since it expresses Silko's punning, metonymic description – there is the potential for its transformation into felicitous space at a later stage.

But first I want to read against the horizontal, linear plot impetus, and weave back to discover more about the mother and why she is a down and out in Gallup. Her story is not dissimilar to Ephanie's 'fall' in adolescence. It is a story of her being taught to be ashamed of her 'Indian' cultural identity and aspiring to be accepted in the white world:

> Shamed by what they taught her in school about the deplorable ways of the Indian people; holy missionary white people who wanted only good for the Indians, white people who dedicated their lives to helping the Indians, these people urged her to break away from home. She was excited to see that despite the fact she was an Indian, the white men smiled at her from their cars as she walked from the bus stop in Albuquerque back to the Indian School. She smiled and waved; she looked at her own reflection in windows of houses she passed; her dress, her lipstick, her hair – it was all done perfectly, the way the home-ec teacher taught them, exactly like the white girls.
>
> (68–69)

The intentions of white educators in the mid-twentieth century are not questioned, except through the heavy authorial irony. This is not the world of Indian Boarding Schools as depicted in *Gardens in the Dunes*, where they are closer to the Dickensian Poor House. The effects are the same, however: by teaching her to be ashamed of her home and its pueblo culture, the adolescent girl is uprooted and her sense of the sacredness of the place that is home is disrupted, in her case irretrievably. Her story is continued by Auntie:

> 'One morning', she said, 'before you were born, I got up to go outside, right before sunrise. I knew she had been out all night because I never heard her come in. Anyway, I thought I would walk down toward the river. [. . .] Right as the sun came up, she walked under that big cottonwood tree, and I could see her clearly: she had no clothes on. Nothing. She was completely naked except for her high-heel shoes. She dropped her purse under that tree. Later on some kids found it there and brought it back. It was empty except for a lipstick.'
>
> (70)

In terms of the chronology of the story, we are told this happened before Tayo was born. In terms of narrative time it comes in a complicated set of flashbacks several levels removed from the narrative present moment of Tayo and Harley in a bar. This particular, complex, sequence of memories begins by telling us that the boy in the tamaric bushes was abandoned by his mother at the age of four:

> He was four years old the night his mother left him there. He didn't remember much: only that she had come after dark and wrapped him in a man's coat – it smelled like a man – and that there were men in the car with them: and she held him all the way, kept him bundled tight and close to her, and he had dozed and listened, half dreaming their laughter and the sound of a cork squeaking in and out of a bottle.
>
> (65–66)

This time she did not 'come back to him'. Instead he is raised by her older sister, who consistently treats him differently from her own son, consistently reminds him by subtle but unambiguous behaviour that he is a half-breed, a child of shame. In this matriarchal household there is no space where he experiences a sense of profound well-being, the memories of his childhood are not those of maternal love but of being 'close enough to feel excluded' (67).

Instead of felicitous space, Tayo sits in a bar with another war veteran and remembers sitting in a bar with another war veteran whom he attacks with a broken bottle, because he insults his mother – 'You love Japs the way your mother loved to screw white men' (63). Instead of eulogized space, he stands on a bridge in Gallup, looks down on the homeless Indians, and remembers his own early years and the times 'she did not come back' (110). Instead of 'the home of other days [as] a great image of lost intimacy', his memories are of a family home he is reared in as a place of distancing and exclusion, as a place he lives in but doesn't belong to. Even without his complicated sense of guilt for Rocky's death, Josiah's death and the present six-year drought, he will need a pretty good ceremony to cure him of his ontological malaise. We might adapt Silko's description of Old Man Ku'oosh, apply it to her own exposition of Tayo's situation, placed as epigraph to this chapter, and say that the fragility and intricacy of Tayo's psyche cannot be explained by any simple diagnosis –

malarial fever, post-traumatic shock syndrome, radiation sickness – nor can his story be told (or read) in a straightforward linear fashion. Narrative time circles back around, and events are juxtaposed with the stories of related events that will help to explain them to the reader. In the ritual that is the story, both Tayo and the reader need to understand 'each filament of web', and why the complicated layers of flashback 'must be said in this certain way'.[4]

So, I assume that a necessary prerequisite for the healing ceremony with Betonie is the apparently incidental interruption to the advancement of the plot, as the story pauses to recall his early childhood memories.[5] Arguably, confirmation that the boy in the tamaric bushes was Tayo comes just a couple of pages later: after he has 'stopped on the bridge and looked into the riverbed' (114) Robert asks him: 'Somebody you used to know?' (115). Even if Tayo doesn't 'know' this particular group of homeless transients, he knows what it is like and he empathizes with them. This is also a necessary prerequisite, since the ceremony he will be called upon to participate in will not only cure his own malaise but also counteract the destructive witchery that currently prevails. For this reason Betonie's ceremony has not remained static but changed in response to contemporary developments. Just as Silko's sense of the tradition is not static but complexly vital, so Betonie reminds Tayo that the ceremonies have always been transformational:

> I have made changes in the rituals. The people mistrust this greatly, but only this growth keeps the ceremonies strong. [. . .] things which don't shift and grow are dead things. They are things the witchery people want. Witchery works to scare people, to make them fear growth. But it has always been necessary, and more than ever now, it is. Otherwise we won't make it. We won't survive. That's what the witchery is counting on: that we will cling to the ceremonies the way they were, and then their power will triumph, and the people will be no more.
>
> (126)

Transmutation and survivance are not only in Betonie's attitude towards the ceremonies, but also something that Tayo undergoes psychically. At the start he is no better than the rest of them:

> Robert looked up at him. 'The other day old man Ku'oosh came to the house. He told your grandma what some of the old men are thinking. They think you better get help pretty soon.'
>
> 'But I haven't been in trouble for a long time, not since that time with Emo.'
>
> 'I know, but there are other things too.'
>
> 'Oh.' Tayo knew. There were other things. 'It isn't just me, Robert. The other guys, they're still messed up too. That ceremony didn't help them.'

> Robert didn't answer. His face was still: Tayo didn't know the last few minutes if it was anger or sadness he saw.
>
> (106)

Thus Tayo's position in the Pueblo at the start of the novel is that of just another problematic, returning war veteran. When Harley comes to the ranch to take him drinking, Tayo's sense is of a buddy helping him out: 'Harley had helped him last year; he had come and got him moving again' (250). Any ambivalence that the reader feels about the usefulness of the help is implied by the narrative rather than by Tayo's consciousness.[6] That he is chosen to continue the curing ceremony is possibly arbitrary; yet he is a true representative of his people in the immediate post-war period, which is the main prerequisite of a classic hero. His mixed-blood identity, his homelessness in early childhood, his experience of being held at a distance by his primary carer rather than nurtured and protected by her, and his worrying behaviour and condition as a World War Two veteran qualify him for the role that Betonie will propel him into.

The transformation that Tayo undergoes is complex and functions on a number of different levels. We might simplify these into two main levels: the personal level within his individual psyche, and the tribal level since he becomes representative of his Pueblo and is accepted into the kiva at the completion of the ceremony. However, we should also bear in mind the ways in which Silko weaves ecological, political and social issues into the story and into the significance of the ceremony. For example, Betonie's sense of being *at home* 'in the foothills north of the Ceremonial Grounds' (116) recapitulates Ku'oosh's sense of fragility, but is more explicit about the politics of land than Ku'oosh:

> He turned and pointed to the city dump east of the Ceremonial grounds and rodeo chutes. 'They keep us on the north side of the railroad tracks, next to the river and their dump. Where none of them want to live.' He laughed. 'They don't understand. We know these hills, and we are comfortable here.' There was something about the way the old man said the word 'comfortable'. It had a different meaning – not the comfort of big houses or rich food or even clean streets, but the comfort of belonging with the land, and the peace of being with these hills. [. . .]
>
> 'It strikes me funny [. . .] people wondering why I live so close to this filthy town. But see, this hogan was here first. Built long before the white people ever came. It is that town down there which is out of place. Not the old medicine man.'
>
> (117–18)

Betonie holds tenaciously to a sense of 'inscape' despite the degradation of his immediate environment and its homeless inhabitants that he gazes down on every day.

We need also to be mindful of the multi-dimensionality of the ceremony, both within the story and as aspects of the novel's narrative structure. Thus, the details of the sand painting that is an integral part of the healing ritual are revealed to be the ceremonial and psychic map, charting the way through the experiences that occur in ceremonial time. To complicate matters further, ceremonial time and historical time intersect, as do ritual patterns, topological spaces and ceremonial spaces. Immediately after the ritual he has an epiphany that enunciates his realization of inscape: 'He took a deep breath of cold mountain air: there were no boundaries; the world below and the sand paintings inside became the same that night. The mountains from all the directions had been gathered there that night' (145). This is a classic example of the recurrence of 'the inner landscape in the outer', to alter Fryer's definition slightly.

As Ephanie discovers in Part 4 of *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, everything is connected. The eyes of Night Swan, the eyes of Betonie, Tayo's eyes and Ts'eh's colouring indicate the connectedness. Night Swan is connected to Ts'eh through the colour blue (98, 183). The indication that the encounters with Ts'eh are all part of the ceremony, first signalled by the appearance of Betonie's stars, is reinforced by the repeated recurrence of the colours of the sand painting: black, blue, yellow and white. These recur in ceremonial time, but also as Tayo tracks down the spotted cattle and sends them back home. Recurrence and repetition with difference are essential to both Silko's narrative strategy and to the success of the ceremony. The stars sketched by Betonie in the sand recur in the night sky as Tayo sets out on the ceremony proper, and on the war shield that he discovers when he returns to collect the cattle in historical time. Repetition with a difference is one of the main ways in which his cure is effected. The lovemaking with Night Swan is precursor to the lovemaking with Ts'eh, the repeated abandonment by his mother as a child is precursor to Ts'eh's arrivals and departures. Yet with Ts'eh he learns to feel comfortable with separations and endings, because he learns from her that the larger pattern is one of healing and renewal once he has also learnt that he has a role to play in the enactment of the ceremony. Thus at a psychic level he is cured of being a victim of the witchery and becomes a responsible protagonist in the cycles of survivance.

The stages in this process are signalled by Silko as 'transitions'. Rather than fearing loss and separation, Tayo learns that transitions are a necessary part of the process of survival. Having learnt this he too becomes 'comfortable' with his place in the ritual and in his community:

> It took a long time to tell them the story; they stopped him frequently with questions about the location and the time of day; they asked about the direction she had come from and the color of her eyes. It was while he was sitting there, facing southeast, that he noticed how the four windows along the south wall of the kiva had a particular relationship to this late autumn position of the sun.
>
> (257)

Here everything connects: natural temporal cycles, the solar calendar, ceremonial time and a communal space that mixed-blood protagonists were denied access to before Silko's novel.[7] The felicitous space that Tayo finds himself in could be defined in Bachelard's terms, but there is an important difference. For Bachelard, eulogized space is remembered space from a secure and loving childhood. For Silko's protagonist, Tayo, this comfortable place, this felicitous space is one that he has 'homed in' on, despite his disadvantages. The story that is the ceremony and the novel that is *Ceremony* are complex, precarious, fragile and full of transitions that could be misunderstood, and supported by the structure of a ritual that only initiates should comprehend. And yet the sympathetic reader, like Tayo, can chart their way through the ceremony to its successful completion. Comprehension both of the story and of the meaning of the ceremony involve a deep recognition that felicitous space is not one in which the 'I' is enclosed in the 'not-I'; rather it is one in which cultural spaces and constructs respond to and resonate with the ecological and cosmic structures they are surrounded by. Both the ritual and the novel involve recurrent transitions and changes since transformation is integral to survivance.

Friedman's model of the vertical axis assisted this reading. Yet it needs to be supplemented by a further sense of spatialization of narrative; one in which the reader attends to the multiple analogies and resonances at work both in the text and between the text and its contexts. The author is merely a part of the story that Thought-creating Woman is spinning. Tayo is only one protagonist in a ceremony that has been going on for centuries. Yet the implicit author is also identifiable with Betonie's shamanism, rather than Ku'oosh's, and by the end of the story the reader has learnt to read the ritual by participating in it with Tayo. Old man Ku'oosh, who seems initially ineffective, re-enters Tayo's ritualistic drama to become, along with the other elders in the kiva, the comprehending addressee of the story of the ceremony – they comment on it rather like a chorus when Tayo has finished his oral narration:

> They started crying
> The old men started crying
> 'A'moo'ooh! A'moo'ooh!'
> You have seen her
> We will be blessed
> again.
>
> (257)

Ephanie's vision of ceremonial felicitous space is authenticated by her seeing the katsina that she had no prior knowledge of. Similarly Tayo, who as a shameful mixed-blood child has also not been initiated into pueblo rituals and beliefs, has a series of encounters with Ts'eh that heal his dissociated psyche and restore harmony and health to the pueblo reservation lands, at least for now.

Friedman's theory of spatialization rests on the concepts of horizontal and

vertical axes as different ways of reading the failed *bildungsroman* plot. Depending on which axes the reader moves along, it tells the story of a heroine's failure or an author's success. Silko's spatialized story is different from that; the emphasis on interconnections means that the story takes place on multiple levels and in multiple dimensions. These include the spaces of traditional ritual and storytelling, of ceremonial time and historical time, of memory, of dream and of vision. Events happen both in the story of the novel and in the 'real' world of the post-war, atomic age. Rather than two conflicting readings depending on which axis one is on, this is a story that is told to generate the power to heal – both in narrative time and on each occasion of telling and reading. The characteristic sense of countless analogies at work in the text, its world and the contextual world moves us beyond Friedman's sense of engaged reading. It gestures to the reader to become active beyond the boundaries of the text and to the text to carry the ceremony for survival beyond the reader.[8] Given Hogan's similarly strong sense of language and power, we turn to her novel, *Power*, with the expectation that we shall experience a similarly uncompromising encounter with the world of story.

6 Telling testimony

Linda Hogan, *Power*, 1998

> They want to know what I know,
> but all I can tell for sure is that
> there is a fracture in the world [. . .]
> (*Power* 198)

Whereas *Ceremony* is the work of a young writer – Silko was in her early twenties when she wrote it – *Power* is the work of a mature author. Silko's narrative strategies were, by her own admission, intuitive rather than consciously planned. Arguably, *Power* is a more crafted and intellectually sophisticated novel. The essays in *Dwellings* propound an uncompromising, deep ecological commitment, underpinned by tribal belief systems; and reading them one might well decide that Hogan has assumed the essentialist position of 'Ecological Indian', without due consideration of its contingent complexities. Yet, *Power* explores these complexities, problematizes the tribal stories and sets the experience of inherent contradiction at the heart of the protagonist's dilemma.

How can there be two truths that contradict each other?

The novel is told entirely by the first person narrator, Omishto, a sixteen-year-old Taiga girl, in the simple present tense. The use of the present tense, more common in French literature than American English, produces an effect of eerie immediacy.[1] It reproduces the stream of consciousness of her whose name means 'the One Who Watches' (4), without the intervention of reflection and conscious organizing of perceptions and responses. Omishto's own sense of her identity is as an endangered species, since her tribe is dwindling in numbers:

> We, my family, clan, and me are one-third of the number of Taiga Indians still in this world. I don't like to think about this very much because it is too large for me, but sometimes this knowledge falls on me like misery.
> (85)

Her misery is compounded by her mother trying to pass as white, and by the threat of violence and incestuous abuse from her stepfather. Although she is a blood Taiga, she has to negotiate the conflicting claims of the old tribal ways and stories and the culture of modern urban dwelling that her mother has espoused. Both she and the character Ama inhabit a liminal position in relation to traditional and contemporary existence. Both try to make sense of the old stories in a world that has been altered by white civilization; and both find themselves in cultural spaces that have conflicting ideologies and discourses, that in Omishto's words 'contradict each other'. A further poignancy is the reader's sense that this narrator has no addressee, and that the text is the testimony that she is unable to utter, since no cultural space exists where it can be spoken. This is reinforced by the trope of silence that recurs throughout the novel.

This trope is introduced in Chapter 2, 'Stormlight': 'It's a year to the day since Abraham Swallow died. Old man Swallow died either by magic or fear' (5). Omishto witnessed his death, but typically has told no one: 'The truth is, my sister and I were close by that day, even though we never told a soul what we saw' (10). The sisters felt paralysed and 'couldn't move a muscle' (12) to help or call for help until too late. They pretended they had not watched him die and have spoken of it to no one. When Ama asks Omishto whether she thinks that he was killed 'by using magic' she silently recalls the event but is unable to share her thoughts even with Ama:

> The truth is, I am thinking of the way Swallow died and the look on his face, and the whirlwind that followed him, and it gives me chills, but I say, 'No, Ama. I don't think magic killed Mr. Swallow. I think he just drank too much.'
>
> (13)

Yet she feels as if she is lying in saying this, even though she resists identifying with Ama's beliefs. This exchange announces other significant tropes, notably the issue of what 'the truth is' and the sense of living in 'a different world what with houses and highways' (13). These are, of course, interconnected and account in large measure for Omishto's silence. The two worlds are contingent, indeed overlap, yet the stories, or truths, they tell to define themselves cannot be reconciled. Omishto, as liminal entity, comprehends both sets of stories or discourses, yet is fluent in neither. Since they are mutually untranslatable she remains tongue-tied.

This extends from speech to the written word. She is given an English assignment: to write an autobiographical essay. 'Out of habit' she writes her story and also tells the story of Panther Woman (109–12). It is the slightly confused writing of a sixteen-year-old student; thus the contradictions of the old beliefs and stories are foregrounded. Yet, if Omishto had been able to tell this story, the reader feels that her peers and the white community that judges Ama might just have gained some insight into her reasons for killing the

panther the way she did. Instead she sees that the concept that 'Ama got lost in the story' could sound ridiculous, another instance of untranslatablility.[2] Her attempt to write an autobiographical essay highlights the impossibility of explaining her tribal culture, or of making her tribal beliefs sound plausible. Living in her mother's bungalow, and attending a white High School, she knows that her essay will be incomprehensible. She is sufficiently assimilated into the white world to feel ambivalent towards the Panther Woman story and its implications. So:

> I read these words and I tear the paper into little pieces and throw them away. I have always been a good, obedient girl, but tomorrow, for the first time, I will hand in no assignment.
>
> (112)

Despite her liminal position in relation to the two cultures, she feels that it would be futile to attempt to mediate between them. Her isolation is exacerbated by her family circumstances, and one senses that Hogan depicts a far bleaker and less resilient tribal and environmental scenario than that which allows Tayo to complete his ceremony successfully and combat the destructive witchery.

Omishto feels most inarticulate and uncomprehending at the two trials, one in the marble halls of justice, the other at the sacred ground. She understands Ama's motivation, but also sees that the old stories are ineffective and her sacrifice has not changed anything:

> I want to tell them that the world is dying like us [. . .] and that Ama believes in the oldest of ways and that she believed, yes, truly believed, someone had to do this, someone had to find a way to renew the world, and no one else would do it. [. . .] And the thing is, the worst and most sad thing is, that it didn't work, that it seems like things have gone on as before, that belief has failed her, failed all of us, and the boys are still out there chasing down the world.
>
> (125–26)

Hogan has created a narrator who not only watches but also understands the significance of what she sees. She expresses her perceptions in the lexical register of an average sixteen-year-old; note how simple the vocabulary is here. She conveys a passionate, emotional intensity at the tragedy of 'the worst and most sad thing', using the simple rhetorical device of repetition. Yet she remains aphonic; she says none of this:

> How could I say it in any way that might convince them it had been coming a long time, a long, long time, and that it was a part of an old prophecy, an old story. [. . .] I can't say the real truth; I can only say the facts.
>
> (127)

'Facts' become subject to authorial irony, despite, or because of, Omishto's problematized 'respect for the truth'.[3] She is discovering that 'the truth' is complex and many-layered; it requires an interpreter to cast it into a language her audience will understand; it needs to be conveyed through 'stories' that reflect its diverse facets. No wonder she falls back upon brief, monosyllabic answers.

She is more articulate at the Taiga trial; as she says: 'I feel as if I am home here' (154). Yet this initial reflection is modified:

> I am both at home and a foreigner here in their presence. I am at home here in a way I don't feel. [. . .]
>
> I know our survival depends on who I am and who I will become. But this is all too large for me. It makes me want to run away and this, perhaps, is the reason my mother tries to pass.
>
> But I am also foreign here because I understand almost nothing that is said in the old Taiga language. I am inept and hardly know our ways.
>
> (161)

So, although she tells the story 'more true' in this situation, she is awkward and embarrassed, and doesn't understand the judgement fully. She can't speak the language of either the white justice system or of the tribal old law. Moreover, the injunction Ama has laid on her stops her from speaking. Thus the tribal trial also repeats the scenario of her silence under questioning: 'I wanted to tell, but now I will keep silent' (167). The Kili clearing, the 'place of old law', ought to be her felicitous space, but because her mother has chosen to pass for white it is not Omishto's naturalized home, it is an 'as if' home at best. When she sits in the swept clearing amongst the elders, she does not experience a sense of protection and security, nor a certainty that she can egress to the wide world bearing ontological assurance with her. Instead, it 'is all too large' for her, and she feels 'misplaced'. Yet neither of the other cultural spaces she inhabits can function as her eulogized space.

Her mother's house conforms to the standards of white, Christian civilization:

> 'Take off those shoes. You'll track in mud.' The next words my mama says even though she's been afraid for me. Cleanliness is next to godliness, Mama always says. She's godly enough and her house is neat as a pin; it seems sharpened to a point.
>
> (90)

This is a suburban house, not a home associated with the comfort of the maternal body. Her mother cannot remember giving birth to her, and she suppresses her awareness of the sexual abuse committed by her husband on his stepdaughter. Unlike Omishto she 'lies to herself' and her house is a manifestation of this maternal failure. Omishto consistently calls it a 'house' rather

than 'home', and the details of description suggest its lack of organic sympathy with its environs. The drapes (curtains) are kept shut to stop the light from fading the furniture, Herm has built a storm cellar inappropriate in a land of torrential rains, and altogether there is nothing that feels 'familiar' to Omishto:

> I look around my mother's house and nothing is familiar. It's as if I have never lived here. I see the world this place has come from. I see the walls of the fallen forest, the floor of clay dissolving in time.
>
> (91)

The phrase 'nothing is familiar' is a repetition for emphasis; in the previous paragraph she says that 'Nothing seems familiar'. Thus the reader is led to ponder the full etymological significance of the word.[4] Most tellingly, Omishto refers to it as 'my mother's house of emptiness' (102).

A world cracked open

Ama's house ought to be a felicitous space; it bears many of the hallmarks: it is a primitive refuge, a hut in the forest, it provides shelter from the storm, it is in keeping with its natural environment. Ama is more of a mother to Omishto than her birth mother, and at the start of the novel she seems to have struck the right balance between the old ways and white civilization. She says she was called 'to living halfway between the modern world and the ancient one' (22–23). It is where Omishto retreats to after the traumas of the trial; and as a classic figure of the 'middle ground' so beloved of American pastoral, the reader might expect it to be the narrative's compromise solution. And yet it is not eulogized space; Omishto associates it with her sense of vulnerability, of powerlessness at the threat of incest and with the precariousness of the old ways in a land invaded by robust colonizers. Her description of it after the storm reflects its precariousness:

> The door has been blown off its hinge, but for the most part, Ama's house with its rickety smallness and decay seems to be standing almost unharmed except for the broken window and the door I step through, cautious that it might fall. Inside, from the shutter that has come unnailed, the curtains of that window are tattered threads and heavy and wet with mud.
>
> (40)

The use of the narrative present tense precludes the intervention of memory and dream work to affect the phenomenological significance of the image of the house. Omishto's mother's house is 'empty' of familial emotion and Ama's primitive refuge is still standing but broken into by the storm. Felicitous space is transformed into eulogized space through the action of memory and

imagination – 'c'est que la maison du passé est devenue une grande image, la grande image des intimités perdue' (100). In this novel the image of the house works through the poetic device of metonymy, a figure of speech that always strikes me as less romantic in its effects than either metaphor or symbol. The main literary device throughout the novel, apart from the use of the present tense narration, is precisely that of metonymy. The perception of metonymic relationships arises in Omishto's present tense stream of consciousness.

For example, when Omishto returns to mend the door, the struggle and exertion involved in fixing it on her own remind her of her solitary struggle to avoid Herm's attention and sexual aggression:

> What I do this early morning is put the door back up, screw the hinges, lift the door, missing the nail head, making the little holes where I will drive the screws, marking the place once again. The door is heavy, but putting it up is easier than putting up the doors to my self, my body, my heart, to keep Herm from fighting with me.
>
> (103)

What he has done to her is only hinted at, indicating that her conscious mind avoids or suppresses the memory of the traumatic event, until she has successfully rebutted him. She does so by locking herself in the chicken coop as he angrily pursues her:

> 'Come back here', he says. He tries to grab my arm.
>
> I pull away and unlock the padlock. I go inside the chicken-wire enclosure that keeps out predators and lock myself in so Herm can't get to me. The chickens cluck and bustle around my feet, the black hen, the red rooster, the yellow chickens. From inside the tall cage, nothing looks familiar, not even Herm.
>
> (208)

Although the chicken-wire enclosure protects her from the predatory male, it is hardly felicitous space: she is reduced to being a 'bird', to being associated merely with domesticated nature not culture, to being less than fully human in order to survive.[5] As the memory is recalled she takes refuge there, sleeping 'huddled in the corner of the cage', and watching the chickens 'pecking at the ground as if they could get inside it and disappear or crack the egg of the earth open and let something beautiful escape' (209). The image of a crack in this world allowing egress back to an unfallen world is a recurrent motif of the novel; it is at the heart of the Panther Woman story, and is lightly recapitulated on several occasions. However, it never feels that optimistic, especially after Omishto realizes that Ama's re-enactment of the old story has not worked to regenerate the world this time. Coming after the memory of her violation, its power to heal seems negligible:

> For a moment I feel guilty that I have stood up to him because, in that moment, I feel sorry for him, seeing him diminished. For a moment I think maybe he's not so bad. But then it comes back to me, the time he made me strip naked and lean against the wall while he beat me with his belt and I tried to cover myself with my hands, cover my breasts, my private body, even though the belt buckle was breaking my skin, leaving its designs like snakeskin patterns, and I believe I have been too kind to him.
>
> (209)

Despite its fragility as a place of security, protection and well being, Omishto does stay at Ama's hut for some time. Her mother visits her twice and some kind of reconciliation is effected:

> Mama cannot look the world in the eye, but she looks at me. [. . .]
>
> 'I know that he hit you. I knew he had his eye on you. I just didn't want to see it.' [. . .]
>
> 'Mama, I'm not coming home. I'm at home here. I'm awake, Mama', I say, no other words to tell her how I feel, the world stretching around me.
>
> 'Yeah, I know.'
>
> I study her face, surprised she knows anything about me, and I think how little of her that I know. She has never let me know her.
>
> (221)

Although she says that she is 'at home' at Ama's house, this is only a temporary solution. This primitive hut cannot function as a felicitous space; as a 'nest' to crawl back into it is indeed too vulnerable in the face of the stronger civilization. Textually speaking, this is suggested through the use of the kudzu vine as a metonym for colonial power.

The first two mentions of the vine note its vigorous and rapid growth, and that it is not a native species, rather an exotic introduction (79, 96). The metonymical connection is made when Omishto returns to school:

> I'm silent. It's as if I'm not here. All the time, inside my own mind, I talk to myself. I am not a cloud that has to fall, I tell myself. I am not a tree, broken by wind. I am not a building fallen with the storm. I am not brick, collapsed. I glance around, knowing I am not one of these people, either, not these people who are like vines grown over this land, smothering it.
>
> (106)

This internal chant to get through the school day sets up the analogies that indicate how Omishto experiences the world as split between tribal culture and white, progressive civilization. The analogy is repeated at the first trial, where the metonymic relationship between the choking vines and a destructive, colonial culture is stressed even more starkly:

> This building is a world cut in two. This building and what it contains divide one part of life from another. It has separated by scars, legal theft, even the stone of earth split and carried here to a building of justice, and then it covers everything broken all back over in words the way the kudzu plants from the old world cover this beautiful ground with foreign, choking vines.
>
> (118)

She associates her stepfather, Herm, with this force.

> I sit, looking again at the kudzu covering the world, dwarfing the native plants. [. . .] At evening, Herman, my stepfather, comes. [. . .]
>
> I open the door and step outside, to keep him from entering the house which I have claimed as my own. [. . .]
>
> I look at the kudzu vines covering the trees at the edge of Ama's yard and beginning to cover the house.
>
> (207–8)

Herman wants her to tell the story of the panther killing in a way that makes sense to him and to 'stop all this nonsense'. Again she stands on the threshold between two different ways of narrating the world, a sixteen-year-old girl, trying to defend the cultural and domestic space she has claimed as her own. While she stays at Ama's house, she reaches visionary knowledge of her fellow tribespeople, and a clear perception of where she stands in this split and fallen world. Despite the fact that she has started by not sharing Ama's beliefs, the reader is lulled into thinking that she will step into Ama's place.

Like Betonie, Ama feels the old ways need to be changed and modified in response to new situations. But her re-entering the old story of Panther Woman is not as successful as Betonie's hybrid ceremony. She is unable to effect a cure for something that is 'too large'. She insists on Omishto's silence, even though the girl could explain to the elders why Ama refrained from giving them the panther skin. Its fragility would distress them too deeply. And she accepts her banishment to leave yet another empty house for Omishto to try to transform into a home. As she dwells there on her own, Omishto identifies with Sisa, the panther, another lonely remnant of an endangered species. The affinity is emphasized by her nickname, which is 'Sis'. Thus she inhabits a liminal position, but is unable to reframe it as truly felicitous. The doorway and windows remain defensive structures put up to keep hostile forces at bay. Yet they are visibly threatened by the invasive choking vines as well as by enraged white men. Poignantly, her initial reflection that her boat floating on the surrounding water is 'the safest place there is' (7) remains true to the end. It is floating in her boat that she hears Oni (the wind) telling her 'what it is my people believe' (180). What she hears is that truth is relative, that belief is personalized, even within the remnants of her tribe and within her own Panther Clan. This insight is the culmination of the text, and as such

the text moves from a simpler structure of a divided and fallen world to a complex vision of fractured fragmentation.

So, when she ends up by choosing Kili as 'home' (233), this narrative solution is far more of a retreat than a healing of the tribal community. The trope of ceremony as cure leading to reintegration – in Tayo's case through the kiva ceremony – gives way to a much bleaker worldview. Two decades further on, the Native American author appears to invoke the nexus of elements that produce felicitous and eulogized space, but the textual presentation denies the reader this romantic consolation. The novel's ending asserts survivance, but is this handful of tribal members really going to survive vigorously or ensure that 'the world will go on living'? At the end of the twentieth century the only inscape remaining is a crack in the universe that neither Ama nor Omishto, the two liminal characters of the novel, can gain access to or pass through. They, like all of us, are trapped in the fallen world, the world of putatively entropic destruction and irreversible devastation. Omishto is not another version of the nineteenth-century American author's need to write the Vanishing Indian out of existence, but neither is she a tribal cultural hero who can ritually enact recovery to stop the choking covering of the metonymical home.

The time has come to abandon my invocation of Bachelard's philosophical paradigm and to listen to less romanticized stories of the family, 'home' and 'homing-in' in the narratives of Native American and mixed-blood authors.

7 Narratives of healing

Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms*, 1995 and *Power*, 1998

> Visitors to a baby ward in hospital are often surprised by the silence. Yet if the mother really has abandoned her child, its only chance of survival is to shut its mouth.
>
> (Chatwin 260)

Introduction

In her review of *Power*, Amy Greenwood Baria refers to both *Power* and *Solar Storms* as 'coming of age' fiction. The term is accurate, but somehow sounds slightly dismissive. True, both novels feature adolescent, first person narrators, who do indeed 'come of age' by the end of the story, but more strikingly both narrator-protagonists have been the victims of abuse and bear the scars, both literal and figurative, of childhood traumas. They are both female adolescents with attachment disorders; and on first and subsequent readings I felt that these novels were written with the authority of experience. My readerly sensibilities were confirmed by the publication of *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*. That 'Native Memoir' reveals that childhood abuse and neglect are central to Linda Hogan's experience, in her own childhood and adolescence, and also through the process of adopting and mothering two Native American daughters, both of whom were victims of severe neglect and abuse prior to their adoption. There is a sense in which Hogan has broken a taboo of silence around these issues, by writing such an honest memoir, and by writing *Solar Storms* and *Power* as adult fiction. Contemporary children's fiction often deals with difficult social problems that the protagonist suffers and learns to overcome. Yet, once this becomes the plot of adult fiction the narrative inevitably is politicized in a number of ways. In this chapter I compare these two novels, in particular by focusing on the ways in which the narration and the text of each are formed by and express the sensitive issues of parental abuse and the resultant childhood disorders. I also consider the proposition that the narratives are written to offer solutions or 'cures' for a situation that is arguably endemic in the contemporary Native American population.

In *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, writing about her own daughters and of herself as a child, Hogan speaks of the burden of colonial

history that has created such a disruption in family groups and in adequate parenting practices. In particular, she mentions the invidious effects of the Indian Boarding Schools that took children away from their parents at an early age, over at least three generations. The result was the widespread loss of parenting skills:

> With generations, often two or more, of children sent away and stolen in this manner, who of them learned how to be a mother or father? All of this is passed on to ourselves and to my daughters, in a chain of history, the links of which we are now trying to break apart.
>
> (87–88)

She also describes her own childhood as one clouded by maternal silence and violence, leading in turn to her own suicidal tendencies and disabling silence. The most poignant essay in the memoir describes the experience of adopting children far more traumatized than she and her husband could have possibly imagined, children who had been subject to the worst possible cruelty, neglect, violations and parental abandonment, leaving the elder sister permanently harmed and the younger requiring extreme therapy to assist in her healing (68–113). She describes her daughters as 'unattached', that is to say as suffering from attachment disorders, and writes of her younger daughter's inability to speak before undergoing Z therapy, the therapy of last resort. Her elder daughter remains incurable, so that in her own family Hogan sees and feels the history of generations of abuse and abandonment being reproduced yet again in the lives of that daughter's children. The memoir makes sober reading and is not that optimistic that such attachment disorders can be cured before the damage is passed on yet again. By way of contrast, both the novels propose solutions, and the process of healing is an inherent part of their plot structures. In *Solar Storms* Angel Wing notes that her story will only emerge slowly, 'a bit at a time' (33), and along with the restoration of a sense of her past denied her up until now will come the happiness that has also been missing in her childhood. In *Power* Omishto needs time to work through the tensions and conflicts in her life and decide where she can best make a viable and secure future for herself. In both cases the protagonist is aided by an older female relative who provides the love and protection that their own mother has failed to give. In both cases that older relative is also a person marked as an 'in between' figure.

Figures of the 'In between'

In *The Woman Who Watches Over the World* Hogan reflects: 'Perhaps "between" was, is, at the root of my very existence' (34). Both Bush in *Solar Storms* and Ama in *Power* are described as liminal figures. Bush is a mixed-blood Chickasaw from Oklahoma, brought home by her husband Harold and then abandoned by him for Angel's grandmother, Loretta Wing. Her ways and

traditions are different from those of the inhabitants of Adam's Rib, and she lives a very solitary, insular existence on an island in the lake. When Angel goes to stay with her, she offers a dwelling space where the narrator can work out her feelings of fear and silent rage, and she also offers understanding, since she comes originally from the place where Angel was brought up in a series of foster homes. Ama, who it emerges has a white grandfather, is explicitly described as liminal: 'Ama said the old ways are not enough to get us through this time and she was called to something else. To living halfway between the modern world and the ancient one' (22–23). Her hut in the woods, which becomes Omishto's home after Ama's banishment by the Taiga elders, is a dwelling space half way between the spick and span but dangerous space that is her mother's house, and the swept ground of the Taiga clearing, where Omishto feels uncomfortable during Ama's trial. Thus both figures act as surrogate mothers to the protagonists and assist the healing of the deep insecurities that they describe explicitly or demonstrate implicitly in their behaviour. Moreover, both Bush and Ama are put in a position where they feel they have no choice but to kill the totemic animal they love. The emotions surrounding these two sacrifices are complex and ambivalent, expressing not just the dilemma of these two characters but also the author's own predicament as inheritor of a tragic and traumatized history.

