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TESIS DOCTORAL

FROM BERDACHE TO TWO-SPIRIT & GAY: [RE]CONSTRUCTING AMERICAN *INDIANNESS* IN THE POST-APOCALYPSE

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To my father, a fighter of time

To my grandfather, already a memory.

A mi padre, un luchador del tiempo

A mi abuelo, ya un recuerdo.

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Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 20 April 2017

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Introduction

It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple;

one must be woman-manly or man-womanly [...]

Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own.*

The beauty of the exotic and the discourse on gender/identity have been substituted by hegemonic stereotypes of dominance, in which heteronormativity has established how all species should be classified. Ever since the Enlightenment, human beings have resorted to labelling, name-calling, and word-formation to structure their environment, and gender has been no exception. Gender has been mistakenly, yet inexorably connected to biology in order to balance the binomial culture of western civilization. Since Genesis, the urgency to categorize the world in groups of two has produced a chaotic, yet beautiful cocktail of biological and mythological philosophy represented in folklore, religion, and the arts. From a socio-anthropological perspective, gender has surpassed the limits of the orthodox. It has provided Pre-Columbian societies with plentiful categories—most of the times unknown and/or misunderstood by a system that comprises political institutions, conservative religious views, and socioeconomics, henceforth referred to as the superstructure. Such categories have often involved practices that have transcended the limits of the biological realm; they have extended beyond the anatomical war to reconfigure the architectural software of the expected *as* projected by the hegemonic majorities.

In Homer's *The Odyssey*, the goddess Athena appears camouflaged as a man several times. In Norse mythology, the giantess Rinda was impregnated by Odin, who appeared

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before her in the guise of a healer woman. Elizabethan drama saw many young actors dressed as women to play female roles, and they were still considered undeveloped boys; nonetheless, they were not considered effeminate or partakers of the opposite group's practice *per se.* Although some roles had been preconceived to be either male or female, gender identification was a system for determining which gender was doing what. However, in spite of following an elementary binary system, communities such as the American Indian had a third gender or 'two-spirit'—a male or female with two souls, the second one being of the opposite biological sex. The construct of the two-spirit escaped a biased system of beliefs that eschews the interchangeability of roles that "[complicated] the assumption that the third one is not a role but an identity" (Fuentes 11). Those beliefs were breathed into American Indian societies as the whole process of conquest and expansion took place in North America, bringing with them a dogmatic, indoctrinating secular ideology in which cross-dressing, same-sex marriage, and intercourse were repudiated.

1.1 The Berdache and the [Post]Apocalypse

Throughout four centuries of traumatic exposure to acculturation, American Indians witnessed the deconstruction of the third-gendered one, or *berdache*, and his involution. Etymologically, the term derived

> from the French *bardache*—earliest use in French dates from the sixteenth century—which [came] from the Italian *bardasso*, and from the Arabic *bardadj* meaning 'young slave.' The word [has been used] to refer to male prostitutes, specifically those who got involved in sexual acts as passives or receptors. Linguistically, the term [has] evolved to be used to describe effeminate [...] and Native American/First Nation homosexuals. (Fuentes 3)

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Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang have explained that the term "has been employed to refer to special gender roles in American Indian cultures that anthropologists have interpreted as ceremonial transvestism, institutionalized homosexuality, and gender variance/multiple genders" (4). Another definition of the term has been provided by Roscoe, who states that a berdache is "a man who combined the work and social roles of men and women, an artist and a priest who dressed, at least in part, in women's clothes" (2). However, literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries regarded the berdache as a "creature of failed biology, for example, hermaphroditism [...], or failed morals [...], or as someone not able to live up to an expected norm" (Herdt in Jacobs et al. 280). Progressively, American Indians were robbed of their queer past and were forced to construct a whitewashed identity based on the superstructure's projected image of the native elaborated from their own understanding of reality.

Professor Sidner Larson has described American Indians as "postapocalypse people who, as such, have tremendous experience to offer to all other people who must, in their own time, experience their own cultural death as part of the natural cycle" (18). The deconstruction of the berdache has occurred in a time that he has considered as apocalyptic because, as James Berger has suggested, the apocalypse is "an event that forms and reveals but leaves nothing but ruin" (xii). The literary constructs of the self of all minorities have departed from a traumatic event usually linked to colonization. In the case of American Indians, colonization has become the historical milestone that has empowered the cultural trauma evidenced in the literature produced in the late 1980s. The aftermath of their culture has become a nearly dystopian configuration of their new identity because their existence was doomed at dawn in October 1492. The cultural clash that followed

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fatally confronted European conservatism with the American Indian's millennial lifestyle, turning colonization into a progressive apocalypse. Such a conception conditioned the apocalypse's destructive, yet revelatory nature to prepare an army of social hybrids for the future.

The consequences of acculturation have been broadly discussed. Post-colonial studies have been established as a field of research precisely because [cultural] trauma had become a powerful source for those hybrids to problematize a situation that had been, for the most part, historically neglected. Moreover, the problem with the berdache construct, and the way it was understood in earlier American Indian societies, is that it escaped all logic of European understanding, because the latter had no way to transcend the "male/female, man/woman dichotomies" (Goulet in Jacobs et al. 45). American Indians were thus affected by systematic discrimination, which also affected them from within. Their social structure had been reconfigured following conservative standards that were adopted by some of the victims of colonization. The biggest problem they have had to face is the superstructure's doctrine of heterosexuality which had become an imperative tool in the rise of the apocalypse: berdaches were condemned to be wiped off the earth.

The cultural and literary movement that arose in the late twentieth century rescued the forsaken berdachism and worked around its meaning. Albeit there has been no explanation of what it meant to be a berdache in the pre-apocalypse stage, what we get to explore is the social burden and the cultural implications of being one from an anthropological and semiotic[1] point of view, taking part in larger and smaller communities.

[1] Semiotics helps to understand from a linguistic perspective the function of the *berdache* in the community by thinking in terms of semantics and pragmatics. The *berdache* has become a significant symbol of communication in American Indian communities, whose roles have placed him or her (although there are

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Some contemporary American Indians have started to identify themselves as berdaches: a former symbol of variance, spirituality, and circularity. The new identity discourse was being constructed around an old-fashioned concept that was "accompanied by romantic notions that linger from the concept of berdache" (Fuentes 14). In addition to this, the presence of Christian values within American Indian communities empowered homophobia and homonegativity as described by Tlanusta & Barret (135), forcing people who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual to seek partners and lives off the reservations. The double discrimination they had to endure extended beyond the stereotype, reaching a traumatic dimension of "depression-through-immersion" (Fuentes 14). Off the reservation, the berdache was regarded as an exotic object of desire. However, those who decided to stay experienced the rejection and objection of friends and family.

1.2 Creatio Ex-nihilo: The Birth of Tradition

After the term *two-spirit* was coined in 1990 the community was divided because of the linguistic implications of the term. What did it mean to be a two-spirit person? Perhaps the question that was asked in the beginning was if there was any linguistic or realistic possibility for equating the complex tribal terminology to this foreign three-syllable compound. Conceivably, the interpretation of the term was perhaps too literal in the way in which *winkte*[2] was portrayed, for instance. Two spirits sharing one biological body that provided their resident with dual knowledge and understanding for seeing the world from two separate perspectives. The term sounded spectral. This new reality presented itself as a shadowy realm; for instance, "in Athapaskan languages [...] carries unpleasant

not sufficient accounts of female *berdaches*) in a non-linear continuum where not only words but also behaviors have been analyzed.

[2] A male-bodied individual who adopted the roles of the opposite sex in the Lakota tradition.

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connotations of the living and the ghosts" (Farrer in Jacobs et al. 248). It opened the debate between those who praised the beauty of the term, and those who still found in 'berdache' a disempowering fear. Therefore, some individuals chose to embrace the new terminology while others chose to adhere to western systems of classification.

Regardless of their self-denomination, individuals from both blocs had started to weave a homogeneous discourse on identity reconstruction using berdachism and cultural trauma as subtexts: "the necessity for immersion pushes the members of these communities to write, both politically and creatively, in order to demonstrate that they are unhappy with their situation" (Fuentes 14). The first literary corpus that contained works by gay and lesbian American Indians exclusively was published under the name of *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology* (1988), one of the central objects of this research, exploring concepts of cultural trauma, cultural appropriation, sexuality, identity, tradition, racism, and homophobia. It set the foundations of what poet Qwo-Li Driskill has called "Indigenous thought" (15), by grouping together artists, writers, and thinkers who articulated an interdisciplinary discourse from an almost shamanistic perspective. From that moment on, the literary production and the establishment of a critical discipline around American Indian studies held a stable pace for the next decades. Thus, the figure of scholar and author Will Roscoe and his extensive research on American Indian communities and berdachism became fundamental for their understanding beyond Indigenous conversations. Further, with time a Two-Spirit Identity theory was suggested to question "the assumptions of roles in society regardless of biological sex [...] while providing perspectives on sexual and racial identity, where the negotiation of their identity is subject to a 'raceless' status" (Fuentes 15). For the first time, the world had access to first-hand

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accounts of cultural trauma in the voices of those who suffered from or had inherited it.

The *creatio ex-nihilo* of American Indian literature has verbalized their minority status. Moreover, it has provided a voice to the minorities within minorities, and similar works have been published. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1983) contained works by Paula Gunn Allen, Beth Brant, Chrystos, and Janice Gould. Brant's *A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection by North American Indian Women* (1983) "brought together creative and critical work by heterosexual and LBQ-identified Indigenous women for the first time" (Driskill et al. 15). Allen's *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986) "brought critical attention to articulating Indigenous lesbian and feminist theory" (15). Throughout the nineties, these and other writers established their positions as spokespeople for the community. This prolific decade also contributed to the construction of a more solid discourse whose main aim was to recover their lost Indianness. Yet, after years of exploring colonization and its aftermath, the natural evolution of that identity construction slowly came to a halt because of the inability of the community to move forward. It became evident that, as post-apocalyptic people, they were still traumatized and suffering from cultural shock.

The American Indian writers of the 1980s were critiquing the superstructure's agency "by shifting the terms on which knowledge of Indigenous people would be produced and debated" (15) within the aggravation of a system that strived for equality in an even more unequal world. When *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature* was published in 2011, its editors presented a work of continuance as a result of a collaborative process, reflecting on Indigenous Two-Spirit/Queer Critiques and labelling, but still umbilically attached to the past they had been longing for. For this reason, the stagnation of the [gay]

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American Indian identity discourse is the central problem to be analyzed and discussed in this dissertation, as it has complicated the way for two-spirits/two-spirit writers to gain visibility in the American mainstream and/or to produce an identity discourse of their own without being socially conditioned by colonization.

Despite this impediment, the post-apocalypse American Indian tradition has observed a growing tendency toward a discourse of recuperation to evoke and reconnect with past concepts and to attempt to construct a healthier identity. It is apparent that the making of an identity virtually from scratch has been defined by the fact that social values have been deconstructed; therefore, the perception of reality has been conditioned by a subjectivity that only transforms the discourse superficially. The chronology of the berdache follows a progression that changed its course in the earlier twentieth century when the berdache had become a living legend associated with ridicule—as was the case of Osch-Tisch, a Crow berdache who was forced to adapt to white society—and preceded the final decline of berdachism. It was previously mentioned that such a long-term exposure to Christian influence altered the fluctuating social harmony and, consequently, brought the berdache to the edge of extinction. Western culture "for the past four hundred years" has put "enormous pressures for First Nations people to assimilate and acculturate to European and Euro-American norms" (Farrer in Jacobs et al. 250); therefore, acculturation developed a strong feeling of dependence that conditioned the discourse of American Indians.

Heterosexual hegemony has developed a protective shield used to reassure its position. The cultural dynamics derived from acculturation have reflected the apparent success of the superstructure in its effort to achieve normality on its own terms. Generally, it has been an institutional victory because the newly-acquainted social hybrids have been

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trained to be[come] western people. Moreover, they have adopted philosophical concepts about sexuality and gender by applying the Euromerican understanding of the right/wrong, the correct/incorrect which has eventually led to an individual apocalypse. Rita Joe's poem 'I Lost My Talk' describes the disempowering feeling of frustration because of assimilation by saying: "I speak like you / I think like you / I create like you." Her words encompassed the whole North American Indian community including the berdaches, who were neglected as they were forced to follow a social scheme which, according to their ways, was too extreme and polarizing. In a superstructure-related chain of events, American Indians were secluded on reservations, and over time, continued to expel those who were against assimilation, mainly berdaches as they were victims of social rejection, forcing a drastic departure to urban areas:

> On the reservation where the opportunities for sexually diverse people's integration are minimal, more Westernized Indians reject homosexuality on the basis of the lack of appropriate cultural references [...]. In the city [...], those modernized Indians who left the reservations to be more accepted as gays and lesbians now feel the need to be less Westernized and become more traditional. (Carocci in Mauzé Ed. 121-22)

The city has become the cradle of the exotic and the perfect place to enhance alienation. Forced migration was the ultimate goal of applying the notion of Foucauldian biopower to a four-centuries-old equation. Through mass control of the population, the superstructure guaranteed its survival. The urbanization of gay American Indians pushed them to seek refuge in gay social circles, which as explained by Brian J. Gilley and John Hawk Co-Cké, "posed a potentially harmful environment to them" (295). Eventually, the myth of the berdache was first created and, then, fetishized and romanticized. Yet, for them, this turn "[revealed] the fragility and naivety typical of an aboriginal amazed by the jungle-city" (Fuentes 51).

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The revelation of a less-demonized homosexuality in urban metropolises came as an opportunity for gay American Indians to come to terms with their existence. By leaving the reservation, the berdache started drawing the path of his/her own fate, in which culture and tradition have no place in the new space-time continuum. Notwithstanding, the fact that "on the reservation there is no cultural osmosis" (Carocci in Mauzé Ed. 122) did not have an impact on the Natives' ability to propel the creation of new cultural standards. The cultural richness of the complex gender variance system prior to the ghettoization of Natives was no match for the process of both self-acceptance and social acceptance. Life prior to the reservation era, and even on the reservations, was not conditioned by the coexistence of berdaches contesting the place; besides, they were not forced to confront homosexuality in the way they were pushed to do in the city. For that reason, the quest for Indianness was directly affected by the realization that others in the same condition were confined to the same space. Following migratory principles, smaller communities that share language, cultural values, and other social standards tend to group together to survive in the new environment. This was probably the spark that ignited the recuperation of a tradition that had been traumatized.

1.3 *A Heterogeneous [Id]Entity: Questions*

The role of the English language in the process of social acceptance of the berdache must not be forgotten. The complex linguistic battle to describe in non-native terms the heterogeneity of the berdache understood as *winkte, nádleehé, tainna wa'ippe, lhamana, hwame,* and *kwerhame*, pushed the limits of social understanding by creating a space of comfort—and controversy, as Farrer concludes, "the business of names is a tricky one indeed, and it is not yet settled to everyone's satisfaction" (in Jacobs et al. 248). Curiously

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enough, Carocci explains that the usage of the language "makes [it] possible to match the different realities of American Indians through a single common code that certainly helps to systematize the complex homosexuals' cultural/sexual identity" (in Mauzé Ed. 122). This *common code* was received with recoil, but no battle has been fought with ease. For instance, Professor Gerald Vizenor suggests that "the Indian was an occidental invention; the word has no referent in tribal languages" (Vizenor and Lee 6). This penchant for categorization inherited from the Enlightenment tended to suppress the signified and give preference to a dictatorial signifier agreed on by those in power. Consequently, the heterogeneity of the whole American Indian community was amalgamated under a nomenclature that satisfied western constructs, but were nothing but palimpsestic representations.

Following Vizenor's perspective on the subject, the aboriginal died four centuries ago, and the apocalypse created the American Indian as a projection of his/her past. If such a construct is taken as a statement, present day American Indians are what Jean Baudrillard defines as 'simulacrum,' a final copy with no original. Realizing that these post-apocalyptic individuals are living in the realm of hyperreality, there is a virtual sense of identity blending that is extremely difficult to maintain precisely because of American Indians' own heterogeneity. It is difficult to carry out a theoretical analysis in this context given the inevitable generalizations. Therefore, my research poses questions to be answered in the final section of this dissertation: How could a community accomplish the challenge to become visibly homogeneous when its own nature is culturally multi-faceted? How can contemporary [gay] American Indians provide closure for their community when trauma, racism, and homophobia are still active? The community is still susceptible to the re-

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enacting of events that trigger painful memories, and since literature has become a platform of denunciation, how would two-spirit writers construct a discourse on healing without turning back to melancholia when they are constantly reminded of their personal struggle as LGBTQQ[3] individuals?

In a broader sense, however, the American Indian community is striving to overcome their trauma, yet research and analysis will show this is not an easy task. Bearing this in mind, is it now possible for two-spirits to escape collapse? How can they reach homogeneity as a community following a systematic fracture that has its origins in a paradoxical heterogeneity? Or even more, has the quest-for-*Indianness* discourse changed the conception of the berdache/two-spirits in the literary scene of the century or has it empowered the deconstruction of this entity to its core?

To provide a meaningful answer to these questions, the objectives of the present dissertation are multiple: (1) to include an wide-ranging scope of study to analyze texts produced in the aftermath of the apocalypse to justify the existence of [gay] American Indians, and their contribution to their community and the field of literature; (2) to offer an insight into the problematic of identity within the LGBTQQ community and how it is affecting their politics of recognition; (3) to analyze the roles of racism and homophobia as catalysts for a new cultural trauma; and finally, (4) to contribute to expand the scope of analysis to establish a 'post-apocalypse' theoretical model.

For this reason, the scope of analysis of this research will be based on three main theoretical approaches that benefit from each other in order to enlarge the greater theoretical field that Larson calls Post-Apocalypse Theory: first, *Apocalypse theory*, which

[3] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning.