Frozen watchfulness and attachment disorders

Children subject to abuse from an early age are likely to exhibit one or more emotional and behavioural disorders. In her Memoir, Hogan describes those of her daughters quite graphically. This makes it more problematic for the reader to believe that 'Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental', however much one concurs with the statement that *Solar Storms* 'is a work of fiction'. Since I shall devote more attention to the earlier novel, I shall look at the two novels in reverse order of composition and publication.

Frozen watchfulness is a strategy developed by severely abused infants. They keep preternaturally still in order not to attract attention; they watch out for signs of imminent violence and violation. Frozen watchfulness – or as Omishto, whose name means 'the One Who Watches' (4), puts it 'frozen silence' (117) – characterizes the narrator of *Power*. The reasons for her frozen watchfulness and for her pathological silence are only revealed gradually through her narration. I have already mentioned that one feature of her narration is the use of the present tense throughout. It gives the text a sense of immediacy, but it is also strangely disquieting. Omishto is floating between two worlds and between the past and the future, but her identity is so fluid that her thoughts remain in a continuous, present moment. In *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, Hogan cites Bachelard: 'Memory is a field full of psychological ruins', and then counters his philosophy with her own optimistic view:

> For some that might be true, but memory is also a field of healing that has the capacity to restore the world, not only for the one who recollects, but for cultures as well. When a person says 'I remember', all things are possible.
>
> (15)

Yet in *Power* Omishto's narration blocks the act of remembering by remaining in the present moment, since her memories are unhappy and traumatic. Despite this, hints surface throughout the novel, so that in terms of the textual poetics, patterns of recurrence, repetition and recapitulation emerge. It seems symptomatic that each time Omishto names Herman she introduces him anew. It's as if the trauma associated with him is so strong that her survival mechanism is to try and forget him (see 7, 18, 20, 21, 27, 35, 69, 75, 103). It could also indicate that she doesn't accept her stepfather as part of her family and feels betrayed by her weak mother, who would 'take a man over anything' (204), including over the daughter whom he abuses. It is only after spending some time at Ama's house alone that Omishto feels empowered to talk about the abuse. That she does so in reported speech to the sheriff increases the impact of the revelation, since the reader has felt privy to her thoughts and been made aware of her inability to utter them in speech:

> He says, 'Your mother wants you to go home'.
>
> 'She knows where I am.' She does. I'm sure of this. 'I'm not going back.' I look at him and say, 'Her husband is always after me. He hurts me. It's a bad scene over there.' And then I look out beyond him, at the oaks and the darkness of swamp.
>
> The sheriff, tight-lipped, does not ask me how, in what way. He does not say he will stop him. He doesn't seem surprised, though.
>
> After a moment I ask, 'What will you do about it?'
>
> 'Does your mother know?'
>
> (204)

A few pages later the real act of remembering occurs, not in speech, but in the recovery of a deeply buried memory. Note the repetition of the word 'moment'. Omishto has consciously lived from moment to moment, trying to hold back the unconscious memories that would engulf her. I have already cited the passage where this recollection surfaces. I repeat it here to emphasize how crucial it is:

> As I watch the car disappear down the road, it occurs to me that he loves my mother, Herm does, in his own small way. He cares that she is crying, that I have hurt her. For a moment I feel guilty that I have stood up to him because, in that moment, I feel sorry for him, seeing him diminished. For a moment I think maybe he's not so bad. *But then it comes back to me, the time he made me strip naked and lean against the wall while he beat me with his belt and I tried to cover myself with my hands, cover my breasts,*

> *my private body, even though the belt buckle was breaking my skin, leaving its designs like snakeskin patterns, and I believe I have been too kind to him.*
>
> (209, my emphasis)

This act of recovery gains verisimilitude by occurring late in the novel and by being precipitated by extreme events. It is preceded and prepared for by not only the increasingly clear sense of the history of her mother's own emotional weakness and deep unhappiness, but also by the strong current of rebirthing imagery that begins with Omishto emerging naked from the deep hole at the centre of the storm. The necessity for (re)birth is intensified by Omishto's mother having no recollection whatsoever of the births of her own children, and thus having failed to pass on to them stories with which they might construct a sense of their personal identity. Significantly, her rebirth finds completion in her mother's presence: 'I have just been born, just now risen into the silence of the evening' (212). Even so, it is followed by further mother/daughter conflict:

> 'How are you going to eat, for God's sake? How will you ever get a job, for Christ's sake?'
>
> 'Leave me alone, Mama.'
>
> She doesn't believe her ears. 'What?' her mouth open.
>
> 'You heard me, I'm tired now. It's time for you to be getting home.' [. . .]
>
> She is crying now. 'I don't believe this.' Then she tries to tell me what isn't true. 'You were always a happy child', she says.
>
> 'You've got to go, Mama.'
>
> 'What do I have to do, send your father back here again?'
>
> 'He's not my father.'
>
> She is shrill now, angry that I've hurt her.
>
> (212)

This time her mother doesn't hit her, the violence is attenuated, and on her second visit to Omishto at Ama's home, a further reconciliation occurs. Hogan manages not to push the bounds of credibility too far (see 221–24). Omishto's mother dissociates herself from Herm to a certain degree and, most importantly, finally tells Omishto stories about her childhood (223–24). Through this telling, Omishto realizes that it was the old people who saved them: 'And . . . us'. This leads to the novelistic ending and the protagonist's 'solution'. Even though the ending is carefully prepared for, the last couple of pages seem less convincing than the study of adolescent behaviour and emotions that constitute the main part of the novel. The narrative culminates by bringing together a series of elements from the story. For instance, the explanation as to how Janie Soto has obtained the panther skin has been given (220). And yet the ending also feels visionary and dreamlike, combining the desire for escape expressed earlier with the narrative completion of the return to the Taiga home.

As *The Woman Who Watches Over the World* describes a childhood of misery and neglect but expresses gratitude to 'my loving parents' (12), one senses in *Solar Storms* some tension between the frontispiece assertion of 'imaginative fiction' and the apparent analogies between the characterization of Hannah Wing and Hogan's descriptions of her eldest daughter, Marie, in *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*. The experiences recounted in Hogan's 'Native Memoir' are very revealing of the familial sources of her characterization of the two female adolescent narrators. The dedication of *Solar Storms* and the initial acknowledgement of *Power* also signal rather than conceal the connections between biographical/autobiographical experiences and the composition of imaginative fiction. One values these novels for their artistry and their poetics, far different from the 'as told to' (auto)biographies of other Native American women; and yet as a reader one is also compelled to attend to their themes of loss, silence and trauma, and to situate their protagonists' stories within a depressing historical and social context. One's admiration of the power of Hogan's writing is to my mind enhanced by knowing of the personal and tribal contexts they emerge from. It appears to me that *Power* draws more on Hogan's own childhood and that of her younger daughter, Jeanette, both of whom expressed their psychological and emotional response to neglect, lack of love and violation through pathological silence and literal speechlessness. Whereas *Solar Storms*, with its initial dedication to Danielle Marie, works through in fictional terms the horror of the permanent attachment disorder suffered by Hogan's eldest adopted daughter, Marie. The difference is, of course, that the fiction proposes the possibility of healing, and the narration is structured to tell a story of the salutary recovery of lost childhood.

Generations of abuse

Attachment disorders can range from the relatively mild to very severe, and exhibit a gamut of symptoms, including: inappropriately demonstrative behaviours towards strangers, testing the parent / foster parent / adoptive parent to see how far their love, affection and patience will stretch, and inability to form lasting relationships. The latter explains how the disorder can be passed on down the generations, as abused children become parents who feel no bond for their own children, and abuse them in turn. While Jeanette's behaviour was quite extreme but curable, the essay 'Silence is My Mother' indicates that Marie, the elder sister, was already past curing when she was adopted:

> She was already a child who'd lost her core. She had no conscience, no reference points outside herself, and was violent. Twenty years later I still wonder how such ice exists in a human. I still fear it. I still can hardly speak it. I wonder, also, how, in my wish for love, I came to stand beside it.
>
> (69)[1]

In interweaving her own life history with that of her daughters, Hogan implies the (to some) unpalatable message that this is endemic:

> Along with the girls, history came to live with us, the undeniable, unforgotten aspect of every American Indian life. She was a remnant of American history, and the fires of brutal history had come to bear on her. (77)

In the first chapter of *Solar Storms*, the narrator, Angel, recounts the various pieces of her birth-mother's and birth-grandmother's life histories, as she is told them for the first time at the age of seventeen (26, 34, 39). She learns that 'that girl who'd washed up from stormy waters in 1949 [. . .] was ten years old and icy cold' (34) – that girl being the mother who would reject her as soon as she was born, putting her outside to die of cold (109–13). These events take place at the significantly named 'Adam's Rib', inhabited mainly by women who are called the 'Abandoned Ones'. They include Bush, who saved Angel from her birth mother. In her account it becomes apparent that Angel learns the strategy of frozen watchfulness from birth:

> *I began walking a circle, an ever-widening spiral across snow and ice, and there were no tracks to follow and you didn't cry out. You didn't even kick or wave your arms.*
>
> *Maybe you were resigned to fate, to a birth delivered to ice. I found you tucked into the branches of a birch tree. You were still and blue and a thin layer of snow had fallen over your head and naked stomach, the kind Indians call pollen snow because it meant more was coming, that winter would continue. You were alert, alive, but silent and cold as ice.*
>
> (112–13)

The suggestion made textually through the repetition of ice imagery is that the pattern of abuse, abandonment and attachment disorder will continue in Angel. The information she gives the reader in the initial chapters tends to confirm this. Hers is a history of a series of placements in foster homes, disruptive and testing behaviour, causing her social worker to move her on each time the foster parents have had enough. She has also prostituted herself and she cultivates a tough demeanour to show she doesn't care. Half of her face is disfigured – she knows vaguely that it was inflicted by her mother – and she tries to conceal her scars with her long hair and thick make-up.

The novel is set in 1972–73, when Angel is seventeen, so she grew up in the fifties and sixties. This was a time when the federal Government's termination and assimilation policy was breaking up tribes and relocating them in urban environments, and also a time when social work practice did not involve giving fostered and adopted children any record of their past history. In Angel, Hogan creates a narrator who suffers the impact of both policies and practices. The morale of American Indians is debilitatingly low: instead of

tribal and cultural self-esteem, they are being forced to lose touch with their traditions. The emotional health of fostered and adopted children is jeopardized, since they lose touch with any sense of their own identity. It was only in the late eighties/early nineties that social work practice was reformed, to redress the fact that these children had no emotional reinforcement, no shared memories of their infancy that they could be told over and again by a loving parent, no clear memory of whom they had lived with, where or when. Now social workers compile life history books for the children to keep, assembling photographs and mementoes, and giving them a clear record of any moves they might have made from foster home to home.

Angel arrives at Adam's Rib, released from foster care, unformed and empty: 'All I had was a life on paper stored in file cabinets, a series of foster homes. I'd been lost from my own people, taken from my mother' (26). Poignantly she describes how she carries 'a picture of an unknown baby, a picture I'd found in a one-dollar photo machine at Woolworth's' (26). She uses it to show people how lovely and happy she was as a child. A characteristic of fostered children before life history books were introduced was that they would fantasize and idealize their past and their birth parents, thus rendering the adjustment to fostering even more precarious. The prognosis at the start of her story is not good. Yet this is an imaginative fiction, and Hogan deploys a number of strategies to compose a more optimistic life history for Angel. One important structuring strategy is that of progression from an initial negative statement to its countering and optimistic opposite: a type of poetics of thesis followed by antithesis, in which the latter is always more positive. So while Angel describes herself as having no photographs, no memories, no record of her childhood when she first arrives, she soon starts to accumulate the missing pieces of her life story. Thus, she thinks, 'I'd been lost from my own people', but narrative events show that Agnes, Bush and Dora-Rouge have carried the memories of and for her, waiting to reveal them when she found her way back home. She has had no photographs of herself as an infant, but when she joins Bush on Fur Island she discovers a kind of altar with 'photographs of loved ones' (71). The discovery is not pain-free:

> I looked nothing like the baby pictures I carried around, the ones I found in the twenty-five-cent Take Your Own Photo machine at Woolworth's where I'd worked for two months, pictures left behind by someone else.
> (71)

To disassemble an idealized false identity aged seventeen and then slowly reconstruct a painfully honest one is emotionally challenging. Bush assists her by revealing parts of her story very gradually, waiting each time until she is hungry to hear more of her real life history. Thus another poetic thesis/antithesis is the transition from feeling discomfort at Bush's Black House (75) to finding that she feels comfortable there and will settle in. Yet another is the contrast between the scene when Frenchie asks, 'What happened to your face,

anyway, dear?' (51–53) and the day Tommy says, 'Tell me about the scars'. This time her response is very different:

> I thought how scars were proof of healing. 'What scars?' I said.
>
> (125)

As well as this device of recapitulation with inverse mirroring, the narrative includes a number of metonymic scenarios, all of which reinforce the possibility of recovering what is lost, of reassembling or of piecing together, even when the process is difficult and painful. Even the Hungry Mouth that swallows objects, animals and people is described as preserving not destroying them:

> Nothing ever surfaced from that place, but some people said that if you dared close enough, you could see it all floating in there, each thing just as it had been the day it broke through or fell, the antlers of deer like roots unmoored.
>
> (63)

Bush reassembles the bones of dead animals, respecting their spirit and restoring their dignity. Angel and Bush together piece and sew beautiful shirts, even though they both dislike sewing.

Ghost Dance as paradigm for narrative recovery

Hogan also invokes specifically American Indian metonyms of recovery and renaissance (rebirth). These include 'the formation of the American Indian Movement. Red women and men all coming to new life' (120). Also there is textual allusion to Angel's dreams as a type of vision quest (119) and explicit description of the Ghost Dance as a paradigm for the recovery of that which is usually thought to be irrevocably lost:

> They had been alive at the time of the massacre of Indians at Wounded Knee. They remembered, and they wanted nothing to do with the new world. Some said these people were keeping the Ghost Dance alive. Most everyone doubted this, but I came to believe it in a way, because in spite of the tragedies they'd witnessed, they all had the peaceful look of those who still had hope, those who still believed that their people and the buffalo would return.
>
> (29)

This paradigm also informs the later novel, *Power*, but here it is announced explicitly near the start of the novel. The narrative structure of *Solar Storms* connects the story of Angel's personal recovery to the story of political and environmental activism. For American Indians to recover their past and their

self-esteem the quest involves a number of different journeys, some psychological, some geographical. It also involves being prepared to take a stand and fight tenaciously through direct action and through judicial procedures. Some readers might feel that the novel ends on rather too optimistic and sentimental a note. Yet in terms of the poetics of the text, integrity is maintained:

> There is no map to show where to step, no guide to tell us how to see. But maybe, as Dora-Rouge once said, maps are only masks over the face of God and we are the lost ones; it is not that the ways are lost from us but that we are lost from them. But the ways are patient and await our return.
>
> I've shaped my own life, after all. Like a deer curled into grasses, or the place a moose slept.
>
> (346)

The fallen deer floating in the Hungry Mouth is transformed into a metaphor of Angel's healing.

Similarly, the images of frozen ice are countered with more nurturing ones:

> The North is not always cold and white. Some mornings it is warm and the wind stirs, a gentle hand touching the world and the people. [. . .] It leaves me thinking that maybe our earth, our sky, will give birth to something, perhaps there's still another day of creation, and the earth is only a little boat with men and women, slugs and manta rays, all floating in a shell across the dark blue face of a god.
>
> (349)

In this novel the present tense indicates a personal and political victory. Through her quest, and with the support of female kin (even if not blood-related), Angel breaks the pattern of abandonment and abuse and rediscovers the lost ways. Paradoxically, the novel dedicated to her most disturbed, harmed and harmful eldest daughter proposes in the narrator's story and through the poetics of the text a more optimistic solution, following the paradigm of the Ghost Dance. On the other hand, I would conclude that *Power* – more closely associated with Hogan's youngest, healed daughter – is less optimistic and more ambivalent in its narrative solution.

Conclusion

Read in conjunction with *Ceremony* and *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, we see a pattern emerging in post-war and contemporary Native American women's writing. Not only do all these novels address the issue of mixed-blood identity, as Louis Owens has pointed out, but they also deal with unpalatable, even taboo issues surrounding inadequate and neglectful mothering. They could be described as feminist in their ability to connect personal

suffering with the larger socio-historical picture. And inevitably there is a political dimension to their writing. While they remain specific in their analysis of the inheritance and impact on the individual of Native American and mixed-blood history, it is noteworthy that their novels could usefully be compared with texts such as *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*. What characterizes all these imaginative novels by ethnic women is the ability to use fictive texts to address deep historical and political scars. They all offer cures and solutions by facing painful traumas, rememorying them, and then putting the pieces back together with renewed hope for and trust in life's powers of healing and regeneration.

8 Lighting out for the territory

Janet Campbell Hale, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*, 1985

> *He* is an American, who, leaving behind all his ancient prejudices and manners, takes new ones from the mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds.
>
> (Crèvecœur 43)

Introduction

In his famous essay on Native American novels, William Bevis argues that whereas the classic American novel tends towards a tale of leaving home and 'lighting out for the territory' – the phrase is Huckleberry Finn's – the typical plot of representative Native American novels is that of 'homing in'. He states that:

> [M]ost Native American novels are not 'eccentric', centrifugal, diverging, expanding, but 'incentric', centripetal, converging, contracting. The hero comes home. 'Contracting' has negative overtones to us, 'expanding' a positive ring. These are the cultural choices we are considering. In Native American novels, coming home, staying put, contracting, even what we call 'regressing' to a place, a past where one has been before, is not only the primary story, it is a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good.
>
> (582)

Bevis further suggests that white readers will misunderstand and misinterpret these novels because they does not share the tribal worldview of these works. Apart from Silko's *Ceremony*, all of the novels he discusses are male-authored. Moreover, he tends to talk about the point of view of the real author or of the novel, which leads to a rather emphatic argumentation despite his disclaimer that he is not being proscriptive in his characterization.

Thus he says of *The Surrounded*:

> [T]he point of view of the novel offers profound respect for the past, family, and tradition; more troublingly, it asks us to admire [the

> protagonist's] chosen involvement on the reservation even as it leads to personal doom. At first this plot may seem 'Romantic' and 'Primitivist', but [. . .] it is not.
>
> (583)

He suggests that it is not romantic and primitivist because it reflects a tribalism that values the tribal past, the authority of tribal elders and a traditional sense of place above the individual will. He suggests that respect for these is far more important than the free individual, indeed that 'the free individual without context is utterly lost' (590). Thus he believes that these novels 'assert a trans-individual tribal identity' (594) and that:

> What looks so often to whites like individual regression to some secure Eden may be in Native American novels an enlargement of individuality to society, place, and past.
>
> (597)

I find this problematic, since for all its apparent political correctness and empathy for tribalist politics, Bevis' thesis consigns all American Indians to an irresolvable conflict between identifying with a sepia-tinted tribal culture and responding to the realities of modernity. The racial essentialism seems not to allow for the transmotion and transformations of historical processes:

> The typical Indian plot, then, recoils from a white world in which the mobile Indian individual finds no meaning [. . .] and as if by instinct comes home. [. . .] This 'homing' cannot be judged by white standards of individuality; it must be read in the tribal context.
>
> (598)

The novels that he discusses tend to be mixed-blood narratives, but it is only very late in his essay that he acknowledges this in relation to *The Death of Jim Loney*:

> [T]he reader is placed squarely in the breed's situation, unable to choose between a white realism that seems to offer at best lonely success or intelligent despair, and an Indian pride in tradition that must seem a dream.
>
> (616)

Then in summing up he states that these typical novels:

> [A]re not offering Indian answers, but reflecting continued respect for tribal identity while realistically depicting the disadvantages of non-assimilation. The challenge to whites is to appreciate how these novels represent a single, eloquent argument against de-reservation and

> assimilation, and for the necessity of working out an identity in relation to one's past.
>
> (618)

Critical thinking has developed since Bevis first published this article, yet its procedures are not that different from those of many contemporary, general readers. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to work with (and against) its critical premises and assumptions, in order to suggest a more flexible response to the primary texts in question.

No group of half a dozen or so novels can be categorized as presenting 'a *single*, eloquent argument' (my emphasis). Yet the central perception that the typical plot of mainly male-authored, classic, Native American novels can be characterized as the 'homing in' plot is useful. To argue that the 'message' of all these novels is one that prioritizes tribal values and respect for the past *above all else* could be an expression of an indigenist position. But it could also be as much of a trap as Edward Curtis' carefully staged photographs of tribal peoples in the traditional clothing that he thoughtfully carried around with him as props. These are novels where the alienation, despair and general dysfunctional character of the main protagonist are foregrounded. In all of the novels he discusses, the plots waiver between the pessimistic endings of suicide or suicidal acts leading to death on the one hand, and on the other a sense of a hard-won healing and cure of the individual and larger malaise, as in *Ceremony*. And while they depict the conflicts and tensions inherent in being Indian or breed in the twentieth century, they sound less conclusive in terms of proffering solutions to the predicament of history than Bevis' romanticized reading indicates.

The history of Native Americans and mixed-blood Americans is less essentialist and more awkwardly contingent than he suggests. Yet his conclusion that the 'challenge [. . .] is to appreciate how these novels present a[n] [. . .] eloquent argument [. . .] for the necessity of working out an identity in relation to one's past' is surely tenable. Less persuasive is his characterization of this resolved identity as 'trans-individual'. This is a dubious term, even though one might adduce Silko's approval of transcendentalism in support of it. The sheer variety of post-war Native American fiction indicates that there is not one pan-tribal past, nor is there one pan-tribal identity to be worked out singly and conclusively. Nevertheless, Bevis sensitizes us to the trope of 'homing in' and thus sensitized, one perceives its persistence and recurrence in diverse manifestations within the canon of contemporary Native American fiction.

The plots of two recent, female-authored Native American novels are structured to counter the pull of that arguably ubiquitous 'homing-in' plot. In this respect they continue the pattern established by *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*. To recapitulate: that novel combines an individual protagonist's quest to get back in touch with her tribal past with the author's acknowledgement of the importance of the encouragement of feminist

audiences. The plot traces Ephanie's move away from Albuquerque to San Francisco, and from there to Oregon, before her final return *not* to the traditional Pueblo of her ancestors near Albuquerque but back to San Francisco. Ephanie's quest is as much a feminist one to resolve issues of female identity and autonomy as it is one to rediscover her female ancestors and their avatar, the Spirit Woman, in an individual ritual in her own, private, urban bedroom setting. The vision of the Spirit Woman offers consolation and provides her with the strength to survive, but it does not order her back to the reservation and to a traditional lifestyle.

Linda Hogan has written movingly about the condition of attachment disorder and how it can affect women's ability to mother their children adequately. She expresses the pain of knowing that women who become mothers before they have worked out issues in their own lives will have difficulty bonding with their children. Common sense confirms the psychiatric analysis: if a woman is still busy attending to unresolved emotional and psychological problems of her own, she will not have sufficient emotional reserves to attend fully to her own children. In both *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* and *Faces in the Moon* the protagonist's mother is depicted as inadequate and as having been unable to bond fully with her daughter. Yet in both novels the protagonist tries to understand the historical contexts, the social forces and the personal circumstances that have conspired to create this condition. The two novels describe protagonists who address these issues through memoir, memory and reflection; significantly they resolve to heal themselves and move forward rather than dwell on their psychological wounds or merely replicate the behavioural patterns of their mothers. Cecelia reflects that, despite sometimes reproducing her mother's inappropriate parenting, she is an 'adequate mother' (177). And in *Faces in the Moon*, Lucie learns to forgive her mother, to draw strength from other female relatives and carers, such as Lizzie, and eventually to recognize her mother's achievements and accept her memoir as a secret gift and private legacy rather than hate her for her failings.

Feminist novels of the late 1970s, such as Lisa Alther's *Kinflicks* and Marilyn French's *The Woman's Room*, were shocking to readers because their protagonists prioritized personal development over and above the needs of their children or husbands. Before second-wave feminism, women were expected to be wives and mothers first and to sacrifice personal ambition in the service and maintenance of the family. After second-wave feminism precipitated a mass movement of cultural and political action, women demanded to be considered as equal to but different from men, and expected the same opportunities for autonomy as men. Despite the differences between tribal, clan and kinship structures and the stereotypical, American post-war, nuclear family, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* and *Faces in the Moon* all tell of individual women who 'work [. . .] out an identity in relation to one's past'. They do so in relation to contemporary American feminist *Bildungsromane* and consequently their narratives are not

ones of 'homing in' but of a centrifugal movement towards positive and successful, assimilated, urban identities. And yet, they describe the very real pull of suicide as a solution to their protagonist's predicament, and as such engage with the classic Native American plot, if only to reject it for their female protagonists. Both *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* and *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* were written in the 1980s at a time when ethnic women's writing was infused with an incredible energy and inventiveness. This was the decade when female-authored novels could attend to the preoccupations of female characters and depict the significant aspects of women's experience with the confidence that the women's movement imparted. As a consequence of second-wave feminism we find a characteristic assertiveness in their plots as representative women and mothers survive and make good against the odds. While assertiveness is also a characteristic of *Faces in the Moon*, I would suggest that its slightly later date of composition is reflected in its more meditative and reconciliatory, post-feminist mode of expression.[1] Given my sense of the variations and subtle differences a decade can make, I discuss the two novels separately, drawing conclusions at the end of my discussions in Chapter Nine.

Resisting the 'homing-in' plot

The Jailing of Cecelia Capture tells the story of a mixed-blood eponymous protagonist who turns thirty during the course of the novel. It resembles a typical 'rags to riches' American plot, since Cecelia moves from being a 'down-home reservation girl if ever there was one' (16) to being *en route* to becoming a successful lawyer, studying at one of the most prestigious US law schools, Boalt Hall, University of California at Berkeley. The novel ends with her certainty of success: 'she knew she would have the Doctor of Jurisprudence degree' (201). However, to outline the novel thus is to ignore the strong elements of feminist *Bildungsroman* that are integral to the story. These can be characterized as the protagonist's need to resolve her current personal and marital crisis by reviewing her past, coming to terms with it and working out a sense of individual identity with which she can see her way forward. They include reviewing her relationship with both of her parents, her peer group including female adolescent friends, and the significant men in her life. This review of her past bears numerous feminist hallmarks. These include the need to educate herself in the attitudes of sexual liberation in order to survive periods of neediness and loneliness, and especially to escape the sense of entrapment or imprisonment in marriage and mothering. This sense of impotent confinement rendered her own mother so bitter as to turn her anger inward on herself and outward on her daughter. Cecelia seeks an alternative model that will combine the responsibilities of mothering, which to her is a positive aspect of her life even in moments of poverty and adversity, with attention to her own need for a fulfilling and meaningful career. In this respect the novel's agenda is commensurate with the demands of the liberal feminist organization, NOW.[2]

Issues of ethnicity and mixed-blood identity further complicate this feminist agenda. The implied author seems to favour a conceptual framework that thinks in terms of racial prejudice and racial oppression. Racism becomes another of the unseen forces that Cecelia has to learn to contend with. Interestingly, much of the means she uses to combat racism are learnt from her father, who in turn learnt it from his father. So it is the patrilinear, full-blood inheritance that motivates and empowers her to continue her education at a predominantly white, privileged, middle-class institution. Early on in the novel the implied reader learns that her father urges her on throughout her childhood. He exhorts her to prepare herself to follow successfully the 'lighting-out', egressive plot. It is also made clear that, as child of her parents' late middle age/old age, she is the honorary, surviving 'son' her father never had:

> But Cecelia, he told her, was going to be different; she was not even going to learn to speak the native tongue, although all her sisters knew it. Then she would have to look at the world and see it as any English-speaking person does, would be forced to form her thoughts in English, and would be able to keep up with any white person. Work, work, work. Study, study, study. It wasn't enough, he told her, to be okay, to hold her own; she had to do better, much better, if she was going to survive in a white man's world.
>
> (69)

So, from childhood Cecelia is singled out to be the family member to overcome not only the marginalization of the reservation *Indian*, but also the double marginalization of being a poor, mixed-blood *woman*. This inauspicious social positioning is emphasized in the plot development, when she runs away from home and becomes a young, single mother on welfare. Yet even when she is most 'down and out', she resists the call to go back home. Bevis argues that such a return would be a positive move for the protagonist of a Native American novel:

> Severed from the past, the present is meaningless, outcast, homeless. The connotations of 'regression' are cultural; not all people equate their 'civilization' with 'discontents', and therefore a return to a previous status quo is not necessarily a romantic 'escape' from an unbearable present of cultural or individual maturity and anxiety.
>
> (590)

Cecelia as protagonist of a Native American novel seems to take a very different position in response to her mother's suggestion that it would be easy for her to go back home:

> Cecelia had nothing. She had only Corey [her young son], and the two of them could easily live in the house on Wasco Avenue with Mary Theresa.

> No, they could not, Cecelia thought when she heard her mother saying that. She would die before she would go back to Wapato and spend her life taking care of her mean, crazy old mother.
>
> (155)

The night before she learns of her father's death, she has dinner and watches *Star Trek* with some college friends (146). This is one of a number of allusions to popular American culture. None are just there to give texture to the story; all are included to make a significant point about the realities of Native American and mixed-blood cultural formations in the latter half of the twentieth century. To watch *Star Trek* just at the time when her father is dying of a heart attack is to reinforce her mission as his daughter to boldly go where no Indian woman has gone before.[3] As well as allusions and direct quotation of iconic figures of popular culture – Hank Williams, George Jones, Joan Baez, The Andrews Sisters – the novel makes it clear that Native American cultural identity is not a pure, static, romanticized phenomenon caught in some kind of historical bubble. Thomas Running Horse, the Indian she has a healing one night stand with on her way back to law school, is dressed as a cowboy; she on the other hand has to dress as a Mexican *chiquita* for one of her waitressing jobs. She also passes as Chicana when out drinking and picking up men, describing herself as modelled on the famous Brazilian superstar of the thirties, forties and early fifties, Carmen Miranda.[4]

The novel's ending also plays with the discrepancies between what Bevis might characterize as 'white realism' and the fantasy expectations of Hollywood movies. A further level of narrative playfulness is added here by Cecelia's decision to dress up as a forties war bride in an 'Andrews Sisters' polka dot dress. All of this destabilizes any sense of essentialist, racial identity and recognizes with trickster humor the extent to which post-war American culture allows the individual freedom of choice in assuming her own identity. Even though she is a simulacrum of the forties war bride, the 'fake' identity allows her to make the crucial and deeply serious decision not to commit suicide and to make a life for herself and her children beyond the confinement of a failed marriage. Yet even at this sober moment in the plot's climax we find traces of Indian humor that contribute to its final life-affirming resolution:

> She was crying hard now and she had no Kleenexes with her. She wiped her eyes and blew her nose on the hem of her forties dress. Claudette Colbert and Joan Crawford probably never did anything so gauche as to use the hem of their forties dresses to wipe their noses.
>
> She knew she was not going to kill herself. She was incapable of such a violent act as that. She could not allow her brains and blood to go spattering all over the grass. How would she look?
>
> (200)

This humor undercuts Bevis' essentialist description of the Native American novel as containing 'the remarkable combination – not juxtaposition – of delicacy and violence' (608) because:

> To whites, murder and violence are part of uncivilized 'nature', while to Native Americans they are part of civilization. There is plenty of room in tribal custom for violence and entertainment.
>
> (607–08)

More importantly, the ending re-inscribes a femininity that is not that of her mother. Despite her efforts to distance herself from her mother throughout the story, Cecelia has caught herself reproducing her mother's mothering and re-enacting some of her symptomatic behaviour.[5] In wearing playfully a dress from her mother's era, she revisits the femininity of her mother's generation in a ritual conversation with the past that rewrites the plot for herself and for other mixed-blood women of her baby-boomer generation.

I have argued in this section that Hale refutes the romanticized and essentialist 'homing-in' plot, by counteracting it with the 'lighting-out' plot. She demonstrates that this is entirely appropriate for aspirational, mixed-blood women. Furthermore she draws on the empowering canon of contemporary female and feminist *Bildungsromane* to rewrite the typical plot of Native American fiction, as characterized by Bevis. She exhibits a postmodern playfulness and trickster humor in her handling of cultural, ethnic and individual identity formation. And yet, neither the implied author, nor the covert narrator, nor the protagonist rejects tribal identity and tribal history. Indeed Cecelia's strong sense of the past is central to the story and also to the narrative strategies used to tell it. In the following section I shall briefly consider some of the novel's most important narrative strategies and argue that the way in which her story is told contributes to the implied reader's sympathetic involvement with the protagonist's mid-life rite of passage.

Narrative and textual strategies in *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*

So far I have described the novel in terms of its story. Readers already familiar with the novel will know, however, that the story is not told in the chronological order of its events. Instead, the story of Cecelia's childhood, adolescence and adulthood up until the age of thirty is told in a series of flashbacks, or analepses. The present moment of the narrative begins in the early hours of the day after her thirtieth birthday and is concentrated within the few days that she spends in prison before her husband, Nathan, reluctantly comes to stand bail for her. The last two chapters complete the time span of the narrative with her court appearance, subsequent release and final resolution to move forward with her life. Equally important as the concentration of time within a few, crucial days in the protagonist's life, is the sense of place in

the novel. The jail is a confined and imprisoning place, where she feels and indeed is powerless. Paradoxically, it is the cultural space within which she finds herself recalling and reflecting upon her life thus far, and arriving at courageous decisions about her future. In terms of the character, it is the function of memory to empower her and enable her to make choices as an individual act of free will. In terms of narrative technique, a covert, heterodiegetic narrator tells the implied reader about these memories in a series of textual analepses.

These analepses, or flashbacks, form the major part of the novel, and are always triggered by a particular association of ideas or reflection in the present moment. For example, thinking about a 'jailhouse song' reminds her of her mother in a rare moment of maternal playfulness:

> She sang the beginning: 'Oh, if I had the wings of an angel, over these prison walls I would fly. I would fly to the arms of my poor darlin', and there I'd be willing to die.' The sound of her voice in the empty, silent cell was strange, intrusive. She hummed the tune. She could see herself sitting on the front porch of the old yellow house in Idaho, rocking her Raggedy Ann doll and singing that song. It had been her favorite song.
>
> (86)

The narrative then tells in flashback of her mother's teasing her into thinking she does have the wings of an angel, and of her childhood dreams of flight:

> She looked forward eagerly to the day when she would be grown and acquire full-time use of her wings.
>
> (87)

This particular analepsis also contributes to the widening significance of imprisonment as a trope for her mother's and her own situation. Frequently, the covert narrator traces Cecelia's memories as one flashback precipitates a further flashback to a prior memory. We are already familiar with this technique in Silko's depiction of Tayo, and will encounter it as a major narrative device in Erdrich's *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, for example. A typical example in this novel would be her recalling taking her children to visit her home reservation in Idaho:

> She got in the car and began driving and found herself headed in the direction of the reservation, and then there she was, home again.
>
> She took her children first to historic Ford Butte, where her tribe had fought a battle with the U.S. Army and won, though of course they lost the war, as all the Indian nations had. She told her children that her father's father had been a young warrior in that last Indian war, fought the white people here in this very spot where they now stood.
>
> (51)

At the end of this sequence of flashback, and concomitantly at the end of the chapter, Cecelia recalls her own childhood on the reservation:

> It was a hard and lonely life, and she would not live that way again for anything. They drove the hundred miles back to Spokane in almost total silence. Cecelia was lost in memories of when she was a girl. It was many years ago, and yet to her now it did not seem long. She could see that house so clearly the way it had been in 1962, when she was twelve.
>
> (53)

Although the first level of analepsis takes Cecelia 'home again', the transition to the further level of analepsis – the flashback within a flashback – makes it clear that 'homing in' is not the dynamic of Cecelia's plot. Indeed the further flashback recalls, in the mode of dirty realism, the reasons why the family moves away from the reservation, denying forever the option of homing in: 'there would be no going back, no home to return to' (63).