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deals with representations of the world at the end, and presents a second reading of apocalyptic events as revelatory rather than destructive; secondly, *Trauma and Cultural Trauma theory*, which will be based on the works of Sandra Bloom and her model of creating sanctuary, and Alexander's and Stamm's approach to a cultural trauma theory, as well as dealing with cultural trauma in the aftermath of the apocalypse. The third and final intertheoretical approach draws: (a) from post-colonial studies its nomenclature and visions of the colonizer/colonized in contrast to the concepts of victim/perpetrator; (b) from queer theory the skewing of the sex/sexuality discourse, and (c) from anthropological/ethnographical studies a significant volume of information that will work as the spine of this research. A full review of the literature will be included in the following chapter.

All the previous questions derive from a cutting-edge turn toward the last decades of the century when historical revisionism and the revision of new identity politics challenged the superstructure's system of categorization. As post-apocalyptic individuals, gay American Indians have started to break away from the stigma of berdache, and have begun to identify themselves openly as gay, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals. The epistemological parameters behind the redefinition of berdache have escaped philosophical and religious traits, although the emphasis on reconnecting with the long-lost traditions has been more of a spiritual nature rather than a merely folkloric one. However, despite this turn to self-determination, as was mentioned before, the American Indian community is still traumatized and, therefore, their discourse has stagnated. The present dissertation alleges that, as a consequence of colonization, [gay] American Indians have developed a Stockholm Syndrome such that they cannot exist without trauma, for

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which they are condemned to extinction if they cannot manage to disentangle from it.

1.4 Post-Apocalyptic Texts: Now and Later

The multidimensional category of gender was almost exclusive to Native communities, and its richness needs a combination of disciplines to explore their tradition. It has been observed that due to the story-telling tradition of these communities, there is no written account that grasps the complex beauty of these individuals. What we have access to is to numerous Western accounts of the berdache, mainly from religious and anthropological perspectives that analyzed and dissected the phenomena almost as a Darwinian object. One of the saddest, yet problematic, facts of the berdache and his/her status before the linguistic baptism is that there was no record of it in literary sources. The cultural wealth had escaped the tradition of writing, yet managed to survive through generations despite the imposition of a post-colonial discourse.

The interest in the production of a post-apocalyptic literary legacy recovering the berdache was consolidated in the turmoil of the era of activism. It took more than a century to fictionalize and poeticize American Indian traditions, using a foreign language, and produced by members of third or fourth, gradually westernized, generations. Definitions of explicit homosexuality escaped the literary scene, yet erotica found its way in as a nuance suggesting rather than explicitly presenting the obvious. For that reason, earlier literary accounts are not sexually pornographic or rather do not explore [complex] sexuality. However, the latest works show another break from linguistic and pragmatic conventions in order to explore sexuality in a more graphic way. What was the place of the berdache in such a problematic literary scenario? There was no place for him/her, at least not until the first anthology on the subject of sexual diversity in American Indian

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communities in which, according to Jacobs, "sexuality, sex, and gender were understood [...] to be cultural constructions that could be investigated separately" (Jacobs et al. 27).

This initiative to publish a collection of American Indian writing supposed one of the first steps towards challenging the collapse that ensued from acculturation. In doing so, the status of the berdache was also allegedly upheld. Both anthologies *Living the Spirit* and *Sovereign Erotics* are post-apocalyptic texts not only because of the time in which they were published, but because they entail deeper layers of meaning that question the very essence of the text, whether at an "authentic" or intellectual level. To demonstrate the hypothesis formulated in this research, a contrastive-inclusive theoretical and literary analysis will be carried out by applying the main concepts of the theories mentioned before to a selection of texts from the literary corpus. These have been chosen according to their contribution to the construction of a renewed American Indian identity that struggles to see beyond the social construct of the berdache.

Is it possible to control the power of social influence by embracing or rejecting a term? Perhaps, but in present day society, despite the progress that has been achieved, berdaches/two-spirit people still have to think "about the escape and the flight from homophobia and social pressure" (Fuentes 57). But homophobia is not only a condition for the ultimate transformation of the berdache/two-spirit to achieve self-acceptance. Other pandemic factors such as HIV/AIDS also play an important role in the reconstruction of Indianness. Some anthropologists think that 'berdache' has lost its derogatory meaning, which is what justifies some American Indians' preference to be identified as such. However, the humiliation derived from the "detrimental impact of Christian morality in tribal traditions" (Vernon 24) caused them to react against those who identified mainly as

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homosexuals in the early stages of HIV/AIDS epidemic. More than two decades later, when the community appears to be more compassionate and comprehensive, the biggest obstacle is the role of the Indian Health Service (IHS), because "they don't want to deal with people with HIV," a consequence of the ignorance of "the historical role of two-spirits" (Vernon 24). The berdache was subjected to ideological agony. Given that American Indian traditions function in circular lines, everything is a repeating cycle; therefore, as a disadvantaged minority, two-spirits are prone to collapse.

The recuperation of identity through activism, coining new terms, and challenging the superstructure regarding social welfare and healthcare, situate the berdache/two-spirit in the spotlight of the discourse of power in the twenty-first century: "in the 1990s, the 'North American berdache' has been redefined, described, renamed, and brought forward in clear empirical realities by diverse American Indians throughout North America as 'two-spirit people of the First Nations'" (Jacobs et al. 37). The absence of the berdache on the literary scene turns into presence by the exaltation of his/her spiritual role in fiction, poetry, and essays. This union of the American Indian genius strikes a blow at the superstructure's hegemony, which still has a say in the development of social groups. It is a meaning to display that exquisite, multi-layered, and diverse gender variance as a milestone that sets the grounds for a new debate.

However, in this introduction, the status of the berdache as an almost suppressed entity in social terms also suggests that there has been a progression that connects the past and the present. This evolution is what has given birth to 'two-spirit,' an interpretation

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of the "Algonquian *niiz manitoag*"[4] (Vernon 22), and a spectral, yet mysterious concept that seduces precisely because of its complex nature. Therefore, the relevance of this work lies in its contribution to the different theoretical fields proposed as it attempts to be innovative. It bridges the past and the present through modern, rather than outdated concepts, while analyzing the role of gay American Indian literature in the American mainstream.

1.5 *Overview*

This dissertation is divided into six chapters that reflect on the struggle of constructing a new identity while disentangling projections of reality from fiction. Chapter Two, "Wóakhiye,"[5] offers a full review of the literature that summarizes the current panorama, and will be subdivided into: "Apocalypse Theory," in which sources such as *Imagining Apocalypse, Arguing the Apocalypse*, *After the End, The Illusion of the End, Marketing Apocalypse* and *The End of the World* will delimit a precise definition of the apocalypse used in this research, as well as insights into apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic/dystopian texts.

The second section,"[Gay] American Indian Identity," will examine some of the works by Will Roscoe, Sue Ellen Jacobs, and Sabine Lang that have contributed to conform the anthropological/ethno-historical approach of this dissertation, together with the works of Max H. Kirsch and Michael Warner in the field of queer theory; also my own Master's Thesis "Queer Plasticity: Queering Indigenous Feminism in Beth Brant's *Food & Spirits,*" and Two-Spirit Identity Theory will be examined together with post-colonial concepts. In the third

[4] A human being with both masculine and feminine qualities.
[5] *Discussion*, retrieved from the New Lakota Dictionary Pro, V.1: 2014. February 2017.

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and final section, "Contemporary Trauma," several academic articles and printed sources such as *Trauma, Ethics, and the Political beyond PTSD, The Future of Trauma Theory, Trauma Theory Abbreviated* and Sandra Bloom's 'Sanctuary Model' will be reviewed to offer a more clinical, yet critical, approach to contemporary notions of cultural trauma, and the overcoming of traumatic events.

Chapter Three, "Wóitȟaŋčhaŋ kčhí oíglakA,"[6] opens the debate of authenticity and examines who is entitled to tell or represent American Indian history, as well as the status of the American Indian tradition before and after the apocalypse. Chapter four, "Oúŋ kčhí naǧí,"[7] is the first chapter of textual analysis and covers the first section of *Living the Spirit*. It analyzes the shamanistic quality and the tone of the essays and articles about berdaches. In chapter five, "Líla hótȟaŋka iyépi,"[8] a selection of texts including poetry and short stories are analyzed as independent parts of a greater discourse on identity reconstruction and power struggles which leads to chapter six, "Sól uŋkáyapi." [9] This final chapter of analysis includes a critique of a selection of texts from *Sovereign Erotics* and an examination of how trauma still affects the literary production of American Indians in the twenty-first century.

Together these chapters offer an innovative approach to the field of American Indian Studies by contributing to the expansion of a new theory that offers an alternative to a limited post-colonial discourse. Moreover, despite its critical tone, this dissertation does not directly 'blame' the writers for the stagnation of their discourse. On the contrary, constructive criticism is meant to work as a wake-up call for those who have found comfort in menial representations of reality. Writers must work harder to escape the past that has

[6] *Power and Identity* respectively, retrieved from the New Lakota Dictionary Pro, V.1: 2014. October 2016.
[7] *Life and Spirit* respectively, retrieved from the New Lakota Dictionary Pro, V.1: 2014. November 2016.
[8] *They talked in a loud voice,* retrieved from the New Lakota Dictionary Pro, V.1: 2014. December 2016.
[9] *We are gradually becoming extinct,* retrieved from the New Lakota Dictionary Pro, V.1: 2014. February 2017.

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branded them. In the academy, there exists a debate that needs to be updated and infused with new approaches to ensure the resistance of its disciplines.

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Chapter Two

Wóakhiye[10]

> At the heart of terror there lies always the explosive combination of the possible and the unknown: the possibility of transgression and the crossing of a line from what is familiar into unimagined, unimaginable territory.
>
> Maria M. Lisboa

There are three major points converging in this dissertation: cultural trauma, [gay] American Indian identity, and the apocalypse. The evolution toward a new theoretical model that combines all three points was first suggested by Professor Sidner Larson when he stated that American Indians are "postapocalypse people" (18). He focused on their skills to outlive the death of their culture and use "communication through storytelling" (18) to establish their impact as a community in the universal mainstream. However, current society understands the apocalypse as "upheaval and destruction" (Lisboa xviii) without considering that it originally meant "the revelation of something new and often better" (xviii). What is even more complex to process is the idea of a post-apocalyptic society which, according to religious models and doomsday prophecies, has not yet materialized. Still, the marketing around the end as an abstract construct—and the end of the world—allowed for the development of a theoretical model based on the apocalypse that explains what happens "after the end" (Berger xi).

Some contemporary theoretical approaches regarding identity tend to discard self-identification as psychological trauma. American Indians lost their identity and were forced

[10] *Discussion*, retrieved from the New Lakota Dictionary Pro, V.1: 2014. February 2017.

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to fabricate a new one almost ex-nihilo. Even more, the berdache who evolved into two-spirit had to face the experience of coming out to endure the trauma of racism and homophobia. As representatives of a minority group, their discourse "had to overcome obstacles such as the gender-sexuality binding" (Fuentes 10) in order to decolonize their bodies. Therefore, it is the aim of this dissertation to include this struggle for self-identification and social validation into a still-in-progress theoretical model that analyzes their colonization as a chain of apocalyptic events with a dominant [cultural] traumatic aftermath.

Bistoen suggests that "the program of ethnic cleansing, involving massacres, genocide, pandemics, forced relocation and so on, carried out over multiple decades [centuries], has created severe problems for the [American Indian] community to continue 'life in the Symbolic'" (130). As a consequence, the total loss of identity became blatant and developed a cultural trauma that, according to Stamm et al., "[affected] the social fabric of a nation or culture" (90). The evolution from berdache to two-spirit and gay identities was circular rather than lineal because opposites, as Tlanusta and Barret suggest, "are thought of as actually existing in a circle that has no real beginning or end" (132). Metaphorically, gay American Indian identity discourse rotates around its own axis—cultural trauma—whose larger orbit simultaneously revolves around the end of all things.

2.1 The End: Apocalypse Theory

Maria Manuel Lisboa has stated that "after the end of the world, how can anything remain, continue, let alone begin again?" (xv-xvi), while James Berger has written that "before the beginning and after the end, there can only be nothing" (xi). These nihilistic projections after the end of time are oxymorons that triggered the need to develop a

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discourse on apocalypticism devoid of religious eschatology. However, in order to succeed in such elaboration, there needs to be a sense of collectivity through which every individual conceives termination as certain. Religion and/or spirituality have become prolific tools to providing for solace in the understanding of the end, yet have failed to provide empirical evidence of the afterlife. Christianity promises eternal life; Buddhism and Hinduism promise reincarnation. As Stephen D. O'Leary affirms, "all [religions] offer evidence that the desire to fix humanity in a divinely instituted order of cosmic time has played a significant role in the formation of cultures" (5).

Stephen Brown, Jim Bell and David Carson state that the apocalypse began after "the beginning of time, or the dawn of civilisation at least" (1). This affirmation suggests that we as individuals have always been molded by chaos, but it only works if the definition of apocalypse is exclusively ascribed to turmoil and destruction. Moreover, they affirm that we have always been addicted to the apocalypse (1) and it is difficult to disagree with them if we consider the numerous times the end of the world has been predicted. The marketing of the apocalypse was the catalyst for the establishment of a formal model that, being linked to the discourse of conspiracy, "[developed] symbolic resources that [enabled] societies to define and address the problem of evil" (O'Leary 6).

This model focuses on the understanding of the crisis, the very moment of collapse. David Seed, editor of *Imagining Apocalypse*: *Studies in Cultural Crisis* (2000), argues that "if apocalypse underpins the modern sense of crisis, it is clear that sudden or cataclysmic events can be perceived as ruptures in the order of history" (4). Seed's affirmation propelled the consideration of this model for the purpose of this research, as in the case of Pre-Columbian communities, the event of colonization became their historical rupture. The

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apocalyptic representations of Hernán Cortés during the Siege of Tenochtitlan in 1521, Francisco Pizarro in the Battle of Cajamarca in 1531, or the United States Army in the Massacre of Wounded Knee in 1890 acted as psychological and political targets to focus a social critique of any existing social order (Berger 7). Euromericans conceived The Americas a projection of Babylon that could only be destroyed and rebuilt again. Biopower, as Michel Foucault suggested, "is an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations" (140), and it became the superstructure's first weapon of mass destruction in the apocalypse.

Berger's examples of the *apocalypse* have provided a general idea of the stages that resulted in massive cultural trauma and annulled any possibility of self-identification: "First, it is the *eschaton*, the actual imagined end of the world [...]; second, apocalypse refers to catastrophes that resemble the imagined final ending [...]. Apocalypse thus, finally, has an interpretive, explanatory function [...] as revelation, unveiling, uncovering" (5). In the construction of a post-apocalypse model applied to American Indian studies then it is necessary to understand the role and the importance of the apocalypse because it represents and explains *the end* (Berger 5). Given the orality of the American Indian tradition, the culture of prophecy changed the myth from community to community while keeping its essence. For instance, the *eschaton* is present in the Hopi's creation myth during their ascension to the Fourth World as the previous one is about to be destroyed:

> The journey will be long and difficult. When we reach the Upper World, that will be only a beginning. Things there are not like things here. You will discover new ways of doing things. During the journey you must try to discover the meaning of life and learn to distinguish good from evil. Tawa did not intend for you to live in the midst of chaos and dissension. Only those of good heart may depart from the Third World. (Courlander 24)

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Following Berger's definitions, the Spanish conquest, the arrival of the Mayflower, the establishment of the American colonies, and the expansion toward the west were a chain of catastrophes that resembled the destruction of the imagined world. This was the vision of the apocalypse adopted in contemporary contexts. There was no room for against-the-clock reinterpretations of reality in "a sequence of events between which there is no relation, pattern or progression" (Brown, Bell, and Carson 5). Therefore, American society has reflected on the collapse and devoted their social energy to make the most of it, rather than advocating for "the general course of American amnesia and disavowal" (Berger 170). Marketing survival is proven to be as successful as marketing death; for this reason, exploiting the American Indian genocide and its aftermath has become profitable from a literary and critical perspective. The consumption of the apocalypse has created a 24/7 industry of fearmongering based on memories of trauma that cannot be dissociated or repressed. Consequentially, the apocalypse as a revelation has also uncovered the disadvantages of minorities in a world yet to collapse, and has proven to be far less explored due to its religious connotation.

Richard Fenn's article "Apocalypse & the end of time" (2003) argues that society has started to live in the shadow of apocalyptic expectation and has begun to "search for latent or disguised signs that time is running out" (111). Moreover, he also suggests that the "apocalypse is expected to finally liberate people from the spirits that have possessed their souls" (112), which is in opposition to Northrop Frye's myth of freedom[11]. Freedom is an imagined illusion nurtured by our representation of the real; however, it will always be conditioned by power, and "may result in the large-scale collapse of social structures and

[11] See *The Northrop Frye Quote Book* by Northrop Frye and John Robert Colombo. Toronto: Dundurn, 2014.

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human communities" (Lisboa 137). The post-apocalypse theoretical model proposes that the apocalypse is a liberatory event that occurs within a given framework pre-established by the superstructure. The apocalypse liberates energy that travels forward and backward in a controlled space-time continuum. This energy is the momentum that enables the fabrication of histor[y]-ies prior to the collapse of the world that clashes with the real image of that history, resulting in the distortion of the past and a projection of such distortion in the present. This final projection fits halfway in between Jean Baudrillard's concepts of 'simulation' and 'simulacrum.' The individual is a hybrid whose reality takes place within him/herself, yet that reality, contrary to Baudrillard, *has* a model which has been copied to be reproduced and readjusted as many times as necessary during and after the apocalypse.

In this context, the paradigm of American Indian identity has been modified together with the apocalyptic one, "to serve a whole range of interpretive and speculative purposes" (Seed 12). Within the study of apocalypse theory, I would include Gerald Vizenor's discussion regarding the simulation of identity. *Postindian Conversations* (1999) reflects his critique of western linguistic systems and the choosing of an all-including nomenclature based on erroneous geopolitical concepts—Indians—and, more in-depth, his discomfort with the "simulation of the *indian* as savage" (21). Vizenor argues that American Indians are *postindians* because the 'indian' is dead. The problem of identifying individuals during and after the apocalypse extends beyond the Indian's physical and metaphorical death. In this context, Teresa Heffernan's vision in "On Apocalypse, Monsters, and Mourning" (2013) surmises that "the dilemma of what comes 'after' is not only a problem of language, of finding the right term; it pervades contemporary culture and its conflicted relationship to the future" (94). Thus, on the one hand we have Vizenor's *postindians* while on the other

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hand we have Larson's *postapocalypse people*. Though both terms make "problematic references to the 'post post'" (Heffernan 93-94), the conception of American Indians as 'postapocalypse people' reflects the fundamentals of Post-Apocalypse Theory, since the term's versatility suggests that there is a progression—before and after the event—rather than just an achieved status after the end of the event.

Ever since the writing of the Bible, apocalyptic narratives have developed a common sense of an ending. Whether collective or individual, these narratives have focused on a loss of faith, coping with trauma, life-changing situations, and the uncontrollable feeling that the end is near. However, some of these narratives have projected reality transcending the end, presenting dystopian texts where society has been deconstructed. In the last decades of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, dystopian—or post-apocalyptic—literature has established itself as a well-documented genre that has been exploited by the arts. However, Heffernan suggests that the "investment in apocalyptic narratives [faltered] in the twentieth-century" (93), and I partially agree with her statement. As was mentioned before, apocalyptic narratives work as links between texts and *post texts* which, as considered by Post-Apocalypse Theory, are texts produced in the present of the writer that are subjected to historicity and its projection in/of an imagined future.

One of the best examples of these texts is Isaac Asimov's collection of short stories *I, Robot* (1950). The thriller combines robotics, human interaction with machines, and morality with artificial intelligence from the mind of a prolific post-war writer. The sense of an ending in "The Evitable Conflict," the last short story, came at the hand of the Machines who decided to take control of humanity. Asimov reflected in his stories the conflict of power that arose in war—possibly influenced by his time of service in the U.S. Army—and

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he did so by projecting a robotic arms race in a future only a few decades ahead of this dissertation. Other texts that qualify to be considered apocalyptic narratives are Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* (1987).

Hurston's novel elaborates a complex racial narrative around Janie and Tea Cake until they are stricken by the Okeechobee hurricane, and faced with the chaos of survival, questioning the existence of God. In a more dystopian sense, McEwan's story revolves around the unexpected and inexplicable loss of Stephen and Julie's daughter, while dealing with quantum physics and alternate realities. The hurricane and the gone girl are a "blend of disgust, moral fervor, and cynicism" that explain why "significant parts of [the character's] world [were] destroyed" (Berger 7). In other words, apocalyptic narratives were "worried with the irrevocable loss" (Heffernan 94). For this reason, Heffernan's assumption becomes the premise of a new literary trend that has been established in the market of the apocalypse.

The creation of post-apocalyptic literature contains the "assumption of a collective "we" of History, the absence of any cultural context [...] and the unquestioned acceptance of progress" that Heffernan proposed as reasons for the decadence of apocalyptic narratives (91). Richard Dellamora in *Postmodern Apocalypse: Theory and Cultural Practice at the End* (1995) affirms that "apocalyptic narratives of group history can also be proclaimed in ways that create the conditions of new catastrophes" (4). Rick Yancey's 2013 novel, *The 5th Wave*, follows survivors in the devastation of the Earth's population after subsequent waves of alien attacks. Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games Trilogy* (2008-2010) follows the deconstruction of America and its evolution into a totalitarian state and the institutionalization of death as entertainment. These are examples of "what disappears and

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what remains, and how the remainder has been transformed" (Berger 7). In the field of American Indian literature, the apocalypse and the post-apocalypse happened almost immediately given their ex-nihilo nature. The progression from exposing the damage of colonization to achieving the status of Larson's post-apocalypse people has occurred in less than thirty years. It is also important to remember that this timespan only reflects the written aspects of a much larger—and longer—event that extends back in time to October 1492.

Dellamora's work comprises a group of essays and articles that explore the representation of the apocalypse, the First-Generation Postmodern Apocalyptics, and its contemporary status. The different perspectives abstracted from this work reflect the dialectic battle between the nature of the apocalypse and its acknowledgment as a rhetorical strategy in cultural practice. Dellamora goes on to study Jacques Derrida's essay "No Apocalypse, Not Now" (1984) and its apocalyptic tone while examining Derrida's presentation of the "reality of the nuclear age and the fable of nuclear war" as separate but equals (Seed 12). In his essay, Derrida wrote that "people find it easy to say that in nuclear war 'humanity' runs the risk of its self-destruction, with nothing left over, no remainder" (20). Brown, Bell, and Carson also stated that "it is easy to dismiss eschatological expectation as irrational, psychosomatically induced symptoms of social disquiet" (7); however, our fear of the end is culturally linked to our addiction to it.

On Derrida, Berger suggests that this addiction and "sense of an imminent, apocalyptic breach that in reality has already occurred" (110) is a "semantic alchemical process" (7). Derrida's essay deals with the *no remainders* following the apocalypse; however, to study the post-apocalypse and to understand how it came to be, one must

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reflect on what is left—matter can be neither created nor destroyed—and how it has been transformed. For this reason, the Apocalypse Theory model relies on the terror of the apocalypse and the "millennial expectations of a new beginning" (Brown, Bell, and Carson 7), while the proposed model of Post-Apocalypse Theory rather focuses on indifference, melancholy, and complete lack of faith in the post-apocalyptic future (7).

In this sense, Maria Manuel Lisboa's *The End of the World: Apocalypse and its Aftermath in Western Culture* (2011) provides an interesting approach to what lies beyond the apocalypse. In *The Illusion of the End* (1994), Baudrillard examined how the idea of the end is a constant in our conception of reality. Everything that has a beginning has an end, and though we are biologically indoctrinated about death, we are not culturally educated in death as a certainty. The arts present us with perfect illusions and otherworldly paradises beyond death, personal and romanticized dimensions created upon the death of the physical body. These utopias at the end of the world are not, according to Lisboa, "necessarily restricted to the common parlance meaning of perfect social, communal or individual bliss" (137).

Therefore, taking into account the original conception of the apocalypse that meant "a stage towards a new beginning" (Lisboa 137), and contradicting the assumption that there were *no remainders* following the apocalypse, the post-apocalyptic scenario has become a wasteland where survivors have had to reconstruct themselves. This latter idea was explored by Lawrence W. Gross in "A Comic Vision of the Anishinaabe Culture and Religion" (2002). In his article he stated that "American Indians in general have seen the end of our worlds [...] and are in the process of building new worlds—worlds that are true to our history but cognizant of present realities" (449). Gross' work is central for the

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development of a Post-Apocalypse theoretical model thanks to his analysis of the post-apocalyptic environment. His considerations of this new environment coincided with Lisboa's demystification of utopia and his study led him to state that "the stress is society-wide in nature" and "the stress strikes at both the personal and institutional levels" (450).

According to Gross, on the personal level, the new post-apocalyptic environment would include the following: "an abandonment of productive employment; an increase in substance abuse; an increase in violence; an increase of the suicide rate; an increase in the rate of mental illness [and] a sense of survivor's guilt," among others (450). Moreover, on the institutional level, such an environment will witness the collapse of "family structures, government institutions, educational institutions, established religious institutions, [and] health care delivery systems" (450). Taking all these considerations together, Gross coined the term Post-Apocalypse Stress Syndrome (PASS) "which can be thought of as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) raised to the level of an entire culture" (450).

Thus, Gross' work and Larson's *Captured in the Middle: Tradition and Experience in Contemporary Native American Writing* (2000) are the foundations of a theoretical model that aims at analyzing American Indian texts, considering that—some of—the writers of the 1980s onwards still suffer from PASS and reflect that in their critical and literary discourses. Hence, to analyze them, Larson's model comprises three primary principles as the fundamentals of his theory: a. The Keatsian *negative capability*, defined by Stephen Hebron as the individual's potential which "can be defined by what he or she does *not* possess—in this case a need to be clever, a determination to work everything out" (*British Library*, 21 November 2016); b. The unification of past, present, and future; and c. Principles of self-efficacy, stating that "the role of intellectuals is to nurture and support those whom they

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represent, that American Indian sources should be the primary sources for American Indian criticism, and that the work of Indian writers should reflect real experiences" (Larson 102).

The discourse of American Indians has been determined by the various representations of the experience of the end. The apocalypse in its darkest undertone was unleashed with the aim of having "no surviving rivals" (Fenn 109) in an uneven negotiation for posterity. Vizenor and Larson had considerations about these *postpeople* who had been subjected to projections of the poetics of remembrance. Memory has been fundamental in order to [re]present the post-apocalypse as has been examined by Berger in *After the End* (1999), where American apocalypticism has "always encountered conflict" (133). According to him, on the one hand, there was the apocalyptic sensibility of the European settlement of America and how later on, "the English inhabitants of New England portrayed their colony as a 'city on a hill,' an apocalyptic break with the past, the unveiling of a new social order and a new relationship with nature" (133). On the other hand, there was "an apocalyptic struggle with native, or natural, powers [that] was still to come" (133). However, despite Berger's valuable contribution to this research, he fails to analyze the case of American Indians apart from the Holocaust, and only includes it as an introductory remark about colonization and its apocalyptic tone.

It has been mentioned that the apocalypse has proven highly profitable. Although Heffernan stated that apocalyptic narratives decreased in the twentieth century, at a critical level the development of an apocalypse model was set in motion. This model was interdisciplinary within the field of arts as it has been included in art, literature, and cinema to establish a coherent discourse that reflects on our own quest to understand the end. While Apocalypse Theory reflects on the sense of an ending and how we react toward

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chaos, Larson's principles of Post-Apocalypse Theory transcend the apocalyptic event to analyze the literary production by American Indians *after* the end. I agree with Lisboa's view regarding utopia because it is a dimension romantically based on assumptions of the afterlife and constructed in/by our [sub]conscious. For this reason, it is important to establish that American Indians have not yet been able to achieve that utopia yet. Their discourse is still struggling for visibility between the apocalypse and the post-apocalypse, while the world we all live in keeps coming to an end. As a result, the development of a post-apocalypse model aims at the consideration of individuals that have survived the end of the world and "are thus more free to work toward unification of the past and future with the present" (Larson 160).

2.2 *[Gay] American Indian Identity*

Larson has presented a theoretical model in which American Indians are considered post-apocalypse people. In more abstract terms, they are individual bodies subjected to colonization whose identity has been defined by the superstructure, which defines the body as "the external extension of inner behaviours, plus, it has been regarded as the means to achieve reproduction, self-determination, and pleasure. Moreover, the body has been presented as natural and biologically unquestionable, to the extent of categorising [it] according to genitalia and [morphology]" (Fuentes 26). Are post-apocalyptic bodies free from gender-based categorizations? Should American *Indianness* be reconnected to its queer past?

Contemporary American Indians have been trapped in the middle of two dimensions determined by the apocalypse and the post-apocalypse, and the lines of their identity as Indians and moreover as gay Indians have been blurred. The berdache was once a revered

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figure that fell before the superstructure. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang have stated that "'Berdache' is considered to be an inappropriate and insulting term" (3). They go on saying that universal rejection in the American Indian community toward the term produced its dismissal in favor of the term 'two-spirit,' which was received with mixed opinions. Some members of the community chose to embrace the term, while others "self-identified as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' 'bisexual,' 'transgender,' or 'third gender' (that is, people who are neither women nor men within systems of multiple genders" (3). The problematic of gay American Indian identity has had a detrimental evolution that has simplified its existence. Berdachism included a long tradition of special roles in American Indian cultures which was suppressed gradually upon arrival of Europeans, and because there was a lack of cultural context in the twentieth century, the tendency was to emphasize berdachism as homosexuality.

The works of William Roscoe, Sabine Lang, Sue-Ellen Jacobs, and Wesley Thomas have been central to the reconstruction of a gay American Indian identity which finds in berdachism its philosopher's stone. However, the reconstruction has been occurring in what Gross described as a post-apocalyptic environment where there has been an increase in the rate of violence. Jacobs has stated that:

> The irony is that as the "berdache" became an honored figure in the reconstructed romantic history of Native American cultures, lesbian, gay, two-spirit, and transgender people of various American Indian heritages were being beaten, disowned, and disavowed on their reservations. (22)

From an ethnographic and anthropological perspective, the research on berdachism, though it is not extensive, has been well documented in the case of male berdachism, while

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female berdachism has been scarcely studied or has been discarded. However, Alex Wilson's article "How We Find Ourselves: Identity Development and Two-Spirit People" (1996) became an important work in the development of a Two-Spirit Identity theoretical model within the discipline of Queer Studies. In it, Wilson examined "the developmental theory of identity formation in two-spirit people drawing from sources such as Susan Barrett's Minority Identity Development Model (MIDM) and Kristine Falco's *Psychotherapy with Lesbian Clients: Theory into Practice* (1991)" in (Fuentes 10).

2.2.1 *Two-Spirit Identity Theory*

The two-spirit cross-gender identity has been documented in 155 communities in North American societies (*Changing Ones,* Roscoe 7). Before the arrival of the colonizers, there were no constructs around 'man' or 'woman;' instead, there were interchangeable performative roles that were ritualized and venerated. Moreover, Roscoe has stated that "because so many North American cultures were disrupted (or had disappeared) before they were studied by anthropologists, it is not possible to state the absolute frequency of these roles" (7). Harry Walters has considered that "the world is made of two: woman and man. But there have always been the third one who is both, the *nádleehi*" (Jacobs 34-35). Consequently, considering the gender/identity world in binaries with a tangential branch—the third one is in contact with the other two, but it does not intersect them–it complicates the assumption that the third one is not a role but an identity: the third gender "generally refers to male berdaches and sometimes male and female berdaches, while 'fourth gender' always refers to female berdaches" (Roscoe 7).

Colonization brought social stigmata and religious condemnation toward what westerners considered deviant acts such as sodomy and cross-dressing. The natural

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became punishable and unacceptable, and the spiritual schism detached the once thought inseparable spirit from the body. In the process, the need of labelling became imperative, so the superstructure found a way to refer to the heteronormative "abnormal" as "berdache"; in consequence, both identity and roles were considered inferior. Thus, American Indians started to exert homophobia over their own kind. Consequently, the berdache was ridiculed, progressively ostracized, and ultimately cast into spectrality, as Robert Stoller noted:

> the deterioration in American Indians of techniques for ritualizing cross-gender behavior. No longer is a place provided for the role–more, the identity–of a male-woman, the dimensions of which are fixed by custom, rules, tradeoffs, or responsibilities. The tribes have forgotten. Instead, this role appears as a ghost. (Jacobs 177)

The inevitable separation of lesbian/gay members from the nucleus has fixed the pattern of a forced exile, a physical and spiritual migration to find open-minded areas and explore their sexuality in a non-judgmental way. This migration has created two worlds where evolution and involution interrupt the development of acceptable identities and roles inside and outside their communities. The arrival of the berdache in the city has placed him in the spotlight of social criticism on the part of the white heterosexual majority. The inner development of a no man's land syndrome combined with the ecstatic quest for the self have diversified their possibilities of accomplishing identity formation within a society determined by the superstructure. Thus, the city has been regarded—in naturalistic terms—as a jungle that jeopardizes the life of the newcomer and provides her/him with the unreachable pleasures forbidden back home.

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For instance, Beth Brant's short story "This Place" (1991) opens with the line: "Mother, I am gay. I have AIDS" (49). The character has labelled himself as *gay*, choosing the wester pattern of identification/categorization, and successfully completes his identity formation. Contemporary American Indians have dismissed the term "berdache" and have taken refuge under heteronormative labels such as gay, lesbian, butch, dyke, bull dyke, fairy, and queer—mostly accepted when used by members within lesbian/gay communities—yet "in the 1990s, the 'North American berdache' has been redefined, described, renamed, and brought forward in clear empirical realities by diverse Native Americans throughout North America as 'two-spirit people of the First Nations'" (Jacobs 37).

Wilson has examined the result of historical facts mingled with sexual exploration, forced exile, sickness, and social behaviour in the framework of racial identity development, as it deals with "the psychological implications of membership in a racial group and the resultant ideologies" (398). It is mostly after the creation of the reservations when we see many aboriginal writers talking about leaving home. Before that, the myth created around the figure of the berdache was exotic and new, yet abhorrent and unnatural for the colonizers. Wilson has claimed that she has chosen the term "two-spirit" carefully (304) as it has come to represent categories, identities and gender roles absent from the European tradition. Therefore, the dialectic clash between the old and the new world transcends the fight over the land, and raises a wall between the inhospitable and the ideal.

Europeans were not prepared to understand the vehement veneration of beings such as We'wha, a Zuni man-woman, who embodied the third gender or *lhamana,*[12] and who

12 Brian Gilley points out that the *lhamana* was occupied by a male-bodied person dressed as a woman who

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was mostly recognized for her role as mediator and cultural ambassador to Washington DC. Identity formation in some American Indian cultures began in childhood, in which children—mostly male—who displayed effeminate behaviours at this age were believed to be sent by the Great Spirit as mediators to understand the human condition. This "morphological male who does not fill a society's man's role" (Wilson 304) was the one who reshaped his identity, and became a non-suspicious heterosexual to the heteronormative eye.

In her attempt to create a developmental identity model, Wilson has considered William Cross's Black Racial Identity Development Model; however, the impact of racism on identity formation does not hold for American Indians as it does for African Americans. She points out the differences when

> in the Pre-encounter stage, which is described in the model as the initial point, an individual is unaware or denies that race plays any part in the definition of who they are. Thereafter, they move through a predictable series of stages: Encounter, after a sequence of events forces them to realize that racism does affect their life; Immersion/Emmersion, as they respond by immersing themselves in their culture, and reject the values of the dominant culture; Internalization, as they develop security in their identity as a person of color; and Internalization/Commitment, when they have acquired a positive sense of racial identity. (309)

I agree with Wilson in considering Susan Barrett's Minority Identity Development Model to develop a Two-Spirit Identity theoretical one. Barrett has suggested that this model could be applied to anyone who does not belong in the European American heteronormative culture. Barrett's model has been constructed around five sequential

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performed women's crafts in Zuni culture (8).