The prison cell functions as a metaphor for Cecelia's life, especially when she views her life as reproducing her mother's attitudes and behaviour. Her liberation, or metaphorical release, will depend in large part on her drawing on her paternal inheritance and making it her own. In so doing she will of course rewrite radically traditional, feminine, role models, and also challenge stereotypical assumptions about Native American identity. In fact the novel begins with a dramatic, free indirect discourse, utterance that tells the implied reader of the protagonist's situation, and also of her attitude towards being imprisoned without a watch:

> No watch. Nobody in the holding tank had one, since all their belongings had been taken away as part of the booking procedure. No clock. No window.
>
> Three or maybe four hours had passed since Cecelia Capture Welle's arrest. Or was it really only an hour or so? It was hard to say because she had been very drunk at the time and she was still not quite sober and was grateful that she wasn't. Being a little drunk took the rough edges off reality. Almost always.
>
> (3)

Unlike Paula Gunn Allen's protagonist, Ephanie, who functions in 'Indian time' rather than 'industrial time', and also unlike Silko's protagonist, Tayo, who needs to make the transition from Western, clock time into ceremonial time, Cecelia experiences the lack of a watch or clock as painful deprivation. Being confined to a prison cell is implicitly framed as a version of Dante's Hell, and a significant feature of this contemporary Hell is the lack of a watch or clock and the inability to even look out of a window to get her bearings in time. So this 'down-home reservation girl' is acculturated to Westernized clock time rather than 'Indian time'. When, in the first of many analepses, she

wakes in the morning, the first thing she does is reach for the alarm clock and she arrives early for her 8.00 am class. The stereotype of the primitive, tribal Indian is thus undermined implicitly by Cecelia's prioritization of clock time in her own life. And it's not just Cecelia as the exceptional daughter who prioritizes clock time; her sister does also.

In a further flashback recalling the time she and her mother 'light out' on their own, leaving her father behind, they first go and find her sister Andrea working as a waitress in an all-night café:

> Andrea looked up at the big electric clock on the wall above the door. Almost eight. She gave them directions how to get to her place: down the tracks, turn left at the crossroads market, down the gravel road to the cabin court at the edge of town.
>
> (97)

Even if being 'a little drunk took the rough edges off reality', Cecelia is stone cold sober as she recalls her past in free indirect style. The dirty realism of this text shows the implied reader that the reality of being the most socially deprived ethnic group in the US is menial, hourly paid jobs. Her sister is subject to the constraints of industrial time, trapped in alienated labour, and living in poor housing the wrong side of the tracks on the margins of urban centres. Having married a Mexican, she is also confined by a succession of pregnancies 'throughout her twenties' (98). In response to the dirty realism of her memories, and in contrast to Andrea, Cecelia chooses 'to go on with her life unencumbered, to move forward according to her plans' (159). She shall not allow herself to become trapped; neither in the 'homing-in' plot nor as an hourly paid wage slave.

This doesn't diminish her respect for and reliance on clock time that links her to her father and her father's father. She also follows them in their respect for the white man's law. She recalls the two gifts her father's father gave her father: the old gold watch 'when he graduated from Jesuit High School' (144) and the law books 'when he went away to college' (67). Despite her grandfather's ignorance of the white education system and her father's failure in it, analeptic recall reiterates the family ambitions and aspirations that are handed down to Cecelia.

> Eagle Capture had wanted his son to be a lawyer, and he had jumped the gun a little, going out and buying him a set of law books for a going-away-to-college present along with the gold watch, which was the graduating-from-high-school present. [. . .] He didn't know how great the distance was between graduating from high school and practicing law.
>
> Will Capture had told his daughter a lot about old Eagle Capture, how much he had admired his father and wanted to please him. He was the one who had brought the white man's system of justice to the tribe. He

> believed that the key to survival was legal representation. If the Indian people had had adequate legal representation, there would have been no Little Bighorn or Wounded Knee.
>
> (67)

Therefore, the trope of her being held in a prison cell takes on a further ironic resonance, as she is currently attending law school and studying to become a legal representative of her people.[6]

She also follows her father in his habit of always sleeping with the window open (13), and although she recalls that her father eventually took the old 'out of date law books' to the dump (67), she herself owns *Black's Law Dictionary*. This book takes on iconic or tropal status in the novel, first introduced thus:

> The book looked important: big and heavy with dark green binding and dignified gold lettering, a book obviously intended for serious purposes, and here it was, propping open a window.
>
> (13)[7]

The implied reader might at this stage misinterpret this as her disrespect for the law, a trickster tale of bringing her down to size. Yet it emerges by the end of the narrative that she no longer needs this symbol of white power and legal authority because she herself *knows* its contents. She has internalized the letter of the law:

> She held it for a minute, remembering her first year of law school and how she had to consult that dictionary every day because she didn't know legal terms and had never taken Latin. She hardly needed it anymore.
>
> (174)

This is the granddaughter of Eagle Capture who 'didn't speak English, let alone read or write or know anything about schooling, or much about schooling, even if he was a tribal judge' (67). The use of analepsis, including the evocation of recent memory just by holding this law book, enacts two related phenomena. First, the way the protagonist's mind, and by implication the mind of any member of the tribe of urban Indians, 'the displaced ones' (199), moves continuously between the present moment, the relatively recent past and layers of both the individual's and the family's past history. This is, of course, part of the process of establishing an individual identity in relation to one's personal and tribal past. Second, the covert narrator's use of multiple flashbacks invites the implied reader to piece together and to make sense of Cecelia's history, reading the narrative in its linear order of telling, but constantly reflecting on linked motifs and events. As a non-Indian reader of this narrative, I find that these textual strategies (of the prison cell as framing device and of multiple analepses within the narrative) compel me to sympathize with the protagonist, and feel real empathy rather than scholarly

distance in reading her story. It might seem redundant or obvious to state this; but in doing so I fly in the face of Bevis' sense that as a white reader I cannot possibly comprehend tribal people's experience.

Conclusion

In using the narrative strategies that she does, Hale not only tells the story of 'a down-home reservation girl' arriving at the point where she no longer feels 'constrained' (201), but tells it with a realism that counters essentialist readings of Native American culture:

> She was not able to return to the beginning, of course, and remake her life more to her liking, but now she was free to go on with the life she did have.
>
> (201)

Despite her espousal of the 'lighting-out' plot as the way forward for mixed-blood women as well as white men and boys, Cecelia still respects her tribal past and through the flashback sequences her historical legacy is incorporated into the body of her own story. She will never forget Wounded Knee, nor will she return to play Indian for the white man's entertainment and cultural consumption. Yet again, a female-authored text shows the reader a rite of self transformation and personal survival that becomes a representative fiction for other mixed-blood women, and by extension for deprived or oppressed American women, whatever their ethnicity by descent.

9 Autodiegetic narration

Betty Louise Bell, *Faces in the Moon*, 1994

> To the utter bewilderment and dismay of generations of undergraduates, even narratological terms beginning with the prefixes hetero- and homo- did not have anything to do with sex.
>
> (Rimmon-Kenan 139)

Introduction

Faces in the Moon shares a number of features with *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*. These include the basic premise, namely that the novel is told from the point of view of the grown-up daughter of a mother who is characterized as inadequate. In each case the daughter is now based in California. The protagonist of *Faces in the Moon* tells the implied reader that after her mother's funeral she 'canceled [her] classes in California and stayed in [her] mother's house a week' (187). The story of both novels is told through a series of flashbacks, which explore the daughter's childhood and upbringing, or 'raising', and eventually gain some understanding of and sympathy for the mother's personal history. In both cases the mother suffers from arthritis, as a physical expression of the harsh emotional and socio-economic conditions of her life story. The protagonist of *Faces in the Moon* resists the 'homing-in' plot; yet this is not the dynamic of the narrative in quite the same way as it is in *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*. Instead, the story is focused more intensely on coming to terms with the past, and in particular with the inheritance of female culture that her mother, her aunt and her great aunt have bequeathed her. The motive of this novel is to find ways to move forward, bearing the culture of Indian women as a functional, living tradition. Thus, when the narrator articulates the motif of the 'lighting-out' plot most clearly, it is still modified by the need to recover the maternal culture:

> My mother did not choose and so I had to. All her life she had wanted to run away, slip into some magical and quick life, and so I took the first man leaving town. I flew fast and free, only stopping, when I grew tired or unsure, to whisper 'Momma'. In hard times, I, too, searched the moon for a mother's face.
>
> (32)

Faces in the Moon differs from *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* in two significant ways. First, the protagonist, Lucie, has no knowledge of her father. She was raised by her mother and a succession of stepfathers, at least one of whom abused her. Second, the style is more lyrical and evocative; its technique is more fluid, since the narrative moves between the point of view of the protagonist expressed in the first person, and the point of view of the protagonist as the child named Lucie, described in the third person. Put more technically, one might say that the narrator shifts between presenting herself as an autodiegetic narrator (speaking in the first person as the adult Lucie about herself as a child) and as a heterodiegetic narrator (speaking in the third person about the child Lucie). It is clear throughout that these two narrators are synonymous, as the identity of Lucie and her life story is the same whichever point of view is taken. Thus the second narrative voice needs, paradoxically, to be described as intra-hetero(/homo)diegetic.[1] This means that there is no omniscient narrator in this novel; the point of view of the narrator emerges from the cultural formation of the protagonist that is the subject of the text's enquiry. Thus, although the novel does not spell out its *Bildungsroman* agenda in terms of its plot, it does subtly incorporate a choice for female literary culture and Indian women's culture of storytelling and survivance into its very texture.

Although *Faces in the Moon* is described as 'a novel' – the University of Oklahoma Press adopts a fairly common practice of American paperback fiction publishing by placing the descriptor on the front cover as well as the frontispiece – the reader learns from the back cover that:

> From this piece of her own family history, Bell has fashioned a first novel of impressive emotional power.

So the reader is informed that the novel is fashioned from history, that the text represents historical people and events. Its representation is both a matter of a sense of responsibility to depict the past accurately and a matter of *putting the case for* a marginalized social group. The implied author acts as advocate for Indian women. The reader is told something else, though; namely that the protagonist and the two narrative voices are versions of the author's self. Behind the story and behind the narrators' telling of it hovers the implied author who is implicated personally and utterly in the text. So, this is a telling of history that is also an autobiographical novel. Rather than gain authority by claiming the objectivity of historical scholarship, the implied author offers the implied reader a family history authenticated through the validity of personal testimony. That is to say, the personal witness corroborates and indeed is sufficiently motivated to research the documentary evidence. Even though the first person, autodiegetic narrator is someone who teaches classes in California, she is also a narrator and character who traces the continuation of the past in the contemporary situation as not only a recall of voices but also a perception of living presences.

'Raised on the voices of women'

The novel begins with a short section entitled 'Raising voices'. Its first sentence states: 'I was raised on the voices of women' (4). This alerts the implied reader to the intentional pun on 'raising': the child has indeed been subjected to *raised* voices in the course of her upbringing, but she has also benefited from the nurturing aspects of an oral tradition of women's storytelling. This first section blurs the boundaries between author, implied author and narrator of Lucie's story, since it both stands as authorial introduction and introduces us to the characters of the novel: her mother, great aunt Lizzie, Auney and the rest of the family:

> [T]hey come alone or together, sometimes carrying with them Uncle Jerry and Uncle Henry and Robert Henry. Sometimes they simply stand in the mortal light of their beloved Hellen, Lizzie's sister-in-law, Momma's mother, my grandmother. But always their real companion is Lucie, the child who sat and listened and stared into their stories, the child whose place I have taken.
>
> (6)

This way of describing the child both acknowledges identification with her – the adult author has taken the place of the child she once was – and expresses some sense of discontinuity with her past self. This explains the doubling of narrative voice; throughout the text the narrator recalls her childhood self and also views Lucie with a sense of distance, a sense of having left her behind and having moved on. For example, the heterodiegetic narrator describes Lucie's stepfather's sexual abuse of her as a four-year-old child: 'Her body lay lifeless beneath him as he pulled her cotton panties down' (68). Immediately this is described, the autodiegetic narrator intervenes to recall, in the first person, Lucie's response:

> *There was a flash of pain and the taste of vomit. In the same dizzying flash the pain took the fear. I know now that fear left me that morning. I began to plan to kill him. I kept my eyes down, I didn't look at him, but I watched for my chance.*
>
> (68)

A few pages further on, the heterodiegetic narrator describes Lucie's mother driving her down to leave her with her aunt Lizzie because her current partner strongly objects to the child. (The narrative implies that Lucie's mother abandons her to an elderly relative not out of any desire to protect the child from an abusive stepfather, but in order to satisfy her own emotional needs for a male partner. As is often the case in such situations, she is unable to perceive or acknowledge that her partner has violated her own daughter; her own emotional and psychological wounds prevent her from protecting her child.)[2] In the third person voice, the narrator describes the mother's abusive

behaviour as she blames the child for the explosion of foam when she opens a beer can while driving: 'Look what ya done' (72). Again the narration shifts from third person to first person (although the implied reader might feel disorientated by the first person narrator still referring to her childhood self as Lucie rather than by the first person pronoun 'I'):

> *Now when I recall this scene, I see it from the top of the Packard, moving pictures of my mother's slurred angry face, a beer can propped against the wheel, and Lucie pressed to the window, her legs dangling over the front seat. She knows her mother's anger is not for her but a confidence. She knows her mother's life will feed the red earth, continuing to confuse and take the lives she dreams, and there is nothing she can do but rage against the sacrifice. Already I know I was born here, but it will not give birth to me. I listen to my mother and plan where and how I will be born.*
>
> (74)

The transition from heterodiegetic to autodiegetic narrator occurs at the start of the paragraph. Within the paragraph this is further complicated by the shift from describing Lucie in the third person to eventually identifying with her in the first person: '*I listen to my mother and plan where and how I will be born*'.

The implied reader might first think that this narrative technique reflects the implied author's need to distance herself from her mother and her past. (She might also suspect that this need to gain distance from her childhood self is symptomatic of psychological strategies adopted by victims of childhood abuse: namely an inability to experience an embodied sense of the self. If you are out of your own body you cannot feel the pain it is subjected to, and this becomes a habit that survives its usefulness into adult psychosis.) This would tally with the implied author's statement about her relation to the female tradition of storytelling:

> I grew tired of living in the past and craved to find my stories in narratives of direction and purpose. I lived in the time of choice, where a person has only to believe to make it true.
>
> (5)

This sounds suspiciously like the declaration of intent to follow the 'lighting-out' plot and to leave the claustrophobic culture of women's kitchen talk behind. Yet this urge is immediately counterbalanced by the opposing draw of those Indian women's voices:

> I have lived in desire these four decades and practiced invention for just as long, but no matter how great my desire to run away from home, to live in a place and history free from secrets, I always take up my position at the table, in the early morning hours, and listen for those women's voices.
>
> (5)

So, in effect Bell modifies the 'homing-in' plot as Bevis categorizes it, to create a post second-wave feminist version that holds in creative tension the desire for feminist 'lighting-out' and the equally feminist need to recover a female tradition of storytelling. The return to the kitchen table to listen to the voices is combined with the achievement of distance and of self-fashioning, so that the contemporary narrator does not get pulled back into the cycle of abject behaviour she has witnessed in her mother and aunt.

Most significantly, the two years spent with her great aunt Lizzie permit the narrator(s) and implied author to keep in touch with a family history that reaches back two generations or more into the late nineteenth century. Compare this with Cecelia's flashback when she recalls that:

> [H]er father's father had been a young warrior in that last Indian war, fought the white people here in this very spot [. . .] Her father's parents had been among the first Indian people ever to live on a reservation, and they had been among those few who had survived the great smallpox epidemic when the government issued infected U.S. Army blankets to the Indian people.
>
> (51)

Even though Lucie has been raised by women and on women's voices, she too is put in touch with male family members who played a significant role in history. Even though she knows nothing of her father, she does learn the history of her maternal great-grandfather. Hers will never be a history 'free from secrets', since her mother is not forthcoming about her father's identity during her lifetime (see 79), and if she does reveal it in her life-writing ('My life') her daughter decides that 'this is not a story to pass on'.[3] The decision is taken with the chorus of women's voices in the background:

> *'You do the right thing', my mother wrote.*
> *'Do right', Auney said.*
> *'Don't wash your dirty linen in public', Lizzie warned. 'Ever' story ain't for repeating. A body don't need to tell every thing he knowed.'*
>
> (184)

Although Lizzie warns not to air all the family secrets, she is Lucie's conduit to the past. She tells her about her grandmother, Hellen, fills in details about her own mother's and aunt's early years that help to explain their sense of victimhood and inadequacy, and also tells her about the oral history she and Hellen learnt from her mother. This is described in reported speech as the old and ailing woman sits up all night with the convalescent child:

> "She talked about her grandma and grandpa, jist like it were yesterday and she just left their house, how they come to Indian territory with nothing more'n their backs could carry, and how her momma walked

> straight across the territory, stopping ever' so often to ask where the Cherokee had gone, to find her parents."
>
> (141)

Then a paragraph of italicized speech is interjected. The implied reader has come to expect this to indicate the voice of the autodiegetic narrator. Here it is ambiguous, since the language is that of Lizzie's speech patterns, but the message becomes not only what Lizzie says to the child, Lucie, but also what the implied author says to the implied reader:

> *She wanted us to member too, and I guess that's what I'm a-doing with you. History ain't nothing more'n membering. A man can't know who he is all by hisself. A woman neither. Both need something to member.*
>
> (141)

The implied author can thus speak through the voice of Lizzie's character and remind the reader of the relationship between individual and family history that is the subject of this novel.

To sum up: I have suggested that *Faces in the Moon* modifies the 'homing-in' plot. Associating it with the culture of marginalized and putatively inadequate women, the autodiegetic narrator desires to free herself from its confinement. Yet, the narrator, acting also as spokesperson for the implied author, acknowledges the pull of the oral tradition of storytelling, practised by Indian women in her family.[4] Thus the novel incorporates information gathered from oral history and family storytelling, and also celebrates this strong tradition of women's culture that forms the protagonist and paradoxically enables her to fashion her own identity, choosing '*where and how I will be born*' (74). The narrator merges this female cultural legacy with a white literary culture. This is implicit in the literary techniques employed in the text, and made explicit towards the end of the novel, when she considers the lighter that her aunt bequeathed to her. It becomes a talisman for the female culture she has inherited and bears with her:

> I kept that lighter in my tweed jacket for years, bringing Auney into classrooms and meetings, touching the handle as I spoke of Dickens and Eliot and Arnold's distant shore.
>
> (181–82)

Similarly, the protagonist merges the female oral histories of her family with objective, historical research.

This culminates in the final scene of the novel in the Oklahoma Historical Society room, where Lucie goes to gather the necessary documentary evidence to set the incomplete record straight and re-inscribe her grandmother into official history. It is the one moment in the text where a directly feminist sense of assertiveness and empowerment emerges; and as such is

delightfully humorous. And yet it recapitulates an underlying theme of the novel, namely that the women's tradition passes on strength and a sense of self-reliance as well as the abnegation that the young Lucie witnessed. The passage would be worth quoting, indeed performing, in full. Instead, I shall remind the reader of two sentences that emerge from and consummate the text:

> I am your worst nightmare: I am an Indian with a pen.
>
> (192)

> 'Don't mess with Indian women', I say. [. . .]
> 'Don't mess with Indian women', the voices whoop.
>
> (193)

The concluding sequence thus enacts another major theme of the novel, namely the relationship between the individual and tribal history, bringing them into confluence rather than framing the relationship as confrontational. This confluence is achieved by the individual self's acceptance and integration of her family's past into her present identity, not by returning to an earlier female identity.

I have discussed the doubling of the narrative voice that dramatizes the *dédoublement* of personality both in the protagonist and by implication in the author. It reflects the ambivalence of attitude towards tradition and the past; the need to identify with it and carry it on, while at the same time transforming the cultural legacy to enable the Indian woman as author/narrator to rebirth herself and move forward. In the next section I shall consider in more detail the effects of this narrative technique and the levels of time in the story and in the narration.

Narrative and textual strategies in *Faces in the Moon*

I want to continue thinking about the different narrative voices that are all that of the one narrator, and implicitly that of the author. This is a novel that has a sense of responsibility to history and tells the story of putting the record straight. In telling the story the historical record is then put straight. This is also a story about one daughter claiming and achieving agency, describing and inscribing her won authority to adjust historiography to make it more receptive to the life stories of Indian women. So the shifts in narrative voice cannot be put down to postmodern, textual playfulness for its own sake. They enact or *show* the implied reader the conflictual drives and tensions involved in integrating that past, abused and neglected self into the university professor with the authority and agency to challenge the historical record.

One moment in the text might serve to focus the conflicts and tensions. It centres on the photograph of Lucie as a child, dressed for the 'beautiful baby contest':

> Now, studying the picture, I can see that the coat had not fit well. Even her small four-year-old body was too large for the thing. The wonderful black cuffs ended well before the wrists, and the hem of the pink dress hung inches below the coat. But there they stood, in front of Momma's Packard, two girls proud of their purchase. On his first and final visit to Momma's house, Melvin examined the picture and declared, 'You were a ragamuffin!' with that one word the leopard coat left me. Flying into the past, a shameful thing, an unworthy thing, it caught on its false promise and I never wore it with pride again.
>
> Lucie looks straight into the camera, a pleased rebel in braids, leopard, and cowboy boots. I try to imagine myself into her, try to take her magic and stories into my tired life, but I cannot get beyond the image.
>
> *'Jump, jump, jump', I whisper.*
>
> But she stands at the edge, facing me.
>
> (61–62)

The present moment of the time of telling is in the narrator's midlife, the suggestion is that she might be in her forties, but no actual age is given in the text. The immediate situation is that she has received a phone call in California, where she lives and works (possibly in San Francisco – see 55) and has returned home to Oklahoma because her mother has suffered a stroke. The time of telling has its own series of events: coming back to her mother's house, going to the hospital to visit her mother, coming back and meeting the landlady again, spending some time in the house, sleeping fitfully, discovering her mother's barely literate memoir, then answering the phone to be told that her mother has died without regaining consciousness, and finally the funeral. This is the timeframe within which the double narrator recalls analeptically Lucie's formative years, especially those spent with Lizzie. Before the initial phone call there are reminiscences of her mother and Auney sitting storytelling in the kitchen. These are not attributed to any particular time of recall, so the implication is that they are a kind of continuous backdrop to the adult Lucie's consciousness. After the funeral, and 'several years after [her] mother's death' (190), the story finds completion in the visit to the Oklahoma Historical Society. Consequently, we can advance the premise that her mother's brief illness and rapid death precipitates an understandable need to face unresolved feelings about her mother, her raising and her adult identity. Memory, or 'membering', is an essential aspect of this process; and looking at photographs is a common strategy for dealing with grief, since it is an efficacious means to recover memories of the past.

The trouble with photographs is that while they put us back in touch with the past, they also freeze-frame isolated moments in history and confirm that the past cannot be recuperated. The autodiegetic narrator voices this phenomenon dramatically, when she says: 'I try to imagine myself into her, try to take her magic and stories into my tired life, but I cannot get beyond the image'. Rather than imbuing her with a sense of continuity with her past self,

the photograph of herself as a child accentuates the sense of distance and of difference between the four-year-old and the self-fashioned forty-something, who 'flew fast and free' away from the maternal home and from becoming caught in her and her family's past. The past, even though it is of herself, remains a photographic image. The passage tells us that there is a further reason for this. It's not made clear if Melvin is synonymous with 'the first man leaving town' (32), but the implied reader does know that she is now divorced. However, the next level of memory is of a previous time when she looked at the photograph, with him. His response creates a strong sense of shame for her past and a desire to leave it behind. Hence, she consigns back to the distant and unattainable past the memories that she had previously carried with pride: 'Flying into the past, a shameful thing, an unworthy thing, it caught on its false promise and I never wore it with pride again'.

The 'lighting-out' plot is seen to entail rupture between the individual and her past; and the implied reader might therefore expect the novel as memoir to seek to heal the rupture, by achieving a reconciliatory return to that past. Instead, as she scrutinizes her great aunt and her childhood self, the narrator maintains the unsettling distinction between herself now and herself as she was then. The strategy of using a first person, autodiegetic narrator, but still referring to herself as four-year-old child in the third person, perpetuates some of the liberating, expanding effects of the 'lighting-out' plot, even as she seeks to recover family history. As we have seen, this strategy is used throughout the extended section of flashback, or analepsis, clearly distinguishing between the identity of the four-year-old Lucie and that of the grown-up narrator. The technique allows the narrator to recall the past without being submerged in it. Time becomes spatialized when the narrator remembers Melvin's telling her that she talks in her sleep: '*I don't wanna travel back with them, all's I wanna do is be with you*' (62). Yet, having successfully freed herself from a shameful past, the narrator is then paradoxically enabled to revisit it, as the next section's title, 'Traveling back . . . ' immediately indicates. Having carefully positioned herself as free of her 'raising' and also as having moved on from the means of flight, the narrator does then undertake an extensive process of 'membering' history. Through analepsis, she 'travels back' to her childhood, and through attending very carefully to what she heard and saw then, she finally reaches a further destination, namely the historical record of her maternal grandmother and great-grandfather.

The way chapters are introduced emphasizes a sense of Western or industrial time, especially since they are often punctuated by crucial phone calls. Thus, for example:

> SOME PARENTS believe children have no memories. They hold their stories and lives until they are ready to return to them, with full chronology and interpretation. History is written in this complicity, an infinite regression of children forgetting and remembering. It takes a long time to remember, it takes generations, sometimes nations, to make

> a story. And sometimes it takes a call in the night before the story is known.
>
> Now, a lifetime later, when the phone rang at four in the morning [. . .]
>
> (22)

> WHEN LUCIE WAS FOUR YEARS OLD [. . .]
>
> (64)

> WHEN THE PHONE RANG I was still prowling through my mother's house.
>
> (168)

> SEVERAL YEARS after my mother's death [. . .]
>
> (190)

The initial meditation on history suggests that the narrator might well have preferred to bury the past, if it weren't for the catalyst of the phone call. The passage also indicates a sense of congruence between history, viewed as chronology, and story viewed as linear.

Moreover, with her mother's death, the autodiegetic narrator moves quickly to a sense of narrative closure:

> I had lived to know the end of the story. I never knew the beginning but I did know the end. I had outlived the clutch of those women's voices, and now there was only the detail of burial. I felt like running, fast and hard, as quick as the living, all the way back to California.
>
> (175–76)

Yet in so doing she falsely anticipates the ending. In the closing pages of this linear text, she discovers that she cannot simply feel ashamed of her mother and thankfully bury her. She still has to learn about her mother's 'Life' and comprehend it. Textual ellipsis preserves the unspeakable family secrets, yet the novel's ending suggests that Lucie has accepted the maternal bequest and integrated it into her own sense of identity. Even if she remains distinct from her family's past, the technique of narrative *dédoublement* also suggests a resolution of conflict, or at least a truce. Despite the extensive use of analepsis, or indeed because of it, Western time predominates throughout the novel. And yet there are moments when the narrator merges with her past, suggesting a more cyclical sense of history than that indicated by the meditation on the photograph. This can be effected by the interjection of the autodiegetic narrative voice during the heterodiegetic narration,[5] but it is also enacted by the recurrent presence of the ghosts of family history in the time of telling. I consider these moments of ghostly presence in my next and final section.

Ghosts Dance: textual rituals of 'membering'

The Ghost Dance religion was a mixture of tribal and Christian beliefs. The basic belief was that if its adherents danced in a certain ritual fashion, for example for four nights in a row and dressed in white robes, all the ancestors would return. Not only that, but the fellow beings such as buffalo would be restored to the fourth world.[6] There were variants on the detail of this story. Some believed the resurgence would arrive as a great wave moving across the continent, sweeping all the white men and their world before it to a death by cosmic drowning. Others believed that when the ancestors returned they would help rid the land of the white man and his Western culture. Underlying all the versions of the Ghost Dance religion was a deep-seated, tribal belief that entities that 'died' were not lost forever but would re-emerge. This was often conceptualized in terms of there being a number of worlds prior to this, the fourth (or fifth) world. The dead, whether warriors killed in battle or buffaloes slaughtered indiscriminately for their hides and for specific delicacies such as their tongues, had merely gone down to a prior world to await their time of return. Western culture exists in two distinct dimensions, those of time and space. Exactly how the two intersect in our lives is a matter of scientific conjecture. The notion of prior worlds, imagined spatially, overcomes the conceptual awkwardness of trying to conjure or juggle two different types of dimension and make them converge in our consciousness. Before the advent of Western notions of clock time and chronology, it has been suggested that Native Americans existed with a different sense of the self's position in the universe.[7]

I have suggested thus far that *Faces in the Moon* exhibits the characteristics of a linear narrative. After all, analepsis can only function in a text when a strong sense of the difference between present and past is established. Or so one might plausibly argue. Yet, what happens when we as readers attend more to the texture of this text, including its strategic use of allusion, ellipsis and metonymy? These literary devices are more often associated with the short story, and contribute to an intensity of storytelling not achievable in the extensive plotting of the conventional novel. And one might indeed argue that *Faces in the Moon* expects the implied reader to respond to it in much the same way as she might to a short story; and that it affects that reader accordingly.

The central, unifying metonymy is that of 'faces in the moon'. The moon fulfils a similar function to that of the prior, third world in tribal and Ghost Dance religious beliefs systems. It is a location where the ancestors, and also former versions of the self, wait in the belief that they will return to the self in a recuperative mode. The finality of the linear view of history that the text seems to subscribe to, especially as the narrator espouses the 'lighting-out' and moving-on plot, is thus counterbalanced by a far more cyclical sense of history, where the stories can always circle back and return. The narrator thus implies that she fools herself when she thinks she can 'outrun' the Indian women of history:

> On clear full nights, I have seen Grandma's or Lizzie's face in the moon. Sometimes, my mother's face floats across it. If I'm lucky, I can make out Lucie, squinting down at me and waiting, like a patient memory, for my claim.
>
> (6)

Given the connotations of 'claim' within an American Indian context – e.g. staking a claim, claiming an allotment, etc. – this central image expresses history not in terms of time, but in terms of spatiality. The significance of 'traveling' then comes into focus. The text focalizes a number of journeys or instances of ground covered. History becomes motion: travelling from Lucie's mother's house to Lizzie's; travelling back to her mother's house; Robert Henry journeying between Georgia and Oklahoma; Lizzie's great-grandmother and great-grandfather journeying to Indian territory, etc. Therefore, the implied reader should not be too surprised when the '*faces* in the moon' travel between this location and the maternal, domestic spaces.

This happens initially in the chapter where the time of telling is indeterminate, prioritizing a continuous remembering over focusing on a specific moment in time when 'membering' is in response to a particular catalyst. However, the reader is told the time of story, in so far as we are told that Lucie is about ten years old at the time.[8] The act of women's storytelling accompanies, perhaps invites, the advent of the ghost:

> The kitchen curtain flapped. Momma went to close the window and found it shut tight.
>
> (14)

The grown sisters tell the story of their own childhood, as they used to gaze into the moon and talk to their deceased mother, Hellen, 'like she could hear us'.

> 'You member, Grace, what she used to tell us?' Momma and Auney laughed, and I saw Lizzie turn from her work at the sink and almost smile.
>
> (18)

This apparition is only seen by the ten-year-old Lucie, not by her mother and aunt. The grown women continue to joke about 'faces in the moon':

> Then Momma laughed and said, 'Used to be we believed Indians went to the moon when they passed on'. The joke passed through Momma's face before she spoke. 'What y'all think? We gonna make it to the moon?'
>
> (19)

However, even as they joke, the young girl discloses inadvertently that the female ancestors have visited her from there:

'Ya member, Rozella?'

'I member.'

'I remember.'

Momma laughs, Auney stops mid-draw on her cigarette, 'You weren't even born. How can you member?'

'I do remember.'

My mother looks at me. The kitchen curtain flaps above my head. Finally, she says, 'You musta dreamt it'.

'Dreamt it.'

(19)

With the flapping of the curtain, we assume that Lizzie departs again, or perhaps warns Lucie to cover her tracks.

While this incident is still fresh in the implied reader's mind, the narrator describes a similar visitation, this time in the present time of telling that prevails through the main part of the novel (28). However, whatever the implied author might know about the identity of the little woman – 'Cherokee, maybe' – who asks if they are still killing Indians in the Oklahoma State Indian Hospital, the narrator doesn't realize until the end of the novel (but soon after in the chronology of the time of telling) that she has seen another ghost:

There is a knock on the door. I open it, and standing before me is the small Indian woman I saw at the hospital, a red shawl draped over her tiny shoulders. I smell sage burning and wait for her to speak.

'How're ya doin', Sugar?'

I touch her shoulder and watch as she passes me.

Mabel comes in, full of chipper, in pedal pushers and red lips. She's carrying a plate covered with a kitchen cloth, her famous cinnamon rolls. I look around the corner of the door for the other woman and look back at Mabel.

(176)

Again, the apparition of the ghost is marked by textual humor. There is a farcical aspect to this game of ghostly hide and seek that expresses jarringly the mix of emotions the narrator is experiencing immediately after the news of her mother's death.

Narrative humor is also evident in response to the various ghostly visitations around the time of the narrator's mother's death. Some of this humor can only work for the implied reader retrospectively, since it involves her already knowing about the four-year-old Lucie's learning to 'shoo' away the chickens pecking at her shoes. At the time of telling about the circling presence of Momma, and possibly also Lizzie and Auney, the first-time reader has not yet heard this story. By implication, this is yet another text that has to be read circularly for the reader to fully 'get' it:

> I looked around the kitchen and glanced into the living room. Something was there. Something had moved, rearranging the air and space around it. I walked into the bedrooms and returned to the kitchen. I was not alone. Some heaviness hung and waited, around the corner, behind a door. I felt it waiting to surprise. I opened the kitchen window. Shoo, I said. Go on, go on. I went into the living room and opened the windows. I felt it circling through the house, slamming against the windows, as it fought to stay close.
>
> (47)

In this sequence, the appeal to the ghost is reiterated, but to no avail:

> Go on . . . shoo! I keep my eyes down and wish her away. [. . .]
> Go on . . . shoo!
>
> (48, 51)

A few pages further on the ghost of her mother materializes, 'a very fleshly ghost':[9]

> *Whispers and movement wake me in the middle of the night. A large fat pink man stands just inside the opened door. My mother is in front of him. In the moonlight I see her large nude ass and the roll of fat hanging on her hips. She is whispering, something urgent and desperate. I hear her ask, 'The car payment's okay this month?' The pigman grunts. A breeze comes through the door and blows the smell of their sweat and whiskey into my corner. Momma comes and lies next to me on my pallet. I pretend to be asleep.*
>
> (59–60)

Somehow the implied reader knows that Lucie has not just 'dreamt it'.

The appearance of ghosts in the material 'fourth world', both in the time of story and in the time of telling, adds to the sense of authorial and narrative ambivalence in relation to Indian women's culture. Yet, it also emphasizes how inevitable and unavoidable that legacy is for the contemporary, so-called 'assimilated' Indian woman. She is not asked to romanticize Indian identity, and the text works hard to disperse any desire on the part of a non-Indian reader to do so. And yet, the narrator recognizes the strength of these ghostly presences, and the strength that they can confer on her:

> As far back as I can remember, I belonged to a secret society of Indian women, meeting around a kitchen table in a conspiracy to bring the past into the present. I listened, their stories settling forever in my blood, and I know the stories were told and told not for carrying but for keeping.
>
> (56–57)

The recurrent use of the colloquial or dialect 'membering' for remembering

acts as a pun that reinforces the various meanings here. The act of remembering draws the individual into the tribe, as she becomes a 'member' of it. It is represented as not just an intellectual but a material process of reincorporating the fragmented body of women's history; and it is experienced as corporeal by the individual narrator, who will carry the stories in her blood. By the end of the novel, the narrator, however reluctant she might have been during the time of telling Lucie's story, has become the keeper of the stories; indeed she also carries them with her. They have become assimilated into her identity, and as such she is both a distinct individual and the beneficiary of tribal women's secrets, as the ending enunciates:

> I walk through the door into the corridor and up the stairs. I hear steps above and below, small quick steps, moving with the force and lightness of ghosts. Women's voices crowd around me, remembering and clucking and giggling over his scared pink face.
>
> 'Don't mess with Indian women', the voices whoop.
>
> And I hear Auney say, slow and pleased, 'Naw, I sure wouldn't wanna do that'.
>
> (193)

Conclusion

In these two chapters I have discussed two novels that have not achieved the status of canonical texts, yet do exhibit major characteristics of novels by Native American women. They both deal with questions of individual and tribal identity. They both question and investigate the place of history in the world of the contemporary, urban, assimilated Indian woman. They both find framing devices that focus the narrator/protagonist's need to remember her life and the life of previous generations of her family. And they both use the narrative strategy of extensive analepsis, or flashback, to convey the balance between 'traveling back' or remembering the past and determining that it's 'time to get on down the road' (Hale 161). They both testify to the significance of 'home' in mixed-blood narrations, while challenging the somewhat static paradigm that Bevis' homing-in plot suggests. As with the work of Silko and Hogan, these Native American women writers call for a kinaesthetic and transformative conception of culture and of literary text. They may well be representative of further novels by women that seem to need to combine elements of feminist *Bildungsroman* with elements of Native American culture and literature.[10] In the following chapters I shall consider in more depth the ways in which the homing-in plot has been deployed and transformed across a range of twentieth-century novels.

10 Homing in

Revisiting the paradigm

> Nature is 'home', then to Native Americans in a way exactly opposite to its function for Boone. Nature is not a secure seclusion one has escaped to, but is the tipi walls expanded, with more and more people chatting around the fire. Nature is filled with events, gods, spirits, chickadees, and deer acting as men. Nature is 'house'.
>
> (Bevis 602)

Introduction

Bevis argues that Native American novels work from a tribal ontological premise, whereas the Western reader prioritizes individualism and American self-reliance in his (or her) very different ontological assumptions.

> These books suggest that 'identity' for a Native American, is not a matter of finding 'one's self', but of finding a 'self' that is transpersonal and includes a society, a past and a place.
>
> (585)

However, the use of the novel form mitigates the strength of this argument, since techniques of characterization suggest the individuality of the protagonist to the implied reader. Indeed, it is one of the techniques central to the novel that ensures that the reader is drawn into the text and keeps on turning the pages. Even *Ceremony* combines the ritual artistic elements of Navajo sand painting and chantways with a more 'psychological' depiction and interpretation of character. While it is appropriate to note that individual characters exist within a social context, tribal affiliation and kinship identity are not simple issues easy of resolution in these novels. The sheer variety of post-war Native American fiction indicates that there is not one pan-tribal past, nor is there one pan-tribal identity to be worked out singly and conclusively. Rather it bears testimony to the diversity of indigenous cultures' responses to US modernity, and refutes the tendency to synthesize and to make generalizations about pan-tribal ontology and culture.

Bevis' essay has dated quite rapidly.[1] Yet it remains the classic description

of a recurrent plot motif in a number of novels by, or about, Native American or mixed-blood protagonists. So some of its conceptual structures are helpful, although one needs to problematize and modify a number of its assertions. I shall discuss three novels that arguably conform to the paradigm it defines. I return to Silko's *Ceremony*, which Bevis also discusses. Before that, I look at a novel by the non-Indian author, Frank Waters that uncannily fits the paradigm. Then, I shall complete this train of investigation by considering Louis Owen's *Dark River*, which could be described as subverting or parodying the paradigm.

Accepting that tribal definitions of 'being' differ from Western ones, the Western reader can still read with comprehension, since these novels are written not only to delight but also to teach the responsive, implied reader. It would be a gesture of inappropriate cultural imperialism to assume that mixed-blood novelists are fixed in a static tribalism than has remained unchanged since Edward Curtis' day. Mixed-blood narrators by definition find themselves negotiating the untranslatability between cultures. Mixed-blood narratives educate their implied readers, and through diegesis and mimesis tell and show the transformative cultural spaces that they dwell in. Mixed-blood narratives substantiate Homi Bhabha's sense of cultural hybridity as testimony to the 'split-space of enunciation' that is '*inter*-national culture'. These considerations do not pertain when we read a novel about a mixed-blood protagonist by a white man. *The Man Who Killed the Deer* thus becomes the 'control' by which to assess the complexity of cultural coding present in the other novels under discussion. Silko makes the distinction between 'Indian books written by non-Indians' and 'books by Indian authors' (165). Bevis' thesis is nearest the mark when we consider the issue of the white *author* of a mixed-blood narration, rather than the presumed inadequacies of a generalized white *reader*. If we take *The Man Who Killed the Deer* as a test case, despite the authorial sympathy for the indigenous people expressed in its narrative, the reader experiences unease in reading this novel.[2]

Frank Waters' *The Man Who Killed the Deer*

> The landscape sits in the center of Pueblo belief and identity. Any narratives about the Pueblo people necessarily give a great deal of attention and detail to all aspects of a landscape. For this reason, the Pueblo people have always been extremely reluctant to relinquish their land for dams or highways. For this reason, Taos Pueblo fought from 1906 until 1973 to win back its sacred Blue Lake, which was illegally taken by the creation of Taos National Forest.
>
> (*Yellow Woman* 43)

Paradoxically, of the novels under discussion, Waters' 1942 novel fits Bevis' model most neatly. In Homi Bhabha's terms, we might say that Waters subscribes to an ideology of cultural diversity but not of cultural difference.

That is to say, his novel offers a 'mirror of representation' of a pueblo culture that he assumes to be 'a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People'. Bhabha argues that 'hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or "purity" of cultures are untenable', since 'all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation', that is, the 'Third Space'. Of the Third Space he writes:

> It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew.
> (208)

He cites Fanon as the basis of his argument: 'it is to the zone of *occult instability* where the people dwell that we must come' (cited 207). Waters' practice as a novelist is the antithesis of this, since at the levels of characterization, plot and style, he reasserts a sense of pueblo culture as having a primordial fixity and unity that it is desirable to return to. In this respect he demonstrates great consistency through his career, since the later *Book of the Hopi* (1963) still clings to this belief, despite the evidence it presents to the contrary.

The *Book of the Hopi* was written to try to preserve a disintegrating pueblo culture. Waters' intentions are of the best: to provide information and thus insight to 'representatives of the Indian Bureau, National Park and Forest Service, state and court officials, and private industry in their future dealings with the Hopis' (xiv). Yet conceptually he adopts a 'politics of polarity' (Bhabha 209). This is most clear in his sense of the tragic history not only of the Hopis and the US but also of 'the Indian and the White throughout all the Americas' (xiv). That use of the singular form of the noun should alert us to an underlying essentialism in his sense of racial otherness. As an ethnologist he clearly won the trust of the Hopi elders, and I do not mean to belittle the achievement of his project to record Hopi beliefs according to their traditions rather than according to white anthropologists' interpretations of them. Yet one has to concede that his style is late romantic and primitivist; and that this Europeanized, writerly prose is his contribution to the materials he gathered.

For example, in writing of the *kachina* he says:

> In its conception the Hopis have created a form for the everlasting formless; a living symbol unique in the world for that universal and multifold spirit which embodies all living matter; which speaks to us, as only the spirit can speak, *through the intuitive perceptions of our own faith in the one enduring mystery of life*. One cannot doubt its veracity when in a kiva we hear the strange falsetto yell announcing a presence above, feel the stamp on the roof, demanding admittance, and see coming down the

> ladder a spirit whose manifested form has never been glimpsed among the figures of this mortal world.
>
> (168, my emphasis)

In *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, Waters anticipates his specific, informed exposition of Hopi culture with a remarkably similar representation of pueblo beliefs. Take for example an ambiguous exchange between Palemon, a traditionalist, and the mixed-blood protagonist, Martiniano. I say ambiguous since the text resists telling the reader whether Palemon articulates his compassionate feelings or communicates them non-verbally. The italicized address is supposedly 'silent', yet Martiniano responds to its accusation that he lacks a faith that will set him free. Here Palemon propounds his belief:

> *You see, it is like this. I am mortal body and I am immortal spirit; they are one. Now on this earth I am imprisoned for a little while in my mortal body. This gives me no discomfort; I have learned its needs and limitations and how to supersede them.*
>
> *Now I, in this mortal body, am imprisoned in a form of life – that of my tribe, my pueblo, my people. Nor does this give me discomfort; I have learned its needs and limitations also and how to supersede them. For as my body blends into my tribe, my pueblo, so this greater form blends into the world without – the earth, the skies, the sun, moon, stars, and the spirits of all.*
>
> *I have faith in my body. I have faith also in this form of life which is my greater body. How then can I object to its demands also? So I feed it with faith; I am obedient to its coarser needs; I lighten its burden by prayer-dance and ceremonial.*
>
> *Now if I quarreled with my body, my spirit would not be free. Now if I quarreled with my greater body, my spirit would not be free. But by existing harmoniously in each, I am free to escape them for my greatest need – to become one, formless and without bounds, inseparable from the one flowing stream of all life.*
>
> (52)

'[T]he one enduring mystery of life', '*the one flowing stream of all life*', across two decades the syntax and the religious idea remain remarkably consistent. The difference is that in *Book of the Hopi*, the comment is authorial, as Waters interjects a sense of how he responds as a white man to Hopi ceremonial forms. In *The Man Who Killed the Deer* this is presented as tribal belief felt or articulated by a member of the Pueblo who accepts tribal rather than individual identity. Stylistically, this is free, direct discourse – 'direct discourse shorn of its conventional orthographic cues' (Rimmon-Kenan 111) – substantially this is Waters' Westernized interpretation and advocation of a non-specific, synthetic and romanticized version of pueblo belief systems. As a character, Palemon becomes here a spokesman for the authorial plot; telling or silently communicating the dilemma that Martiniano has to face and resolve during the course of the novel:

> *Now you, my friend, have your mortal body also, and are at peace with it. You too have a greater body, your form of life. It is not mine, for our old ways you reject; nor is it the Government's, the white man's, for you reject it also; but one you must have. Who knows which is best? They are all the same. All are merely shells of life. But they must be lived within harmoniously to be free. For only when there is no sense of imprisonment in form is the substance of the spirit able to overflow and become one with the flowing stream of all life, everlasting, formless and without bounds.*
>
> *Forgive me, my friend. Do you see what you lack? Not a form of life, for there are three for you to choose from: our old ways, the white man's new ways, or your own which may be part of both or newer still. You only lack a faith in one of them. The faith that will set you free from bitterness and envy and worry. That will free your spirit into a formless life without bounds, which will overflow and taste of all life.*
>
> (52–53)

To draw on a vocabulary of form and formlessness, and to invoke the concept of 'shells of life', permits the implicit author, barely concealed behind the silent utterance of Palemon here, to move to posit a universal spirit that is a force for homogenization of religious belief. This conceptualization also figures as an erasure of difference in cultural identity except as a *surface* difference.

Repeatedly in *Book of the Hopi* Waters speaks of the 'Hopi Road of Life' and even of 'evolutionary progress on the Road of Life' (230). This ideological need to reframe the cyclic nature of pueblo rituals and belief systems into an evolutionary progress or type of religious quest narrative is also evident in *The Man Who Killed the Deer*. Against the backdrop of the pueblo ceremonial year, Martiniano finds himself in a three-part plot that will end in the re-establishment of his spiritual harmony with the Pueblo. The novel ostensibly fits the structure of the homing-in paradigm by adhering to its characteristic plot, yet misfits it, by othering the tribal identity it purports to sympathize with. Issues of authorial intentionality are always tricky, but I would contend that the author unintentionally translates the tribal and the pueblo culture, for which he evidently feels great personal and political sympathy, into a Westernized and romanticized version. Vizenor has theorized this typical move of Western culture, describing it in *Manifest Manners* as the production of simulations of the white man's antiselves.[3] Paradoxically, in attempting to evoke an originary pueblo culture and tell the story of its continuing relevance and vitality in the twentieth century, Waters produces a manifest simulation, that bespeaks his own spiritual need for the primitive more clearly than it enunciates the transformational continuance of tribal identity.

The time of story is approximately twenty months, commencing one October, following the ceremonial and 'natural' year through two Christmases, or winter solstices, to end the following June, around the time of the summer solstice. Time is described both according to the Western,

Catholic calendar, marked by the important festivals of El Dia de los Muertos, Christmas and Easter; and also according to an indigenous lunar calendar with its accompanying pueblo tribal ceremonies. Since the pueblo is not named, it is futile to attempt to assess the authenticity of the rituals and ceremonies depicted. On the one hand the text implies that this is a fictionalized version of Taos Pueblo, since the recurrent theme of each stage of the plot is that Martiniano's actions precipitate yet another confrontation between the tribal elders and the Indian Agent, Strophy, in which the elders reiterate their demand to have their blue Dawn Lake restored to their rightful ownership. On the other, many of the rituals described are remarkably similar to those described in the later *Book of the Hopi*, and much of the imagery around Martiniano seems to draw on Hopi clans' iconography, in particular the significant deer/snake interrelationship. One can only conclude that the unnamed Pueblo is a synthetic fiction, and that the nearby town of Oreja, which has been constructed on disputed land, is also a fiction.[4]

Taos Pueblo waited until 1973 for final restitution of its sacred Blue Lake, but it did gain a fifty-year use permit similar to that described by Waters. The historian, Peter Iverson, comments:

> Earlier in the twentieth century, the federal government had granted a fifty-year use permit for Blue Lake to the pueblo, but had maintained control of the lake as part of Carson National Forest. The multiple use philosophy of the Forest Services caused lands in Carson to be scarred by logging; the idea of religious privacy or sacred space for the Native people had not enjoyed a high priority.
>
> (139)

Waters has his fictionalized pueblo hear the news of the permit to use its blue Dawn Lake by the end of the novel. Thus his plot seems to imitate and represent history very closely. He cannot be blamed for not anticipating that the terms of the permit would produce an unsatisfactory outcome as far as the people were concerned. In other respects I have reservations about his treatment of history in this text. Published in 1942, the novel makes no mention of America's entry into World War Two in 1941. Both stylistically and referentially, the novel feels as if it is held in stasis, some time prior to 1940. The non-specific, synthetic depiction of pueblo culture contributes to the primitivism and romanticism of the text. This is particularly the case as regards the erasure of the specificity of language as a vehicle for culturally specific formations and comprehensions.[5]

As Gary Witherspoon's work on the Navajo demonstrates, through a study of language one can arrive at an informed understanding of the underlying cultural concepts that form a people's worldview. Waters' collaboration with the Hopi Elders in the early 1960s is still expressed in what a postcolonial critique might describe as the language of the colonizer or the discourse of the centre.[6] The style and ambience of *The Man Who Killed the Deer* even more

clearly exemplifies – to borrow the formulation of Terry Goldie – a type of 'imperialist discourse [that] valorizes the colonized according to its own needs for reflection' (233–34). As Taylor and Sturtevant point out in a discussion of Native Americans of the Southwest:

> No culture is static, even though we tend to portray indigenous peoples as homogenous and frozen in time and space.
>
> (87)

Although Waters' plot depends on the real and fictionalized history of the region and the crisis it precipitates in the life of the protagonist and of the Pueblo, I would argue that, in terms of its textuality, his novel is specular throughout, however well-intentioned he is in treating his indigenous subject.

Martiniano is 'mixed-blood' in that Waters describes him as a mixture of Apache and non-specific pueblo ancestry. The description comes at the start of the first analepsis and offers a racialized explanation of his character traits:

> He was part Apache – those tall broad-shouldered men with great, black, high-crowned Stetsons who came from their western range to gorge mutton at ceremonial times. Only the wildness showed sometimes in his eyes, but their indomitable stubbornness was bred into his spirit.
>
> This wary freshness implanted in his gentle Pueblo strain had made him a very sharp boy. Smart, said the Government agent who had picked him for away-school.
>
> (35)

Martiniano is depicted as experiencing a double displacement on his return from boarding school. He has not been brought up and initiated into tribal ways, he is punished for continuing to act as an assimilated Indian within the tribal context. Although the extra-heterodiegetic narrator tells us that his predicament is caused by having been chosen for 'away-school', the texture of the narrative belies this and focuses far more on his stubborn individualism. The dramatic tension is at the level of his conflictual character, wherein the self-reliant individualism wars with the ethos of tribal communalism. The conflict is resolved by his going 'back to the blanket' by the end of the novel, and thus confirming a view of the American Indian as being about to vanish from a progressive sense of history. If history is a 'metonym of the present' (cited Krech 26), then this white-authored, homing-in plot becomes a vehicle for writing American Indians out of a dynamic, ongoing cultural present.

The implicit author, or again perhaps the real author unintentionally, imposes a white, conceptual framework on the plot by basing it on the figure three, rather than the more usual four of American Indian cosmology. Palemon outlines Martiniano's dilemma as his having three forms of life to

choose from, and Martiniano commits three major acts of transgression against tribal and government laws before his 'conversion' back to the wisdom of the old ways. He kills a deer out of season and is caught in the act by Forest Rangers, who wound his head badly and leave him for dead; he joins others in the community who no longer fully espouse the pueblo ways to form a branch of the Native American Church whose sacrament is peyote; he fights with a Mexican (*sic*) shepherd who leads his sheep onto his newly cleared land and shelters in his newly cleaned house even though Martiniano knows it is part of the land granted his family from the treaty dating back to the time of Spanish colonial rule. There are other minor acts of transgression or defiance, such as driving his cart across the pueblo square at 'the time of staying still' (63). However, these provide thickness of texture rather than function as major plot events; it is the three main acts of transgression that are recapitulated and focalized through Martiniano's fantasy:

> Swiftly he built up the fantasy of his immense pride. One time long ago, the stories would tell, the pueblo was in trouble. The people's land, their Dawn Lake, was taken from them. White people and Mexicans intruded on their privacy. Then something happened. There was a poor young man whom nobody liked. Now this Martiniano killed a deer, was beaten and punished. But his act roused the old men about their Dawn Lake. A strange religion came. It was called the Peyote Road. This Martiniano ate this peyote, and was punished for it. But he learned it was no good, and his action turned his people back to the good simple life. Now something else happened. This Martiniano beat a Mexican sheep-herder off his land, the mountain slope that rose to Dawn Lake. He was whipped. But he took his whipping like a man for he had roused all the people to desire back their land. Ai! For all these he was fined, he was punished, he was whipped. No one spoke to him. He was called Martiniano the Trouble-Maker.
>
> Life shows as the still surface of deep blue lake. But the impact of a thrown pebble causes ripples that beat upon all shores – that affect all men's lives, that travel from pueblo to pueblo, to Washington itself. And his was the hand which had cast the stone. This poor young man who in his wisdom and strength of will defied all men, suffered trouble, and so saved his people. And now he is no longer known as Martiniano the Trouble-Maker. He is a great man, a savior – he who in legend is known as the Man Who Killed the Deer. [. . .]
>
> (148–49)

In the first paragraph cited it is quite clear that the implicit author sets his hubristic protagonist up for the consequent lessons in humiliation. Yet in the next paragraph the distance established by authorial irony is diminished by the way in which the figurative style blurs the distinction between Martiniano's self-aggrandizing reverie and the narrator's romanticized plot.

The main lesson in humiliation (or peripeteia) strikes me as Lawrentian in nature, since it turns upon an essentialist and primitivist rendering of male/female relations and the ritualist sense of the cosmic nature of female power. It is worth reminding ourselves how unashamedly Lawrence essentializes and 'others' American Indians of the Southwest when he writes about New Mexico. Waters comes close to a Lawrentian discourse as he describes Martiniano's pregnant wife, Flowers Playing, dancing the sacred part of a Deer Mother:

> They gave way before her as the male ever gives way to the female imperative. They tried to break free of the circle only to be irresistibly pulled back as man in his wild lunges for freedom is ever drawn back by the perpetual, feminine blood-power from which he can never quite break free. And all the time they uttered their strange, low cries, the deep, universal male horror at their submission. Out of them it welled in shuddering sobs of disgust, of loathing and despair, as still they answered the call. On all fours, as the undomesticated, untamed, archaic, wild forces they represented, impelled to follow her in obedience to that spiritual cosmic principle which must exist to preserve and perpetuate even their resentment.
>
> The two Deer Mothers kept on dancing; impersonal, impassive, with lowered eyes, as if oblivious of the power fatefully bestowed upon them as of the obedience they commanded.
>
> Martiniano watched them with a hypnotic horror. He felt himself cringing before that manifestation of the blind force which had pulled him back from his own strivings toward a new and resplendent faith – back into that warm flow of human life of which he was still a part.
>
> (174–75)

Compare Lawrence writing about 'Indians and an Englishman' where the specularization of the Indian is blatant:

> We do not need to live the past over again. Our darkest tissues are twisted in this old tribal experience, our warmest blood came out of the old tribal fire. And they vibrate still in answer, our blood, our tissue. But me, the conscious me, I have gone a long road since then. And as I look back, like memory terrible as bloodshed, the dark faces round the fire in the night, and one blood beating in me and them. But I don't want to go back to them, ah, never. I never want to deny them or break with them. But there is no going back. Always onward, still further. The great devious onward-flowing stream of conscious human blood. From them to me, and from me on.
>
> I don't want to live again the tribal mysteries my blood has lived long since. I don't want to know as I have known, in the tribal exclusiveness.

> But every drop of me trembles still alive to the old sound, every thread in my body quivers to the frenzy of the old mystery. I know my derivation. (197)

To read Lawrence is to remind ourselves how deeply embedded a white, primitivist ideology was in modernist authors, including those who were welcome guests at Mabel Dodge Luhan's Taos ranch. This particular essay was written in the autumn of 1922, but the deep structures of the imagery and thought are remarkably similar to Waters' description published in 1942. There is the same sense of the pull of the 'blood-power', the discourse of body tissue and blood bearing the tribal imperative. Elsewhere in Lawrence this is strongly connected to the female, as it is here in Waters. Against this is the image of the individual, civilized man, who still feels the draw of this 'old mystery' but who resists it, in order to progress further along the path of civilization. Considered within the context of Lawrentian thought, Martiniano's 'own strivings toward a new and resplendent faith' reads as his attempt to also follow that path and break free of the retrograde pull of the tribal consciousness and 'the feminine blood-power'. But, since he is Indian, albeit mixed-blood, that way forward is not available to him. Read as a white man's plot, this story of homing-in is not one of triumphant reconciliation, or of growing in wisdom and learning to appreciate the true value of tribalism and to subscribe to its discipline. Rather it is a racist and colonial plot to relegate the pueblo community and even the mixed-blood members of it to a regressive past, to write them out of a significant future. True the story champions the historic restitution of Taos Pueblo's Blue Lake, and could be read as an activist's manifesto, but this is not how it is framed.

This will become apparent if we look at two passages towards the end of the novel, where 'the strange white trader' Rodolfo Byers focalizes Martiniano and the pueblo people.[7] It seems to me that the implicit author voices his assessment of Martiniano's going 'back to the blanket' and of the meaning of their legal victory through this character. First, a passage where Martiniano is working for Byers, and the trader notices that the Indian has knocked the heels off his worn boots – a sign that he has decided to revert to traditional ways:

> He remembered what had happened when this Martiniano killed that deer. [. . .]
>
> There is a difference between races, he thought. A difference down to the tissues, nerves, integuments and bone structure, the chemical composition of the blood stream, in the very rhythm of life. Who really knew what this race was? A race that had raised pyramids by ways unknown to man. Which had evolved a time calendar more accurate than the one now in use, and were trepanning skulls while the barbarian tribes of Europe were still breaking theirs with stone hammers. A race whose tribes had overspread a continent and developed a civilization whose

> ancient mysteries still defied the probing of modern minds – and whose pitiful remnants still carried untouched the secret core of their inner life.
>
> What an appalling difference, really between this race and his own which had supplanted it. [. . .]
>
> Byers thought of the world of nature as the white man sees it; the sparkling streams and turbulent rivers as sources of potential electric power; the mountains gutted for the gold and silver to carry on the commerce of the world; the steel and iron and wood cut and fashioned, smelted, wrought and riveted from the earth to bridge with shining hulls the illimitable terrors of the seas – a resistless, inanimate world of nature to be used and refashioned at will by man in his magnificent and courageous folly to wrest a purpose from eternity. And yet what did he really know of the enduring earth he scratched, the timeless seas he spanned, the unmindful stars winking at his puny efforts?
>
> And he thought of the world of nature as the Indian had always seen it. The whole world was animate – night and day, wind, clouds, trees, the young corn, all was alive and sentient. All matter had its inseparable spiritual essence. Of this universe man was an integral part. The beings about him were neither friendly nor hostile, but harmonious parts of the whole. There was no Satan, no Christ, no antithesis between good and evil, between matter and spirit. The world was simply one living whole in which man dies, but mankind remains. How then can man be lord of the universe? The forests have not been given him to despoil. He is equal in importance to the mountain and the blade of grass, to the rabbit and the young corn plant. Therefore if the life of one of these is to be used for his necessity, it must first be approached with reverence and permission obtained by ritual, and thus the balance of the whole maintained intact.
>
> (197–99)

Next, the passage where Byers has read the newspaper reports of the Act of Congress to permit the tribe occupancy and use of the Dawn Lake and contested land for a period of fifty years:

> Old Sun Elk hobbled into the post for a nickel sack of tobacco. Byers slid it across the counter.
>
> 'Well, you got back your Dawn Lake!' he growled. [. . .]
>
> He was a little amazed at his first reaction, his intangible resentment. He had reconciled himself to view these Vanishing Americans as circus performers parading in remote rings for the benefit of gawking tourists, and himself as an old fogy, way behind times, and quickly going to pot. Now, like a condemned man reconciled to his fate, he was confused by receiving a sudden extension of freedom for fifty years. He realized that it would cover the rest of his lifetime. This post and his livelihood from it would endure. There would always be for him, as there always had been, the distant sound of a drum, the flicker of flamelight on dancing ghosts,

> the faces calm, dark and inscrutable that had surrounded him since childhood, and the impalpable mystery of their simple lives – the life to which he too was confirmed in the midst of the forest of steel and stone inexorably pressing upon him.
>
> Byers saw its falsity. There can be no oases in the desert of ever-shifting time, no idyllic glades of primitive culture in the forest of mankind, no ivory towers of thought. We are all caught in the tide of perpetual change. These pueblos, these reservations must sometime pass away, and the red flow out into the engulfing white. The Government had only postponed the inevitable. His resentment gave way to a faint sadness. The victory, even for the Indians, seemed a shabby makeshift.
>
> For it was predicated upon the differences between men, upon the outward forms of their lives, their ethnological behavior, and not upon the one eternally groping spirit of mankind. It was maintained by the white who was content to set the red apart in his tiny zoo, and by the red who with traditional secrecy and stubborn obduracy to change, himself held aloof. So both must sometime pass: the Indian with his simple fundamental spiritual premise untranslated into modern terms, and finally the white with his monstrous materiality.
>
> But perhaps there would still be time, thought Byers, to learn from these people before they pass from this earth which was theirs and is now all men's, the one truth that is theirs and shall be all men's – the simple and monstrous truth of mankind's solidarity with all that breathes and does not breathe, all that has lived and shall live again upon the unfathomed breast of the earth we trod so lightly, beneath the stars that glimmer less brightly but more enduringly than our own brief lives.
>
> (212–13)

Although Byers as focalizer thinks about the 'appalling difference' between the races, the style of these passages, the type of romantic and universalizing discourse that the implicit author favours, tends to erode cultural difference. It replaces it with the Lawrentian gesture that consigns the People to the status of Vanishing Indians at the same time as it laments nostalgically the passing of their primitive philosophy. In Lawrence this duplicitous and apparently contradictory move is starkly stated as he writes:

> The voice out of the far-off was not for my ears. Its language was unknown to me. And I did not wish to know. It was enough to hear the sound issuing plangent from the bristling darkness of the far past, to see the bronze mask of the face lifted, the white, small, close-packed teeth showing all the time. It was not for me, and I knew it. Nor had I any curiosity to understand it. The soul is as old as the oldest day, and has its own hushed echoes, its far-off tribal understandings sunk and incorporated.
>
> (197)

Lawrence argues, or rather simply assumes, that the white man's 'knowledge' of the red man – and here every single term should be in scare quotes – is visceral. The 'Red Indian' is primitive, and thus by definition a part of the civilized white man's 'far-off' past. Lawrence states this so baldly and so extremely, without any sense of the horror a reader might feel at such a racist and colonial discourse. This allows the reader to see the underlying ideological assumptions of a text such as Waters', which states the case more sympathetically and persuasively. Evidently there is at work in this piece an implicit paradigm of social evolution, a model of the civilized man as having progressed beyond the primitive, while incorporating traces and visceral memories of primitivism in not only his racial unconscious but also in his biological constitution. Hence, according to Lawrence, there is no need to know Athabascan, Keresan or Tanoan languages and cultures, since the civilized man 'knows' them as part of his incorporated prehistory.

A further characteristic of Lawrence's thinking, and again one that is applicable to Waters' text as well, is the typical intellectual move that converts cultural difference into cultural distance and then translates that difference in cultural space into a distance in linear time. In the paragraphs preceding that which I have quoted, Lawrence describes approaching an Apache kiva built from young trees, 'standing outside, beyond the entrance', and listening to the oral performance of an elder. He is told by a young Apache not to enter, not to cross the boundary into tribal, sacred space. His response is to claim in his address to Anglo readers – not in dialogue with the Apache – that 'the voice out of the far-off' is known to his soul, which has 'its far-off tribal understandings sunk and incorporated'. Inevitably, however sympathetic the white man may be, if he conceptualizes cultural difference as 'far-off past', the harmonious, holistic, ecological Indian is consigned to vanishing into a visceral prehistory. Thus, when Byers focalizes Martiniano on behalf of the author, he can only interpret Martiniano's return to the blanket as a regressive step, and the Pueblo's victory as a slight reprieve in the progress of history towards its civilized goal: 'We are all caught in the tide of perpetual change. These pueblos, these reservations must sometime pass away, and the red flow out into the engulfing white'. The paradigm of progress pre-empts entirely the potential, alternative model of differing cultural spaces co-existing with mutual, informed understanding of their different ideological premises. Even though Byers, and through him the author Waters, is critical of the exploitative, Western attitude towards the environment and natural resources, the tribal people are focalized and framed by a colonial perspective that renders them as fixed, pure and originary entities. Thus, paradoxically they are represented in the text as simulations that will inevitably be engulfed by historical progress.

In Waters' handling of it, the homing-in plot is a vehicle for erasing cultural differences. For the implicit author, the narrator and various characters all ignore the significance of culturally and socially constructed formations of reality and instead express in a romantic, universalizing

discourse the underlying reality of 'the one eternally groping spirit of mankind'. Byers may indeed be a mouthpiece for authorial views about the ecological Indian or twentieth-century noble savage, endorsing the recognition of animate Nature and preferring a primitivist perception of the cosmos before Good and Evil. Yet, even his sympathetic old fogeyism can only conceive of the white flood of civilization engulfing indigenous peoples in the inevitable march of progress. (In passing, I would remark that as one contemplates this social evolutionary and linear view of historical process, the countering tribal myth of the Ghost Dance Religion as heralding a vast wave to engulf all non-Indians and regenerate the land does not seem that much more incredible.) In his thinking, the Vanishing American has been given a fifty-year reprieve, but the sentence has not been and could not be revoked.

Waters is well-intentioned as an author, but several aspects of his novel undercut his good intentions and graphically illustrate his inability to move into an ambiguous and dynamic third space in his treatment of racial and tribal cultural identity. First, his tendency to think of race categorically and discretely means that at best he might be operating with a paradigm of cultural diversity, but that he can never overcome his categorizations to enter the third space where cultural differences converse on equal terms. Second, despite his express sympathy for the American Indian way of life, whether tribal or mixed-blood, he cannot escape from his own ideological, cultural assumptions, especially in subscribing to a linear and progressive sense of history as inevitable and universally applicable. Third, he is unable to enunciate tribal ontology, specifically tribal ways of perceiving the past, relating to place and belonging to society, since his authorial and narrative voice can only speak in a romanticizing discourse. All of these limitations in his analysis, his imagination and his enunciation contribute to the overwhelming impression that the novel is a systematic specularization of the Pueblo and its inhabitants. Sadly, this text does not really advance the People's cause for it cannot avoid othering them in its advocacy.

The absence of the real in the ruins of tribal representations

Using Vizenor's writing as a theoretic model and thus as an analytic tool is challenging. However, his method is vindicated by its usefulness in defining the problems a novel such as Waters' presents, as this passage from *Manifest Manners* suggests:

> The simulations of manifest manners are treacherous and elusive in histories; how ironic that the most secure simulations are unreal sensations, and become the real without a referent to an actual tribal remembrance. Tribal realities are superseded by simulations of the unreal, and tribal wisdom is weakened by those imitations, however sincere. The pleasures of silence, natural reason, the rights of consciousness, transformations of the marvelous, and the pleasure of trickster stories are

> misconstrued in the simulations of dominance; manifest manners are the absence of the real in the ruins of tribal representations.
>
> Those who 'memorialized rather than perpetuated' a tribal presence and wrote 'Indian history as obituary' were unconsciously collaborating 'with those bent on physical extermination', argued Ziff. 'The process of literary annihilation would be checked only when Indian writers began representing their own culture.'
>
> (8)

So, I want to bear this view in mind as I consider the image of the kiva in Waters' novel and its function in the homing-in plot.

In *Book of the Hopi* Waters describes the function of the kiva in the concluding ritual of the Hopi 'Mystery Plays' thus:

> The kiva symbolizes the body of the universe; hence this placement illustrates the various Emergences and routes of migration taken by the people coming to this land. But the ritual also symbolizes the spiritual uplift of man.
>
> (208)

In his interpretation, the kiva becomes a static symbol of a eulogizing myth, and the next move to describe the ritual as symbolizing 'the spiritual uplift of man' completes the process of describing the kiva and the ritual without a due sense of 'actual tribal remembrance'. The referent ceases to be the tribal worldview and slips into a Western religious ideology of 'spiritual uplift'. When the kiva is described near the start of *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, it becomes a static symbol of an othered, primitive culture:

> On his way through the pueblo to Palemon's house Martiniano always passed a kiva. The circular, soft adobe walls sinking like a womb into the dark resistless earth, with a ladder sticking out for men to enter by. The female symbol of fertility imbedded in Our Mother Earth. The Kiva. This was the Indian church. A form of life whose substance was passivity, not action, and which had no will to conquer, to even oppose. A creed of supplication and appeasement. And so when water was needed the people merely danced for rain instead of digging more ditches.
>
> (54)

The point of view of the implicit author intrudes here, especially in the scientific rationalism of the last sentence. Within the homing-in plot, the kiva symbolizes the traditional tribal culture that Martiniano feels alienated from, since he was sent to boarding school rather than to undergo the traditional initiation. Yet the reader senses that it is the author, not the character Martiniano, who focalizes the kiva in this passage.

The kiva continues to be an important plot element, as Palemon's son

enters it 'for a year and a half's instruction before initiation' (78). Waters commences the novel with a sense of mystery and mysticism, as Palemon senses Martiniano's silent cry for help from the mountainside after he has been caught and beaten by the Forest Rangers. In a reciprocal gesture, Martiniano senses that something has gone wrong with Napaita's initiation, and rescues him from the mountainside. The authorial logic is not that simple, however. For whereas it is a primitive, mystical intuition that saves Martiniano at the start of the novel, it is Martiniano's distance from the etiquette of initiation that permits him to act decisively, while the men in the kiva merely drum to call Napaita back:

> The kiva, each kiva, was now itself a vibrating drum. A single star visible through the aperture at the top quivered as if painted on the vibrous, skin-tight membrane of the sky stretched overhead. In the middle of the round floor, like a dot within a circle, was another symbol – a little round hole, the opening to the center of the world, the place of emergence. The circular walls quivered.
>
> (188)

Thus the tribal elders are represented as acting according to a cult of passivity and acceptance, which the reader is supposed to believe would have resulted in Napaita's death from exposure. Martiniano, on the other hand, flouts the rules of initiation to rescue him and bring him back to the kiva's mouth:

> Without waiting longer, he gathered the boy in his arms, clambered up into his saddle, and rode slowly back down to the pueblo. Napaita babbled feverishly. Martiniano closed his ears. He had stumbled upon a queer thing that belonged only to the old men of the kiva.
>
> This feeling of chance participation in something strange and secret still persisted as he approached the pueblo. On the snowy housetops an old man wrapped in white had taken his post as usual, but the underground drums were still beating. Martiniano rode slowly along the outside of the wall until he came to the opening nearest the first kiva. He hesitated until the plaza was clear of the first women who had come to fill their water jars. Then he clambered off his horse and carried Napaita to the kiva. There, very simply and without a cry to those within, he laid the boy down in the snow at the bottom of the ladder and walked back to his horse.
>
> (195)

In this scene, Martiniano participates in and respects something that he does not fully know nor understand. His interference alters the outcome of Palemon's son's initiation to suit a more sentimental, Westernized sensibility. Thus, the ending of the novel cannot be read as a real reaffirmation of tribal values and ways.