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stages, which attempt to describe the psychological aspects of identity formation: the "Conformity stage," the "Dissonance stage," the "Resistance and Immersion stage," the "Introspective period," and finally the "Synergetic Articulation and Awareness period." Wilson summarizes the description of this five-stage model as follows:

> In the Conformity Stage, a person is ashamed of her membership in a minority culture, and accepts the devaluating judgments of the dominant culture. In the Dissonance stage, she wants to express her membership in a minority culture, but is still restricted by discomfort with it. She then moves into a Resistance and Immersion stage, as she becomes aware of the positive value of her membership in a minority culture and rejects the dominant culture. Following immersion in her minority culture, she enters an Introspective period, as she realizes that she cannot express herself fully within the constraints of an isolated minority identity. Finally, in the stage Barrett calls Synergetic Articulation and Awareness, she finds self-fulfillment when she integrates her minority identity into all aspects of her life. (309)

The necessity for immersion pushes the members of these communities to write, both politically and creatively, in order to prove their dissatisfaction with the superstructure. Hence, the anthological corpus analyzed in the present dissertation, *Living the Spirit* (1988) and *Sovereign Erotics* (2011), came out as a gathering of literary minority spirits, which have provided new perspectives on lesbian/gay literature at the turn of the twenty-first century and beyond. Both anthologies have explored the concepts of racism, sexism and homophobia, analyzing them separately rather than inclusively. Yet, Wilson has stated that "[i]mmersion in the White, gay party scene became a way to numb a growing depression" (312). Depression through immersion thus responds to the insufficient recognition of the two-spirit identity by mainstream lesbian and gay communities "unless it is accompanied by romantic notions that linger from the concept of *berdache*" (313).

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Wilson has concluded that immersed two-spirit people have been regarded as the "'holy man who fucks' or 'just a fuckin' Indian'" (313). Therefore, all models considered for the development of her own respond to the experiences of homophobia and racism, but never in synchronicity. As a result, the development of Two Spirit Identity Theory has aimed at the assumption of roles in society regardless of biological sex, considering the inhospitability of the heteronormative world while providing –as the "other"– perspectives on sexual and racial identity, where the negotiation of their identity is subject to a 'raceless' status.

2.2.2 *Queer Theory & Two-Spirit Identity Theory*

Despite the 'recent' proliferation of multiple labels to designate new identities, alternative sexualities have been part of humanity's multiplicity for as far as history can record. To understand the object of Queer Theory is to drop binarisms and hierarchies, to choose multiplicity over duality, to accept sex as a categorical division with its biological boundaries, and to overcome the oppression of the superstructure. The term *queer* entered the semantic scene in the sixteenth century meaning 'unusual' and 'strange,' specially to refer to people with strange or unacceptable behaviour. The semantic shift of the twentieth century has made the term a derogatory word to refer to gay males—similar to 'berdache'—who are involved in sexual intercourse with other men. Throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the arts have echoed the lesbian/gay-bashing nature of the word. Nevertheless, during the 1980s, the reappropriation of 'queer' turned into an umbrella term as inclusive as the term two-spirit, including lesbians and gays at the same level. This linguistic contesting is the first instance of the counter-attack against the superstructure's biopower.

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Of the many definitions of what the Queer theoretical model complies, April Callis has described it as "a segment of academic thought that focuses on the constructedness of gendered and sexual identities and categorizations" (23). In addition to it, Mimi Marinucci has also argued that Queer Theory suppresses binary and hierarchical reasoning in general, and in connection with gender/sex, and sexuality, while encouraging political apathy as it "relativizes all sexuality and gender" (Kirsch 8). Moreover, Rachel Carroll has explained that this model "has been principally concerned with the hierarchical nature of the heterosexual/homosexual binary, but this binary is understood as not so much expressive as *constitutive* of heterosexual power" (6). Therefore, in order to produce a merged definition out of these explanations, Queer Theory is hereby described as a branch that studies the multiplication/proliferation of identities in terms of gender and sexuality, and their mutual interaction with subsequent identities out of the superstructure's binary.

While heteronormativity has been produced by the arrangement of social life and phobias towards lesbians and gays, the queer framework has questioned other identities in a field that must not be governed by heterosexuality. Such questioning happens within the limits of social constructionism and semantic holism, where the term 'queer' is understood as part of a larger discourse on identity politics and also as a social construct, product of sociohistorical choices opposed to mere judgment. Even if 'queer' has been understood as inclusive, the concept itself has failed to apply to lesbians and gays because, in the field of compulsory heterosexuality,[13] they are neither women nor men. How is that even possible? In order to understand gay identities, we must study them in relation to heterosexuality, because the "natural" existed first and everything else starts from there, in the same way as

13 Compulsory heterosexuality is a model proposed by Adrienne Rich that divides women/men from each other by its 'othering' of lesbians/gays as deviant, as pathological, or as emotionally and sensually deprived (Rich 137).

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women and men make each other existent, visible, and tangible through social interactions. Rich has proposed the existence of a lesbian continuum as a form of resistance to the superstructure. This continuum "places same-sex desire between women within a spectrum of female attachment and solidarity and in doing so repairs the division between 'women' and 'lesbians' imposed by compulsory heterosexuality" (3).

The redefinition of a new paradigm in the academia has suggested the deliberate attempt of queer theorists at taking traditional identities, prioritizing them, and fitting them within a theoretical framework at the same level. The elimination of contrasts has allowed the inclusion of other identities within a queer discourse. Besides, to include them means to multiply the categorical spectrum to fulfill universality. Thus, the destruction of the man-woman binary allows the *nádleehi,* the butch, the trans, and the intersex to be categorized along the same potential assumptions. However, the limitation of Queer Theory is that it has reduced the scope to sexuality and gender only, as Kirsch has said. It is true that Queer Theory has found its strongest corpus in homosexual erotica and the development of sexuality, such that it has drawn from Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1976) to sustain the theory of the construction of sexual identity. As Callis has written, "many authors believe that 'it was Foucault's overall model of the discursive construction of sexualities that was the main initial catalyst for Queer Theory'" (29). Therefore, Foucault's radicality in the deconstruction of sexual identities has given power to foundational and radical works in the field of Queer Theory, plus it has provided the necessary means to explain the creation of lesbian and gay identities. Kirsch has argued that "Queer Theory promotes the 'self' of the individual as an alternative to wider social interaction" (79), and has also stated that "the bounded individual, as 'self,' *different and*

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unique, cannot be the center of strategies for social change" (79). I agree with Kirsch because promoting the individual is diametrically contrary to Larson's model, because his model has advocated for cultural collectivity rather than individual experiences.

Contemporary assumptions of Queer Theory have also been influenced by Butler's performativity as her work, *Gender Trouble* (1990), considered "the most influential text in Queer Theory" (Callis, 34). While Foucault has focused on sexuality, Butler has broadened the scope to include gender and sexuality and then problematize it. Butler suggests that sexuality is as important as performance is to the construction of gender. However, the development of Queer Theory does not establish the construction of gender upon the basis of performance/performativity; it does define the central aspects of lesbian and gay identity, for example, without the need of confronting them in the superstructure's binary. Consequently, Queer Theory grounds itself in gender (Butler) and sexuality (Foucault), but sustains a binary structure at an abstract level with little impact on the subcategorical level.

The debate over sexual orientation, sexual preference, sexual activity, and sexual display has emerged from gender and sexuality, confronting naturalism and essentialism. Queer Theory has illustrated the discussion between what is considered an "essential nature" and what is "socially constructed." The case of two-spirits presents both variants, as one part of them has an essential nature, and the other part is socially constructed, such as the case of Zuni We'wha.[14] Social constructionism studies the development of certain artifacts in social contexts. Will Roscoe's *The Zuni Man-Woman* (1991) has illustrated that "the debates over sex and gender involve ethical choices relative to our own time and place; choices rather than the application of presumed natural or social laws" (214). Part of

[14] We'wha was a Zuni man-woman who became ambassador of the Zunis in Washington D.C. S/he was born biologically male, yet lived his/her life as a berdache.

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We'wha's experience in Washington DC is constructed around the [forced] dynamic interaction between the oppression of the superstructure and We'wha's alternative to presumed heterosexuality.

Categories are part of what Queer Theory deconstructs. Categories such as 'woman' and 'man' that seem to be essential are not considered relevant for the development of a more rigid, yet wide reasoning of identity politics. The problem with the model's strictness is that it has become radical in terms of deconstruction and subversion, which in a desperate quest for the correct sociological analysis of the subject matter has failed to maintain the separation among categories. In most cases, queer theorists have tried to normalize the non-distinction between categories, but at the same time in order to maintain such a complex continuum they reject all references to standard normality. Therefore, Queer Theory has enhanced queerness within its boundaries.

This endless categorical loop dissolved when both women and men advocated for self-identification as a source of energy, but never together. Rich has argued that there is no alliance between lesbians and gay men, basically because it would "deny and erase female reality once again" (3) and "lesbian experience [is] like motherhood, a profoundly female experience" (3). Such affirmation thus poses the question whether the 'gay experience' should be considered like fatherhood: a profoundly male experience. It is inconceivable for gay men to deny female reality as they would be fouling their own nest. To even think of the remote possibility that lesbians would be undervalued if joined by gay men is to abandon any possibility of universalization. Rich universalizes woman-identification *only* as "a female and feminist, rather than exclusively lesbian, experience" (3), but she still refuses to cooperate with gay men in favor of her lesbian continuum.

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Queer Theory has also failed to devise the limits of its own reach. This segment started with the usage and meaning of the term 'queer;' however, despite its ethical, social, and historical burden, the word itself does not encompass any specific sexual status or gender choice. On the one hand, this suggests that *everything* can be queer, so there is neither an evident limit nor an insight on the subject. This is the linguistic weak link because it has allowed the superstructure to contest Queer Theory from the outside. Thus, if heterosexuals can be queer by appropriating characteristics that make *queer* unique, then queer as an identity category has difficulties at being consolidated.

Despite the ever-evolving nature of language, Queer Theory has not defined what it means to be queer. Indeed, there are no binarisms and there are no categories, which is one of the celebratory mottos of Queer Theory. However, queer is not only an ideology but has also alleged to be an inclusive movement that welcomes trans, butch, intersex, BDSM[15] and other marginal identities, practices, and sexualities, so the scope as to where it starts and where it ends has not been well defined. Marinucci has concluded that by recognizing sexuality as unique to each individual

> it is difficult to believe that there is anyone whose sexuality is not unusual, unexpected, or somehow queer. It therefore makes sense to regard as queer even some people who might otherwise be expected to identify as heterosexual. The point of this shift is not to allow heterosexuals claim homosexual identities [...] The point is to shift the balance of power. (36)

Heterosexuality is believed to be natural and instinctual rather than ideological. Queer Theory has found support in ideological postulates which are not natural but they are rather instrumental. Its methodology has been highly criticized because it has not

15 BDSM stands for Bondage, Domination, Sadism/Submission and Masochism.

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offered empirical evidence, while at the same time it has rejected any biological reference to discuss the existence of 'the queer.' Queer Theory has been trying to overcome the scrutinized status of homosexuality as opposed to the invisible status given to heterosexuality. Yet the superstructure has seconded such dynamics, and it has been perhaps necessary to challenge the 'natural' system from the inside.

Queer Theory symbolically approaches Two-Spirit Identity Theory and supports itself under a dynamic and contested relationship in relation to the analysis of heterosexuality. The theory's new emphasis on sexuality can be added to the two-spirited focus on gender, and its inclusive nature reorganizes the logic of domination because in this case there is no dominant group to refer to or a group which lacks power. In the case of men, the concept of freedom has been much wider as it has not been as restrictive even with gay men. On the other hand, women have had to exercise selective freedom as they have not had the same opportunities men have, or have they? Women can choose among garments, political ideologies, and sexual practices *but* only as long as it is not in the public sphere because the superstructure could lose control and women could gain power. This process of limited freedom is what is understood as the 'logic of domination,' or an example of Frye's myth of freedom.

The differences between the queer—as propagated by literary production by gay white writers— and the two-spirit canon have surpassed the limits of the body and have established a racial dynamic. Moreover, both cannons have moved between racism and classism within sexuality studies, developing a bias against women in Queer Theory. As the power gained by women over the years has also changed the dynamics of feminism, the role of feminism in Queer Theory has changed as well. The role of feminist thought—as a

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keystone for the understanding of new paradigms of study including lesbian and heterosexual women at the same level—has offered a new approach to feminism as a critical perspective. If feminism subverts and questions the paradigm of normality proposed by the superstructure, then feminism is itself queer. It has been noted before that just as the system loses control over women, they are also losing control over LGBTQQ. Therefore, the world is witnessing the reconsideration of identity politics in the twenty-first century within the framework of Queer Theory and feminist thought revisited.

In a discursive space about sex[uality], gender, and [gay] identity, Queer Theory has reframed and reshaped the discourse of power to understand the representations of the objects of desire. These objects have been fantasized over and dreamt of on a regular basis, and they symbolize the ultimate unattainable reality of the individual. Lesbians are the heterosexual men's object of desire, straight men are the gay men's object of desire, straight women are straight men's object of desire, the blonde is the black's object of desire, and the list of stereotypes could continue and be considered valid by whoever accepts its content as an absolute truth.

During the course of this research, one of the main problems of Queer Theory has been found to be that following a strict queer approach fails to consider the whole spectrum of identity, as it would focus on sex and sexuality but not in relation to the development of two-spirit identity. For this reason, theorists should let go of sex/gender debates in the first place. Philosophers and critical theorists are constantly questioning if one exists in favor of the other, if they are related or if they are not related at all; there is nothing productive in developing critical thinking with unresolved issues at that level. Secondly, Queer Theory should stop generalizing about the superstructure's logic of

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domination because it has been proven that, despite the fact that the state of affairs does not change as fast as we would like, not all heterosexuals are evil; and third, theorists should acknowledge the irony behind their postulates.

Queer Theory 'knows' that categories cannot be forgotten or instantly removed, so consciously or not, the individual goes back to them to shape his/her discourse. Following the same line, Two-Spirit Identity Theory cannot detach itself from the former because, even though the identity politics are exercised in different terms, one draws energy from the other as both identities, structures, systems or categories were established and [un]welcomed alternatives in equal terms of marginalization. Finally, theorists should not fear the use of language. One of the functions of language is to give name to things/objects we have not stored in our brain. It is necessary and healthy to overcome the complex reality of naming and talking or writing about it. In most cases, what has been said cannot be unsaid; therefore, humanity is presented with a discursive space in which, to our minds, almost everything has been registered.

In some aspects, queering Two-Spirit Identity Theory would eliminate or consider that the third and fourth genders do not exist, just as if the same process is applied to Queer Theory and all categories disappear. The quasi symbiotic relationship between Queer Theory and two-spirit continues to narrow and grow strong, in spite of the problematic nature of their union. This is one of the reasons why in queering both theories, the conclusion is that one cannot exist without the other because they provide each other with a new perspective suitable for survival within the philosophical framework. Two-Spirits Identity Theory has offered a gender-based perspective to Queer Theory while the latter has provided an insight on sexuality for the former. However, the adjective *symbiotic*

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refers to physical interactions, and there is no physical contact between abstract models of thought. The relationship is symbiotic in terms of persistence, and is conjunctively symbiotic in terms of the union of mutual concepts in one single corpus. For this reason, the existence of both theories in the field of gender studies is as valid as Derrida's *différance* or Spivak's strategic essentialism. They have all worked together on a non-superstructure continuum which problematizes the development of critical thinking.

The work of Queer Theory and Two-Spirits Identity Theory will continue as long as tolerance and queer practices continue to emerge. However, the usefulness of the compound in terms of identity politics is still an open debate. The beginning of the modern gay movement, more than cultural, has been merely political and demanded efficacy on the side of homosexuals to identify themselves as homosexuals and make, in Butlerian terms, a public performance of their *coming out* in order to gather attention from the superstructure. Queer politics have addressed gay rights on the basis of an existing and preconceived identity. This attempt to universalize and include has proven how inefficient it was when theorists started to question it and found fundamental breaches. Queer politics' advocates have supported identity politics in relation to class, economics, and geographical location, thus enhancing an unstable approach which has minimized the relevance of LGBTQQ identities in favor of heterosexist concepts. The breach between identity and identity politics has divided queer activists and liberal lesbian and gay activists, where the latter has looked for the complete inclusion of non-binary identities in society, and the former has succumbed to a spectral world where they want to be neither recognized nor accepted. Despite the partial loss of activism—mainly due to radical thinking—Halperin suggests that

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> queer politics may, by now, have outlived its political usefulness, but if its efficacy and its productive political life can indeed still be renewed and extended, the first step in this procedure will be to try and preserve the function of queer identity as an empty placeholder for an identity that is still in progress and has as yet to be fully realized, to conceptualize queer identity as an identity in the state of becoming rather than as the referent for an actually existing form of life. (in Jagose 159)

The course of queer politics is flexible and flowing, but as its name suggests, the political burden overfloods the concept and inevitably leaves aside other central topics of this research. After enduring severe criticism, identity politics have been subject to change within and without the political spectrum. The proliferation of extreme political parties in Europe has endangered the progress achieved during the last two decades. As of today, the Republican Party of the United States of America still speak their minds against equal opportunities for lesbians and gays, as most of their members still believe in the discourse of AIDS/HIV as divine punishment. Moreover, the extreme polarization on the matter of abortion has reopened the debate over femininity and individual freedom to choose; therefore, conservatism deploys the heteronormative bias and is constantly contesting lesbian, gay, and women's identities.