Although this ending reads superficially as the reintegration of the alienated,

acculturated Indian into his tribal origins, the narrative represents Martiniano as accepting the dominant myth of the Vanishing Indian in his decision to give his own son to the kiva for initiation:

> One must not forget one's beginning, thought Martiniano. And that was why he had consented to the adoption of his son into a kiva, with Palemon for the boy's godfather, his preceptor. Times were changing, and his son should know something of the old before he was confronted with the new.
>
> (215)

This is memorialization rather than perpetuation of tribal presence. It does not challenge the author's social evolutionary model, and it does not allow Indian writers to begin representing their own culture or to enter the historical and literary process in order to transform it and perpetuate it. Instead, this version of the homing-in plot, for all its apparent sympathy, relegates the pueblo Indian and the mixed-blood Indian to the formlessness of alienation or the unreality of simulation. Using *The Man Who Killed the Deer* as a 'control' text, we can now turn again to Silko's *Ceremony* for an example of cultural synthesis and transformation that genuinely enters that third space of inter-cultural imaginings.

11 Indian 'homing' as healing ceremony

> The Navajo intellectual style is one of dynamic synthesis.
>
> (Witherspoon 200)

Introduction

In his article, Bevis constructs his argument on the basis of six 'canonical' novels; namely McNickle's *The Surrounded* and *Wind from an Enemy Sky*, Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney* and *Winter in the Blood* – although *Fool's Crow* also gets a substantial mention – Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Silko's *Ceremony*. It is noteworthy that the two latter receive the least detailed commentary, possibly because Bevis favours social realist narratives. If one extrapolates from his argument the observations that he makes specifically about *Ceremony* and edits his prose to apply his more general statements to Silko's work, the resultant series of points is very clear but also revealing of the underlying premises of his argument:

- *Ceremony* tells of a wanderer in the white world coming home. In *Ceremony*, an Indian serviceman returns from Japan to the Southwest Laguna tribe, and slowly breaks from a pattern of drinking and madness to participate in a healing ceremony guided by an old medicine man, a ceremony that begins with a quest for cattle and ends with an amended story and rain for the desert land.
- Indian 'homing' is presented as the opposite of competitive individualism, which is white success, characterized in the novel by Rocky.
- The protagonist, Tayo, seeks a meaningful relation to a meaningful structure. He becomes a healthy man through accepted social ritual. Self-realization is not accomplished by the individual or by romantic bonding only; that would be incomprehensible.
- Tribal reality is profoundly conservative; 'progress' and 'a fresh start' are not *native* to America. Most of the western tribes shared a belief in a 'distant past'. Old Betonie is in touch with a tradition tracing from the distant past, and extends this connection to the young protagonist. Tayo succeeds because he finds a connected ancestor.

- No 'free individual' who achieves white success is really admired – not Rocky – and certainly the free 'mode of life' he has 'chosen' is not preferred to tribal context.
- To call Tayo back from the war an 'individual', implying all the weight of dignity, promise and law which is carried by that term in white culture, is misleading.
- The protagonist seeks an identity that he can find *only* in his society, past and place; unlike whites, he feels no meaningful being, alone. Individuality is not even the scene of success or failure; it is nothing.
- Tayo's mythic romance places his acquisition of crucial knowledge in a social [and family] context.
- The plot is regressive because Native American knowledge is regressive; the traditional elders of *Ceremony* teach the protagonist the only knowledge which proves useful in the book.
- 'I been there before' is a primary virtue. Both meaningful 'being' and meaningful 'knowledge' are supra-individual aspects of tribe.
- The novel comes from an inland west reservation and from a tribe not drastically displaced from its original territory or ecosystem. Place is not only an aspect of this work; place may have made it possible.
- Conversely, white disregard and disrespect for place is crucial in this book.
- The novel depicts an Indian coming home and staying home, but 'home' is not the 'house' of white heaven.
- The protagonist succeeds largely to the degree in which he reintegrates into the tribe, and fails largely to the degree in which he remains alone.
- The novel is a profound and articulate critique of modern European culture, combined with a persistent refusal to let go of tribal identity.
- Silko is not resurrecting archaic rituals for symbolic purposes, but telling of the pull of tribal identity, tribal despair, tribal pride.
- Silko is taken with the grand themes of sacredness and place.

In extrapolating and applying the points of his argument solely to Silko's *Ceremony*, aspects of Bevis' homing-in paradigm can seem categorical and rather too emphatic. However, the series of points reflects Bevis' thinking, and in particular underscores the fact that he conducts his argument in terms of: the plot, the protagonist, the novel (or the book), the author Silko, and the themes. Presumably this is why he avoids analysing *House Made of Dawn* and *Ceremony* in detail, since both these novels are, in the most basic meaning of the term, post-modern in their narrative structures and techniques. Bearing in mind the narrative strategies of Silko's text, including its construction around processes of transition and transformation that I discussed in Chapter Five, I would argue that we cannot simply read *Ceremony* by focusing on the protagonist and the plot. To do so would oversimplify the thinking of the novel, to use Bevis's preferred term, and the thought-creating activities of the implied author. In considering to what extent and in what manner this is a homing-in novel, we need to bear in mind the dialogic nature of the text,

where rituals, myths, narrative prose, modernist stream of consciousness, poetic clan stories, chantways and reservation/dirty realism all enter its polyphonic conversation.

The non-Indian reader can respond intelligently and sympathetically to mixed-blood narrations, and the novels educate the reader in relevant aspects of Native American culture that they deploy but which may be unfamiliar to her. A genuine meeting and inter-action can occur between narrator/implied author and reader, even when their provenances are different cultural formations. The important thing is that the reader understands this and remains vigilant and attentive in terms of her own responses and readings of the text. However, I now take a more informed look at *Ceremony*, and consider the ways in which tribal, cultural formations might inform its narrative strategies. Bevis argues that the novel opts for tribal ontology, specifically in its expression of the themes of society, place and history. However, he does not discuss tribal or clan cultural formations in any detail. Moving beyond his generalizing discussion of themes and plot, I consider how particular tribal cultural formations, with their location in a specific sense of history and of place, inform the narrative strategies and textures of the novel. *Ceremony* is an interesting text to investigate, since the mixed-blood narrative deploys European, Laguna Pueblo, Keresan[1] and Navajo cultural elements. Arguably it is *par excellence* the exemplary type of a novel generated in the third space of creative, cultural hybridity that Bhabha advocates.

Thick description

In his classic essay, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', Geertz characterizes the activity of the cultural anthropologist as conversing with strangers:

> We are not, or at least I am not, seeking either to become natives (a compromised word in any case) or to mimic them. Only romantics or spies would seem to find point in that. We are seeking, in the widened sense of the term in which it encompasses very much more than talk, to *converse* with them, a matter a great deal more difficult, and not only with strangers, than is commonly recognized.
>
> (13, my emphasis)

One of the reasons for the difficulty is 'a lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs'. His model, which dates back to 1973, could be accused of a bipolar bias; however, the semiotic notion of needing to understand the acts or speech acts as signs that can only be interpreted according to the actor's or speaker's imaginative universe remains a challenging one. In the case of a culturally hybrid text, such as *Ceremony*, the challenge for the reader is further complicated by her not knowing, or by only partially knowing, the intersecting, imaginative universes that

are the text's location and inspiration. How is she to know how much Betonie, and indeed the implied author as well, 'have made changes in the rituals' if she doesn't understand the significance of the rituals in the first place? In an ironic twist, the only solution for the average reader is to trust the text and/or to trust the anthropologists.

Here is a description of Laguna Pueblo by the distinguished authority, A. LaVonne [Brown] Ruoff:

> According to their origin legends, the Laguna tribe (in existence since at least 1300), came southward from the Mesa Verde region. Some versions indicate that after pausing at Zia, they were joined by the head of the Parrot clan, who decided to take his people southward with them. After wandering further, first southward from the lake at Laguna and then northward back to the lake, they settled Punyana, probably in the late 1300s. After founding Old Laguna (Kawaik) around 1400, they issued invitations to other pueblos to join them. Those which responded were the Parrot clan from Zia, the Sun clan from Hopi, the Road Runner and Badger clans from Zuni, and the Sun clan from Jemez. The tribe occupied the site of what is now called Laguna by the early 1500s. Additional immigration occurred during the 1690s, when the Lagunas were joined by Indians from the Rio Grande, probably fleeing both drought and the hostility of the Spanish after the Pueblo Rebellion in 1680 and the renewed uprising in 1696. These immigrants came chiefly from Zia, Cochiti, and Domingo, but a few came from Jemez, Zuni, and Hopi. Over the years, a few Navajos intermarried with the tribe, bringing with them the Navajo Sun clan and kachina.
>
> The Spanish first entered the area in 1540, when Francesco de Coronado led an expedition to Zuni and two years later passed through the present site of Laguna on his way back to Mexico. Antonio Espejo, who commanded an expedition to New Mexico in 1582, visited the area in 1583. [. . .] Although the pueblo was not subjected to as many attacks from the Spanish as the Rio Grande pueblos, it was forced to surrender in 1692 after an attack by the troops of Governor Diego de Vargas.
>
> Concerning the mixture of people who settled at Laguna, Parsons comments that 'it is not surprising that Laguna was the first of the pueblos to Americanize, through intermarriage'. Around 1860 and 1870, George H. Pradt [or Pratt] and two Marmon brothers (Walter and Robert) came to the pueblo, married Laguna women, and reared large families. [. . .] While Robert Marmon served as governor, the two kivas of Laguna were torn down by the progressives and what was left of the sacred objects was surrendered. There were no kachina dances for some time after the Great Split and the laying of the railroad on the edge of the village. When a demand arose later for the revival of the dances, Zuni influences were introduced into Laguna rituals. Parsons closes her description of Laguna with the comment that although the ceremonial

> disintegration was so marked when she first studied it (around 1920) that it presented an obscure picture of Keresan culture, it now (1939) offered 'unrivaled opportunities to study American acculturation and the important role played by miscegenation'.
>
> (2–3)

By altering our perception of Laguna Pueblo Indians as a people with their own, pure, tribal history, somehow separate from the history of contact with Europeans, to a less pure and more contingent account, this attention to detail complicates Bevis' thesis. It confounds any tendency we might have to assume that pueblo cultures have less 'history' than Europeans. Instead, we need to acknowledge: their specific and complex history of multiple relocations; inter-tribal mergers and alliances; inter-marriage even with the Navajo – traditionally depicted as marauding bully boys and land grabbers compared with pueblo inhabitants; contact and conflict with the colonial Spanish; inter-marriage with whites, or, as Parsons could put it, miscegenation from the 1860s onwards; and importation of other tribal cultural influences. Rather than view the implied author of *Ceremony* as favouring a simplistic 'return to the blanket' and the kiva, we should view her as the product of a history of hybridization and acculturation that stretches back for generations.

In terms of cultural hybridity within the text, scholars agree on the main contextual sources and their provenance. Silko has repeatedly stressed the importance of oral storytelling traditions in her family, her clan and in Laguna; but she also alludes in interviews to the work of Parsons.[2] Robert Nelson indicates that, contrary to Paula Gunn Allen's accusation that Silko revealed clan secrets, specific materials in *Ceremony* had already been transcribed by Elsie Clews Parsons and edited by Franz Boas. He points out that the Boas and Parsons volumes are now scarce and only to be found in research libraries; thus they have had the effect of taking the stories away from the people. Refuting Allen's criticisms, he argues that Silko performs an act of restitution by embedding the clan stories in her novelistic text. In his reading, *Ceremony* rescues the stories from the mouldering anthropological tomes sitting on museum or library shelves and brings them back home to the people they belong to:

> All that's left to do now, Boas's critical apparatus in *Keresan Texts* tells us, is to pickle as many of these artifacts as we can still find in the preservative of print for future study. It is a telling comment, then, that the Boas book is out of print, impossible to come by except through special interlibrary loan. One is reminded of the boxes and boxes of human bones and 'artifacts' in a museum warehouse somewhere, waiting to be sorted and displayed in the museum – or, if they get lucky, repatriated back to Indian Country.
>
> This, it seems to me, is what Silko's presentation of these same materials amounts to: an act of repatriation, putting those Laguna bones

> collected by the ethnographers back to their original use – to serve as backbone for a Laguna story about Laguna life in Laguna country.
>
> (53)

Thus in relation to the specifically Laguna stories, he suggests that Silko brings the stories back home rather than consigns them to a museum. This version of the return of the stories takes account of historical process, including the role of ethnographers and anthropologists. The text becomes a 'telling' in more than one way, including its entering into a dialogical relation with cultural anthropology, and its entering historical process to restore balance after the harm done to the stories in the 1920s and 1930s. Although Silko draws on the oral traditions of Laguna storytelling, or gossip, she does so in a postmodern text. I say postmodern not simply because she follows the modernist paradigm of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. I mean specifically that she employs a very postmodern technique of combining different styles from different cultural locations. In this text the 'Arrow Boy and the Witches' story, as well as other Keres clan stories that are laid out as poetic text, are interwoven with Europeanized narrative techniques of the modern novel. In addition, as I've previously mentioned, she draws extensively on Navajo sand painting and chantways. In fact, Navajo cultural formations seem central to *Ceremony* as ritual and text.

Silko emphasizes that her knowledge of Navajo culture is from a live oral tradition, rather than from ethnography,[3] but a number of scholars have pointed out that the ceremony that Betonie performs is based on a specific Navajo chant, the Red Antway. Shamoon Zamir reports his research on Silko's use of a prior ethnographic text in his excellent essay on *Ceremony*, 'Literature in a "National Sacrifice Area"':

> The ceremony in which Tayo sits in the middle of a white sandpainting with crossed rainbows, while Betonie's mysterious helper, a bear child, buries ceremonial hoops in the ground and marks the earth with bear prints and Betonie himself paints four mountain ranges on the floor of the hut and then lightly makes a cut in Tayo's scalp (141–143) is in fact taken (often with direct quotation) from a version of the Red Antway told by the Son of Late Tall Deschini to Father Berard Haile in 1933–34 and published by Leland C. Wyman in 1973. Silko acknowledges her anthropological source in *Ceremony* by naming Betonie's grandfather, the originator of the ongoing ceremony in which Betonie and Tayo participate, *Descheeny* (145).
>
> (406–07)

Gary Witherspoon, working in Geertz's school of interpretative cultural anthropology, endorses the careful work done by Father Berard Haile and Leland Wyman with the Navajo, although his strongest praise is reserved for Gladys Reichard.[4] To date I cannot find precise evidence that Silko knew

Reichard's work, but she is worth consulting as a sympathetic authority on Navajo sand painting and healing ceremonies. Her comment on the concentration required by the medicine man in order not to inadvertently make changes in the ritual will give us some sense of how radical Old Betonie is in relation to the Navajo traditions he works with:

> Even if the patient is ideal, there are other points at which the Chanter must watch himself. The prayer has many lines repeated often with only one word changed. They must be said the exact number of times, no more, no less, and of course the word must be changed at exactly the right place. [. . .]
>
> Of course the teacher has a safeguard against chance mistakes of his pupil and the Chanter against those of his patient. The Navajo, even in his most visionary moments, never loses sight of human frailty. The Chanter has a prayer to erase the danger of error from himself and all concerned if an honest effort has been made to avoid it. Miguelito evidenced his attempt at concentration by closing his eyes. He always did this when praying over the altar at dawn and when intoning the prayers for the deific invitations.
>
> He performed the Shooting Chant so often and was so confident of his knowledge that this extreme form of concentration was never noticeable elsewhere, and he carried out all other rites surely and swiftly, at times almost casually. Indeed there was never the slightest hesitancy apparent even in the long prayers. Once I heard him sing the Bead Chant. Gone was his air of nonchalance. He closed his eyes as he sang the songs, never did he interrupt himself with a smoke, a joke or one of his habitual bantering asides. When the painting was disposed of, he threw himself exhausted on a pile of skins in the cooking shade, and lighting a cigarette, said to me, 'When I sing the Shooting Chant I do not have to think, I know it so well. But I sing this one so rarely that I have to concentrate on every word and it makes me very tired.'
>
> (12)[5]

One might deduce from this information that Silko herself introduces the concept of change and processes of transformation into the novelistic text.

However, Witherspoon's commentary on language in the Navajo imaginative universe will help us to see that both the concepts of unchangeability and of transformation derive from Navajo belief systems. First, the fixed, unchanging character of the ritual:

> Ritual knowledge can be purchased but it cannot be produced; it can be learned but it cannot be discovered; it can be communicated but it cannot be destroyed. Ritual knowledge is fixed and complete; it cannot be expanded. All there is to know about this world is already known because the world was organized according to this knowledge.

> Earth surface people (Navajos or human beings) can expand their awareness or command of knowledge, but they cannot expand knowledge itself.
>
> (33)

On the other hand, Navajo ideology – i.e. that set of assumptions held in common by the people and generally found to be advantageous to their survival but not necessarily consciously articulated by them – is based on a belief in transformational processes at work in their world. Knowledge of Navajo language and specifically of its verbal constructions facilitates Witherspoon's interpretation of the people's deep-seated cultural assumptions:

> A Navajo premise that is significant and relevant to the powers of thought and speech is that all matter and all being have a dualistic nature: static and active. The assumption that underlies this dualistic aspect of all being and existence is that the world is in motion, that things are constantly undergoing processes of transformation, deformation, and restoration, and that the essence of life and being is movement. The static dimension is defined in terms of the active dimension, and is defined as the temporary withdrawal of motion; that is something that is temporarily at rest in between its various movements. These propositions are very firmly and clearly embedded in the structure and content of Navajo language, ritual, myth, and art. [. . .]
>
> [T]he principal verb in the Navajo language is the verb 'to go' and not the verb 'to be', which is the principal verb in so many other languages but is of relatively minor importance in Navajo. This seems to indicate a cosmos composed of processes and events, as opposed to a cosmos composed of facts and things. [. . .] Reichard shows that the idea of unrestricted motion progressing through space with only a peripheral reference to time is a significant aspect of Navajo verbs.
>
> (48, 49)

Witherspoon is also very helpful in terms of explaining the underlying understandings of how ritual and healing ceremonies function:

> Restoration is a particularly important concept in understanding the nature and purpose of curing rites. Illness occurs when the normal harmony of one's world becomes disrupted, and curing rites are designed to restore harmony through which the health of the patient is also restored. [. . .] [T]he curing rites are designed to harmonize the patient with the world or his total environment.
>
> (22)

Building on Reichard's work, he highlights the importance of concepts of harmony and disharmony (or order and disorder) in the Navajo imaginative

universe; and how these are related to beauty and goodness on the one hand and witchery and evil on the other. Curing ceremonies work by ritual and artistic mimesis of the creation of the world, locating the patient in this ritually recreated world and 'closely identifying him with the good and power of various deities'. This ritual identification neutralizes the dangerous contamination, charges the patient with the deities' 'positive spiritual electricity' and restores the patient to harmony (25). Thus, ritual language is 'the means of transforming chaos into cosmos'; although its potency means 'it can also be used to reduce cosmos to chaos' (39). At the heart of the Navajo worldview is the belief that thought is potent and creative:

> Navajos believe strongly in the power of thought. The world was created by it; things are transformed according to it; life is regenerated from it. People are cured and blessed, vegetation is improved and increased, and health and happiness are restored by the power of thought. [. . .]
>
> Both order and disorder are first conceived in thought, and then projected on the world through speech and action. In both Navajo language and culture, things are considered to be in a random or an unordered condition unless a thinking, animate being has ordered them into some sort of a pattern.
>
> (29, 132)

So, the clan stories of Laguna Pueblo intersect with the Navajo Red Antway Chant, and Thought-creating Woman of Keresan mythopoesis converses with the Navajo belief in the power of thought and the potency of language to neutralize witchery, restore harmony and cure the disorders of the contemporary, post-atomic world.[6]

The third space of hybridity

In this imagined 'third space' of dynamic hybridity and transformations of gossip, ritual, sand painting, chantways, storytelling and prior ethnographic texts, we needs must also find room for European cultural influences. One of the most eclectic and persuasive essays on transformation in *Ceremony* has to be Shamoon Zamir's. Yet at the point that he introduces the possible influence of *The Waste Land* on the structure and particularly the ending of the novel, he accuses Silko of espousing a European model of transcendence that diminishes the textual politics he discovers in the body of the work. Zamir reads *Ceremony* as an engaged text, critiquing European capitalist economy and countering the colonial invasion of pueblo territory and ecosystems through uranium mining, with a complex set of stories that create a counter-narrative of local resistance. However, he argues that Silko's novel fails to sustain its resistance to European modernity and adopts, even if unwittingly, the transcendent structures of high modernism's version of the Grail Legend:

> *Ceremony* constitute[s] a contest of stories in which narratives are competing to describe and explain a Pueblo world radically dislocated by the penetrations of a capitalist political economy. [. . .] The politics of Silko's literary practice emerge [. . .] as a paradoxical mixture of a newly emergent regionalist resistance and an internalization of global forms that simultaneously erases this resistance.
>
> (397)

His argument depends on reading the ending as 'an ahistorical nostalgia for mythical transcendence' and on her deploying her source materials 'as part of a strategy of negotiating historical crisis' through the 'abandonment of the historicist literary imagination in favour of the transcendentalism T. S. Eliot termed the "mythic method"' (406). But what if European modernism's transcendentalism is actually the Navajo medicine man's curing ritual in creative dialogue with clan stories of Arrow Boy, told by Thought-creating Woman? Can we as readers assume that the text retreats from the inter-tribal and inter-national third space it has conceived and been conceived in, back to just one element, the European? Or should we attempt to read the ending as an ongoing conversation in a complex, imaginative universe that is stranger to us than we can consciously tell?

Even though the bare bones of the plot fit Bevis' homing-in paradigm, the narrative strategies of *Ceremony* complicate the static, over-simplified, bipolar model of homing in, back to the tribal identification that he proposes. Self-evidently, Silko and her protagonist 'home in' on a different kiva from either of the two that were torn down during her paternal ancestor's governorship. Tayo's entering the kiva and telling his story to the elders cannot be read as his deciding to return 'to the blanket' in a repetition of the plot resolution of *The Man Who Killed the Deer*. True, he returns with a restored – or in his case a newly acquired – sense of identification with the Pueblo, its people and its traditions. But this restoration of civic and environmental harmony is not a simulation of an Edward Curtis or Reverend Voth image caught in time and framed in perpetuity. This is a conversation of differing cultural elements that will have to function in a historical, contingent, post-atomic world, where the stories, chants and rituals will continue to signify only if they continue to transform traditional formations in renewed, differing cultural patterns.

The half-breed protagonist, Tayo, and, speaking through his actions, the implicit author have moved beyond the static, either/or model of Bevis' argument. Tayo does not choose to retreat into the local and ignore the global situation; Tayo learns that in the post-war, post-atomic situation the global is located in his back yard. Laguna Pueblo is at the complex nexus of Keres and Navajo stories and rituals, but it is also at the advanced capitalist nexus of uranium mining, atomic weapons testing and military strategic defence installations. Tayo is both hero of the 'Arrow Boy' stories and patient of the curing 'sing' or ceremony, restoring harmony to his environment and transforming post-war, post-traumatic shock syndrome into usable know-

ledge for his people. When he enters the kiva to tell his story, at last he brings with him a complex understanding of the transformational ceremony for a changing world situation. 'Earth surface people (Navajos or human beings) can expand their awareness or command of knowledge', and *Ceremony* is a culturally hybrid multi-stranded telling of why this becomes a matter of life and death post World War Two. In Bevis's interpretation as filtered through the lens of Frank Waters, Tayo is just another half-breed Indian going back to the blanket; in Zamir's he is lined up by the author to be a modern-day Grail hero, allowing his friend to be the substitute sacrificial victim in another (post)modernist retelling of the Frazerian mono-myth. Difficult as their prose is, the trickier conceptual discourses of Vizenor and Bhabha invite us as readers to imagine the textual space of *Ceremony* as a polyphonous conversation in which all the differing voices participate and play their parts. The mixed-blood protagonist of the mixed-blood narrative moves in both the global and the local environment, as surely as we also do as contemporary readers.

12 Homing in

Transforming the paradigm

> Why would Pushmataha and the other Choctaws have sided with foreigners like the Shawnee warrior Tecumsey, when they at least knew the English and white Americans? Whites never understood that, thinking that all Indians were the same.
>
> (*Dark River* 48)

'I have learned to inhabit a hybrid, unpapered, Choctaw-Cherokee-Welsh-Irish-Cajun mixed space in between'

In 'Mapping the Mixedblood', Owens draws on his own experience to enunciate a definition of mixed-blood cultural identity that, like Bhabha's, is imagined as a spatialized concept. Given the painful and shameful history of contact, colonization, forced assimilation and attempted termination that is American history, his choice of metaphor is particularly appropriate. Owens reclaims the concept of 'frontier' and defines it as a creative, transformational, trickster space, similar to Bhabha's sense of the third space. Bhabha draws implicitly on French philosophy, transforming Derrida's notion of the hesitations and deferrals in language that open up gaps between signifier and signified into a potentiality for exploring cultural as well as linguistic difference. Owens, on the other hand, draws on his knowledge of the rich trickster traditions of oral American Indian cultures to propose a specifically American theory of elusive and multifarious cultural hybridity.[1] Despite his self-deprecatory disclaimers that he is not an intellectual, just a writer, Owens' definition strikes me as eloquent and satisfyingly adequate:

> Because the term 'frontier' carries with it such a heavy burden of colonial discourse, it can only be conceived of as a space of extreme contestation. Frontier, I would suggest, is the zone of trickster, a shimmering, always changing zone of multifaceted contact within which every utterance is challenged and interrogated, all referents put into question. In taking such a position, I am arguing for an appropriation and transvaluation of this deadly cliché of colonialism – for appropriation, inversion, and

> abrogation of authority are always trickster's strategies. 'Frontier' stands, I would further argue, in neat opposition to the concept of 'territory' as territory is imagined and given form by the colonial enterprise in America. Whereas frontier is always unstable, multidirectional, hybridized, characterized by heteroglossia, and indeterminate, territory is clearly mapped, fully imagined as a place of containment, invented to control and subdue the dangerous potentialities of imagined Indians. Territory is conceived and designed to exclude the dangerous presence of that trickster at the heart of the Native American imagination, for the ultimate logic of territory is appropriation and occupation, and trickster defies appropriation and resists colonization.
>
> (26)

'Mapping the Mixedblood' is one of the series of linked essays that constitute the non-fiction volume, *Mixedblood Messages*, a volume that enacts cultural hybridity in its blending of autobiography, eco-philosophy, literary theory and criticism as well as reflecting Owens' personal engagement in identity politics. Moreover, it is the volume that most clearly indicates the influence of Vizenor on Owens' mature writing. Its preoccupations are further refracted in Owens' last novel, *Dark River*, published the following year (1999). All of his previous novels draw on trickster aesthetics at the level of plot and arguably characterization, but *Dark River* comes closest to the trickster discourse that Owens so admires in Vizenor's fiction. I can understand the trajectory that leads to the overtly trickster ending of *Dark River*, but I wonder if the strategy works as well for Owens as he judges it does for Vizenor.

Owens' notion of frontier space does, however, allow us to abandon conclusively the generalizing and essentializing discourses of Bachelard and Bevis. Again, 'Mapping the Mixedblood' clearly articulates why:

> Today [. . .] Euroamerica remains involved in an unceasing ideological struggle to confine Native Americans within an essentialized territory defined by the authoritative utterance 'Indian'. Native Americans, however, continue to resist this ideology of containment and to insist upon the freedom to reimagine themselves within a fluid, always shifting frontier space.
>
> For those of us who, like most authors we recognize as Native American, are mixedbloods, the hybridized, polyglot, transcultural frontier is quite clearly internalized. For all of us, however, territory remains a constant threat, an essential fiction of the colonial mind [. . .] From the very beginning of European relations with indigenous Americans, the goal of the colonizer has been to inhabit and erase an ever-moving frontier while shifting 'Indian' to static and containable 'territory' – both within the trope of the noble and vanishing red man and within the more effective strategy that equated good Indians with dead ones.
>
> (27)

While it is true that, as Frederick Hoxie has put it, Native Americans made homelands out of 'prisons', i.e. reservations, it is clearly no longer the case that all Native Americans, or peoples that shared some Native American ancestry, could or would want to return to their tribal homelands and the tribal traditions of previous centuries. When Commissioner John Collier attempted to legislate for a return to such traditional tribalism in 1934 he met with much scepticism and resistance from various groups and factions.[2] Bevis' critical efforts to return all mixed-blood protagonists to the tribal ways of their ancestral past should be countered with similar resistance by writers and readers. And yet, mixed-blood protagonists from Welch's Jim Loney to Owens' Jake Nashoba not only internalize the hybridized frontier, they also play out in their painful psychodramas the anomie of the culturally displaced and dispossessed. While their emotional symptoms are similar to those of the fashionably alienated modernist, existentialist hero, their malaise is deeply rooted in the history of displacement that frequently became genocide and in the paradox that sent (proportionate to the population) twice as many Native American soldiers to fight in US wars as from any other American ethnic group. I have chosen to compare *Dark River* to the prior texts by Waters and Silko; however, it should be noted that Welch's Jim Loney, with his unredeemed, self-elected death, casts a strong shadow over Jake Nashoba. A comparison of the two novels would suggest that like Jim, Jake doesn't have enough childhood memories to provide resources for self-healing; like Jim, the figure who might be the guiding elder fails to assist him even though living in the near neighbourhood; and like Jim, there is no effective cure or timely 'medicine' to purify the returning warrior/soldier.

Home, a bad joke

Owens acknowledges that the raw materials for his novels are drawn from his own experiences and those of his family. In an extended rebuttal of Cook-Lynn's tribalist position, for example, he asserts the obviousness of this and also suggests that while pre-Columbian tribal peoples might not have had a Westernized sense of individual identity, the late twentieth-century Native American author inevitably will.[3] In *Mixedblood Messages* and *I Hear the Train*, he strives to leave clear evidence of the relationships between his family's complex, marginalized history, their individual characters, their shared experiences and his works of fiction. Most poignant is his acknowledgement in *I Hear the Train* that his elder brother's experiences as a Vietnam veteran, and his attempts to deal with the sense of loss this in turn inflicted on him, led to his writing his second novel, *The Sharpest Sight*:

> And then one day, after a quarter of a century of silence, my brother called. He had found a copy of *The Sharpest Sight* [. . .] he had read it and had known at once that it was about him, had read past layers of metaphor

> and myth, through a complex 'mystery' plot, to see that I'd written a novel about the loss of my own brother.
>
> (12)

In this novel not only the missing brother, Attis, but most of the male characters are formed or deformed by their memories of Vietnam. Tom Holm has described the ways in which post-traumatic shock syndrome affects veterans, and the ways in which their experiences of conflict leave them estranged from members of their peer group who haven't experienced warfare. At a point in their lives when they might normally feel the 'immortality of youth', they bear instead a heightened sense of their own mortality and the immanence of violent and senseless death (7). Owens returns to the subject more allusively in *Bone Game* – in a trickster twist of the plot, one of the two murderers is a seriously deranged Vietnam veteran, a deadly joker in the pack when everyone thinks the game is over. However, his most mature tribute to his brother Gene and war veterans like him, who continue to suffer twenty-five years on, is in my opinion the characterization of Jake Nashoba.

In a moment of reminiscence that touches me all the more deeply for the simplicity of its utterance, Owens captures the nobility of his brother's life:

> Sitting there after catfish and fried potatoes, I was able, however, to ask the question that had clawed at me for years: Why had he re-upped twice? Why had he stayed three years in what his letters had described as worse than any hell a person could imagine? He looked at me directly when he answered, his brown eyes locking on mine for the first time since I'd come to his home. 'I stayed so that someone wouldn't have to take my place', he said.
>
> (11)

For all the postmodern games and trickster aesthetics of *Dark River*, Jake Nashoba is a tragic hero, journeying ineluctably towards the heart of darkness, playing over and over the pointless futility of America's apocalypse now. The clues are there from the start, but the implicit reader is unlikely to take them too seriously, since they are balanced by a textual playfulness that suggests survivance rather than vanishment. Paradoxically, this realistic mixed-blood protagonist will get involved in the deadly hyperreality of Rambo-esque war games.

Despite the superficial similarity to Silko's novel, there are a number of significant differences.[4] Jake does not return to his tribal homeland after serving in Vietnam; he reflects the restless motion of late twentieth-century American culture:

> [H]e'd been driving toward the tilting red cactus like he'd been driving toward the tilting red sun every day since being discharged in New Jersey. He'd drunk and fought his way across from Amarillo to Albuquerque and

> down to Las Cruces and through Silver City, Patagonia, and Tucson before turning the Chevy pickup north to Phoenix. Flagstaff was on the other side of Phoenix, and he had a Navajo buddy in that patriotic-sounding town who said it was full of beautiful women and cheap liquor.
>
> (32–33)

Here he gets into another fight and two months later ends up married to the dancer he fought over. Thus he lives on a reservation that is strange to him: he doesn't know its stories and traditions, and although he learns its environmental landscape he can never know its significance in tribal culture. He is a perpetual stranger in this place, even in his own home:

> He hadn't counted on a couple of things. First, as Tali had explained, the tribe was matrilocal, which basically meant that he and Tali were expected to live with her parents, sisters, unmarried drunken brothers, and anyone else who dropped by. [. . .] The second thing he hadn't considered was that in the tribe the wife owned the house. The husband was a kind of guest, and in his case not even high on the bathroom waiting list since he was not just a husband but a foreigner.
>
> (31–32)

After two years his wife divorces him, matrilocal style, by 'setting his few possessions on the porch' (33). Yet he remains on the edge of the reservation geographically and on the edge of the community socially, and is still there after twenty-five years. The allusion to Owens' brother Gene is, of course, encoded in the quarter century that Jake has existed as a resident stranger at Black Mountain. As is the fictional description of Jake's violent nightmares:

> Sometimes he'd fall over the edge of sleep into that other world, a black, tangled place where everything conspired to destroy him, and he'd leap to protect his life. Those were the times he'd awakened to find his wife on the floor or against a far wall of the bedroom, her mouth or nose bleeding and her eyes staring in terror.
>
> (36)

Owens recounts the factual source of this textual reminiscence, focalized in the novel through Jake himself, in a stripped-down, laconic style:

> In a matter-of-fact way, his wife interrupted to explain that he'd nearly killed her a few months earlier when she moved during the night unexpectedly.
>
> 'Gene still has his problems', she said, looking at him with what struck me as critical love.
>
> (10)

Knowing that he draws on personal and family experiences shouldn't lead us to assume that he writes 'transparent' texts. Especially in *Dark River*, there is a critical/creative intelligence at work. Thus he alludes to and deals with the trope of the ceremony early in the narrative. Jake is taken by Tali for counselling at the Phoenix Indian Center, but is unable to talk to the therapist; Tali suggests that he attend an inter-tribal sweat, but he dismisses the idea; and most ominously Mrs Edwards refuses to help him because she sees straight away that he is beyond healing. I assume that 'Black Mountain' is a fictitious and deeply metaphorical tribal name and location, possibly an imaginative synthesis of the Apache White Mountain reservation and a shadowy, colonial, heart of darkness. The point is that Jake doesn't know its beliefs and ceremonies; Mrs Edwards might have the power to help him, but feels suspicious and antagonistic towards him as a dislocated, traumatized foreigner. Moreover, in the late twentieth century, tribal culture has become a complex modern phenomenon for all the characters who dwell at Black Mountain. In a Vizenor-like paradox, the only 'real' traditional tribal member is the New York, Jewish anthropologist: the utter fake is the only hyperreal Indian, recognizable to white perception. As a fake, he is unable to save Jake, despite his deep and accurate acquired knowledge of the past tribal culture. Thus, the novel enters into a tricky dialogue with its prior text, *Ceremony*, in order to refute Silko's optimistic ending that affirms the curing ceremony can still function, albeit in a radically transformed fashion.

The post-modernism[5] of Owens' protagonist is darker and more fragmented, with no sense that a ritual can be recovered to heal the Fisher King. Early in the novel Jake laconically tells his boss why he enjoys reading Hemingway. He does so partly to wind Sam up, because he intuits that Sam might be withholding information, as indeed he also does. However, the dialogue also reveals to the implicit reader both the kind of novel they are reading and the kind of novel they shouldn't expect to find in the pages that follow:

> 'Say, did I ever tell you why I like to read Hemingway? You ever read his stuff?'
>
> 'What the fuck are you talking about?' Sam yelled. 'You got blood all over my goddamned floor last night.'
>
> 'It's mostly his language, Sam. It's restful, you know, and honest; it doesn't require some kind of action. His people are all fucked up, just like the rest of us, but there's this sense that he's not trying to hide anything, that nothing's going to change and it's not so great but basically okay. I tried one of those Indian novels, a best-seller supposedly written by a real Indian, but it was nothing but a bunch of stupid skins drinking and beating each other to death and being funny about it. At least the writer was trying to be funny about it.'
>
> 'Fuck Hemingway and fuck Indian writers and fuck you, Jake. We have a problem here. Have you talked to anybody about this head?'
>
> (11)

Unlike the implied author (and the plot imperative) of *Ceremony*, the implied author of *Dark River* signals to his readers that 'nothing's going to change and it's not so great but basically okay'. The rituals of the healing sing won't be transformed into a hybrid, optimistic literary text this time. But neither will the author fulfil reader expectations of dead-end, self-destructive Indians, vanishing themselves with humor. Trickster-like, the implied author simultaneously announces that the plot might do both of these contradictory things as well, after a fashion.

In a late story about Luther Cole, published in *I Hear the Train*, Owens defines a characteristic of Native American and mixed-blood identity:

> All of his life the old man had balanced two realities, two worlds, a feat that had never struck him as particularly noteworthy or difficult.
>
> (195)[6]

Both the implicit author and the protagonist perform this balancing act; and it is also an important feature of the plot. Jake is characterized as Choctaw (or *Chahta*) / Irish, 'with only shadowy notions of what it might mean to be Choctaw' (37). The homing-in plot simply is not available to him:

> '*Chahta*,' he said. '*Chahta okla*. White people say "Choctaw". They have plenty of stories. Stories, in fact that tell me who you are.' He knew he was treading on thin ice. He remembered only the barest fragments – *alikchi*, sorcerers, dream-senders, *isht*-something or other. There were good ones and bad ones with different names. His granma's stories had become bits and pieces like a jigsaw puzzle dumped thoughtlessly on the ground, some pieces carried off by careless children. [. . .]
>
> 'Then why have you never gone home?' She looked at him keenly. 'Hasn't that old man called you?'
>
> He thought of the cabin in Mississippi, his father, whom he couldn't visualize in his memory half as well as he could the old man across the river, his granma talking about blooded earth as though sacrifice had been made, and his thin, Irish mother brushing hair from her face in the cabin door. 'Look, Grandmother, I'm no Indian. My people have stories of leprechauns, too, and something called the *sidhe*. You know about those? Besides, home is where the heart is, and I'd like you to stop messing with my dreams. I don't know what you're up to, but I don't like it.'
>
> (42)

A couple of generations younger than Luther Cole, his knowledge both of his Irish inheritance and of his Choctaw culture is so fragmented that they have become part of the unusable past. He remembers just enough to realize that Mrs Edwards is some kind of sorcerer or dream-sender, without having a clear idea what kind she is. 'Home is where the heart is' is uttered ironically: as a

saying it might still have had resonance for his Irish mother, but for him it is a clichéd husk of language.

Owens plays tantalizingly with another aspect of the homing-in plot, namely the role of the traditional elder to teach the protagonist 'the only knowledge which proves useful' (Bevis 592). Bevis describes such a figure as 'a connected ancestor', commenting:

> [A]ll are in touch with a tradition tracing from the distant past, and all extend this connection to the young protagonists. Only Loney fails to find a connected ancestor, and only Loney fails.
>
> (588)

Bevis' essentialist certainty has no place in this novel, for the Dark is a 'zone of multifaceted contact within which every utterance is challenged and interrogated, all referents put into question'. The Dark is, of course, both the river canyon where nobody is supposed to be, but just about every character in the novel ends up, and the state of mind that Jake has existed in all these years on Black Mountain. It also functions as a mnemonic for Jake, reminding him of the intense but fleeting encounter he had with the connected ancestor, Luther Cole, on that other river in his Mississippi childhood:

> As a very young boy, he'd hidden in the woods once and watched the stringy old Choctaw man haul a mudcat out of the river, the ugly fish longer than the man's arm. The old grandfather had clubbed the fish with a piece of oak and then, unexpectedly, raised his eyes to look directly at where he hid, the eyes so taut that he could feel them go over him like smooth hands. [. . .] His mother had died on his first tour of duty, and so he was tied to nothing in the whole world except a childhood vision of an old man he never knew. Luther Cole.
>
> (108–9, 111)

Owens uses intertextual allusion to his own prior novels, and the implicit reader will only realize the significance of Luther's role in this story if they know the roles he played in prior texts. In *The Sharpest Sight*, Luther and Onatima (Old Lady Blue) intervene in the story of Attis' death to guide Cole McCurtain in his task of retrieving his brother's bones and thus freeing his shadow to rest. In *Bone Game* they still play a significant role, knowing when to assist Cole in his encounter with the 'Gambler'. But already they are not able to control the outcome of the story; they can only help Cole to do that. In this novel, Cole is referred to once as a distant cousin of Jake's. Thus, there is a tenuous connection that serves to highlight the difference. Uncle Luther is Cole's connected ancestor, but is not close enough to be Jake's. Consequently, as a young boy he glimpses what 'he never knew', and there seems to be no way the knowledge can be given to him.

In Jake's focalized memories Luther denotes absence and loss, a childhood of dislocations and missing pieces of the puzzle:

> He'd asked his granma about the old man. 'Luther Cole', was all she'd said, shaking her head and spitting the eternal tobacco juice. And then his mother had taken him away from whatever that dream had meant. He lived with a vague yearning to go home, but he couldn't locate that place on all the maps he bought and hoarded.
>
> (50)

Somehow the Dark River and its canyon answers this vague yearning. Jake makes a kind of home in its environment, unaware of its specific tribal traditions and knowledges. This lack of relevant cultural knowledge leads him to make the mistake of constructing a hubristic, marital home that reminds Mrs Edwards of a US cavalry Fort Apache, rather than an appropriate matrilocal dwelling. Luther and Onatima are unable to act as dream-senders or storytellers, they are unable to intervene to save him. Yet as tenuously related, connected ancestors they do what they can within their Choctaw reality:

> His body was soft, like melting plastic, and he remembered the old Choctaw man across the river. *Chahta*, they said. *Chahta*. With the memory, the old man approached, his broad hat drawn down low over his thin, dark face. 'We don't send this dream, Grandson', the old man said. 'But the Grandmother and I are watching your shadows.'
>
> (214)

In *Dark River* Jake's story is appropriated by Shorty Luke, as indeed are everybody's stories. At the beginning, he appears to be a harmless, comic character; a playful, postmodern characterization of what Hollywood does to real Native Americans who go there to play Indian.[7] The implicit reader interprets him as something of a joke: an Apache who passed as an Italian actor in order to act as an Indian extra, and who is clearly not a contender to be viewed by the *National Geographic* film crew as an authentic Indian. Unfortunately he is a rather bad joke, as he and Mrs Edwards emerge as dark and unpredictable parodies of Luther and Onatima. Shorty knows the old tribal stories, having learnt them from the tribal chairman's grandmother, but he has also learnt Hollywood lines and acted in hyperreal screenplays. Like Luther Cole, he balances two realities, two worlds, but unlike Luther he allows them to intersect disastrously. Like Jake, the implicit reader doesn't have enough knowledge to judge whether Mrs Edwards is 'a good one or a bad one'. Is she belatedly trying to help Tali and to cure Jake, or does she remain convinced that, unlike Domingo Perez, he won't survive? The fact that she has the power to save Domingo Perez, veteran of World War Two, but cannot

restore Jake to life in the Black Mountain community may tell the reader something about her character. However, I believe it says far more about the difference between the traumas experienced by World War Two veterans and the post-traumatic shock syndrome of veterans of the Vietnam conflict. At the dark heart of this novel is a core sense of the inexpressible and incommunicable nature of that experience.

Kimo Sabe! *Que no sabe?*

In an impressive and mature engagement with postcolonial theorists, including Bhabha, who write as if Native Americans have not only vanished but also were invisible throughout American history, Owens invokes Bakhtin:

> [F]or Native Americans the only burden of expectation is that he or she put on the constructed mask provided by the colonizer, and the mask is not merely a mirror but more crucially a static death mask [. . .] He or she who steps behind the mask becomes the Vanishing American, a savage/noble, mystical, pitiable, romantic fabrication of the Euroamerican psyche fated to play out the epic role defined by Mikhail Bakhtin: 'The epic and tragic hero', Bakhtin writes, 'is the hero who by his very nature must perish. . . . Outside his destiny the epic and tragic hero is nothing; he is, therefore, a function of the plot fate assigns him; he cannot become the hero of another destiny or another plot.
>
> (218)

Owens' sense of the perniciousness of 'the absolute fake, the fabricated "Indian"' (217) pervades this novel, including the darkly comic scenes at the tribal Casino, and the depiction of Jesse's fatal Vision Quest Enterprises. However, even though he quotes Bakhtin as authority in 'As if an Indian Were Really an Indian', as trickster author of *Dark River* he complicates the Bakhtinian definition of the tragic hero. Despite and/or because of Shorty Luke's and Mrs Edward's dream-sendings and story-tellings, Jake can 'become the hero of [. . .] another plot'. In the shimmering, multifaceted frontier zone that this text inhabits, Jake becomes the hero of a Spider Woman story:

> There was only a small black hole in the ground between the clumps of grass. He began to walk away, but a voice said, 'What are you looking for?'
>
> He stopped and tried to find the speaker, but no one was there. 'I'm looking for my own people', he said. 'I've been gone a long time, and I have a long way to go.'
>
> 'Don't you realize that no one can go to that place?' The voice said.
>
> Jake looked down to see a black spider at the top of the hole. 'Come into my house, Grandson', the spider said. 'Don't be frightened.'

> How can I go into such a tiny hole, Jake thought, but he closed his eyes and when he opened them he was in a warm, lighted room [. . .]
>
> Jake closed his eyes and found himself in the room of soft earth. He was sitting up with his back straight, a wonderful feeling of life coursing through his body. A great black spider crouched close by. 'Welcome home', the spider said. [. . .]
>
> 'Welcome back, Grandson. *Halito*. It's been a long time.'
>
> *Halito*. Jacob turned toward the smiling old Choctaw man, the flow of a big, dark river in his brown eyes.
>
> (235, 271)

A characteristic feature of Spider Woman is that she can change shape and size from tiny spider to beautiful young woman or to wise old grandmother figure. She often helps the hero by perching behind his ear and being a tiny, invisible voice directing him; and when he stumbles on her home it is a tiny hole in the ground, but at her command he finds he can enter it. However, it emerges that the only way Jake can gain access to this traditional story and journey back to meet the old man is through dying. This is a novel in antithetical dialogue with the healing that *Ceremony* depicts and advocates.

It is worth recalling that Owens' chapter on *Ceremony* in his study of the mixed-blood narrative is entitled 'Leslie Silko's Webs of Identity'. A close reading of that chapter would indicate that *Dark River* constitutes a critical/creative engagement and dialogue with the tradition of Native American novel-writing. Tayo too is the hero of a Spider Woman story. He succeeds in moving 'from fragmentation and alienation to wholeness and integration' (176). According to Owens, Silko uses the character of Night Swan to lay out 'her rationale for the power of the mixedblood to introduce a new vitality into the Indian world' (182). And he comments noncommittally that this is 'a thesis in direct opposition to the more common image of the suffering halfblood caught between cultures' (183). Ominously though, Owens avoids endorsing the optimism that he interprets as woven into Silko's web of stories. He ends his chapter on a deeply ambivalent note:

> Like virtually every novel written by an American Indian, *Ceremony* describes a circular journey toward home and identity. For some protagonists too much has been lost for the journey to be completed; for those who succeed, the key is remembrance.
>
> (191)

Read with the knowledge that hindsight proverbially brings – and here I allude to both textual knowledge and knowledge of Owens' own death from 'that which lies beyond the written word, outside its textual mode of being' to cite Greenblatt again as I did in my Introduction – the attentive reader should have realized that Jake has lost too much in terms of a sense of place, a sense of familial identity, a sense of any tribal allegiance or connectedness. But then,

most readers of Owens' work would not necessarily be prepared for the textual humor[8] to be quite so 'dark' this time around.

In Owens' previous novels the reader is expected to suspend disbelief. This is an author who relates autobiographically his belief in his mother's prescient childhood dream and the phenomenon of him and his siblings being simultaneously visited in dreams by their mother after her death. In the first four novels, the implicit author establishes conventions that require the implicit reader to accept various tribal belief systems as well as Western rationalism. So, in the final sequence of this novel the implied reader who has stalwartly suspended disbelief is confounded by the improvisatory turn the dénouement takes. Questioned by Jesse's shadow, Shorty opines: 'Well, Jake's not predictable, or hackneyed, as they say. Seems pretty original to have him down in a hole like that. He's the hero, right?' (282). This prompts him to improvise an ending that Hollywood special effects departments would be proud of:

> The earth had opened up, and two enormous mandibles framed by spider legs reached out and seized Jake. In a moment he was gone, dragged into a hole that closed at once.
>
> 'My idea', Shorty said.
>
> 'Good one', Jesse replied admiringly.
>
> Shorty turned to Alison. 'Don't worry, your grandfather has gone home.'
>
> (284)

Shorty, the tribal storyteller and Hollywood authentic/fake Indian, balances both realities for Jake. At one level, the implied reader recoils at the irresponsible killing off of the hero, when it looked as if a good ceremony might have saved him. However, giving up the struggle to suspend disbelief on this cutting-room floor of an ending, the implied reader realizes that Jake has gone home to the reality he has yearned for all his life. The implicit author, through the improbable character of Shorty Luke, holds in balance a realistic, existential, Hemingwayesque honesty and a traditional tribal telling. The novel begins with the extra-heterodiegetic narrator invoking the traditional oral framing phrase: 'That's what they say' (9). It ends with Shorty, who has usurped the storytelling to become the intra-homodiegetic narrator, explaining to a perplexed tribal chief: 'It is said that Jacob Nashoba went home' (286).

It's as if the trickster author challenges his implicit white reader: OK if you want a regressive plot, I'll give you the ultimate regressive ending; but I don't think you're going to like it! But then Jake's other (or should that be *tribal*?) name is 'The Lone Ranger'. So, Kimo Sabe! *Que no sabe?* Yet this is not just about clever plotting. I cited part of Owens' meditation on his own hybrid identity as the epigraph to this chapter. The passage in question ends thus:

> Finally, everything converges and the center holds in the margins. This, if we are to go on.
>
> (176–77)

Sadly and shockingly, Owens arrived at a moment in a car parked in the airport parking lot at Albuquerque where he chose not to go on. It's deeply sobering to recall that tricksters are tricksters because they have a dark side, even if this is the side they normally conceal from the spectator.

13 Narrative authority in the *Ozhibi'ganan* novels

> 'Omniscience' is perhaps an exaggerated term, especially for modern extra-diegetic narrators.
>
> The narration returns, as it were, to a past point in the story.
>
> [I]t is in the text's interest to slow down the process of comprehension by the reader so as to ensure its own survival.
>
> (Rimmon-Kenan 96, 46, 123)

> History is grief and no passion is complete without its jealous backdrop.
>
> (*The Antelope Wife* 160)

> 'History [. . .] is both a metaphor of the past and metonym of the present.' No matter who their authors may be, narratives about the Native American past must be read in this light.
>
> (Shepard Krech III 26)

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss representations of Native American history in mixed-blood narratives, focusing on two novels by Erdrich that depict contact between indigenous and colonizing forces near to the 'medicine line' or border between the US and Canada. I commence, however, with some comments on James Welch's historical novel, *Fools Crow*. Mixed-blood narratives combine elements of the European-American tradition of the historical novel with an implicit empathy with those who experienced contact first hand. Mixed-blood narratives form a literary genre that implicitly empathizes with the cultural hybridity of the mixed-blood position. Thus, while I accept Krech's proposition about the contingent nature of historical narratives, I would suggest that the preponderance of mixed-blood narratives in the Native American literary canon complicate the mirroring of 'relations between Native Americans and people of European descent'.[1] Frequently, Native American historical novels dramatize the complexities of this relationship, which is often figured by focalizing the emotional life of a mixed-blood protagonist or multiple protagonists.

Fools Crow differs from earlier novels by Welch in its presentation of a historical, tribal consciousness and reality, represented in the text by retaining in the prose a flavour of a putative American Indian source language. Erdrich, in her early historical narrative *Tracks* and in the 2001 reservation novel *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, deploys to the full the resources of the European and European-American novel tradition, while conveying at a deep structural level an Ojibwe conceptual framework. While Welch adheres to recognizable conventions of the historical novel in his representation of the effects of contact on a tribal protagonist, Erdrich's mixed-blood, historical narratives actually maintain and transform Native-American traditions in a more vital way that ensures cultural survivance and arguably overcomes cultural binarism. Welch's narrative strategy is to reconstruct a Blackfoot past around the time of contact, and to try to situate the reader entirely within Blackfoot tribal consciousness of historical reality. In contrast, Louise Erdrich's mixed-blood narrations continuously raise questions about the issues of historiography and characteristically do so through her sophisticated deployment of an extensive narratology repertoire.

Mixed-blood narratives

Writing in *Mixedblood MESSAGES* (1998), only a few years before his untimely death, Louis Owens defined the condition of cultural hybridity though his 'autobiographical reflections':

> [I]n life's midpassage I have learned to inhabit a hybrid, unpapered, Choctaw-Cherokee-Welsh-Irish-Cajun mixed space in between. I conceive of myself today not as an 'Indian', but as a mixedblood, a person of complex roots and histories. [. . .] This is an 'other' territory which I, too, have claimed, like those early Choctaws who migrated westward across the Mississippi River, reversing the direction from which their ancestors had come carrying bones, to hunt and live and remain in Louisiana. I am descended from those people, *but I am not those people*, just as I bear the blood of the Trail of Tears and of an enormous Owens clan that reunites periodically somewhere in Kentucky or Tennessee, but I am not those people either. The descendent of mixedblood sharecroppers and the dispossessed of two continents, I believe I am the rightful heir of Choctaw and Cherokee storytellers and of Shakespeare and Yeats and Cervantes. Finally, everything converges and the center holds in the margins. This, if we are to go on.
>
> (176–77)

Spatial imagery predominates in this passage. Owens describes his identity as: 'I am the product of liminal space, the result of union between desperate individuals on the edges of dispossessed cultures and the marginalized spawn of invaders' (176). That is, his own sense of himself echoes histories of

conquest, invasion, first contact and dispossession. This sense of himself internalizes histories of movements across continents, frontier clashes of different human cultures and combines a sense of embodied history and cultural topography. The liminal space of mixed-blood identity contains and conveys the trace of the journeys, pioneering routes and enforced relocations that his ancestors underwent. Hence the contemporary autobiography signals both history and territory in its figures of spatialization / spatialized figuration. Thus, the mixed-blood personality holds the histories of possession and stories of dispossession in creative tension.

Owens' critical writings focus on mixed-blood narratives.[2] Thus at the start of *Mixedblood MESSAGES* his thoughts turn to James Welch's *Fools Crow*, which depicts a tribal history from the point of view of tribal people, opening on the verge of contact with white civilization:

> Responding [. . .] to the challenge of how one may appropriate narrative authority in English, Blackfoot author James Welch produced *Fools Crow*, a novel set almost entirely in the Blackfoot world of the 1860s and '70s. [. . .] The point of view in *Fools Crow* is that of a Native culture still whole and intact. Throughout the novel Welch attempts the problematic task of conveying the texture and sense of Blackfoot speech not only by insinuating numerous literal 'translations' of Blackfoot terms, but also through a careful manipulation of English syntax. Writing in predominantly simple declarative sentences and avoiding complex syntactical constructions, Welch attempts the nearly impossible feat of conveying a feeling of one language through another while simultaneously trying to avoid (without total success, I should say) the clichéd formal pidgin of Hollywood Indians.
>
> (7)

Welch's intention in this novel is to write 'from the inside-out', not like most historical novels 'from the outside looking in' (cited 7). Owens' point usually is that the mixed-blood narrative writes from and of the liminal space that is both 'from the inside-out' and 'from the outside looking in'. In *Other Destinies* Owens comments on Welch's protagonist in *The Death of Jim Loney*: 'In believing that the "real" Indian world is a thing of the dead past, Loney has adopted the Euroamerican idea of the Indian as a figure of the epic, and therefore absolute, past' (155). Loney is a 'half-breed' whose ending is to choose a good day – and way – to die. But might one say that in telling the story of *Fools Crow* as he does, Welch also colludes with the belief 'that the "real" Indian world is a thing of the dead past?'

Fools Crow strives for authenticity and purity of style. In the process it narrowly avoids becoming a manifest simulation of Indian-ness. This might be because the genre of historical novel that Welch elects to write is closer to a European tradition of historical novel, in the style of Sir Walter Scott, than it is to Blackfoot storytelling. In seeking 'the inside-out' experience, Welch sets

himself the impossible task of representing his tribal history as if it were authentic and unmediated. Yet, a narrative that pretends to be in the past of 1870s deceptively ignores the conditions of historical fiction. Historical metafiction inscribes an acknowledgement that we cannot know the past, we can only know of it through surviving evidence both textual and non-textual, and only tell of it through historio*graphy* – i.e. writing that is contemporary to us. *Fools Crow*, on the other hand, precipitates the contemporary reader into a tribal reality, albeit merely a translated representation. I find it thought-provoking that Welch plays down his European-American ancestry, and chooses to depict Malcolm Clark through the perceptions of Fools Crow and implicitly from the point of view of Fast Horse. The reader hears of Malcolm Clark's death when the 'seizer chief' comes to parlay with the Pikuni Blackfeet about his murder:

> 'The big bosses have sent this chief to track down the murderers. There were witnesses. Malcolm Clark's daughters and son saw this thing happen. The son was wounded and left for dead, but the Great Spirit was looking out for him. Now he identifies Owl child and Bear Chief and Black Weasel as the men who killed his father.'
>
> Fools Crow felt his heart quicken. He wondered if Fast Horse was among the murderers. It was less than a year ago that Fools Crow and Fast Horse had gone on the Crow raid to gain honor and wealth in the traditional way: Fast Horse, who would one day become the keeper of the Beaver Medicine, who had always been smart and ambitious. It wasn't the fact that he might have helped kill the white man that bothered Fools Crow. This Malcolm Clark was known as a two-faced man, a bully, a dangerous fool who had little regard for the Pikunis. His death caused Fools Crow no sorrow. But Owl Child was also a bad man. He had killed one of his own, Bear Head, when the two men argued over the scalp of an enemy. Owl Child had lied and tried to claim it, but many in the party had seen Bear Head bring down the enemy. Now Owl Child wandered about with his gang, threatening the Napikwans and stealing their horses – and Fast Horse had become a part of it. He had turned away from his own people.
>
> (156–57)

Much of the novel tells – and I use the verb advisedly – of the struggle between traditionalists and assimilationists: which policy will be effective in protecting the Blackfeet from the effects of westward expansion after the end of the American Civil War? Welch attempts free indirect discourse, focalizing much of his story through Fools Crow as well as other members of his Picuni band. Yet, as in this extract, diegesis intrudes much of the time. It may be this, rather than problems of avoiding 'the clichéd formal pidgin of Hollywood Indians' that makes this novel a tour de force, but not an 'authentic' text.

Telling histories

In the following sections I focus on issues of narrative technique, and investigate the characteristic strategies that facilitate Erdrich's open-ended literary production, since her literary storytelling performs survivance and celebration of a living history, not a memorialization of a vanished past. Several of the, to date, eleven novels by Erdrich are located mainly on the imaginary reservation, called 'Little No Horse', or *Ozhibi'ganan*. These novels are all characterized by their inscription of history or stories that exist within the span of living memory; that is to say, the time span is roughly that of the twentieth century, characters and events from before that time remaining hazy. *Tracks* covers the years 1912 till 1924, and is narrated retrospectively by Nanapush and Pauline. *Love Medicine* covers the years 1934 to 1984 and is told in a complexly polyphonic set of narrations. (*The Bingo Palace* is strangely reserved about dates, so that one needs to read it in the context of the series to understand its place in the story sequence. One might say it roughly covers the same time as *Tales of Burning Love*, but ending by 1994, its date of first publication.) (*The Beet Queen* clearly signposts that it covers a similar but slightly shorter period of the mid-twentieth century, namely 1932 to 1972.) *Tales of Burning Love* is set in 1981 to 1995, and contains a series of retrospective, hypodiegetic narratives. *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* covers a period from 1910 till 1997, employing the marvellous real to extend the natural life spans of Father Damien and Lulu. *Four Souls* starts where *Tracks* ends, 1924, and fills out the story of what happens to Fleur before she returns with her son by Mauser, as told in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. Initially it returns to the narrative strategy of *Tracks* by using two narrators, one Nanapush and one a European woman, Mauser's sister in law. Towards the end it includes a further female, homodiegetic narrator, Margaret, thus complicating the narration's point of view. The narration could thus be described as polyphonic across gender and ethnicity.

The Last Report is also less polyphonic than some of the other texts, and could usefully be compared with the narrative techniques of Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Each succeeding novel refers to the prior, or anterior, related texts; moreover, techniques of mutually referential focalization and the use of delay and gaps to retain the implied reader's attention are extended across texts rather than confined to individual novels. In this chapter I consider the major narrative techniques employed by Erdrich. In passing I would comment that above all it is the excellence of Erdrich's prose style that keeps her readers reading, but that would be the subject of another essay.

So, in this chapter I consider issues of narration and narrators; focalization; analepsis and prolepsis; delays and gaps; addressees (or narratees); implied author and implied reader; and family trees.

Narration, narrators and narratees

A short story became the basis of a novel, that novel was revised substantially a decade later; another novel, begun before it, but published after it, provided information that readers of *Love Medicine* (1984, 1994) required in order to complete their reconstruction of its events. On the other hand readers of *Tracks* (1988) needed some of the information provided in *Love Medicine* to understand its scenario. For a while critics and reviewers could confidently talk about the tetralogy of novels, but then along came *Tales of Burning Love* (1996), followed by *The Antelope Wife* then *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* (2001) and more recently *Four Souls* (2004) and *The Painted Drum* (2005).[3]

Tracks solves the problem of narration by using two, homodiegetic narrators: Nanapush and Pauline Puyat. They represent two polar opposites in terms of Native American responses to European American civilization and, arguably, colonization. Nanapush is a traditionalist. Pauline Puyat is a mixed-blood who denies her Indian blood in order to be accepted into the convent (138). Nanapush is an avatar of the Ojibwe trickster figure, Nanabozho (33); Pauline aspires to Catholic sainthood. Nanapush tells his story to a named addressee, Lulu, and for a specific reason: to dissuade her from marrying a Morrissey. His style suggests that his is an oral narrative, whereas Pauline's narrative style is more writerly, and it is not clear who her narratee might be. As he is a trickster, the implied reader would be naïve to always take Nanapush's words at face value. Yet Pauline is also an unreliable narrator, since she writes to justify her own actions, even though some of them are quite deadly, and her demeanour is generally that of a religious maniac and colonized subject. At moments in the text both are said to lie, or admit that they lie. Within the text this urges the implied reader to redoubled efforts to establish a version of the truth from two untrustworthy versions. It is my experience in teaching this text that some readers favour Nanapush's version, whereas others prefer Pauline's. My own sense is that for all his trickster antics, Nanapush is given more credibility by the implied author. Yet, disorientatingly, it is Pauline who echoes the author's dedication to her husband and writing collaborator, by saying knowingly:

> It comes up different every time, and has no ending, no beginning. They get the middle wrong too. They only know they don't know anything.
>
> (31)

Perhaps the implied reader is expected to seesaw between the different reality models these two narrators embody, unable to resolve interpretation by adhering totally to one or the other. What is certain is that a novel told entirely by two, unreliable, and contradictory, narrators sets up the possibility for the events and characters to be retold from another, potentially more reliable perspective. This is especially true since both narrators have a specific

purpose in telling their version of events: to persuade the specified addressee not to make a bad marriage, to convince the unspecified narratee – Pauline's confessor, Pauline's conscience, Pauline's spiritual visitation – that her actions and behaviour are justifiable. Given the specific occasions and reasons for their narrations, gaps are inevitably going to remain in their stories. It is these that enable Erdrich to return to the materials over again, specifically in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*.

Characterization

It is beyond the bounds of my imagination to conceive of an author, on a writing programme and in her twenties, who would both solve the problem of how to structure an unruly, over-long draft of a potential first novel and at the same time envisage how a degree of narrative indeterminancy would allow her to return to the material twenty years hence and construct a different, but related novel. And I don't suggest that Louise Erdrich, in finding the form for *Tracks*, knew that in 2001 the gaps in the anterior novel would permit her to publish *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. Yet it is interesting to see how, in retrospect, *Tracks* contains the gaps and the hints of characterization that enable the implied author of *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* to develop the character of Father Damien, and to make him the main focalizer and 'reporter' of the subsequent novel.

In *Tracks* the character of Father Damien is not foregrounded. The study of the phenomenon of Catholicism among the Indians is instead projected onto the character of Pauline Puyat. Moreover, Father Damien is always focalized by one of the two, homodiegetic narrators, whose point of view is partial. Thus, Nanapush:

> But one day the new priest, just a boy really, opened our door. A dazzling and painful light flooded through and surrounded Fleur and me. Another Pillager was found, the priest said, Fleur's cousin Moses was alive in the woods. Numb, stupid as bears in a winter den, we blinked at the priest's slight silhouette.
>
> (6–7)

> 'Reason with the idiot', he commanded poor Damien, who was caught in the web of his meddling. Father tried talking to me earnestly, face to face, and did his best to no effect. Tears started in his eyes and his shoulders sagged, but I would not budge.
>
> (168)

> The young priest's neck had thinned, his cheeks hollowed. To shield himself from the cold he had tried to grow a beard but it was too sparse for warmth. He shook his head now, unwilling to deliver what he had to tell.
>
> (174)

And Pauline:

> Lulu was spoilt proud, never humble. She laughed at Father Damien in his skirts, at the nuns in their starched and cutting wimples.
>
> (70)

> And they tried. Over the hours, I witnessed their muddled attempts, the growth of a crowd of my sisters and our priest. Father Damien himself launched a small brown canoe into the waves, but God tossed him back on shore, sopping and endangered, for the water was frigid enough to still the blood.
>
> (198)

Interestingly, Father Damien features more in Nanapush's story than in Pauline Puyat's. She is more focused on the nuns, as her role models, surrogate mothers and sisters. Nanapush enjoys the humor he can ring from Father Damien's gaucheness and boyishness, but has some sympathy for a priest who cares enough to risk his own life and who encourages him to fight the treaties and deals that deprive him of his tribal homelands. Both narrators characterize Damien as unmanly and to a certain extent ineffectual in reservation life, and yet he is not described as a hateful black-robe. The slightness, not only of Damien's figure, but also of the attention given him by these two narrators, leaves open the gaps that the subsequent text enters. Some scenarios are reworked and greatly developed from the first telling, especially the visit to save Nanapush and Fleur; many scenarios are new to the implied reader. Yet on the whole there is a sense of credible continuity of history between the anterior and the sequel text. It seems to me that the technique that is crucial in maintaining this credibility is that of focalization. Especially when homodiegetic narrators are retelling events from memory, have different cultural, religious and ideological positions, and operate in the same place but through different reality models, the possibilities for different perspectives and different versions are multiple.

Focalization

Tracks is constructed around what I would describe as mutually referential focalization, which is to say that Nanapush focalizes Pauline, Pauline focalizes Nanapush; they both tell the same story but disagree as to its interpretation. At moments one can see the workings of the implied author, since rather than get two, complete versions of events from 1912 till 1924, their narratives interweave, one taking up where the other left off. (Again, one could envisage a reworking of this novel in which the 'edited' segments of the two narrations were retrieved.) Very crudely, these narrators could be identified as representing male traditionalist and female assimilationist reality models, thus they polarize the *Gestalten* that make sense of the events they narrate. Whereas

this is a major structuring device in *Tracks*, it is elsewhere a very flexible technique. In *Love Medicine* it is used variously at local level. Thus, for example, 'The Plunge of the Brave (1957)' and 'Flesh and Blood (1957)' both include the story of Nector's affair with Lulu (122–66). Both chapters tell of his decision to leave Marie for her, his accidental burning down of her house, before he is retrieved by his daughter, Zelda, and returns to Marie, unsure whether she read his farewell note or not. The poignancy of this is that the implied reader knows more about their marital crisis than the two, separate, homodiegetic narrators. The technique is used again, within a single chapter, 'A Bridge (1973)', to suggest the lack of connection between two characters on a one-night-stand. Within the space of a dozen pages, Albertine Johnson focalizes Henry Lamartine and Henry focalizes Albertine (167–80). Neither will ever know the state of mind and emotions the other experienced that night, but through the heterodiegetic narrator the implied reader does.

This technique is pushed a stage further when the opening chapter of *Tales of Burning Love* recapitulates the first section of the opening chapter of *Love Medicine*. The same brief encounter between June and the mud engineer, resulting in June's death, is told through a heterodiegetic narrator. The difference is that in *Love Medicine* it is told with June as focalizer and in *Tales of Burning Love* the focalizer is 'Andy', whose real name now turns out to be Jack Mauser. Read side by side, the two chapters dramatize the ways in which a man and a woman fail to fully communicate or comprehend one another; the ways in which they perceive one another according to their own needs and desires; the ways in which each can manage not to fully know the other. Neither is sure of the other's name, and from this the implied author is able to add another, important family to the expanding saga. The Mauser family thus becomes identified as white Easterners, of Germanic extraction, who exploited the allotment policies at the start of the century, and now exploit the farm-land for building. Again, I doubt that when Erdrich developed Jack Mauser's character she necessarily envisaged that earlier in the time of story Fleur had married John James Mauser to exact revenge and retrieve her family's land; but the possibility was created at that point. Thus shifts in focalization can also open up other ramifications to the story line, since one character's centre of perception necessarily differs from those of other characters and focalizers. This potential is fully realized in the development of Father Damien's character in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*.