The unification of criteria in order to produce one—true—critical branch of thought which deals with gender and sexuality within the framework of identity politics has been unsuccessful. Despite the fact all people involved have mutual interests such as full inclusion in mainstream society, acceptance of identity proliferation, and *normalization*, most of them have private interests and premises, such as the lesbian experience and the utopian uncategorization of the world, that they are not willing to sacrifice to favor the other. The result is an amalgam of Queer Theory's sexuality and Two-Spirits Identity

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Theory's gender in which the gendered sexuality or the sexualized gender interacts beyond the limits imposed by language, race, class, and even gender itself.

In order to conclude this section, the palimpsestic role of language in the construction of a queer/two-spirit paradigm should be explained. These terms have not been created from scratch because history has proven that humanity copies and reinvents an original, the original disappears over the course of time, and we are left with an uncountable set of Baudrillardian imitations, which have been constructed one upon another. Language has done this with 'berdache,' 'queer,' 'two-spirit,' and 'gay.' All terms have been created, developed, contested, reclaimed, and reshaped without forgetting the true origin/meaning of the word. In this case, we are before the palimpsestic nature of language to evolve over itself and be able to multiply to fulfill the needs of a contemporary identity spectrum. In this sense, Queer Theory and Two-Spirits Identity Theory are examples of social palimpsests in which history has been in charge of reshaping the concepts before they were given a name.

During my MA research, I argued that Indigenous societies cannot be palimpsestic, but in fact they can. Despite the fact that Indigenous people are considered to be the first inhabitants of the continent, and that there was nothing to compare cross-gendered members of their communities with in the western world, colonization made them an ethnographic palimpsest that constructed new identities over the old ones. The sense of aboriginal uniqueness was lost as soon as the term 'berdache' was used for the first time, and eventually, the uniqueness of the berdache gave way to more simplistic constructs subjected to the superstructure's logic of domination.

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For this reason, I consider that Queer Theory and Two-Spirit Identity Theory should be theoretical allies. In fact, a great part of this research is to understand the deconstruction of the berdache and his evolution to gay from an intertheoretical perspective. Perhaps what slows down the expansion of the movement is the paranoia surrounding control and domination. One must understand that in spite of universalism and decategorisation, the world is still constructed, conceived, and defined in binary structures. These structures empower and disempower different behaviours and situations which are regulated by the superstructure. As was commented before, not all heterosexuals are evil so there is no need to constantly think about the logic of domination and the roles of the insiders and outsiders in the margins of social domination, for instance. Butler and Foucault have contributed in one way or another to elaborate the discourses of contemporary Queer Theory. Along with other theorists, philosophers, and writers, Butler and Foucault have laid the foundations for the hybridity of a branch of critical thought, which has taken notions that influence an epistemological perspective.

This section has dealt with the problematic of uniting two ideologies and intimately connecting them in order to cross the border of the superstructure's heteronormativity. There are many different aspects that have been not considered such as the role of religion and spirituality, as well as the role of biology, which are neither exclusive nor inclusive, but some theorists believe in them as exceptional markers in terms of categories. In addition to this, the semantic mutation of the adjective *queer* has turned it into a verb. Beyond its simplest meaning, 'queer' has been regarded as active, as the change promoter, as the action within a hybrid society which does not self-identify with homosexuality but takes part in it. Sadly, radical queer activism has been downgraded and considered anti-identity,

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because its foundations are too radical and too old to coexist in an ever-changing paradigmatic world. Thus liberal activism has come on the scene as a breath of fresh air amidst reivindicative chants and painstakingly elaborated slogans. And yet everything can be queered within the limits of our imagination. Queer theorists have the power in their hands to contest fields ruled by the superstructure, dismantle them, mold them and come up with something new.

In the process of the construction of new critical paradigms, essentialisms have been discarded and there have been no basic or taken-for-granted concepts or assumptions between the berdache, the two-spirit, and the gay. The road is long and humanity has walked only half of it, but there is still a need to keep on building the other half. Perhaps in a short-term future, philosophers and theorists will come up with a groundbreaking theoretical model to destabilize everything, to queer what has been queered, to undo what has been done.

In conclusion, the fact that theorists and philosophers have yet to develop a new theoretical model reveals, at the same time, the inconsistency of the process of construction of new identities. Queer Theory has failed to provide new terms to refer to LGBTQQ; even so, it has relied on superstructure's labels to develop a model of normalization on the basis of linguistic and cultural reclamation and appropriation. Therefore, despite the necessity of two-spirit writers to tell the world about being a gay or lesbian Indian in the heteronormative world, they make use of heteronormative labels to introduce their experiences and narrate their stories. So, in spite of modernity, political correctness and normalization, I have been limited by the language and the writers themselves. Thus this research stands in the midst of heteronormative binaries, utilizing

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them as points of departure to deconstruct the social models imposed by fundamentalisms.

2.2.3 *Gender and Identity: Butler, Foucault, Roscoe, Lang, and Jacobs*

Gender, as presented by Lang in *Men as Women, Women as Men* (1998), "may be characterized as the cultural meaning given to an individual's physical sex" (47). In *Two-Spirit People* (1997), Jacobs has defined it as "how people are classified along a continuum from female to male (or vice-versa)" (27), and in *The Spirit and the Flesh* (1986), Roscoe has stated that it is "a social category rather than [a] fixed biological entity" (22). The development of identity has been subjected to gender and social conventions of cultural mainstreams, in which there is still an ongoing battle between determinism and voluntarism. The debate of power, sexuality, and sex has flourished after Butler's controversial and thought-provoking statements. She has suggested that gender is performative, without contemplating social constructionism and any scientific evidence of the contrary. She has also materialized the discourse of the body and stated that repetition inculcates and creates gender; therefore, we consider *performed* genderless roles. On the contrary, Foucault has presented sexuality as repression shaped by the superstructure wherein the body itself is a battlefield.

The body has been analyzed as the external extension of inner behaviours beyond Foucauldian constructionism; plus, it has been regarded as the means to achieve reproduction, self-determination, and pleasure. Moreover, it has been presented as natural and biologically unquestionable, to the extent of categorizing it according to external genitalia and other attributes. Despite the visible reality of the body, gender has been linked to it as part of society's urgency to label unknown products. The biological gender of

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fetuses is revealed before they are born, and individuals involved in these pregnancies orchestrate, in advance, a cisnormative life based on colors, clothing, and other accessories. In addition to this, there has been a tendency to assign identity in childhood and try to educate the child within the superstructure's parameters of what is considered right or wrong.

However, Roscoe has argued that in American Indian communities "it is unclear to what extent parents choose to raise a boy as a berdache. In some cases there does appear to be parental direction" (45). He has explained that according to his observations, there exists gender flexibility and "children are allowed to live where and how they wish. If [they] feel manipulated, in a direction other than the one they are inclined to take, they refuse to cooperate" (46). This conjunction of the physical body, gender assigned at, before or after birth, and identity construction—cultural, individual, and sexual—is what Butler has dismantled through the concept of subversive bodily acts.

Butler has questioned the 'natural nature' of the body and called into question all the concepts that have been taken for granted in the construction of such nature, ever since the evolution of humanity. Our kind has been described as sociobiological, with no possibility to detach sociology from biology. In doing so, the construction of gender and identity has been both sociobiological and linguistic because of the expansion of language and the necessity of including gender/identity as part of speech. Language, as well as society, has created the conception of correctness to introduce numerous limitations and taboos surrounding the body. In other words, "the body is itself a consequence of taboos that render that body discrete by virtue of its stable boundaries" (133). In the imminent

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creation of a hegemonic binary, the superstructure has contested all fields of sexual expression and social displays.

Chris Shilling has written that the [social] body constrains how the physical body is perceived and experienced (41-42). The dominant group, according to standpoint theory, has perceived the body as untouchable and reluctant to change. Only minor changes such as plastic surgery, tattoos, and hair-dying are welcomed, not without the proper qualifying adjective from a cisnormative perspective. Human conduct has raised judgment over humans depending on their visible selves. What is required to define an individual's identity? Accessories and clothing are part of the garment which conditions the acceptance or rejection of that individual in the social sphere. If so, should drag queens be judged by extravagance and mockery? Butler has suggested that *drag* is the perfect way to destabilize the superstructure's binary. Thus, should drag queens be considered men, women, man-women or do they simply 'genderfuck'? Marinucci writes that "although anyone, female or male, can wear a dress or a short hairstyle, such social displays are fairly reliable unless people consciously present themselves in an ambiguous manner, which is sometimes referred to informally as genderfucking" (42).

The term 'cross-dresser' has emerged to refer to drag more formally, but it complies basically the same concepts. Cross-dressers neither own an identity nor try to steal or make a new one. This practice has been—and still is—present, and it has served in some communities as disguise or mere comfort. In the case of American Indians, berdaches/cross-dressers were welcomed in their communities performing the same roles assigned to the sex of the garment they were wearing. In early works, Roscoe discussed cross-dressing as transvestism: "if we define transvestism as dressing in the clothes of the

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opposite sex, then we find [...] that berdaches wore all women's clothing no more often than they wore a mixture of female and male dress" (*The Spirit and the Flesh* 71-72). However, in later works he stated that "the most visible marker of berdache gender status was some form of cross-dressing" (*Changing Ones* 8).

Shamans, healers, peace-keepers, hunters, chiefs, and other roles were identified with berdaches/cross-dressers who performed their roles but not their identity, thus deconstructing cisnormativity. Butler's hypothesis about drags was that they were constantly performing. The concept of performativity applied to drags should not be confused with art performances and drag shows such as the Southern Decadence in New Orleans, an annual festival held by the LGBTQQ community and usually hosted by drag queens. Performativity describes the capacity to perform an identity through language and gestures, not pantomime and lip-synching. Butler's contesting of this concept has led her to conclude that "sex as well as gender can be performatively reinscribed in ways that accentuate its factitiousness rather than its facticity" (Salih 55).

When de Beauvoir wrote "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (295), she was not aware of the implications of such a statement. What does it mean to become a woman? What does it imply to become one of them? Which aspects of behaviour should someone change to become a woman? Was de Beauvoir addressing a particular community or could the statement be applied to both women and men? Butler's idea of gender performativity has dealt with these questions from the inside. She has relied on the power of language to state the failure of heterosexual systems. She has done so because the superstructure has failed to offer an empirical and biological account of what it means to be a woman, a lesbian, a man, a gay man or an intersex individual in the rise of a gender

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revolution that is broadening the "spectrum of gender identities and expressions" (*National Geographic,* January 2017). Therefore, gender is performed by means of reiteration of discursive production.

Theoretically, the notions of performativity and performance have been easy to define, as one deals with language and the other with representation; but Butler has been severely criticized because within her own discourse she has not been able to provide an accurate differentiation between both concepts. If gender is performed, then the notion of self-determination must be eliminated from the analysis, which opposes Kirsch's idea, yet favors Larson's and Gross' postulates about the preference of a cultural 'we' over the simplified 'I.'

During their first years of life, children are not able to produce performative utterances so that they can perform one gender of the many. Such utterances are not automatic. Parents and active peers reinforce said reiterations through comments on physical strength, fast growth, weight, external beauty, and the final capacity to perform the roles they have been assigned. In most cases, such as in the case of homosexuality, children are aware of same-sex attraction at an early stage and consider it part of their nature; therefore, no performative utterances are needed. It is in puberty when social constructs and heterosexist notions come to dominate the social discourse, so the homosexual teenager is contested and forced to perform, either her/his true gender or the neutral gender which guarantees inclusivity. The mother of Fred Martinez, a Navajo teen victim of a hate crime, mentions that her son, once he reached adolescence, started to ask her for makeup (Independent Lens, footage min. 1:05). Progressively, she witnessed the transformation of her son to the point where he considered himself transgender. Evidently,

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he chose to perform his true gender failing to meet the superstructure's cultural expectations of the human "ideal."

Butler's performativity has abandoned its primary source, the works of John Langshaw Austin. He problematized the relationship between language and thought by means of reiteration. Indeed, this work was considered at first by Butler when she developed her hypothesis of gender performativity. However, in recent years, her move from Austin to Derrida's view of texts constructed around elemental oppositions has changed the dynamics of the discourse she has presented in *Bodies That Matter* (1993). Thus, is identity not performative but different? In Derrida's terms, *différance* gestures at a number of heterogeneous features that govern the production of textual meaning. The construction of gender/identity in Derridean terms appeals to the universalisation of power and mutual knowledges to control gender and sexuality.

If gender is controlled by discourse, which is controlled by power, is power the ultimate weapon to mold the body? Butler has argued that gender is not only about language and thought but is also about action and lived experience. So, basically she has suggested that the mind/body relationship and, eventually, the identity/gender relationship with the body is inextricably linked, as Shilling (1993) has stated, because they are all the result of the mind's location inside the body. Gender does not exist on its own nor is created *only* through reiteration. The body needs repression, limits, and critical boundaries as well as its opposites to achieve self-realization. In other words, heterosexuality needs homosexuality, the straight needs the queer, and the binary needs the drag.

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To define gender in Butlerian terms requires examination of her own bibliography. When she first introduced the difference between sex and gender in *Gender Trouble* (1991), she was so cryptic that she was forced to produce a rewriting and explanation of what she meant two years later in *Bodies That Matter* (1993). Trying to deconstruct Foucault's views on sexuality, Butler has written the pages of postmodern feminism in terms of radicality in favor of homosexuality. It has been said before that the body and the identity as well need repression and prohibitions as well as their opposites to coexist, and it is necessary to quote Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997): "heterosexuality is cultivated through prohibitions, and these prohibitions take as one of their objects homosexual attachments, thereby forcing the loss of those attachments" (136-137), to conclude that heterosexual identity is the consequence of repressed homosexual desires. Consequently, gender is neither determined by social constructionism nor by linguistic development, but by the formulation of concatenated biological matrices where exploration and sexuality play the part of gender determiners. However, these gender determiners were not taken into account in the case of study of French intersex person Herculine Barbin (1838-1868).

Foucault's accounts of Barbin triggered Butler's rewriting of gender and sexuality in order to debunk his theory of living happily. Barbin was apparently born female and was raised as such. In puberty, her body would not show signs of female development as she remained flat-chested and grew facial hair. According to Butler's usage of action and lived experience, Barbin fell in love with a female coworker, and after rumors of the affair spread, they were exposed. Her body was biologically incompatible with her gender, and a legal decision declared she was a male. Forced to live a cisnormative life, he committed suicide in 1868. A more recent account is that of David Reimer's, a Canadian man who was

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reassigned as a girl and raised female despite having been born male. He committed suicide in 2004 at age 38 after a lifetime of difficult social interactions and depression. Butler dismantled Foucault's idea of Barbin living in a happy limbo of non-identity before reassigning of gender; on the contrary, she proposed the idea that Barbin was subject to control applied by oppressive institutions on a larger scale. Both philosophers have spoken of the singularity of freedom from conflicting perspectives, where one has romanticized the idea of living gender and sex, and the other has debunked the myth of sexual freedom and proposed that sex should be freed from gender.

This would not be the first suicide account in terms of non-binary identities. The death of the body results from the desire to punish the tool that has brought shame to its bearer. The social burden contributes to the wish to vanish, and the debate about tolerance reopens every now and then. Discrimination, non-acceptance and hatred within the direct environment of the LGBTQQ communities, contribute to choosing death before considering fighting for *their* own identity. The death of transgendered people during penectomy in clandestine surgery is not registered, and if the surgery does not go well, they end up committing suicide. Moreover, consistent with the information contained on filmmaker Lydia Nibley's YouTube channel, "gay teens are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. And Native American youths have the highest rates of suicide among all ethnic groups," according to the Youth Suicide Prevention Program (12 December 2016). Suicide over gender mismatch is the ultimate expression of brutality and punishment on the physical body.

Physicality is what Foucault considered the real existence of the body, beyond mere modern constructions about the soul. Shilling has written that the Foucauldian body is not

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simply a focus of discourse, but constitutes the link between daily practices on the one hand and the large-scale organization of power on the other (75). So, how is the body articulated in language and discourse? Moreover, how are gender and sexuality confronted within the boundaries of identity construction? The body as the link between gender and sexuality is shaped by the politics of language; therefore, language in the discourse of power conditions the construction of physical identities.

Language politics have always served the needs of the dominant group, and the result of such control is the [pre]conceived idea of a biologically weak definition of the categorical sex/gender structure. If we take Barbin's example, before research in the last decades of the twentieth century, language politics would have forced people to consider him a 'hermaphrodite,' but not to be confused with 'intersex.' Scientifics and psychologists have stated that the use of 'hermaphrodite' is misleading, so it has been discarded. Political correctness has moved from hermaphrodite to *intersex, transgender*, and *disorders of sex development* (DSD), in order to avoid derogatory terms such as *freak*, *gender-bender*, *she-male*, and *tranny*. Yet, it has wrongly done so without considering that 'intersex' goes beyond the phenotypical presentation of sex organs.

Another example is the term 'berdache.' Identities constructed around the term were of a negative nature and often regarded as aberrations by the dominant group. At first it was used to depict a "male prostitute," but progressively expanded to include also homosexual women, and eventually, all American Indian/First Nation lesbians and gays. There is no word in North American indigenous languages for intersex people, neither for lesbians and gays. When the term 'two-spirit' was coined, it was to detach contemporary models of identity construction from burdens of the past. Butler suggests that gender—in

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the case of two-spirit people, the third and fourth genders—is performed. However, I think that suggesting that women and men have the ability to reiteratively articulate their sex and present themselves as the result of such reiteration, leaves aside the essentials of identity.

Cross-dressers for example, have presented themselves in two different ways. On the one hand, there is the cross-dresser who performs artistically and does not identify her/himself with someone different from her/himself; and on the other hand, there is the cross-dresser who lives her/his life in constant development. They tend to identify with the opposite sex and, in honor of sexual self-realization, adopt a much more elaborate and thorough image of the new self, to the extent of *passing* in society. Some notable cases in contemporary North American pop culture include Chaz Bono, Sony and Cher's only son, who has identified himself as male after undergoing FTM (female-to-male) transformation; American actress Alexandra Billings, who played the first transgendered character on American television; and one of the most famous instances of MTF (male-to-female) transformations, carried out by former Olympic athlete Bruce Jenner, now known as Caitlyn Jenner.