Apart from Nanapush's mention that 'he had tried to grow a beard but it was too sparse for warmth', there is nothing in the anterior texts to undermine the characterization of Father Damien as a product of 'lifelong gender disguise' (357). And since Nanapush is a wily, trickster narrator, that particular comment can easily be absorbed into the implied reader's revised perception of Agnes/Damien. As with the June/Andy encounter being retold in the Jack Mauser/what's her name encounter, the narrative strategy of focalization exploits the phenomenological truism that one can never know the object of perception, but only one's perception of that object. When a

dedicated, Catholic priest turns out to be a defrocked Catholic nun, who has since lived in mortal sin out of wedlock, further aspects of the phenomenology of human perception come into play. Strongly featuring amongst these is the fact that much of gender is a cultural performance, and that in social interactions people respond to certain cues in terms of dress, deportment, manner. Virginia Woolf explores this wittily and perceptively in an anterior text to *The Last Report of the Miracles at Little No Horse*, namely *Orlando*. Louise Erdrich, like Woolf, enjoys and makes full use of the inherent humor of the situation, and indeed of the absurdity of conventional gender roles:

> Some Rules to Assist in My Transformation
> 1. Make requests in the form of orders.
> 2. Give compliments in the form of concessions.
> 3. Ask questions in the form of statements.
> 4. Exercise to enhance the muscles of the neck?
> 5. Admire women's handiwork with copious amazement.
> 6. Stride, swing arms, stop abruptly, stroke chin.
> 7. Sharpen razor daily.
> 8. Advance no explanations.
> 9. Accept no explanations.
> 10. Hum an occasional resolute march.
>
> (74)

Yet, *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* is more than an authorial *jeu d'esprit*, since Agnes's sexuality returns to trouble and complicate her masculine disguise, and since an underlying deeply serious suggestion is that Agnes brings to the role of priest qualities of feminine empathy and compassion that complement the energetic masculinity of the supposed Father Damien. As a focalizer in the heterodiegetic narration, Agnes/Damien shifts between female and male perceptions of the other characters and of her/himself; and even when Damien writes his letters and reports, the style combines masculine assurance with feminine hesitancy. At moments when Damien is focalized by other characters, this duality of gender identity is glimpsed:

> Father Jude blinked. In that instant a strange thing happened. He saw, inhabiting the same cassock as the priest, an old woman. She was a sly, pleasant, contradictory-looking female of stark intelligence. He shook his head, craned forward, but no, there was Father Damien again, tottering into the comfort of his room.
>
> (139)

And there are moments in the story when Agnes learns that her disguise has been seen through (201, 230–32, 274); yet in the present moment her secret is maintained to the end, due to the devotion of Mary Kashpaw. Father Jude

never fully decodes his uncanny glimpse of the truth, and as addressee and focalizer of Damien manages to introduce some further complications into his life historiography. Yet he does stumble on the perception that is a deep structuring device of this novel; namely that Father Damien is more saintly in his unassuming way than the candidate for canonization, Sister Leopolda:

> It occurred to him that he was, in his mind, setting the life of Damien out in a scheme next to the life of Sister Leopolda, and he wondered why until he thought, *The life of sacrifice, the life of ordinary acts of daily kindness, the life of devotion, humility, and purpose*. The life of Father Damien also included miracles and direct tragic encounters and examples of heroic virtue. Saintly, thought Jude almost idly, then caught himself in wonder.
>
> Saintly? Father Damien? Am I writing the wrong Saint's Passion?
>
> (341)

The introduction of Father Jude as interlocutor and investigator of Sister Leopolda's life precipitates extensive retrospective interrogations and hence analepses through reported speech. Again, the analepses refer back to the anterior texts in the oeuvre, further complicating the implied reader's sense of the true version of the story/stories. Father Jude is an emissary from the pope, but as we see, his judgement and interpretation of the evidence he gathers is fallible. The implied author is alluded to in the End Notes, but the real author, Louise Erdrich, admits that 'the source of these early narratives is mysterious to me also' (358). What can be said is that this novel draws on all the anterior texts by her, and in that respect uses a type of trans-textual analepsis, or signifying. Incidents from not only *Tracks* but also from *Love Medicine* are recapitulated from Father Damien's point of view, and retold/revised in directly reported speech by other characters. The effect for the implied reader of the oeuvre as a whole is of 'signifying' as well as reinforcing the presence of this imaginary community in all its complicated ramifications.[4] Moreover, the extreme age of Father Damien and the long span of the time of story contribute to the implied reader's sense that the complex function of memory is a fundamental theme of this novel. This impression is reinforced by the inventive variety of narrative techniques that bear comparison with Proust's depiction of the function of voluntary and involuntary memory in *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. In Father Damien's case it is suggested that involuntary memory is precipitated not by the *madeleine*, but by 'an obscure beaujolais' (3).

Narrators and narratees

The other significant anterior texts are *Tales of Burning Love* and *The Beet Queen*. Events narrated in *Tales of Burning Love* are recapitulated when Father Jude arrives to question Father Damien (49–54). The implied reader who knows the anterior texts therefore is aware of the more farcical and secular

explanations of the putative miracles. *Tales of Burning Love* is particularly relevant since the time of its story ends in late August 1995 and *Last Report* commences in March 1996, in terms of time of telling or recall. In the anterior text, Father Jude has already been characterized as a priest keen to canonize a local nun (442–43). By the end of *Last Report* he is working on his new project, 'the proposed blessedness and possible sainthood of Father Damien Modeste, recently perished' (353). The implied reader in the know is thus aware that he is prone to hagiography, which is necessarily an ideologically informed version of the truth, and is not a reliable, disinterested narrator.

Father Jude is the catalyst for much of the telling of the past and is thus a partial narratee in the text, as well as focalizer of Father Damien and Lulu. (Readers familiar with *The Beet Queen* will recall that he is the baby brother of Mary and Karl Adare, who was snatched by a desperate young husband after their mother flew off with an aviator. Hence one might deduce that as a character he has unfinished psychological business of his own that might lead him to search for perfect parental figures in the heavens.) However, he – along with the beaujolais – precipitates memories that are not told to him, but only to the implied reader. This narrative situation has its precedent in *Tales of Burning Love*. As they sit stranded in the red Explorer stuck in a snowdrift, Candice and Marlis take their turns at telling their stories of their lives with Jack. Then they come to a point in the story where they both recall what happened next, but they don't tell their narratees, the other two wives. Instead, the narrative switches back to extra-heterodiegetic mode as 'they recall everything about the maternity waiting room' (352). This includes a screamingly funny description of the birth of Jack Jr. that should have most mothers who have tried for natural childbirth in stitches. Thus they withhold information from their narratees, but the implied author ensures that the implied reader knows more of their life together after Jack. On a major structural level, this technique is employed throughout *Last Report*. Thus the implication is that the memories recalled from 1910 onwards are those of Agnes/Father Damien, even when they are recalled in extra-heterodiegetic narration, and through a variety of focalizers. Since the implied reader is told information withheld from Father Jude, one might think that Erdrich has finally given her readers a definitive version of events. This is not the case, since Father Damien is very elderly and has suffered traumatic memory loss earlier in his/her lifetime. Moreover, there are stories in the novel that read more like oral trickster tales, so that Nanapush remains a significant narrative presence and influence on the text.

Analepsis and prolepsis

Just to recapitulate:

> An analepsis is a narration of a story-event at a point in the text after later events have been told. The narration returns, as it were, to a past point in

> the story. Conversely, a prolepsis is a narration of a story-event at a point before earlier events have been mentioned.
>
> (Rimmon-Kenan 46)

In *Tracks* the story-order and text-order observe the same chronology, despite the polarization of focalizers. In *Love Medicine*, on the other hand, anachrony is a major structuring principle. Chapters 2 through to 11 inclusive are analepses, and although dates of telling are not explicitly stated, the implied reader senses that the time of telling is prior to 1981. There are further analepses in chapters 14 and 15, even though the time of telling has now caught up with the chronology established at the start of the novel. Prolepsis is used far less; however, it is occasionally employed by the heterodiegetic narrator, for example in 'Lulu's Boys (1957)':

> At the time her hair was still dark and thickly curled. Later she would burn it off when her house caught fire, and it would never grow back.
>
> (116)

And:

> It would not surprise Bev to hear, after many years passed on, that this Gerry grew up to be both a natural criminal and a hero whose face appeared on the six-o-clock news.
>
> (118)

The variety of heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators and multiplicity of focalizers contributes to the specific textual quality of this novel. Rainwater has argued that the narrative structure works to marginalize the implied reader, and thus replicate the condition of marginality within which Native American cultural identity survives. Put slightly differently, one might say that the implied trickster author enjoys subverting the implied reader's expectations about plot construction, and about 'major' and 'minor' characters. In *Love Medicine* polyphony is exploited as a technique to its farthest limits, and with the multiplicity of voices, and thus focalizers, various discrepancies occur. Apart from major structuring anachronies, local anachronies become inevitable, as do delays and gaps in the imparting of information.

In *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, two framing devices establish the time of telling as taking place in 1996. The first of these is the letters and reports that Father Damien continues to address to the Pope. The second is the arrival of Father Jude to investigate the miracles associated with Sister Leopolda and to interview Father Damien. The implied reader thus knows more than Father Jude, from whom information is strategically withheld, both by characters in the novel and by the implied author. In *Tracks*, Nanapush takes on the traditional role of oral storyteller, passing on the tales of the tribe, and hopefully the moral lessons that they convey. Thus he is a 'historian' telling the stories of the past, and as such relies on memory.

In the character of Father Damien, as it is developed in *The Last Report*, the *function* of memory is investigated and portrayed, as well as the memories that are summoned, suppressed and recovered involuntarily. Thus the novel explores in equal depths the time of telling – 1996 – and the time of the story – 1910 to 1997. The implied author thus offers a description of the complex ways in which the past informs the present moment, and in which present consciousness continues to review the past. Moreover, she questions and complicates issues of history and historiography and, unlike *Tracks* where an American Indian way of telling history is juxtaposed with a Western or assimilationist way of writing it, in this novel she resists a racialization of historical methods. Father Damien respects Nanapush as an oral historian and 'reliable' source of, for example, the Puyat family history; Father Jude misinterprets documents, the 'foolproof' materials of Western historical method, because he cannot decipher Father Damien's character. Notions of historical truth are thus relativized and problematized yet again. The canny implied reader should perhaps wonder whether this really is the *last* report from Little No Horse, or whether the title's connotations of finally getting a true version of events are subject to authorial humor and narrative irony.

Although *The Last Report* mainly involves analepsis, both as a major structuring device throughout and inter-textually in relation to the anterior texts, it too has brief instances of prolepsis within its retrospective chapters. Thus, for example, when Agnes first arrives at Little No Horse, the heterodiegetic narrator inserts a couple of prolepses:

> Kashpaw was the driver's name. He was the first Indian she'd ever met and he would be one of the first she'd bury, come that summer and the feast of the saints.
>
> (62)

> The abyss of loss had led him to his present marital situation – a problem with which Father Damien would presently become involved.
>
> (64)

Positioned at the point of arrival, these prolepses contribute to the sense of anticipation experienced by Agnes, without really divulging any significant information to the implied reader. Across the oeuvre as a whole, the far more typical strategy is that of delaying the imparting of information, or of revising versions of events as homodiegetic narrators review them at different times and for different addressees.

Delays and gaps

Louise Erdrich employs the related techniques of delays and gaps more boldly than many contemporary novelists. I believe that her risk-taking with these techniques contributes to the appeal of her novels. It also leads to

characteristic reader and critical responses that are predictable, justifiable and just possibly ludicrous. One particular response is to endeavour to construct a definitive family tree, encompassing all the families on the reservation and any relations off reservation. Given the complexity of kinship patterns and the chaotic nature of human sexual relations, a definitive version is unattainable. All the more so, since different narrators suggest different marital relations and parentages for the same characters. To recapitulate what the unreliable narrator, Pauline Puyat, says: 'It comes up different every time, and has no ending, no beginning. They get the middle wrong too. They only know they don't know anything' (31). Especially when it comes to issues of female sexuality, no one, not even the mother, can always be sure who the father is. Add to this the different kinship models of American Indian and Western European cultures, and the disruptive effects of disease, boarding school education, deprivation and alcoholism – not to mention malicious gossip – and differing versions of family trees are inevitable. Nevertheless, my students regularly arrive at seminars having tried to work out a family tree as they read *Love Medicine* and/or *Tracks*, and in recent years a spate of attempts at definitive family trees have been published. This activity culminates in the hand-drawn family tree on the inside front and back covers of *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*. Elegant in its simplicity, this family tree has more gaps than family members, and thus thwarts any reader of the entire oeuvre who seeks the final and complete version of tribal relations over the past one hundred years or more. While it is understandable that readers will continue to puzzle over how to draw a satisfactory family tree, covering the eight or nine novels in question, it is perhaps more profitable to consider why we as readers feel impelled to do so.

I have already implied what I think the reason is, namely the variety of narrators, both heterodiegetic and homodiegetic, reliable and unreliable in varying degrees, and the different narratees they address in various contexts. The style of the homodiegetic narrators often implies an oral situation with an intra-textual addressee, particularly in Nanapush's narrative and in *Love Medicine*. The very features of style that convey this effect are those that contribute to the delays and gaps, or withholding of information. It would be tedious to enumerate all the occasions when this occurs throughout the novels, so a few examples will suffice here. For example, in 'The Island' Lulu utters a prolepsis, looking forward to the narrative scenario of *Tracks*:

> He never spoke against Moses the way he later would speak against the Morrissey, the first of my law-married husbands, the first mistake.
>
> (75)

But she doesn't mention which Morrissey it is that she marries. To my knowledge, but of course I might be a fallible reader, that particular piece of information has yet to be imparted. She also leaves the reader wondering whether the baby is safely delivered and if so what its name is:

> I needed a midwife to guide me, a mother. The ice had broken and black water swelled. I couldn't sleep. I knew that this baby, still tied to my heart, could drag me under and drown me. And yet, each morning light rose in the trembling mica, and I turned over, into darkness, in his arms.
>
> (84)

We don't learn his name until two hundred pages further on, and even then not directly:

> Bev had liked the idea of Gerry going along with him, but got more than he bargained for. They threw my boy in detention, and to this day I think that Bev turned him in. I wasn't too worried over that, however, since no white man has made a jail that could hold the son of Moses Pillager.
>
> That was one father's name I gave away now, free.
>
> (285)

The humor is that although the implied reader might want to work out who the fathers are of all Lulu's boys, the fathers would prefer that this information not be divulged.

Similarly, I don't believe that the implied reader ever learns the name of Marie's son whose birth is described in 'The Beads'. On the other hand, she does learn the name of the son that Lulu gives birth to by Nector; but again the information is considerably delayed. In Nector's homodiegetic narration, the name is not given, as his style of delivery is not writerly:

> And yet I couldn't ask her to be true, since I wasn't. I was two-timing Lulu in being married to Marie, and vice versa of course. Lulu held me tight by that string while she spun off on her own. Who she saw, what she did, I have no way to ever know. But I do think the boy looked like a Kashpaw.
>
> (136)

Again, in 'The Good Tears' Lulu reveals to her addressee that the child was Lyman:

> It went on for five years like that, until well after my youngest boy was born. Half Kashpaw. No wonder Lyman had money sense.
>
> (281)

In the case of Lipsha, both the implied reader and various other characters know his parentage long before it is revealed to him by Lulu (335–36). There is, of course, a variety of plausible reasons why information is delayed. People in recalling and telling part of their life story don't carefully arrange the information into complete, chronological order, but disclose it as it occurs to

them. On different occasions of telling there is a different focus or impetus to the narration. At the level of the story there are numerous reasons, some laudable, some less so, why a particular character conceals information from another or from the community as a whole. One major delay in information that is concealed for devious reasons is that Sister Leopolda/Pauline Puyat is Marie Lazarre/Kashpaw's mother. In fact this information was delayed for four years (real time), since it is not revealed in *Love Medicine* but only with the publication of *Tracks*. A further decade and a half passed by, again in real time, before readers learned that Marie knew this (324).

Thus Erdrich uses delays and ongoing gaps to create the effect of referentiality within the telling of the story. The implied reader senses that each narrator and each narration returns to and draws upon a complexly inter-related community, far too complicated to ever be explained in a single, definitive telling. Both the heterodiegetic narrator and the numerous homodiegetic narrators conceal information on some occasions, reveal it on others, only to revise it during a further telling. Sometimes the implied reader notes discrepancies in all of this; these are often glossed over through the function of primacy and recency effects. If the recency effect is not predominant as one reads Marie's account to Father Jude Miller in 'A Night Visitation (1996)' the reader might wonder why Marie seemed not to acknowledge Sister Leopolda as her mother in 'Flesh and Blood (1957)'. Yet there is nothing in that homodiegetic narration than indicates that she isn't her mother, and the implied author leaves not only the clue of the chapter heading, but also the juxtaposition of mother (Sister Leopolda) and daughter (Marie) with that daughter (now a mother) and her daughter, Zelda:

> Her body was so shallow I could hardly tell if she breathed, the covering of her bones so frail I could see the heart pumping in her breast.
>
> I sat with her a long while, in silence.
>
> The earth was so mild and deep. I was sure that by spring she would be placed there, alone, and there was no rescue. There was nothing I could do after hating her all these years. [. . .]
>
> Watching Zelda walk in front of me [. . .] I remembered the year I carried her. It was summer. I sat under the clothesline, breathing quiet so she would move, feeling the hand or foot knock just beneath my heart. We had been one body then, yet she was a stranger. We were not as close now, yet perhaps I knew her better.
>
> (158)

Thus, often, although the implied reader is not *told* information, the text hints at it through parallelisms and especially through continuity of motifs and imagery. Often kinship is more accurately revealed that way than through attending to (mis)information imparted directly to a narratee.

Implied author and implied reader

A further consideration in all of this is that I have assumed that the implied reader adheres to a Western concept of historical truth. It seems to me, however, that the implied author is familiar with and at home in both Western versions of historical truth and a Native American sense of truth and history. This complicates her narrative strategy, since these two conceptualizations of 'the truth' are mutually subversive.[5] In a very real sense the novels that make up the Little No Horse oeuvre are mixed-blood narratives, or mixed *Gestalten* narrations. The culture that Erdrich writes from and about is the subject of not one but two cultural codes or reality models. Thus not only the narrators and the characters but also the implied author is highly sensitized to the arbitrary and artificial aspects of reality models. Techniques of mutually referential focalization, as well as ambiguous or conflicting accounts, all contribute to educate the implied reader in the complexities not only of reservation life but also of the narratological and historiographical codes available to describe and inscribe it. As Father Jude settles down to write up his life of Sister Leopolda he confronts the impossibility of writing a full and truthful version. Just as Virginia Woolf problematizes issues of historiography and biography through her somewhat plodding narrator in *Orlando*, so Erdrich sets Father Jude up as the aspiring author of the Life of a Saint. He soon realizes that his task is absurd:

> With some dismay, in the welter of files and note cards in fans and toppling stacks, Father Jude understood that to tell the story as a story was to pull a single thread, only, from the pattern of this woman's life, leaving the rest – the beautiful and brutal tapestry of contradictions – to persist in the form of a lie.
>
> (337)

The implied author, who by definition cannot speak in the text but only gesture through it, already knows this. The art of the novel is the art of telling stories well; but each story is a single thread in a densely woven fabric. None claims to be the final, authorized version; there will always be another story interwoven with this thread of the narration. There will, theoretically at least, always be further tales to tell about the same life or lives.

The implied author complexly combines the wily trickster aesthetics of Nanapush with the unconventional, feminine spirituality and contradictory, 'female [. . .] stark intelligence' of the revised version of Father Damien. When a significant two of her polyphony of characters are an Ojibwe shape-shifter and a lifelong gender-disguised priest, the implied reader should expect and accept that transformations in the narration of the events of the story will continue to multiply. It is precisely the imaginative spinning of multiple versions that keeps the implied reader baited and hooked. The bold use of narrative techniques is what any aspiring author needs to keep on reeling us in.

Conclusion

Accused famously by Leslie Silko of being too postmodern, I would suggest that Erdrich is actually deeply traditional, in respect of her deployment of Ojibwe beliefs and cultural formations in her novels. This is not accomplished at the overt level of 'contents' but far more through the transformative flexibility of her story-telling. I offer this detailed discussion of narrative devices as antidote to the plethora of family trees her novels have generated by way of reader response. I would suggest that the urge to create the family trees misses the point; in the desire to fix relationships amongst 'nindinawemaganidok, or my relatives', readers attempt to avoid the complexities of relationship between persons and through dimensions. The fluidity of Erdrich's style, the continuous shifting of point of view – or of focalizer and focalizee – and the willingness to tell with humor the varieties of human and religious experience in their endless heterogeneity testify to both personal and artistic acts of creative survivance that one can only attempt to appreciate more fully with each rereading of the novels.

Conclusion

In his essay on Clifford Geertz's 'thick description', Stephen Greenblatt writes:

> Literary criticism could venture out to unfamiliar cultural texts, and these texts – often marginal, odd, fragmentary, unexpected, and crude – in turn could begin to interact in interesting ways with the intimately familiar works of the literary canon.
>
> (20)

In my Introduction I defended my decision to look exclusively at Native American literary texts, yet argued that this was not because I advocate a separatist position in relation to issues of canonicity. Speaking on the 'Start the Week' programme this morning as I write, Yasmin Alibi Brown puts the case succinctly: 'I want the canon expanded, not divided off.' Yet in order for the canon to expand, we as readers need occasionally to deliberately divert our gaze away from the already established literary tastes and conventions of any national literary tradition. We need to immerse ourselves for a while in a marginalized tradition and discover its qualities, its strengths and its delights. No novel is going to succeed with its reading public if it fails to divert and give pleasure. Yet the writing I have considered here embodies a complex politics and is situated in a highly contested political arena. It has not been my aim to explore fully the critical debates that articulate these textual and contextual politics; that would be the job of a different kind of literary critic than myself.[1]

I respect Native American authors calling for a tradition of intellectual sovereignty. This is an urgent task for Native Americans, where intellectual sovereignty is claimed concomitantly with the demand for the resolution of the complex and contradictory legal status of tribal peoples. However, I strongly believe that literary texts should not be read for simplistic enunciation of civic and political agendas. To do so would be ultimately to do a body of texts of great creativity, passion and subtlety a long-term disservice and also to diminish the contribution cultural texts can make to political discourse and action. Thus I have chosen to approach these texts, both

canonical and not-yet-canonical, as an individual reader, bringing my own cross-cultural formations and preoccupations to this series of readings, yet always attempting to read in imaginative sympathy, to establish a wider community of engaged readers. This approach no doubt results in lacunae and oversights, but hopefully also returns the responsibility for attentive, respectful reading of literary texts to the burgeoning readership that exists both within and outside intellectual institutions. For either type of readers, the process of arriving at a fuller understanding of a text necessitates an eclectic mix of reading strategies. I have preferred eclecticism as the most useful strategy for literary appreciation. I don't propose that I have discovered the 'key' to all Amerindian narratives. Merely that I have spent some time considering these texts, because I hope that by so doing more of them will find their way onto reading lists both in academic institutions and in populist book clubs. My hope is that a cross-cultural community will grow in the global context, one that will be educated by these novels and will give back to Native American authors the appreciation and encouragement they deserve.

Identity, as defined by Louis Owens, is not experienced as a cosy, home-like container, a house of the soul limiting a sense of the self to the experience of interiority. The mixed-blood identity that Owens traces in *Mixedblood MESSAGES* is defined by the SPACE that Charles Olson was moved to 'spell' large in his essay on Herman Melville (11) and by the history of the movements of different peoples across this SPACE. Cultural geography and history are the stage of the self's psychodrama: they created this self and this self reflects their complex, conflicted topography and historiography. The American frontier experience becomes the third space of mixed-blood identity, a clash of ethnicities, a clash of cultural understandings, a zone of conflict as well as of immense energetic creativity. So, one aspect of my study has been to mix together questions of identity as expressed in autodiegetic, homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narratives, with issues of cultural geography, and with some reflections on fiction as a valid form of historiography.

In this study I have sought to interweave issues of place and space – senses of place and eulogized spaces – and questions of narratology – the ways in which contemporary American Indian authors mediate between the oral, storytelling tradition and the sophisticated, literary conventions of the European or Euro-American novel. My intention has been to demonstrate how these two strands are inextricably entangled. I have not attempted to find a way of disentangling history; memory; the telling of a tale to an imagined audience; the telling an unknown stranger about places familiar (to the author) and unfamiliar (to the reader). Rather, I have reflected on the ways in which these preoccupations wove their way through all my thoughts and responses to these texts. An appropriate response to this emerging canon is to construct a hybrid critical text that meditates on these interrelated issues of identity, home, homelessness, place, displacement, continuity, discontinuity and, above all, survivance.

Writing in *Storyteller* in 1981, Leslie Marmon Silko reflects with wry humor on some of the journeyers across the continent who arrived at Laguna Pueblo:

> In 1918 Franz Boas, ethnologist and linguist
> Passed through Laguna.
> His talented protégé
> Elsie Clews Parsons
> stayed behind to collect Laguna texts
> from which Boas planned to construct
> a grammar of the Laguna language.
> Boas, as it turns out
> was tone-deaf
> and the Laguna language is tonal
> so it is fortunate he allowed Ms. Parsons
> to do the actual collecting of the stories.
>
> (254)

I have tried to develop a flexible critical discourse that responds to some valuable texts by Native American and mixed-blood authors. I have tried to avoid intruding on a contextual politics that by rights belongs to indigenous critics, yet at the same time I have felt invited by the textual strategies these novelists use to read and respond to their narratives. Felicitous space and textual spaces have been connected preoccupations that have construed a web of thought in all that I have written. As my work has developed I have felt increasingly that any valid literary criticism should attempt to forge a language that allows awareness of history, sensitivity to place and attention to narrative strategies to coexist. Louis Owens and Leslie Marmon Silko both created texts that perform cultural hybridity; the critic in response endeavours to construct a third space of literary appreciation that is correspondingly fluid and mixed. I have tried above all not to be 'tone-deaf' and not to fail in imaginative engagement with a literary culture I can only know as a stranger. For me, 'This, if we are to go on.'

As a foreigner, an outsider to the cultures of Native American authors, and as a passionate believer in the importance of ecological understanding and orientation, I have had to guard most of all against romanticization of the 'ecological' Indian. Rereading critically the work of Frank Waters assisted me in gaining a further appreciation of Vizenor's position as regards the simulations of real, contemporary Indian identity that pass as Native American even in the most well-meaning circles. For this reason I included one novel by a non-native author in this study. It should help us to guard against what Lyotard has named the 'politique de l'oubli':

> Une 'politique de l'oubli', c'était notamment, pensai-je, édifier un mémorial.
>
> (14)

In all that I have done, I have tried to avoid memorialization. Even written literary texts exist as part of the flux of cultural process. Their monumentality is an illusion to be seen through.

In *Storyteller* Silko sets the scene for her hybrid text by enunciating the relationship between the stories told her as a child by her Aunt Susie and her current activity as a writer. She states:

> I write when I still hear
> her voice as she tells the story.
>
> (7)

To write with that sense of intergenerational and inter-media process and responsibility takes genius. Moreover, I would argue that this precept defines certain recognizable aspects of twentieth-century Native American writing. So, I have not had the hubris to construct a definitive Native American literary canon to append to the ongoing formation of the American literary canon, but I have found myself circling back round to Silko's canonical text as a touchstone of what might constitute texts included in that canon. Consequently, I arrive at the end of this critical study with further avenues opening before me and with renewed curiosity to find more such hybrid texts. To add to the already expanding canon more novels that speak relevantly to a future that embraces the marginalized and the specifically local in any global discourse and vision.

Appendix I

Ceremony: chart of narrative structure

Arrangement of tales yielding an ocular representation of totem pole

Thought-[creating] Woman – thinking the story the story-teller is telling.
Ceremony – reported speech from 2 anonymous tribal members, one male, one female.
Invocation to 'Sunrise.'
Story of Reed Woman and Corn Woman – first mythic story of drought.
(13–14)

Description of Scalp Society – by anonymous contemporary tribal informant.
(37–38)

First story of Ck'o'yo medicine man (magician) – second mythic story of drought.
(46–49)

Second mythic story of drought continued.
(53–54)

Emo's story.
(57–59)

Second mythic story of drought continued.
(71–72)

Second mythic story of drought continued.
(82)

Second mythic story of drought continued.
(105–6)

Second mythic story of drought continued.
(113)

Story of 'in between' bear/child.
(128–30)

Story of witchery – possibly told by Betonie, certainly part of the tradition he has inherited.
(132–38)

Story of 'in between' coyote/man.
(139–41)

Chant sang at healing scalp ceremony – invoking story of getting back bear/child, repeating the 'whirling' of witchery story, and accompanied by hoops as described in the story of coyote/man ceremony.
(142–44)

Second mythic story of drought continued.
(151–52)

Story of 'in between' coyote/man continued.
(153)

Second story of Ck'o'yo magician, the Gambler – third mythic story of drought.
(170–76)

Second mythic story of drought continued.
(180)

Tayo's prayer (invocation) to Sunrise.
(182)

Deer Hunter's autumn song – brother to Mountain Spirit woman, Ts'eh. [Tayo now in ceremonial time.]
(206)

Arrow boy and the witches fragment.
(247)

Second mythic story of drought completed.
(255–56)

Men in kiva honour Ts'eh.
(257)

Story of 'in between' coyote/man completed.
(258)

Second story of Ck'o'yo magician, the Gambler –
third mythic story of drought completed.
(260–61)

Balancing invocation to 'Sunrise.'

Appendix II

Chart of *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* (2001): Narrative and textual strategies

Nanapush cited as authority on Ojibwe philosophy. Ojibwe sense of space and time and of relationships stated.

PROLOGUE

The Old Priest 1996

Extra-heterodiegetic, third person narrator. Father Damien Modeste focalizer. + Directly reported document: 'last report', i.e. letter to the Pope, the infallible authority. Masculine pronoun used throughout. The 'obscure beaujolais' activates memory and energy to write, as an involuntary process that Father Damien is in the 'thrall' of. Thus the narrative frame is comparable to *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. This establishes the convention of the novel, that the past is recalled by the aged Father Damien, even though the narration is extra-heterodiegetic, or homodiegetic for Lulu's and Marie's stories.

PART ONE: THE TRANSFIGURATION OF AGNES

1 Naked Woman Playing Chopin 1910–12

SISTER CECILIA / MISS AGNES DEWITT / THE CARAMACCHIONE / BLESSING / ARNOLD 'THE ACTOR' ANDERSON / BERNDT VOGEL / THE BLUE HORSE / FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN / FATHER DAMIEN MODESTE (THE FIRST) / THE MISSION / THE FLOOD[1]

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes/Sister Cecilia main focalizer, but locally focalization shifts: e.g. Agnes focalizer/Berndt focalized, then, Berndt focalizer/Agnes focalized (27). Anterior texts include musical scores: Bach, Brahms, Beethoven, Debussy, Schubert and Chopin; and early silent movies. Other major anterior cultural text: Catholicism. Implied author behind the humor at the expense of the first Father Damien (36–37) and comedy of 'slow-speed chase' (31). First loss of

memory: 'She didn't even recall, donning her jacket, how it came to be fitted behind the satin lining with an astonishing amount of money' (33).

2 20 March 1996, 3 am, In the Thrall of the Grape

REPORT THE FIRST THE MIRACLE OF MY DISGUISE
Directly reported document: report authored by Father Damien. The implied reader should then assume that the subsequent, third person narration consists of indirectly reported contents of the report, and/or memories recalled at the time of its writing.

MIRACLE THE SECOND
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. Christ focalized. + Directly reported document: letter to the Pope, signed 'Modeste'.

THE EXCHANGE
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. First Father Damien buried. Anterior texts *passim*: Diane Wood Middlebrook's *Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton* and Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. (Anterior body of texts: nineteenth-century women's fiction: burial of the 'father' at start of plot frees heroine.) Agnes suffers second and deeper loss of memory: 'her memory, again, was a distressing patchwork of eroding islands. [. . .] She had no way of knowing that she had lost the vast gift of her music' (45).

3 Little No Horse 1996

Extra-heterodiegetic, third person narrator. Arrival of Father Jude Miller who becomes addressee (but some information withheld from him). Reciprocal focalizers: Father Damien and Father Jude. + Directly reported document: Father Damien Modeste's letter to the Pope. Pun on gender disguise in signing himself 'Yours in the Lamb' (49). Anterior texts: *The Beet Queen*, *Tracks*, *Tales of Burning Love*. Father Damien claims to be reliable narrator of events: 'I would like to establish myself as the crucial witness in the archive' (51).

PART TWO: THE DEADLY CONVERSIONS

4 The Road to Little No Horse 1996

Extra-heterodiegetic, third person narrator. Father Damien focalizer. + Directly reported document: unfinished, draft letter to the Pope. Involuntary memory overwhelms Father Damien (60), to give access to the events narrated in following sections.

THE ARRIVAL 1912 / DEATHROBES / MIRACLE AT THE MEAT / SISTER HILDEGARDE'S VIEWS
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. Prolepsis. Father Damien focalized by Kashpaw. Pauline Puyat focalized by Agnes. Sister Hildegarde focalized by Agnes. + Directly reported documents: Father Damien's first letter composed by Agnes (69–70) and directly transcribed notes on gender disguise (74).

5 Spirit Talk 1912

Extra-heterodiegetic, overt narrator. Implied author endorses strong opinions of overt narrator re land policies (75–76).

THE LOSS / NANAPUSH
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. Implied author behind comment on gender as performative: 'Between these two, where was the real self? It came to her that both Sister Cecilia and then Agnes were as heavily manufactured of gesture and pose as was Father Damien. And within this, what sifting of identity was she? What mote? What nothing?' (76).

THE LIVING
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Focalizers: Fleur and Nanapush. Father Damien focalized.

NANABOZHO CONVERTS THE WOLVES Nanapush
Intra-heterodiegetic narrator: Nanapush. Addressee: Father Damien. Hypodiegetic narration: actional and thematic function. Anterior texts: traditional, Ojibwe Trickster tales (*ätíso'kanak*).

GAAG
Nanapush focalizer. Father Damien focalized and tricked.

6 The Kashpaw Wives 1912

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Nanapush focalizes Father Damien. Father Damien focalizes Kashpaw family. Implied author employs trickster aesthetics: e.g. 'Nanapush reluctantly told his story' (95).

PATAKIZOOG! Nanapush
Intra-heterodiegetic narrator: Nanapush. Addressee: Father Damien. Hypodiegetic narration: actional and explicative function. Anterior texts: Ojibwe oral storytelling about the people (*täbätacamowin*).

KASHPAW'S PASSION
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Kashpaw focalizer. Father Damien focalized. Implied author behind narrator's comment on the mutual untranslatability of Christian and Ojibwe languages and cultural concepts: 'This

love of Christ, this love that chose Agnes and forced her to give up her nature as a woman, forced Father Damien to appear to sacrifice the pleasures of manhood, was impossible to define in Ojibwe' (99). * Agnes focalizer. Prolepsis.

QUILL'S MADNESS / DOCTORING QUILL
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Quill focalizer. Directly reported document: Father Damien's letter to the Pope, signed 'Modeste'.

JOHN JAMES MAUSER
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. Directly reported document: Father Damien's daybook. Recapitulation and development of theme stated by overt narrator at start of chapter.

7 The Feast of the Virgin 1912–13

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Damien focalizer, and also Agnes to reinforce authorial humor. Pauline Puyat focalized. Anterior cultural texts: Catholic and Ojibwe rituals.

THE SEVEN DRUNKS
Extra-diegetic, third person, humorous narrator. Anterior text: *Tracks*.

THE RUNAWAYS / KASHPAW'S VISION, QUILL'S PEACE
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Damien focalizer. Death focalized as black dog.

QUILL'S DAUGHTER
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Damien/Agnes focalizer. Mary Kashpaw focalized.

INFLUENZA 1918
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Damien/Agnes focalizer. Pauline Puyat focalized.

THE HAIR SHIRT 1919
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. Pauline Puyat focalized. + Directly reported speech: her confession to Father Damien. Anterior text: *Tracks*.

THE VICTIM SOUL
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Focalizers: Father Damien and Sister Hildegarde. Pauline Puyat focalized. Anterior text: *Tracks*.

8 The Confession of Marie 1996

Extra-heterodiegetic, third person narrator. Father Damien focalizer. Father Jude focalized. Father Jude focalizer. Father Damien focalized

especially: 'He saw, inhabiting the same cassock as the priest, an old woman' (139). Father Jude addressee in diegetic narrative. Father Damien addressee of Marie's confession in recalled past. Prolepsis: Father Jude misses his 'comeuppance', i.e. Lulu. Anterior texts: *Love Medicine*, *Beet Queen*, *Tales of Burning Love*.

MARIE KASHPAW

Extra-heterodiegetic, third person narrator. Narrative technique of delay in imparting information dramatized in this section. + implied authorial humor at expense of Father Jude. Anterior text: *Love Medicine*.

AN ARGUMENT

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Jude focalizer. Father Damien focalized: 'It was a problem of perception. A distinct uncanny sense he could only name in one way' (146). Anterior text: *Tracks*.

HISTORY OF THE PUYATS BY FATHER DAMIEN MODESTE

Intra-heterodiegetic narrator: Father Damien. Hypodiegetic narration: explicative function. One source of the historical paper is Nanapush's oral, trickster narration. Implied author balances Ojibwe 'history' and European/American historiography. Also contributes to characterization of Father Damien as well-meaning, Mission priest.