Undoubtedly, to choose how to live our sexuality, our gender, and our sex depends on our own character; however, one way or another, the discourse of power will have an influence on our decision. This power promotes natural kinds as true expressions of gender/sexuality/identity, and it even dares to propose the use of the term 'normal' to define them. Natural kinds are far from painful constructions of the self, nor have they had to cope with social pressure in order to fulfill a determined societal role. Butler and Foucault have written on the subject of power relations and the status of the body but their

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discourse, despite groundbreaking contributions in the past, seems outdated and does not offer a proper overview of the subject. I do agree with Foucault's view of the body as a punishable object because of shame. There are many cases of transgender/intersex people who have committed suicide because the world became unbearable, and displaying their true colors was socially condemned. Also, Foucault's theory of sexual construction has explained the rise of the homosexual and the eventual creation of lesbian and gay identities. Moreover, I also agree with Butler's proposal against Foucault's idealization of the happy limbo of non-identity. The topic is too crude and painful as to present it as *happy*. I do believe that identity construction is controlled, to an extent, by the superstructure, which determines who and what we are going to be.

Religion and economics have also played an important role in the construction of gender/identity. Identities are also constructed in terms of wealth and poverty, but this topic deserves its own research to develop it. On the other hand, religion has always conditioned the geopolitical thought of the Western World, so organizations such as the Holy See still control what is accepted and what is not in terms of essentialism. Eventually, the will to choose over identity and gender/sex will not destabilize the reality of the main body, nor it will focus on the logic of domination. This will to choose is similar to Foucault's will to knowledge: the more we know the more power we have and, in the end, to understand how identity is constructed we exercise power by using what we already know.

2.3 *Contemporary Trauma*

Behind the politics of identity reconstruction there is a latent linkage to trauma but not in Freudian terms of real occurrence and/or physical or emotional blow. As described by Roger Luckhurst, trauma is a sequence of "hybrid assemblages" that avoid our falling into

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reductivism when considering its definition (Rothberg in Buelens et al. xi). Roy Eyerman has defined trauma as "a wound inflicted by an emotional shock so powerful that it breaches the mind's experience of time, self and the world" (42). Further, Saira Mohamed has affirmed that "trauma knows no categories of victim and perpetrator, good and evil" (1170), which has turned it into a wide-ranging experience, and the ultimate human condition. However, despite the universalization of trauma, Kate Shick has stated that trauma has been neglected in global politics because "it poses political dangers that operate not only in the immediate aftermath of trauma, but also decades and generations later" (1837).

The semantics around trauma fall into similarities that tend to be repetitive: wound, shock, victim, perpetrator. And yet, there is an apocalyptic aura that surrounds trauma in its most cataclysmic sense, as described by Cathy Caruth: "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events" (Shick 1840). For the purpose of this research, the interchangeable dichotomy apocalypse/trauma will be used to explain not only the apocalypse *as* trauma, but also as cultural trauma. The classification of trauma as a "moral category that identifies its subject as a person who merits empathy and deserves to be heard" (Mohamed 1173), has allowed Larson to consider those who survived the colonization and their descendants as post-apocalypse people. The transformation from colonization into apocalypse/trauma has recorded the transition from personal to cultural trauma. Extensive research in trauma studies has concluded that trauma has been perceived as an individual rather than a collective constant; however, in his study "Freud, Faulkner, Caruth: Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form" (2007), Greg Forter has emphasized that trauma studies are limited because of their difficulty to account for forms

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of trauma that are *not* punctual, and are as mundanely catastrophic as other spectacular instances of violence such as the American Indian genocide (260).

The works of psychoanalyst Judith Hermann have been key to the development of trauma theory. For Hermann, the state of events constructs a traumatic history that can only be triggered by memory because trauma "overwhelm[s] the ordinary human adaptations to life" (Suleiman 276), and "only after [the traumatic event has concluded] that interpretation and real understanding [of such an event] are possible" (Eyerman 49). If trauma persists through memory, it has properties that transcend space and time, thus making it permanent, which has been suggested by Carol A. Kidron in "Surviving a Distant Past: A Case Study of the Cultural Construction of Trauma Descendant Identity" (2003). Kidron has relied on Hermann's idea of integration of trauma in the future, given its permanent status. However, despite agreeing with Hermann and Kidron's view on the subject, in her preface to *Diacritics* (Winter, 1998), Mary Jacobus stated that "[t]he trauma can never be undone" and "cannot be integrated into the onward movement of patient's lives" (3). The issue of integration has become a delicate subject, because it would be similar to asking victims of rape to accept their situation and carry on with their lives, or even more, asking American Indians to incorporate the apocalypse into their discourse. Nevertheless, it is unlikely for victims to advocate for integration for two reasons: (1) The traumatic effects on the victim, and (2) the impossibility of memory.

The feeling of consternation in the aftermath of the apocalypse puts the victim in what Freud called a 'period of latency,' in which "the capacity to feel pain is temporarily suspended [and] amnesia and repression are defences of the mind against such an intrusion" (Eyerman 42). This period of latency has corresponded to the period of lethargy

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of American Indians following the Last Massacre of 1924, that extended through the second half of the twentieth century until the birth of American Indian activism. At that point, contemporary American Indians resurrected the past to explore the long term effects of trauma, and only then did it become evident that they were victims of traumatic memory: "Physical or cultural genocide, slavery, forced migration, urban and domestic violence, natural disasters, and terror attacks are only some in an expanding list of human suffering now categorized as traumatic experiences" (Kidron 514).

In "The Past and the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory" (2004), Eyerman has argued that "collective identity formation is grounded in loss and crisis, as well as in triumph" but also that collective memory "unifies the group through time and space by providing a narrative frame, a collective story" in which "the past is collectively shaped" (161). After the rise of American Indian activism and the future literary movement through which victims verbalized their situation American Indians, despite being "highly culturally heterogeneous" (Kaufman et al. 302), have been working together to represent trauma, whether personal or collective, as a political aggression in order to seek justice. Although it seemed that the period of latency had ended, reality suggests that it does not have an established timespan, and overcoming trauma can take longer than imagined. However, it has been established that some contemporary models consider trauma as a chronic state with its own moral categorization.

Michelle Balaev, however, has argued that "the concept of trauma is filled with contradictory theories and contentious debates" (1). Her edition of *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014) contains a series of essays that deal with the reconsideration of the concept of trauma, its presence in post-colonial studies, and its

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impact in the present. She has continued to state that "much of the newest criticism employs psychoanalytic and semiotic theories that restructure how we understand trauma's function in literature" (2). In this ever-changing world, there is a need to delimit the constructs that govern the present. In order to keep up with the evolution of time, the binary gender system has been contested and reconfigured to allow space to new gender identities. In the field of trauma, Freud's conceptions of trauma had become outdated, and with the establishment of post-traumatic stress disorder as a syndrome, the panorama of trauma theory has had to redefine concepts and approaches to coexist.

Caruth has argued that "[t]rauma theory [has exceeded] its own secularity—it is not simply psychological, not psychoanalytic alone, not philosophical, but also *a discourse that communicates beyond itself*" (Rambo 937). It has been the literary turn to trauma, as stated by Shelly Rambo, that has opened an "ethical dimension to practices of writing, reading, and interpretation" (936). Kate Shick's article "Acting out and working through: trauma and (in)security" (2011) has described the concept of 'acting out' as a "compulsive and repetitive re-living of the trauma" with difficulty to distinguish between present, past, and future (1842). However, Shick has proposed verbalizing trauma through literature as a solution. Further, she has relied on Hermann's approach to narration in order to express pain and loss: "Storytelling [is] a work of reconstruction that transforms the traumatic memory and enables it to be incorporated into the traumatised individual's life story" (1849), contradicting Jacobus' suggestion that traumatic experiences cannot be integrated into the patient's life.

In "Representing Trauma: Political Asylum Narrative" (2004), Amy Shuman and Carol Bohmer have advocated a narrative representation of trauma. According to them,

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"narration helps the individual to recover, but it may not be productive to political discourse" (396). Thus, Eyerman's concepts of collective memory/collective story have been taken by American Indians and shaped around a communal narration that has produced *Living the Spirit* (1988) and *Sovereign Erotics* (2011). This narration has empowered identity reconstruction; however, such reconstruction depends on the individual's capacity to produce a self-reflexive narration. Self-reflexivity within the context of trauma, and more specifically, the American Indian trauma, is affected by similarity given the cultural shock. Shuman and Bohmer have argued that this similarity in narrations "could either support the teller's credibility [through repetition of similar accounts] or could make listener suspicious that one teller had copied another" (397). For this reason, Shick has stated that acknowledging trauma politically would represent a palpable danger for the superstructure:

> Reagan entirely elided the destruction of Native American cultures. The central and founding crime of American history is stirred into an utterly distorted "melting pot" in which dispossessed Native Americans share the same national experience as those who dispossessed them [...] In Reagan's narrative, the Indians are no longer the "bad guys" resisting white America's "destiny" because the unequal struggle for possession of the continent never took place. Reagan's narrative is a post-apocalypse that has repressed its apocalyptic moment. The Native Americans now are immigrants just like the rest of us, and therefore could not possibly have been, or continue to be, victims of any injustice. Equilibrium has been restored: America *is* perfect and has *always* been perfect. (Berger 134-135)

Janice Haaken has observed that "trauma is open to interpretation" (465), and narrations have [re]interpreted and [re]presented trauma from different perspectives through 'meaning-making narratives' that work as collective narrative attempts "to work

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through that trauma" (Shick 1842). Shick has discussed three models of meaning-making narratives: (1) Heroic-soldier narratives, in which the victims "search for meaning among the chaos and wreckage the [apocalypse] left in its wake" (1843); (2) Good versus evil narratives, wherein individuals or societies—in this case, American Indians—portray themselves as innocent victims while the perpetrators are demonized (1844); and (3) Redemptive violence narratives, in which failure to work through trauma often perpetuates further violence (1845). These narratives are a way to develop emotional intelligence and create sanctuary, according to Sandra Bloom's "The Sanctuary Model."

Victims need and should act out to heal. In *Trauma Theory Abbreviated* (1999) and her model, Bloom has explored the concepts of 'creating sanctuary' and 'emotional intelligence' among others. She has defined emotional intelligence (EI) as "[t]he ability to perceive, understand, and express emotions; and the ability to regulate them so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (*Sanctuaryweb.com*, 08 Mar. 17). For Eyerman, emotional intelligence cannot be achieved until there has been a full understanding of the traumatic event, which corresponds with Freud's period of latency. There had to be a period to process the 'mass atrocity' because "in genocide and other mass crimes, victims are individuals not only who have suffered unjustifiably, but also who have been silenced by history" (Mohamed 1177).

In order to create sanctuary, as Bloom has envisioned it, trauma victims must create a "safe environment that promote[s] healing and sustain[s] human growth, learning, and health" (12). Bloom has proposed a difficult, yet attainable task that could be achieved by social mourning through collective memory and collective narration. However, Caroline Yoder has argued that "incomplete mourning at a societal level can lead not only to a

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feeling of victimhood but also to aggression" (Shick 1845). Both post-traumatic stress disorder and post-apocalypse stress syndrome are part of social mourning, as they set the grounds for the internalization of rage eventually channeled through frustration. For American Indians, this internalized rage followed their "symbolic death" (Bistoen 130), at a time when the sociocultural life-world was reconfigured by perpetrators.

Universal history only acknowledges Adolf Hitler as the greatest villain, and credits the Nazi Holocaust as *the* only traumatic—and apocalyptic—representation. In this sense, Eyerman has questioned the relevance of certain events upon others: "Why are some occurrences more traumatic than others? Why are some of them more powerful?" (43). As has been explained before, traumatic events affect the individual and the society around him/her, conditioning the development of their future life. By ascribing the stardom of trauma to Holocaust, we neglect history, and furthermore, existence. I agree with the vision of the 'strong naturalist' described by Jeffrey Alexander, who is inclined to believe that "certain events are traumatic in themselves, that is, be the direct cause of traumatic effect" (570). What makes the execution of six million Jews more traumatic than the more than three hundred executions attributed to Kim Jong Um since coming to power? (Kwon and Westcott, 08 Mar. 2017). Further, what makes Hitler more evil than Brigadier General Samuel Whitside[16]? Trauma is subjected to interpretation, and interpretation is subjective: it all comes down to what Alexander describes as "the emotional experience and the interpretative reaction" (570). Mohamed has perceptively concluded that "all victims suffer, but not all who suffer are victims" (1215).

[16] Major Commander of the U.S. Army 7th Cavalry Regiment at the time of the Massacre of Wounded Knee (1890).

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2.3.1 *Asserting Hopelessness: Cultural Trauma*

Trauma has been associated with individual rather than with collective experiences. When we learn about trauma there is a tendency to create a connection with the victim regardless of his/her experience. The transition from trauma as an abstract construct, to personal trauma as a moral categorization of the victim's identity, to cultural trauma has been "an emotionally charged meaning struggle" (Eyerman 48). As stated by Eyerman, "cultural traumas begin with disruptions of the established foundations of collective identity" (49). Moreover, he has also argued that cultural trauma is a negotiated recollection of events that "must be understood, explained and made coherent through public reflection and discourse" (160). Since memory is central to "what we mean by society and to all social interaction" (Eyerman 161), as part of trauma—traumatic memory—enhances a process of negotiation between what the victims choose to remember, what they choose not to remember, and what the event [un]consciously suppresses. Part of this process is involuntary, almost an immediate reaction. Yet, the other part is conscious because it is carried out by choice, and since choices are mechanical, they are believed to be made.

Alexander has defined cultural traumas as "processes of meaning-making and attribution" (570). Neil Smelser has also described them as "made, not born" (570). This emphasis in the power of creation is related to the external agents that have ensued the traumatic event. Smelser's definition aims at creating a definition for 'cultural trauma' aside from 'psychological trauma.' He has defined cultural trauma as "an invasive and overwhelming event" (570), and yet are not all traumas invasive and overwhelming? He has supported his claims by appealing to the condition of a traumatized culture, but his

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definition lacks theoretical accuracy. Cultural and psychological traumas are similar, except for the fact that psychological trauma analyzes the individual, and cultural trauma analyzes the community the individual belongs to and how s/he correlates with them, their environment, and the coping with the traumatic event.

In "Considering a Theory of Cultural Trauma and Loss" (2003), B. H. Stamm, H. E. Stamm IV, Hudnall, and Higson-Smith have presented "a nascent theory" that has "a historical past, a geosociopolitical present, and an uncertain future" (90). Their considerations of cultural trauma are appropriate for the purpose of this dissertation because they have argued that:

> Cultural trauma involves more than physical destruction of people, property, and landscapes such as might be seen in warfare or ethnic cleansing. It directly or indirectly attacks what constitutes culture, of which there are some essential yet vulnerable elements. The attacks may include the prohibition of language, spiritual/healing practices, or access to public spaces. There may be the creation of a "new" history or a "new" enemy. (95)

The creation of new histories and enemies goes along with the enforcement of policies that favor violence and restriction. Through good vs. evil narratives, victims have demonized the perpetrators and envisioned them as 'modifiers' of the present. Cultural trauma, as considered by Smelser, is a consequence of the superstructure's methods of ultimate control. The balance of power has always tilted in favor of the system, which have appropriated the right to [re]tell [hi]stories through their own projections of the real. John Hughson and Ramón Spaaij have concluded that "the inability to overcome trauma will remain as long as the perception of the failure of justice remains" (292). If their statement is true, American Indians are submerged in the longest episode of traumatic cultural

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constructivism in history. Trauma has been systematically neglected for political purposes, and victims have been patched up rather than satisfied in their right to be acknowledged and/or given a voice to ameliorate their suffering.

The most significant problem has been the acknowledgment of the existence of cultural trauma on its own terms. As Shuman and Bohmer have stated, the similarity between representations of traumatic experiences has led to suspicion in a greater political discourse. Despite the benefits of narration, the superstructure has failed to see the reconstruction of a collective identity lost to themselves. The superstructure has not recognized survivors' descendants as the bearers of trauma, taking advantage of the newer generations' inability to sustain the memory of the past. In this sense, Kidron has asked: "What type of memory-work and identity-making practices are capable of bridging the past to constitute descendants who perceive themselves as wounded survivors of a distant past?" (514). The answer has been provided by Hermann and her insistence on the benefits of narration and Rambo's view of the literary turn to trauma, which she has defined as a "larger move to employ new literary theories to disrupt notions of a single stable meaning [...] that served to justify violence, maintain institutional hierarchies, and flatten differences" (936).

The superstructure has failed—and keeps doing so—to determine the aspects of cultural trauma. In fact, despite the fact that the government of the United States has issued a public acknowledgment of the stringent policies and crimes committed with respect to American Indians, they did so without including a formal apology. This action is what Hughson and Spaaij have linked to the individual's inability to overcome trauma. The

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consequence has been an indirect addiction to trauma caused by its re-enacting that has conditioned the [political] discourse of victims and their social environment.

American society has been traumatized since the 9/11 attacks, as they did not have time to digest the formation of such trauma because of the immediate military response and the manipulative war on terror. Painstaking airport security checks, Islamophobia, and economic distress have been the methods of acting out/working through this unrecognized trauma to keep the ideal that "America *is* perfect" (Berger 135). Stamm et al. have stated that "[w]hen the culture—the group's context of self-definition—is traumatized, the people in the context are affected, including their inability to support their economy, as the economic focus shifts from production of goods and services to survival" (97). Why else would President George W. Bush have encouraged Americans to "Get on board [...] [to] get down to Disney World in Florida" or urged them to not be afraid and "go shopping for their families" (*Whitehouse.archives.org*, 9 Mar. 2017).