PART THREE: MEMORY AND SUSPICION

9 The Rosary 1919–20

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator (but still implication that 'Father Damien's vision sank inward into the past'). Focalizer Father Damien. Implicitly, Father Damien withholds information from Father Jude: his memories are recalled, but not narrated to his diegetic narratee. Anterior texts: *Tracks*, priest detective fiction G. K. Chesterton's *Father Brown* Stories.

THE TEMPLE WHIPPING

Extra-heterodiegetic, trickster narrator. Focalizers: Margaret Kashpaw and Bernadette Morrissey. Implied authorial humor. Anterior texts: *Tracks* and Ojibwe oral storytelling about the people (*täbätacamowin*).

BERNADETTE / NECTOR KASHPAW / PENMANSHIP

Extradiegetic narrator. Implied author supplies crucial historical information, including clan divisions within the tribe and Nector's strategic use of writing. Anterior texts: *Tracks* and *Love Medicine*.

NECTOR

Extradiegetic narrator. Nector focalizer. Nanapush is told of the events at diegetic level and in response teaches trickster story-telling to Nector.

10 The Ghost Music 1913–19

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Focalizers: Agnes/Father Damien.

PRAYER
Implied author behind the description of the priest as hermaphrodite in terms of gender identity: 'Four times a day [. . .] Agnes and Father Damien became that one person who addressed the unknown. The priest stopped what he was doing, cast himself down, made himself transparent, broke himself open.'

LULU'S BAPTISM / COLLATERAL
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Damien focalizer. Implied author behind characterization of Father Damien's letters being written too late.

FLEUR
Fleur focalizer. Implied author behind plot implication that Fleur's action more effective than Father Damien's.

11 The First Visit 1920–22

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. Devil focalized. Anterior text: *Tracks* (this version suggests that Lulu is saved in both religio-cultural systems). Prolepsis. NB List of anterior texts (198). Agnes' gender and sexual identity known by Father Gregory.

THE CLOUD
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Focalizers: Father Gregory then Agnes. Anterior text: *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

THE LETTER
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Focalizer: Agnes/Father Damien. + Directly reported letter to the Bishop. Implied author behind gender politics of exchange between Gregory and Agnes, ending in statement: 'I am nothing but a priest' (207).

AGNES'S PASSION
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. + Directly reported letter to the Pope.

FATHER DAMIEN'S SLEEP / DAMIEN'S INNER TRAVELS / SLEEPERS / THE SACRAMENT
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Damien focalized by Sister Hildegarde and Mary Kashpaw. Implied author behind overt narrator's explanation: 'He was exploring worlds inhabited by both Ojibwe and Catholic' (211). Anterior texts: Catholic and Ojibwe texts, traditions, practices.

12 The Audience 1922

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. Story of recalling part of her lost past: she recovers her musical talent. Implied author puns on 'audience' [with Pope] as Agnes plays piano to the audience of snakes.

GINEBIGOOG

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Damien/Agnes focalizer. Nanapush interprets Father Damien through Ojibwe belief system.

THE PIANO

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. Implied author: 'When it came right down to it she acted as artist' (222).

TIME

Extradiegetic narrator. Focalizers: Nanapush, Father Damien, then Agnes. Implied author highlights the different conceptions of time in Ojibwe and European American culture.

THE MADONNA OF THE SERPENTS

Extradiegetic narrator. Focalizer: 'old *mangeur de lard*', woodcarver. Anterior text: *Tales of Burning Love*: reworking of 'The Stone Virgin' (436–38).

THE SERMON OF THE SNAKES

Extradiegetic narrator. Father Damien protagonist. Anterior texts: the Lives of the Saints, i.e. hagiography. NB The chapter as a whole provides the materials for Father Damien to be commemorated both in Ojibwe oral story-telling about the people (*täbätacamowin*) and in Catholic hagiography.

13 The Recognition 1923

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes/Father Damien focalizers. Overt narrator tells story of eighteenth-century Jesuit priest. Nanapush acts as trickster in this scenario. + Directly reported letter to the Pope. Father Damien's gender disguise known by Nanapush and Margaret. Anterior texts: oral trickster tales and The Gospels story of Christ being recognized by disciples after the crucifixion.

14 Lulu 1996

Extradiegetic, third person narrator. Father Jude focalizer. Lulu and Father Damien focalized. Implied authorial humor at Father Jude's expense. Yet Father Jude's assessment of Father Damien's character also endorsed: 'Whatever his belief, Father Damien had acted on the fundamental dictates of a great love. Sacrifice had been his rule. He'd put

others above himself and lived in the abyss of doubt rather than forsake those in need' (239).

15 Lulu's Passion

Intra-homodiegetic, first person narrator: Lulu. Father Jude addressee. Anterior text: *Tracks*.

PART FOUR: THE PASSIONS

16 Father Damien 1921–33

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes/Father Damien focalizers. + Directly reported documents: notes on Ojibwe language, correspondence with the Bishop. Anterior texts: cultural anthropological and linguistic studies of Ojibwe language and culture (e.g. A. Irving Hallowell's 'Ojibwa Ontology, Behaviour, and World View', 145–49).

FLEUR'S CHILDREN

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Focalizers: community and Father Damien. Fleur focalized. Anterior text: *Tracks*. Implied author reveals information previously withheld: 'She had a fierce intelligence and nothing slipped by her, so he accepted that she'd known his secret from the beginning, and it hadn't mattered. Not because she was so tolerant, but because certain details of other people's personhood were not worth her notice' (263–64).

LULU'S YELLOW CANARY

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes/Father Damien focalizers. Lulu focalized. Prolepsis. Repetition of major themes: e.g. 'Her transformation presented Agnes with a small clutch of embarrassing resentments'. And: '*Saint Augustine, Nanabozho, whoever can hear me, give me a little help now*, he prayed' (265).

1945

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. Lulu's firstborn (Gerry) and baby by the Morrissey focalized. Implied author withholds information: children's names. Anterior texts: *Tracks*, *Love Medicine*. Narrative indeterminacy across the texts: 'she believed in the essential angelic nature of that tiny boy, even though the baby grew up and went to prison' (271), referring to second son not 'Lulu's older son'.

LEOPOLDA'S LAST CONFESSION

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Damien focalizer. Pauline Puyat focalized. + Directly reported confession and letter to the Pope. Analepsis: Sister Leopolda has guessed Father Damien's sexual identity. Implicitly, confession not told to addressee, Father Jude, only to implied reader.

17 Mist and Mary Kashpaw 1940

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Awun/the Mist focalizer. Mary Kashpaw focalized. Then, Mary Kashpaw focalized. Awun/the Mist focalizer. Anterior text: *Tales of Burning Love*, but narrative indeterminacy across the texts, since Jack Mauser's mother called Mary Stamper in his recollection of her (184–85).

18 Le Mooz or The Last Year of Nanapush 1941–42

Extra-heterodiegetic, trickster narrator. Nanapush and Margaret protagonists. Anterior texts: *Moby Dick*, studies of Ojibwe language and culture (e.g. A. Irving Hallowell's 'Ojibwa Ontology, Behaviour, and World View', 149–50). NB Implied authorial humor.

19 The Water Jar 1962

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Gregory focalized by Senior Citizens, Sisters, Father Damien. Then, Agnes focalizer. Mashkiigikwe focalized. Anterior text: Gospel story of Christ asking for water from woman at the well.

20 A Night Visitation 1996 / The Mighty Tempter

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Agnes focalizer. Death focalized as 'the black dog'. Implied authorial, trickster humor: e.g. 'The dog ranted – it had never liked the composer, it turned out it was jealous – but Agnes didn't notice anymore' (310).

THE WINES OF PORTRARTUS
Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Jude focalizer. Father Damien focalized. Jude focalizes Damien as unreliable narrator (315), but implied reader knows that Father Damien's judgement more reliable than Father Jude's. Implied authorial humor: puns on ambiguity of spirits/spirituality. Yet also suggests narrative closure, mirroring the sequence of 'In the Thrall of the Grape': obscure beaujolais – vision sunk inward into the past – 'I have only to think back and consider my life' – the behaviour of 'habituated winos'. Implied author signifying on anterior text, *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, and modifying its version of involuntary memory.

THE INTERVIEW
Extra-heterodiegetic, trickster narrator. Marie Kashpaw and Father Jude reciprocal focalizers.

RED MOTHER Marie Kashpaw
Intra-homodiegetic narrator: Marie Kashpaw. Sister Leopolda focalized.

Father Jude addressee. Anterior text: *Love Medicine*.

21 The Body of the Conundrum 1996

Extra-heterodiegetic, third person narrator. Focalizers: Father Damien, then Father Jude. Father Damien focalized.

THE MOUSE

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Jude focalizer. Father Damien focalized. Implied authorial humor as Father Jude *misreads* evidence of story.

FATHER JUDE'S CONFESSION

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Damien/Agnes focalizer. Father Jude focalized. Implied authorial humor at Father Jude's error.

BINGO NIGHT

Extra-heterodiegetic narrator. Father Jude focalizer. Lulu focalized (and addressee in diegetic narrative). Implied author humorously describes narrative indeterminacy: 'Not just telling but discussing the implications of what was to become of whatever findings he made, and even worrying about the difficulty of establishing a literal or factual truth when there were opposing versions of Leopolda's life and story, when the life – as opposed to the evidence of miraculous interventions – did not add up' (336).

LEOPOLDA'S PASSION

Extra-heterodiegetic, third person narrator, with awareness of late twentieth-century debates on postmodern narratology. Father Jude focalizer. Sister Leopolda and Father Damien focalized. + Directly reported drafts of Father Jude's 'Life of Sister Leopolda'. Anterior text: *Tracks*. Implied author employs mimesis to dramatize issues of hagiography, historiography and narrative 'truth' (337).

22 Father Damien's Passion 1996

Extra-heterodiegetic, third person narrator. Agnes focalizer. + Directly reported documents: draft reports (immediately erased) and last letter to Pope. Authorial humor: Father Damien/Agnes literally laughs herself to death (349).

MARY KASHPAW

Extra-heterodiegetic, third person narrator. Mary Kashpaw focalizer. Father Damien focalized. (We are told that Mary Kashpaw 'knew her and had kept her secret' (345).)

EPILOGUE

A Fax From the Beyond 1997

Extra-heterodiegetic, third person narrator. Father Damien focalized. Focalizers: Father Jude and Mary Kashpaw. + Directly reported document: fax from the Pope. Implied authorial humor: Pope turns out to be humanly fallible rather than the infallible, spiritual authority. Like Father Damien, he responds by sending correspondence too late! Also humor at expense of Father Jude, who is now working on his new project: 'the proposed blessedness and possible sainthood of Father Damien Modeste' (352).

END NOTES

Self-reflexive authorial humor. Indeterminacy as to authorial agency. Nanapush is validated as trickster narrator of tales of the people.

Concluding comment

This chart of *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* is inevitably sketchy and lacking in subtlety in response to the trickster aesthetics and narrative shape-shifting of the implied author. It is offered as an act of satire directed at itself *inter alias*,[2] but also as an act of homage to Louise Erdrich to indicate the complexity of her narrative techniques. I have not attempted to include every nuance of narrative shift, but rather to indicate the broad sweeps of narrative technique. In particular, I have not noted consistently the authorial wit and humor, especially in relation to Catholic beliefs and practices and traditional Ojibwe culture. I have indicated a few crucial instances as prompts for the reader to discover more.

Notes

Introduction

1 See, for example, the work of Craig Womack.
2 Toni Morrison explores this difference in the performative yet literary text of *Jazz*.
3 See also Greenblatt's discussion of the influence of Geertz's essay on his development of new historicism. Greenblatt emphasizes the importance of *interpretation* and also of:

> a sharp attention to genre and rhetorical mode, to the text's implicit or explicit reality claims, to the implied link (or distance) between the word and whatever it is – the real, the material [. . .] – to which the text gestures as that which lies beyond the written word, outside its textual mode of being.
>
> (16)

1 Preliminaries

1 'When we dream of the house we were born in, in the utmost depth of revery (*sic*), we participate in this original warmth, in this well-tempered matter of the material paradise. This is the environment in which the protective beings live. We shall come back to the maternal features of the house' (7). See also Bachelard's *The Poetics of Reverie* 18–19 *passim*.
2 It is worth noting that the two terms, translatable by the one English word, have different nuances in French philosophical and cultural traditions.
3 Compare Silko's justification for the non-representational art forms of pueblo people in 'Interior and Exterior Landscapes': 'A lifelike rendering of an elk is too restrictive. Only the elk *is* itself. A *realistic* rendering of an elk would be only one particular elk anyway' (29).
4 In the French philosophical tradition we can trace this back to Rousseau.
5 '[W]hen she holds a fragment of pottery in her hands, looking from the broad band of white cliff houses painted on a black ground to the cliff houses that appear exactly the same to her, she feels time slide away, as if the place of the Ancient People, their perceptions have become her own' (293).
6 'The old German word for "to build" was *buan* [*sic*] and means "to dwell," Heidegger reminds us, "that is, to stay, to remain . . . The word 'bin' (am) came from the old word to build, so that 'I am', 'you are' means: I dwell, you dwell. The way the you are and I am, . . . is 'Buan' [*sic*], dwelling. . . . Dwelling is the basic principle of existence."' (Fryer 384).

7 In the novel this is complicated further by being eulogized space imagined by one of the nine armed men who come to execute the women staying at the Convent. In opening *Paradise* as she does, Morrison shocks her reader as a place of refuge and safety is violated, by men whose own Imaginary centres on the maintenance of a safe, protected space for women to dwell in.
8 In focusing on Bachelard's notion of felicitous or eulogized space, I realize that I have not concentrated on Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (first published in 1929), which has also been a seminal text for a range of North American women writers, including Adrienne Rich. Alice Walker signifies brilliantly on it in her essay 'In Search of Our Mother's Gardens', and clearly it informs *The House on Mango Street* in a less problematic way than *The Poetics of Space* does. Yet I would suggest that Virginia Woolf's polemical essay lacks the imaginative dimensions of Bachelard's volume; thus Cisneros needs to distil both prior texts in her own work.
9 See Versluis 118; Waters Part 1. Both these authors indicate that we are now in the fourth world. On the other hand, Allen and Silko indicate that in the Laguna Pueblo belief system we have emerged from four previous worlds. See, for example, *Yellow Woman* (37).

2 Tribal feminism after modernism

1 See also her article on teaching Silko's *Ceremony*: 'Special Problems in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*'.
2 Numerous critics have noted that Gertrude Stein only started to be understood and valued as a writer by post-war generations of readers and critics, more receptive to her experimental, innovative prose style once postmodernism rendered it accessible and familiar. It is noteworthy that Allen's close friend, the poet Judy Grahn, edited *Gertrude Stein: A Selected Anthology with Essays by Judy Grahn* in 1989. Other anthologies available at the time of writing *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* were: *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein* edited by Carl Van Vechten and *The Yale Gertrude Stein: Selections* edited by Richard Kostelanetz.
3 See my 'Adrienne Rich: Consciousness Raising as Poetic Method'. The best text I know on essentialism is Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*.
4 If I am correct this means that the reader is essential to the completion of the process. The full significance of the novel cannot be just Allen's imposed meaning, but the sum of interpretations of its collective readership.
5 The phrase was putatively coined by Stein's Harvard professor, William James. It has also been connected to the influence of the French philosopher, Henri Bergson on European and expatriate American modernist authors.
6 See, for example, the lecture, 'Composition as Explanation' (from which the heading for this section is taken) and the short story 'Melanctha: EACH ONE AS SHE MAY' (originally the middle story in the 1909 *Three Lives*, this is the story about which Richard Wright wrote: 'As I read it my ears were opened for the first time to the magic of the spoken word'). Both of these are reprinted in various editions, but significantly they are both included in *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*.
7 See my 'Good Housekeepers: Flaubertian Fictions of Domesticity'.
8 See 'Kurena, Sunrise' (206–11).
9 Most useful to an understanding of Mary Daly is her *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*.
10 See *The Sacred Hoop* (15).

3 Ephanie's case

1 By this I mean simultaneity of time of story and telling of story. See Silko, *Ceremony* – especially the opening – and her comments on story and storytelling in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*. For example: 'Whatever the event or the subject, the ancient people perceived the world and themselves within the world as part of an ancient, continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories' (30–31).
2 This also works because events unravel as the book observes and recounts them in the same time-frame. The time of story and time of telling move closer and closer together as the book reaches its ending.
3 In the case of Ishi, amongst other museum and travelling freak show exhibits, a live tribal person was kept on display in a museum. Various authors, including Vizenor, have commented on this incident. The performance artist and erstwhile AIM activist Jimmy Duran has re-enacted this scenario in his own work.
4 See Rachel Levy, *The Gates of Horn*, *passim*.
5 In *The Poetics of Space*, on the other hand, corners are places of safety and refuge.
6 Elsewhere in the text Allen implies that the policy of taking Indian children away from their tribal family background and boarding them in public schools thousands of miles away affects the ability of such children to parent their own children as adults. She also suggests that tribal attitudes towards women who married white men and towards their half-breed progeny deeply affects the women and children involved. Ephanie is of the third generation of women to suffer from these policies and attitudes. It is for this reason that I argue that her mental breakdown is not merely 'personal' but 'political' in its representative exploration of the effects of a systematic undermining of individual and cultural identity (see 148–51).
7 I deliberately refer here to the work of American therapist Carl Rogers. In particular, the notion of congruence is analogous to Ephanie's dream of the katsina.
8 The novel says little about paid employment, except that Ephanie is 'more than able to support [her]self'. According to Allen's synopsis in *The Sacred Hoop*, childcare is provided by her mother and her ex-husband, despite Ephanie's cynicism at the divorce proceedings (117).
9 I have not attempted to do justice to the importance of the spider/Spider Woman in the text. She is at least as important in *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* as she is in the canonical novel, *Ceremony*. In Allen's treatment the ambiguity of Ephanie's attitude towards the spider and the progression from vacuuming to addressing her is highly significant. See Allen's Introduction to *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*.
10 See also her discussion in *The Sacred Hoop* (15).
11 In Western philosophical terms, Ephanie's sense of the universe is closer to Spinoza's account, than to Cartesian dualism.

4 Narrative as ritual

1 See also 140.
2 See *The Works of George Herbert* (26, 484).
3 See, for example, *Storyteller*.

4 See *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* (135–51).
5 See Silko's enthusiastic remarks on American Transcendentalism in *Conversations* (179–80).
6 Kroeber (251–65). Dundes *passim*.
7 See Toelken and Scott in Kroeber (80–81, 89–90, 110).
8 See Kenneth Lincoln, 'Blue Medicine' and Robert M. Nelson, 'The Function of the Landscape of *Ceremony*'.
9 Keynote Lecture, 'Early Native American Writers' Representations of Native Life'. *First Nations Conference*, Theodore Roosevelt Center, Middleburg. 29–30 May 2002.
10 'The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions.' (Victor Turner. Cited Wallace 100).
11 Robert Nelson makes the point that these texts are difficult to lay one's hands on, even for the academic expert in the field.
12 As Nelson argues in 'Rewriting Ethnography: The Embedded Texts in Leslie Silko's *Ceremony*' *passim*.
13 See Castillo's discussion of the Silko/Erdrich controversy. While I agree substantially with her analysis, I am trying to make a slightly different point about the strategies non-Indian readers need to adopt to make their own sense of the text.
14 See Johnson (472–85) and Iverson (139–74) for informed discussions of the American Indian Movement, which can be defined as the Native American activist civil rights movement that began in the 1960s and played a significant role through the 1970s.

5 The world of story

1 See also the longer version of her article, which offers a reading of Woolf's *The Voyage Out*.
2 In saying this I am deeply conscious of the discussions of the Native American sense of time in Allen, Deloria, Fixico, Radin and Silko. See, for example, Silko's discussion of 'theories of time other than linear time' in *Yellow Woman* (136–37), and Allen's comments on 'space as spherical and time as cyclical' in *The Sacred Hoop* (59, 94).
3 And even in this short flashback sequence, this motif of the child in an enclosed space waiting for her to come back is already repeated.
4 See 35. I am aware that in pursuing this argument I am neglecting the analogues between Auntie's description of Tayo's mother returning to the Pueblo, stark naked at sunrise, and the Laguna Pueblo, traditional story of Yellow Woman. One needs an extra dimension to one's critical commentary to complement the multiple dimensions of sometimes-conflictual significances in the text. To pursue single-mindedly the Yellow Woman analogy would short-circuit the journey back to healing and hope.
5 In the previous chapter I offered a preliminary analysis of the changes in narrative

point of view that occur in this novel. They are as multiple as the layering of events in time. The difference in narrative points of view between the various sections of the story of Tayo's early childhood is perhaps one reason why the reader hesitates to associate all the elements. This narrative disassociation represents or enacts a type of disassociation experienced by abused children. They can grow up to experience themselves as disassociated from any sense of unified self.

6 When the chronotope of Tayo's going drinking with Harley and Leroy is repeated after the ceremony with Betonie, then Tayo's attitude has already started to undergo transformation. He doesn't participate in the same way as previously, experiences ambivalence in relation to his buddies, and purges himself by vomiting as soon as the episode is over. I have already discussed the structure of *Ceremony*, including the balancing of scenes and situations that repeat with a difference, in more detail in my previous chapter.

7 See, for example, Frank Waters, *The Man Who Killed the Deer*.

8 My interpretation of *Ceremony* has gone beyond Silko's authorial account of its composition (*Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko* 39–41 and 56–57). Silko stops short of stating that the woman down in the Gallup arroyo is Tayo's mother, yet she makes a strong connection between the protagonist of the 'stillborn' segment and his mother. Allen sees her story as one of a number of 'analogues within the narrative', calling the small boy 'Tayo', although in the text of *Ceremony* he remains nameless (*Sacred Hoop* 95). I acknowledge that these fragments of stories about Tayo as a small boy and his mother remain unintegrated into the narrative frame. However, I think we can read this fragmentation of his self history and the lack of integration into the family and clan groups that is reflected by these stories not being bundled up into the stories of the tribe as indicative of why he's a boy in need of a good ceremony.

6 Telling testimony

1 In fact the reader tends to translate this into the equivalent of the French 'historical present' (see Dupriez 296).

2 See Cheyfitz's analysis of the first colonial encounter as a moment of inability to translate different cultural concepts, even when words are translated (59–82 *passim*). See also Krupat's recent discussion of 'non-violent translation' (64–66).

3 It is depressing to note that an antecedent text, especially as regards the trial scene, is Cooper's *The Pioneers*. Slotkin's discussion of the conflicting codes of Leatherstocking's companions and the Judge could be applied to this late twentieth-century text too: 'To the Indian the hunting ritual is his initiation into a symbolic marriage with the spirits of his world, the source of his procreative power. To the judge this ritual of creation is, like the eating of the apple in Genesis, a type of fall from grace' (489). Even more chillingly: 'For the American writer, the conflict of cultures meant the replacement or extermination of the Indian' (473). Omishto's silence in the trial scene seems to point towards this narrative conclusion. If their stories cannot be voiced and heard, how will their world survive?

4 See Raymond Williams' entry for 'family' in *Keywords* (131–34).

5 See Sherry B. Ortner's classic feminist essay 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?'

7 Narratives of healing

1 See also 76–77, 81, 89–91.

8 Lighting out for the territory

1 This is not to deny the triumphant, upbeat ending that could be described as aggressively confrontational.
2 See my 'Gender in American Literature and Culture'.
3 Students of this novel might enjoy checking out each allusion to popular culture and then discussing the ways in which its inclusion affects their understanding of the protagonist's cultural dilemma and indeed of the narrator's humor and irony.
4 Carmen Miranda (1909–55) was accused in Brazil of becoming too Americanized. Her trademark costume was a tutti frutti headdress that tended to present a caricature or stereotype of Chicana femininity.
5 See, for example, 74, 116, 169.
6 A career path that Silko considered before her decision to write instead. See *Conversations* (viii, xv).
7 The image takes on a symbolic significance when one compares it to the image of the kitchen door opening onto ellipsis and by implication denying egress in Ephanie's nightmare.

9 Autodiegetic narration

1 See Rimmon-Kenan (94–97) for definitions of these terms.
2 I have already discussed a similar scenario in Linda Hogan's *Power* in Chapters Six and Seven above.
3 The allusion is to the ending of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. It would be illuminating to compare Morrison's treatment of an unspeakable history with Bell's. Both base their novels on documented historical evidence, both employ 'magic realism' and contain ghostly presences, and both write an explicitly female version of history centring on the consciousness of women who have been silenced by official histories until recently.
4 Compare Greg Sarris' representation of the verbal art of orality in *Keeping Slug Woman Alive* (1–76).
5 For example: 'She heard a voice in her ear say, "I have lived here". / *I too have lived here*' (92–93).
6 Accounts differ as to whether the current surface world is the fourth or the fifth, depending on which tribal belief systems are being described, and which commentator one consults. Shepard Krech III attributes to the belief in prior worlds and the eventual regeneration of the deceased in this world some of the blame for non-ecological buffalo hunting by Plains Indians.
7 See James Mooney, 'The Doctrine of the Ghost Dance' and Benjamin Lee Whorf, 'An American Indian Model of the Universe'.
8 Remembering the photograph of her mother and herself as a new-born baby, the narrator reflects: 'Some tension had given, some spirit snapped in the space of ten years, and the pretty girl had swollen into fatigue and repetition' (9).
9 The phrase is A. S. Byatt's in referring to Morrison's character, Beloved.
10 Consider, for example, Diane Glancy's *The Mask Maker*.

10 Homing in: revisiting the paradigm

1 Rossi Ivanova points out that his characterization of the classic American novel has also dated and neither reflects nor anticipates the radical developments in literary canon formation that occurred in the late twentieth century.

2 Thus I find I cannot agree with Silko that 'non-Indians are still more comfortable with Indian books written by non-Indians than they are with books by Indian authors' (165).

3 Vizenor's work is crucial to an understanding of the innumerable ways in which the dominant culture and the literature of dominance play Indian. However, his postmodern, trickster discourse can cause some dismay to readers unfamiliar with his style; and his delight in postmodernist theory can also be confusing for the reader expecting him to counterbalance the simulations of manifest manners with an authentic Native American culture. In his texts the 'reality' of indigenous ethnic identity is as elusive and illusive as images of the Indian in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. This is more challenging than a theoretical model that allows discussion of the ways in which history might impinge on the production of the literary text, and that allows indigenous authors some agency in their writing. However, one needs to recognize the wit and sophistication of Vizenor's strategies.

4 See John Nizalowski's 'Frank Waters: Prophet of the Sixth World Consciousness': 'Martiniano is a member of La Oreja Pueblo, a fictionalized version of Taos Pueblo'.

5 'Hopi is a language that belongs to the Shoshean branch of the Uto-Aztecan language family', whereas the 'people of Taos [. . .] speak dialect of Tiwa' (Bonds 65–67).

6 Consider, for example, the following:

> We today can witness on these three lofty mesas the last full moon of Hopi life, a cultural erasure even as we look. Yet it is no paradox that from these tawdry villages choked with refuse still springs such profound beauty. For the persistently obdurate dramatization of the law of laws alone marks the Hopi Road of Life. These annual cycles of great ceremonials are monuments that leave no petroglyphs to fade into obscurity, no stones to topple into ruin. They are written, like life, on the vast palimpsest of the earth and sky, and in the enduring heart of man.
>
> (126)

> How beautiful and brilliant they are, touched by a strange otherworldliness, as they come dancing slowly and singing deeply through the narrow, dusty streets. It is shortly after noon. The frozen pond behind the village has melted, and naked children are crowding the sunny stone walls. From the high mesa top one can see the dry, tawny desert stretching emptily away to the lofty buttes sixty miles south.
>
> The softly pounding feet, the soughing voices. . . . It is a little mesmeric, as always. But one notices that while all the others dance in beat with the drum, the Two Horns maintain a steady rhythm out of time with the rest. With knowledge of all previous worlds, and not being restricted to the life of this present world, they keep time with an inaudible cosmic pulse impervious to time and place.
>
> (151–52)

and

> It is later, colder now, and from high above we watch their gray, phantasmal shapes gliding into dusk in a silence accompanied only by the far-off clacking of their turtle-shell rattles . . ..
>
> (153)

7 Again, I shall quote at length from the text, on the assumption that not all my readers will be familiar with it.

11 Indian 'homing' as healing ceremony

1 I list Laguna and Keres separately to emphasize the complexity of pueblo cultural identity. Consider the following recent and reliable description of the cultural geography:

> Living dispersed among the Tanoan speakers are the *Keresans*. Along the Rio Grande and its tributaries are the Keresan villages of Cochiti, Santo Domingo, San Felipe, Santa Ana and Zia; farther west are Laguna and Acoma. [. . .] The Pueblos are divided into two main subgroups based on location and ecological adaptation. The Eastern Pueblos (Tanoan and Keresan speakers), who live on the Rio Grande and its tributaries, have a permanent water source enabling them to practice irrigation agriculture. The Western Pueblos (Hopi, Hopi-Tewa, Zuni, Acoma and Laguna), lacking a steady supply of water, rely on dry farming. The difference in water supply affects many aspects of culture from food procurement to religion. [. . .] The Pueblos share a way of life, a world view and a landscape, but they speak half a dozen languages and live in more than 30 villages. Although several pueblos may share a language, internally they may have different societies and clan structures, so that they are not alike in organization. There are, naturally, several distinct styles of pottery.
>
> (Taylor and Sturtevant 73, 75, 106)

2 See *Conversations* (14, 19).

3 See, for example, *Conversations* (13–15, 17–18).

4 'Gladys Reichard was one of the greatest ethnographers of the twentieth century, and her intensive and comprehensive studies of Navajo language and culture represent some of the most complete and most perceptive ethnographic writing ever done. She was one of only a very few ethnographers who took the time to learn to speak Navajo and she was the only ethnographer who took the time to learn how to weave. She was obviously fascinated with Navajo culture and got along well with Navajo people. Her writings reflect the sincerity of her interest, the keenness of her perception, and the warmth of her feeling.' (Witherspoon xiii).

5 As far as I can ascertain, the 1975 Dover publication, *Sandpaintings of the Navajo Shooting Chant* contains an unabridged reproduction of the text of Gladys Reichard, *Navajo Medicine Man*, New York: J.J. Augustin, n.d. [1937].

6 We might pause for a moment and ask ourselves: would we be surprised to read the quotation from Witherspoon in a different textual context with the word 'Navajos' replaced by the phrase 'postmodern theorists' and the phrase 'in postmodern language and culture' substituted for his reference to 'Navajo language and culture'?

12 Homing in: transforming the paradigm

1 See Owens' essay 'As If an Indian Were Really an Indian: Native American Voices and Postcolonial Theory' *I Hear the Train* (207–26) for an excellent critique of postcolonial critics, including Homi Bhabha and Toni Morrison, who as a general rule ignore the presence of Native American literature and culture in their discourses. Like Owens, I turned to Bhabha in the hope of finding a critical discourse that would be adequate to the situation of Native American literature, and found some of his conceptual formulations useful despite his ignorance of the specific canon.
2 See Wilson (333–58); Iverson (77–102).
3 See *Mixedblood Messages* (153, 181–83).
4 One way to approach this novel is through Owens' discussion of *Ceremony* in *Other Destinies*. The critical dialogue with this canonical prior text, commenced there, finds its culmination in the creative/critical response that *Dark River* constitutes. I shall adopt this approach in the final section of this chapter.
5 Throughout this study I use the hyphenated 'post-modern' when implying that the author is working in relation to prior texts from literary modernism, and the elided 'postmodern' when implying the nexus of theories and philosophies that flourished in the late twentieth century.
6 For another perspective on this phenomenon we can turn to James Wilson's history of Native America:

> Almost since the time of Columbus, the Native American ability to syncretize two realities – to accept that different people have different truths or to believe that two apparently contradictory statements can be true in different ways – has baffled and frustrated Europeans brought up with the idea of a single, monolithic truth.
>
> (9–10)

7 It seems probable that Shorty Luke is a dialogic trickster response to Iron Eyes Cody, the so-called 'Crying Indian' of the 1970s campaign for ecological awareness, who claimed to be of Cherokee/Cree extraction but who was actually the son of Sicilian immigrants.
8 To the despair of my excellent proof-reader, Kate Reeves, I have persisted in spelling 'humor' the American way throughout this study. My reason for this has been to foreground the phenomenon that humour is arguably impossible to translate literally from one culture to another.

13 Narrative authority in the *Ozhibi'ganan* novels

1 In his controversial, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*, Shepard Krech III eloquently summarizes a contemporary view of historical narratives:

> People everywhere creatively construct meaningful frameworks for understanding their past; they everywhere actively invent tradition. 'History', as Greg Dening, a historian, reminded us, 'is both a metaphor of the past and metonym of the present'. No matter who their authors may be, narratives about the Native American past must be read in this light. As Edward Bruner, an

> anthropologist, underscored, narratives about Native North Americans are contingent on the times in which they were created. They mirror relations between Native Americans and people of European descent. They reflect not just changing national governmental policies toward indigenous people, but understandings of native people that vary from one moment to the next.
>
> (26)

I accept there is generally a difference between historical narratives and literary, historical metafictions, but the line can often be blurred when it comes to Native American storytelling.

2 According to Owens, Welch is a mixed-blood author: 'Welch has pointed out that his own family tree includes American Indian, English and Spanish forerunners. Among his relatives was Malcolm Clark, who figures significantly as the murdered trader in *Fools Crow*' (*Other Destinies* 266). More frequently Welch is described as a half-blood American Indian, e.g.

> The son of a Blackfeet father and Gros Ventre mother, Welch was born in 1940 in Browning and reared primarily on the Fort Belknap Reservation.
>
> (http://missoulian.com/specials/100montanans/list/057.html, accessed 17/11/04)

> I was born on the Blackfeet Reservation, my father's country, and I lived there and later lived on the Fort Belknap Reservation, my mother's home. Both reservations are in northern Montana, on the Hi-line, just south of the Canadian border. Both are quite isolated. I've heard both described countless times as being 'bleak', even 'hopeless'. But to a kid growing up, they weren't bad at all. You had friends, your parents loved you, you loved your culture, you rode horses, you put up hay, you fished and hunted. It was only later, after you had been told that your culture was dying and that you had grown up in a depressed, 'bleak' place, that you came to believe that life on a reservation was not what you thought it was.
>
> Hugo, in his infinite wisdom and generosity, said, 'Go ahead, write about the reservation, the landscape, the people.' At the moment I thought that was a fine idea, but as I walked home that day, I became more depressed with each block. I knew that nobody wanted to read about Indians, reservations, or those rolling endless plains that turned into Canada just thirty miles north. By the time I got home, I began to think that maybe that country was bleak and that life on the reservation was hopeless.
>
> (www.lopezbooks.com/na3/na3-01.html, accessed 17/11/04)

3 'Published as the third novel in the sequence, *Tracks* was the first to be drafted "thus reflecting," as Susan Stanford Friedman writes, "Erdrich's earliest effort at the novel as well as her experience with her [two] critically acclaimed texts." Talking about the composition history of the novel, Lorena Stookey adds that Erdrich "made the move from mainly writing poetry to writing fiction with the draft of *Tracks* she worked on during her years as a graduate student in the John Hopkins Writing program." Judging by additional information that Erdrich and the late Michael Dorris share in interviews, Erdrich must have composed the first

draft of *Tracks* between the years of 1978 and 1982 and had a manuscript of about 300 to 400 pages before the publication of *Love Medicine* in 1984. She then revised that manuscript after the publication of *The Beet Queen*.' (Ivanova 2005).

4 I allude here to Gates' highly influential theory as set out in *The Signifying Monkey*.
5 See Krupat's recent attempt to deal with this in 'America's Histories'.

Conclusion

1 And indeed it is a task that has already been undertaken by my admirable research student, Rossi Ivanova.

Appendix II

1 Chapter subheadings are only itemized separately in this chart when a change of narrative technique occurs.
2 Let us never forget that the most effective form of abuse in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is 'Crritic!' The word, uttered by Estragon, wins the round of verbal sparring, causing Vladimir to wilt 'vanquished' (75).

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American Indian Quarterly. Hurst, TX: Southwestern American Indian Society.
Studies in American Indian Literatures. Richmond, VA: Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures. Online: http://oncampus.richmond.edu/faculty/ASAIL/index.html.
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