Polish sociologist Piort Sztompka's trauma theory has "examine[d] how cultural trauma impacts on public consciousness and memory" (Hughson and Spaaij 284). For him, this trauma is dynamic rather than static, and goes through six stages in order to be 'established:' (1) An event shakes the foundations of [the community's] collective pride; (2) This event dislocates individuals in routines; (3) The traumatic event needs to be redefined, interpreted, framed or narrated; (4) Symptoms of cultural trauma disrupt normality and regularity; (5) Social groups will deal with the events accordingly; and (6) How do the individuals cope with it? (Hughson and Spaaij 285-286). This *coping* reinforces Kidron's statement about trauma's permanent status. Cultural folklore has it that 'time is a healer,'

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but in fact trauma is neither overcome nor forgotten. Individuals learn to cope with it through the negotiation with their [selective] memory to integrate it into their lives.

The discourse on cultural trauma has the potential to be enriched and explored through various possible angles. The multifaceted interpretation of traumatic events leads the way to reevaluate trauma and how it has impacted the social environment of those who have suffered from it. Cultural trauma can work as a virtual border—as has been used to explain the Arab-Israeli conflict—, as a vindication of existence—war refugees in all conflicts after the Second World War—and as a commodity, as described by Haaken: "trauma is open to interpretation and social uses, including exploitive ones" (465). Alexander has affirmed that "the theory of cultural trauma provides a framework of analysis, a heuristic device [...] to retrospectively map a discursive process" (577). Further, the analysis of Eyerman, Stamm, Shick, Mohamed, and Kidron have established how fascinatingly complex it is to delimitate cultural trauma when the traumatic event is psychologically traumatic both personally and collectively.

In conclusion, trauma and cultural trauma have passed "through time via the social and genealogical linkages of families, ethnic groups, and nations" (Degloma 111). As concepts—whether born or created—they have had a spatial and temporal projection in history ever since trauma was first studied. The development of a trauma theory model beyond psychological and psychoanalytical constructs allowed literature to become a platform of denunciation and representation. This literary turn to trauma has proven beneficial for the genre and for the individual who has narrated his/her experience. Once the trauma has been verbalized, it has been made accessible to readers, theorists, and other professionals to create a cohesive discourse of unity.

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Beyond the romanticization of the term, trauma studies, albeit limited, have worked to unify not the traumatic event, but how the victims live after it through their methods of coping strategies. A [post] apocalyptic approach to cultural trauma could provide more consistency to the process of identity reconstruction. As trauma has been considered a synonym for apocalypse in this dissertation, the way is open for further research in the literary and sociological fields to promote new approaches to the unsolved trauma of the American Indian genocide, the rape of their culture, and the destruction of their *Indianness*.

2.3.2 *On [Gay] American Indians*

The study of trauma among American Indians has described their lives "in terms of the problems they have: alcohol and drug use, suicide, depression, and their relatively grim economic and scholastic prospects feature prominently" (Kaufman et al. 302). More specifically, the LGBTQQ American Indian community has considered homophobia together with HIV/AIDS as the traumas faced by contemporary members of such communities. Studies in cultural trauma have reflected on the loss of language, the programs that separated families, forced migration, loss of land, and so on. However, they have failed to include homophobia as part of such trauma, especially after considering the relationship between American Indian communities and the long-gone berdachism. Responses to acculturation have created a new divide that has affected American Indians, and has increased the rates of violence in metropolitan areas via physical trauma. Therefore, further considerations of gay American Indians have been linked to how they cope with homophobia and social disruption, although Jonathan R. Sugarman and David C. Grossman have concluded that "the role of racism and cultural disruption associated with

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the adverse health status of [urban] American Indians has not been adequately defined" (327).

The research conducted on gay American Indians has been health-directed as trauma is the first cause attributed to risky sexual behaviors—hence the prevalence of HIV infection—and "slightly elevated risk for mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, suicidality, and substance abuse" (Balsam et al. 290). In "Cultural Investment: Providing Opportunities to Reduce Risky Behavior Among Gay American Indian Males" (2005), Brian J. Gilley and John Hawk Co-Cké have proposed that "factors for risky behavior, such as AOD [Alcohol and Other Drug] use or risky sex, are the result of multiple generations internalizing colonization" and also that the traumatic impact of colonization has created attitudes among American Indians resulting in a proclivity to self-destructive behaviors (294-295). Balsam et al. have also argued that "[American Indians] suffer from the ongoing cumulative impact of colonization" (289). Therefore, they—as other minorities—are more prone to physical violence than any other members of the community.

Internalized colonization has had two developments that converge in self-destructiveness. On the first hand, this process has manifested, as Shick concluded, "decades and generations later" (1837) through episodes of stress and physical violence—including domestic violence and a "substantial proportion of excess of mortality" (Sugarman and Grossman 322). On the other hand, internalized colonization has resulted in a process of identity construction from the superstructure's perspective based on stereotypes, mainly due to "alcohol use as a cause of excess mortality [...] and a risk factor for injury" (322). While these facts apply to all members of American Indian communities

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regardless of their sexual identity, "epidemiologic research on Native populations has revealed high rates of mental health problems, substance use, and trauma [...] rendering two-spirit issues invisible" because it has not assessed sexual orientation (Balsam et al. 290).

Further, the issue of invisibility is still arguable. American Indians have been trying to work through cultural trauma, and they have been overshadowed in the construction of America: "Native Americans were more or less regarded as footnotes in the larger project of colonization and settlement" (Brandt 15). This has been due to portrayals of these communities as outnumbered, savage, uncivilized, and in need of rescue. However, these representations have failed to include the gay Indian who played a vital part in Pre-Columbian cultures. Stating this as a fact implies that the American Indian traumatic discourse is heteronormative because, even though trauma "shatter[s] fragile or event resilient systems of external and internal support" (Kaufman et al. 302), it seems that trauma is considered as such when it affects heterosexual American Indians only.

Precisely, because trauma or negative events have rarely been investigated, "the few existing studies on two-spirits suggest that compared with LGBT European Americans and heterosexual Native, two-spirits may be at particularly high risk for victimization" (Balsam et al. 290). They have reported being traumatized by being verbally, physically, and sexually assaulted or murdered, as the cases of openly two-spirit Navajo youth, Fred Martinez Jr., who was "bludgeoned to death by [Shaun Murphy] [....] motivated by bias based on gender (transphobia) and sexual orientation (homophobia)" (Balsam et al. 288), and the recent killing of Dara dos Santos, a transgender woman who was dragged out of her house in Fortaleza, Brazil and was beaten to death. Laura Hein et al. have stated that

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"LGBT hate crimes can cause both physical and emotional problems for the victims" (84), and these crimes tend to be geographically motivated by the presence of gay American Indians in and out of the reservations. The feeling of social non-belonging forced them "[to] migrate to large cities… in order to live more openly or to find personal and professional opportunity" (Vernon 25). Moreover, gay American Indian "men may feel alienated from their [communities] by homophobia and heterosexism, [and] they often turn to their local gay community for social engagement and sexual opportunities […]. At the same time they also [have] felt that they [have] had no other option but to seek refuge in the gay bar scene" (Gilley and Co-Cké 295).

The prevalence of hate crimes among LGBTQQ members has developed a clinical profile in which trauma has produced "devastating mental health consequences for the victim" (Hein et al. 87). According to Rivers, McPherson, and Hughes, "a hate crime has three major consequences: (1) It destroys the myth of personal vulnerability; (2) It results in a decrease in feelings of self-worth; and (3) The idea of the world as logical and reasonable is shattered" (Hein et al. 87). Thus, cultural trauma has conditioned the development of healthier relationships among American Indians, and has also increased the presence of interpersonal trauma in the case of gay American Indians. If trauma "is not merely a psychological disorder" (Mohamed 1173), and cultural trauma is "a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion" (Hughson and Spaaij 285), is it necessary to analyze gay American Indian trauma as a separate event? What kind of interventions can be suggested for trauma survivors beyond the ones implemented "for various mental health problems"? (Hein et al. 88).

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Hughson and Spaaij have also concluded that trauma will not be overcome until the victim feels some kind of justice has been made. What is left to hope for the Martinez family? According to Emery Cowan, "Murphy pleaded guilty for second-degree murder and was sentenced to 40 years in jail" (*The Durango Herald*, 10 Mar. 2017). The crime against Fred Martinez has been a harsh reality check and, as reported by B. Norrell, "another example of over three decades of race-motivated homicidal hate crimes in which Navajo youths are targeted to be murdered as a rite of passage for White youths" (Balsam et al. 288).

The choices with which we have been presented are most often product of our own negotiations. These negotiations have been conditioned by external stimuli, in which stress has had its quota. Other aspects that may have influenced our choices are sociopolitical variables. Kaufman et al. have studied the relationship between trauma, stress, and risky sexual behaviors among American Indian youths within the context of poverty. Further, Irene Vernon has elaborated a thorough study on HIV/AIDS and American Indians published as *Killing Us Quietly* (2001). For Vernon "poverty comes [with] a host of other factors, such as poor health, poor diet, and related diseases" (48). Besides, "since poverty is closely related to health and disease it is also a factor in determining the length of survival after developing AIDS" (48).

Gilley and Co-Cké have concluded that "the relationship between sociocultural alienation and unsafe sexual behaviors is embedded in the complexities of identity for many [gay American Indian] men" (297). Because of the high rates of poverty, many urban gay American Indians have turned to hustling as a way to cover their expenses, which are more alcohol and drug-related than health-concerned. Since "traumatic experiences are

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common in the lives of urban American Indians of all sexual orientations" (Balsam et al. 297), gay American Indians have included double discrimination as a traumatic experience not only because the feeling of communal alienation in the reservations but also for being discriminated in urban areas based on "sexual orientation, ethnicity, or a combination of the two" (297). A third layer should be added to such discrimination based on serological status, as HIV among [gay] American Indians has also had an impact on Indian society. Most of HIV-infected Indians have returned to the reservations often finding themselves hopeless and abandoned in greater metropolitan areas, and together with alcohol and drug abuse, PTSD has dramatically increased. Is HIV the new traumatic event of the century?

There is a turning point upon HIV diagnosis. Vernon has stated that "culturally appropriate services do not necessarily stop the depression attached to a diagnosis of HIV," and moreover, "[a]n HIV diagnosis places Native people, still experiencing the effects of European colonization—loss of land, language, and family—at further risk of posttraumatic stress syndrome, and other psychiatric disorders, as well as alcoholism" (27). The apocalyptic undertone attributed to HIV/AIDS comes as it has been perceived "as the new smallpox, due to its potential to eradicate Native populations as effectively as smallpox once did" (Vernon 1). Therefore, a sociological definition for 'gay American Indian trauma' should involve identity loss and cultural rape, as defined in cultural trauma; the impossibility of memory, as described in personal trauma, and the incidence of PTSD, HIV/AIDS, STDs, drug and substance abuse on society, as presented through the notion of collective trauma.

In general, gay American Indians "[appear] to be associated with a greater subjective sense of being traumatized, as evidenced by the higher levels of PTSD symptoms in this

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group" (Balsam et al. 297). This has been reinforced by Haaken's postulate about trauma being opened to interpretation. Although there is the undeniable truth that gay American Indians are [more] exposed to a greater danger than their white counterparts, and that in their cases, the prevalence of stress and trauma is higher than in the general population, the personality component of the individual plays an important role in the materialization of trauma. Mohamed concluded that "not all who suffer are victims" (1215) and she is correct, because not all [gay] American Indians have depicted themselves as victims. They do identify the superstructure as the enemy, the perpetrator of mass atrocities, yet by acknowledging their weakness they are attributing unnecessary strength to the logic of oppression. Literature has evidenced this, as some writers are still struggling to develop emotional intelligence whereas others have already created sanctuary.

Finally, the research conducted for the present dissertation has found some inconsistencies in the field of trauma studies. Trauma should not be established under a single definition because it is dynamic, and its construction varies depending on the time in which the concept is revisited. There are, of course, certain characteristics that must be shared in order to be defined and diagnosed as trauma, but there is no need to separate the concept from general definitions when it is not necessary. Nevertheless, given the separation between trauma and cultural trauma, there should be an approach that studies exclusively gay American Indian trauma while reconstructing their *Indianness*. This limitation, however, has not restrained the application of the several theoretical models in the analysis section of this dissertation. Yet, it invites future researchers and theorists to work on new models adapted to the faster-changing reality of our times, especially now when the gender revolution has just begun.

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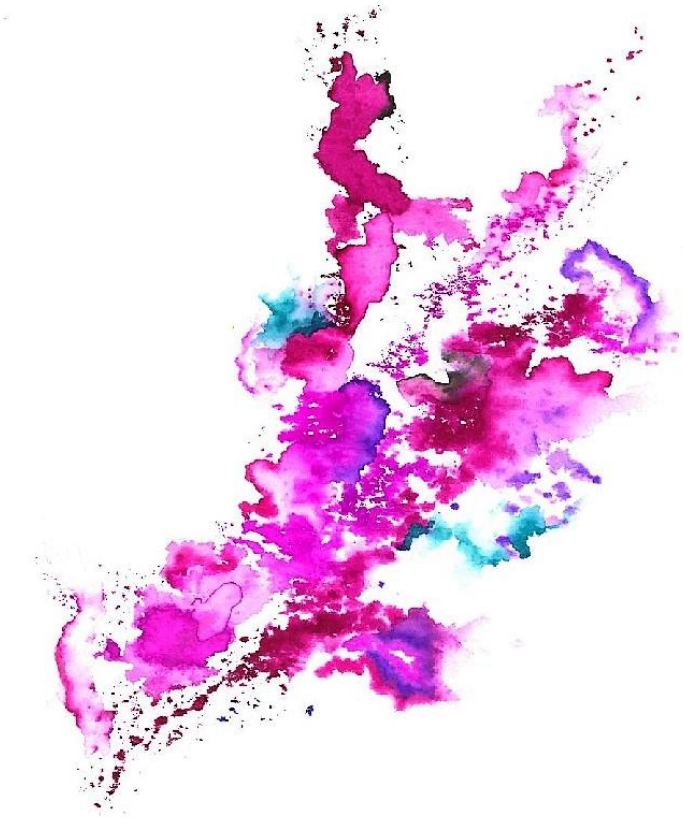

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Chapter Three

Wóiťhaŋčhaŋ kčhí oíglakA[17]

The road to power is paved with hypocrisy, and casualties.

(Frank Underwood, *House of Cards*)

The paradigm of a dream culture has been built upon the premise of discursive power. In this cultural universe, the two-spirit individual has found itself at a crossroad between the superstructure and its heteronormative norms, and the innermost necessity to fulfil the ultimate quest of understanding his/her place. The literary scene has proven to be the lieu to thoroughly document and argue the importance of the self and its subjugation to power. Political power controls the population in terms of sequential discourses which appeal to everyone's conception of reality as a collective whole; sexual power controls human beings by using sex as a trademark to establish a hierarchy of roles, regardless of sexual identity and orientation. However, 'biopower' as Foucault suggested, "is an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations" (140), and "histories of biopower deeply affected Native people's relationship to body and sexuality" (Finley 31). Hence, the concept of power and identity is developed as a centripetal force to ensure *traditiona*l perspectives with regard to societal structures. Conversely, Dahl suggests that power "is defined in terms of a relation between people, and is expressed in simple symbolic notation" (201). Yet power could be defined as a systematic web of contradictory labels categorized to reinforce stereotypes, political

[17] *Power and Identity* respectively, retrieved from the New Lakota Dictionary Pro, V.1: 2014. October 2016.

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myths, and [urban] legends with the intention of creating a new order based on arbitrariness.

Considering the present world as a post-apocalyptic dimension, we can understand how the new order has empowered—and deified—the figures of the critic and the academic scholar to [re]define what is to be considered genuine.[18] Given the growing demand for non-fiction and hyperreality, one of the most credible and authentic sources of this type of structural power is *Living the Spirit, A Gay American Indian Anthology* (1988). This compilation by American Indian and First Nation writers connects the power of the image, through visual arts and photography, to the power of words. The rampant struggle between power, [re]construction of identity, tradition, and truth in a post-apocalyptic setting are the skeleton of the corpus which will be analyzed in depth in the following chapter. Its pedagogical and encyclopedic tone places the reader at the highest peak of the erroneously named American Indian Renaissance, commonly regarded as the movement that propelled the construction of a new *Native* identity in the whitewashed literary scene of the late 80s.

3.1 *American Indian Tradition Before the Apocalypse*

The prophetic tone in the opening lies of Richard Dawkins' *Unweaving the Rainbow* (1998) are examples of a sharpened [post]apocalyptic discourse: "we are going to die, and

[18] According to this, geniuses are not born but created, as long as the exertion of power allows it. However, this does not divert the natural flow of the American literary mainstream and, as a member of the contemporary best-seller tradition, Dan Brown is an explicit example. Brown's latest work *Inferno* (2014) was severely criticized, to the point of including it within the category of self-parody for putting personal ambition ahead of accuracy. *Inferno*'s dramatic success could not compete with its predecessor's, *The Da Vinci Code* (2004), despite being adapted to film. Brown's revisitation of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* to fictionalize around it is not exclusively new to the genre considering intertextuality as a device. However, despite Brown's attempts to remain relevant and authentic to his style, the norm still dictates whether he is an authentic author in terms of credibility, or if his works should be discarded for failing to meet the requirements of discursive power.

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that makes us the lucky ones" (1). One of the human certainties is that everything that has a beginning has an end. As grim as may sound, there have been different sociological approaches to the ideas of death and loss, the reshaping of the physical body, mourning, and oblivion; however, although we have been biologically coded to disappear, societies have struggled with the concept of apocalypse and its prophetic, destructive nature. To understand the apocalypse merely as cataclysm or chaos is to undermine the linguistic charge of the term, leaving aside its other nature of "showing, illuminating, illustrating through symbolism" (Castleman 6). Nonetheless, in this dissertation the construction of American Indian tradition and *Indianness* will be analyzed through the apocalypse as a drama of survival, in which the survivors get the opportunity to reflect on the memories of trauma in order to make a transition between realities that have collapsed.

Ever since the first tool was made, humans, as a species evolving in a pre-apocalypse stage, have unwarily been developing the concept of tradition. For instance, the *Popol Vuh* contains the mythological story of the creation of the Maya. Further north, there are several accounts of creation myths that come to represent the beginning of each tribe in North America. Symbols such as maize tie their traditions together, as well as considering sky-dwellers such as the Feathered Serpent deity in the Maya and the Aztec traditions, or Sky Woman in many American Indian/First Nation creation myths as vital characters in these mythologies. For this reason, it is common knowledge that both, religion and mythology, have served as the point of departure for the conservative construction of tradition and identity around the idea of the past.

Evolution has insured that the *social construct of tradition* is broad enough to cover more abstract and complex fields that escape the realm of folklore. The present chapter

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discusses how the power of the past has conditioned the birth of 'two-spirit,' bringing in the concept of death as a hate crime, and the "inability of people in tribal communities to discuss sex and sexual behavior" (Vernon 30), and the passiveness of the Indian Health Service (Vernon 2) that derived into death as a systematic liquidation through the presence of HIV/AIDS among two-spirit people. If Darwin's natural selection is a key mechanism, does it affect tradition's hegemonic power? Dennett has stated that "Darwin's idea of natural selection makes people uncomfortable because it reverses the direction of tradition" (PBS 2001).

To understand the authenticity of an object there must be an appreciation of its multi-layered a-truth. 'A-truth' is as a fact understood as a subsequent interpretation of a simulation of reality that is widely accepted and put into practice as authentic. It differs from the concept of truth because the latter is accepted as abstract and universally acknowledged, and therefore not subject to change. This explains the current state of the American Indian tradition, which is the result of fighting against cultural appropriation and objectification. Hence, the final product is perceived as 'authentic' although social evolution has changed, modified, and readapted its original coding. Thus, two questions need to be considered: to what extent is tradition linked to authenticity? And who is deemed to be credible? Humans as a collective species have pushed the boundaries to establish a solid conception of what it means to be human. Part of the process has been carried out by the construction of national and individual identities based on historical facts and cultural heritages, through which folklore has been turned into a powerful device for exerting biopower. Nevertheless, identity has always been a controversial subject as its

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blurred contour draws from the capacity of ownership.[19] The discourses of *interpretatio graeca* and *interpretatio romana* are, perhaps, the best examples to appreciate the sense of influential appropriation in order to make it a-true. The Greek and the Roman used interpretational discourse to provide godhead-equivalents to their pantheons (Ando 41). Although Greco-Roman mythologies appeared in different times, they managed to coexist to the degree of increasing each other's sense of understanding. So, if academics were to consider Jupiter a more authentic ruler than Zeus based on one's appearance in time before the other's, they would be undermining the Greek's capability to create a credible, a-true mythological figure. Therefore, tradition does not fuel authenticity, yet, authenticity nourishes tradition.

The right to produce works dealing with minorities is a contentious matter because some people cannot separate tradition from authenticity. For specialist in American Indian culture Jack Forbes, "American Indian literature must consist in works produced by persons of Native identity and/or culture" (Larson 30). The gravity of such an assumption calls into question vital works such as *Black Elk Speaks* (1932). The title of Neihardt's work suggests that his original source *speaks* but cannot write in the language of the audience to whom he was writing during the times of the Great Depression. As a member of the Oglala Lakota (Sioux), Black Elk perpetuated the oral tradition as part of his/their discourse, and despite his illiteracy, his wisdom both, as a medicine man and as a holy man, was highly praised. He did not know English, and by the time he was interviewed by Neihardt, he had lost his sight and could only communicate through an interpreter (*History.com* 2010). *Black Elk Speaks* became a milestone in the field of American Indian studies and "did not follow other

[19] This is the capacity by which individuals are entitled to [re]claim the right to make a statement based on a series of socio-cultural traits framed by tradition.

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contemporary works into oblivion" (Deloria Jr. in Neihardt xii), provoking an enormous interest that led the book to be reissued during the revival of the Native movement in the 60s and 70s. Its relevance to this project lies in the process in which the discursive nature of the book was produced, mainly because it implicates not one, but three voices to determine the final degree of authenticity, as Deloria Jr. states in the final part of his introduction to the 1979 edition:

> Present debates center on the question of Neihardt's literary intrusions into Black Elk's system of beliefs and some scholars have said that the book reflects more of Neihardt than it does of Black Elk. It is, admittedly, difficult to discover if we are talking with Black Elk or John Neihardt, whether or not the positive emphasis which the book projects is not the optimism of two poets lost in the modern world and transforming drabness into an idealized world. Can it matter? The very nature of great religious teachings is that they encompass everyone who understands them and personalities become indistinguishable from the transcendent truth that is expressed. So let it be with Black Elk Speaks [sic]. That it speaks to us with simple and compelling language about an aspect of human experience and encourages us to emphasize the best that dwells within us is sufficient. Black Elk and John Neihardt would probably nod affirmatively to that statement and continue their conversation. It is good. It is enough. (xiv)

Black Elk's voice represents the original source Forbes discusses when talking about production of authentic work. The skeleton of Neihardt's work is the teachings passed onto him through Black Elk's interpreter, his son, who plays the role of the anchor and is caught in the middle of the oral and the written traditions. In this sense, the anchor was bestowed with the power to modify the authenticity of his father's words by adjusting himself to the target language. The final product could be regarded as an a-true account that underwent a second process of manipulation when the beautification of the text took place. Thus far,

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Black Elk Speaks[20] has been regarded as a reliable source of information regardless of Deloria's introduction in which he poses the debate surrounding its creation. The intellectual sovereignty of this discourse is scrutinized under the premise of truth as a cultural document of change because "a talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change" (Larson 137). *BES* reflects genuine interest in "those beliefs that are 'truly Indian'" (Deloria Jr. in Neihardt xiii), standing alone as a reflection of the survival of the fittest, but who was intended to survive, the writer who claimed to have been truthful to Black Elk's words or the oral tradition itself?

The powerful imagery and mythology contained in *BES* is not a mere glimpse of what and who those characters could be, it is a "reflection of complex tribal metaphysics" (Larson 131) that extends its impact to the present. Black Elk's image could be analyzed from two perspectives. First, as an individual who is defined by the traditional role and place in the community, distinguishing him as medicine and holy man. Second, as a multi-layered man, product of "renewing life forms in overlapping images, from grandfathers who turn into horses that turn into elk, buffalo, and eagle" (131). This second approach is more complex due to the palimpsestic conception of the self that suggests, yet is quite similar to the process in which *BES* was conceived. The narrative is interconnected and the oral source is kept alive through interpretation and immediate notation, raising the question of authenticity. Whether authorship might indicate the presence of a problem in terms of identification as Deloria Jr. suggests, there is absolutely no doubt that the text itself is a traditional discourse absent from societal binaries and more complex systems of democratic nature such as the European. For instance, Neihardt makes the most of his

[20] Henceforth referred to as *BES*.

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fascination with Indian cultures to present to the world the Lakota tradition of "The Offering of the Pipe." In American Indian tradition, the pipe is a symbol of union and kinship, which is the best way to lead the readers into the wisdom of Black Elk: "Now, my friend, let us smoke together so that there may be only good between us" (Neihardt 6). The bond between the reader and the oral source is established almost as a live-streaming talk which cannot be overturned unless the book is closed. As an ethnographic text, *BES* is an authentic and functional bible that reflects how the Lakota—and most Native communities— perceived the natural world as a liaison between the earthly and the human.

It is especially important that we understand how this book's message has had an impact on the recovery of a Native collective past. Despite non-Indians' interest in American Indian mythology and tradition, their vast readership aggressively attracted younger generations of American Indians who had been born in the post-apocalypse, and who wanted to accept how their world had been redescribed: "They look to it [the book] for spiritual guidance, for sociological identity, for political insight, and for affirmation of the continuing substance of Indian tribal life" (Deloria Jr. in Neihardt xiii). The question posed by Deloria Jr., "can it matter?" (xiv), has been rephrased as '*does* it matter?' Whereas in other examples such as visual arts, cultural authenticity is sought to satisfy the necessity for social criticism and the ethnic quota of resentment and prejudice, in *BES* there is no need for such debate. The text is a calculated experience of the life of the Lakota, and an image of tradition. It might have undergone thorough editing, leading to question 'who' said 'what,' and while Neihardt might have infused Black Elk's words with some romantic ideas to reach his audience, both the written text and its echo of the spoken word have remained as an intact account of

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American Indian thought that proves "helpful to serious problems faced by many societies today" (Larson 131).

Although *BES* is a tour de force in the American Indian tradition, the thread that leads this research through power and identity questions the idealism behind *that* tradition. For authenticity to construct tradition as such, first it must be socially accepted as an a-truth. For instance, when anthropologist and ethnographer Frank Hamilton Cushing posed as a Plains Indian warrior (Fig. 1), for him it meant "a chance to contact spiritual values outside those of his own society" (Roscoe, *The Zuni Man-Woman* 10). Whether he was trying to escape or to *perform* as a Plains Indian warrior, he crossed the line between divulgation and cultural appropriation from the perspective of political correctness. This simple, yet pioneering approach did not demand readjustments in the construction of a paradigm of indigenous identity. On the contrary, the act of employing a symbol taken for granted and redefining it, contributed to the idea that "accessories and clothing are part of the garment which conditions the acceptance or abnegation of the body in society" (Fuentes 27), although it would pave the way for a sensitive debate between the contemporary concepts of cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation.[21]

Cushing's simulation of existence might have acted as a personal escape from the world that stigmatizes all those who are not fit for the norm. His act of performance has a deeper layer of thought after observing it through the Butlerian discourse. Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) proposes that genders are performative and not just performed for the sake of identity and power; therefore, by assuming this, Cushing was making a statement to

[21] Cultural appreciation is understood as a benign, respectful, and courteous approach to a foreign culture as opposed to cultural appropriation, in which the disrespect for culture is emphasised by the lack of awareness and the bold usage of its symbols as amusement or trends (Rivers, *Smith College*, 2016).

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destabilize the *authentic* maintained by those in power. And yet, a question remains unanswered: would an American Indian wearing the same garments reinforce the identity discourse in terms of authenticity, or would s/he be *performing* on account of perpetuation? If gender is a performative construction that escapes the individual's control and produces a series of effects, it would answer the first part of the question. On the other hand, if the individual can consciously terminate the act or performance, s/he assumes total control, and therefore, goes on performing for the sake of perpetuation to guarantee his or her own survival.

Regarding visual arts, for instance, perhaps Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's *Red Man Watching White Man Trying to Fix Hole in Sky* (1990) (Fig.2) might be considered a more trustworthy representation than Alfred Jacob Miller's *Buffalo Chase by a Female* (c. 1858-60) [Fig. 3] on the grounds of identity discourse. As an outsider, Miller portrayed several aspects of the American Indian life with remarkable insight and accuracy. Though Miller does not elaborate on the identification of the female's tribe, he provides a description of a female hunter:

> To win renown amongst the Indians and adventurers of the Far West, the first step is that of being a successful hunter. [...] To do all this requites great presence of mind, dexterity, and courage, --and few women are found amongst them willing to undertake or capable of performing it. (Roscoe 72)

Miller's observation of the females "performing what were usually male activities: hunting buffalo and catching horses" (72) accounts for visual authenticity. This third-party approach is a reshaping of a misrepresentational patriarchal discourse. The cultural authenticity of the image stands as an attempt to discuss the Indian tradition and present it

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as real, but American Indian identity discourse begs to differ. For academics such as Jack Forbes, blood quantum and storytelling were the minimum requirements for developing authenticity. Does this mean that Yuxweluptun's painting of an Indian contemplating from the distance how a white man tries to fix the hole in the ozone layer is more authentic, and thus, more credible than Miller's? Larson provides a straight-to-the-core answer that corresponds with the course of this research: "experience removed from its cultural specificity through any written textual practice makes authenticity elusive, but experience itself is no guarantee of uncontaminated authenticity" (Larson 155).

The dialogue between literature and visual representations nearly establishes a wormhole in the space-time continuum of a discourse mostly produced, both orally and written, under trauma and the inability of coming to terms with the past. From an aesthetic perspective, both accounts are colorful examples of multi-layered realities, not distant at all from the *whole* that represents the objectification of Indian culture. The American Indian cultural trauma that includes objectification, museumisation, and cultural appropriation derives from its continuous depiction originated in the misrepresentations from those in power, which led to what Larson calls the 'gangsterization of culture' (34). Different approaches over the last two hundred years have failed to reconcile the present with the past, yet both artistic representations appear as reflections of a palimpsestic conception of the human being.

In trying to separate tradition from authenticity, the visual discourse has been rewritten to convey a more powerful message, perhaps to have an opportunity to exert inner and outer criticism. Yuxweluptun's painting presents us with a figure who seems to be passive, imaginably due to years of indoctrination, who at the same time observes with caution the

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post-apocalyptic outcome of expansionism. However, the literary discourse has not evolved enough to escape from stereotypical Indian thought. The historical profile of literature provides it with complexity and variety, yet, variety does not account for durability, which in the end deconstructs the concept of tradition. For instance, the creation myths were taken from an oral source with nearly unlimited *sapientia* that relied on the same symbolism to elaborate a narrative thread translated into several accounts of the same story. The oral tradition is not exempt from modification, so each time the story was passed on to the next generation, there were probably bits of it that were romanticized to make it credible, to be eventually accepted as a reliable a-truth.

Both paintings are cultural constructions which have acquired a reality of their own. The transition between Miller's pre-apocalypse era and Yuxweluptun's post-apocalypse one encounters a traumatic conflict of identity and powerlessness. For American Indians, the nearly 150-year gap between both paintings accounts for numerous instances of pain and melancholia after witnessing the end of their world. This concept of *the end* was translated into internalized rage which later led to frustration and social stress, not only at an individual level, but also at an institutional one. Whatever power existed in American Indian tradition, "in being denied their heritage at school, [for instance], students commonly had their identity as Indians undermined" (Gross 452), it crashed together with any trace of identity conditioning their [American Indians'] ultimate adaptation to life.

With the advantage of time, looking back at Miller's painting, the apparent calm at certain stages of the apocalypse can be observed; in opposition, Yuxweluptun's "reveals how something came to pass" (Castleman 11) leading the world to collapse on all established levels. From the power of the buffalo-rider to the passivity of the 'red man,' the

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dialectic of power in these paintings affects every member of the American Indian community by turning them into witnesses of the apocalyptic ideation behind the pictorial discourse. The apocalyptic function of art in Yuxweluptun's painting illustrates, through symbolism, the implicit terror that produces an altered vision of the world. However, although his painting looks crudely at a world being driven into oblivion, it offers a negotiation to surrender its negative capability[22] for the sake of reality.

Contemporary American Indian's reality and narrative history have a reasonable number of voices, but only a few have made it in to America's cultural mainstream. It is not about commercializing a story but making it relevant and known to the general public. After the Jewish Holocaust, the voices of the survivors were, compared to those who perished, a small fragment that uncovered the trauma and the horror of the Nazi concentration camps. Works such as Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* (1947) and recently deceased Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1960) deal with traumatic experiences during World War II. Yet, Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947) is one of the most notable texts of Holocaust literature. Despite the differences between Jewish and American Indian literature, it is relevant to establish the importance of Anne Frank's text as an apocalyptic work with a post-apocalypse reading and impact in future societies. The same task has been carried out by Roscoe when he edited *Living the Spirit, A Gay American Indian Anthology* in 1988.

Through stories and personal accounts, Frank describes the fear of imprisonment and the horror of hiding from the enemy who tolerated no surviving rivals in the destruction—and reconstruction—of the known reality. The concept of the *diary* is based on secrecy and intimacy, which explains Otto Frank's reaction on reading his daughter's book for the first

[22] John Keats' idea of 'negative capability' establishes that there is a "power to remain open to mysteries, uncertainties, and doubts" (Larson 3).

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time as apocalyptic: "it was a revelation. There, was revealed a completely different Anne to the child that I had lost. I had no idea of the depths of her thoughts and feelings" (Mullin 108). Although the book's authenticity has been reaffirmed, Otto Frank "wrote a prologue assuring readers that the book mostly contained her words, written while hiding from the Nazis in a secret annex of a factory in Amsterdam" (Carvajal, *The New York Times* 20 Oct. 2016). Frank's deconstruction of reality reflects the same apocalyptic ideation behind the American Indian narrative history, while it differs in representation and style. The impact of her work in post-modern societies has raised the subject of redemption in times of turmoil, which could be extrapolated to Europe's refugee crisis as an example of conflict in the representation of the [post]apocalypse.

Berger establishes that the world is constructed through a dialectic process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization/ (437). Both *The Diary of a Young Girl* and the American Indian tradition have this process in common, resulting in a distressed environment. First, the presence of the Nazis and the Whites, respectively, urges the contemplation of the world from the outside as being painfully invaded by socially-deconstructed ghouls in terms of dehumanization. Dealing with this new external reality centers the focus on the disappearing object, which has come to be the object of study and experimentation for torture and historical extermination. Berger also points out, when referring to Ronald Reagan's remarks concerning American Indians, that the passage of time made sure that, "[American Indians] could not possibly have been, or continue to be, victims of any injustice" (135) because "the unequal struggle for possession of the continent never took place" (135), in the same way the Jewish could not match the Nazi's powerful force. The result of this dialectic process is the social stress powered by a derogatory

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stereotypical discourse, which causes the ultimate internalization of the trauma, and eventually, to the vanishing of the survivor in a post-apocalyptic world.

The foundations of American literature have been laid with a heteronormative discourse based on stereotypical traits, in which the early captive narratives reinforce the concept of the savage Indian, who covets the taste of white women and children's blood. During the King Philip's War, the trauma of the war was experienced by [white] victims through "acts and cruelty perpetrated by the 'savage'" (Harkin 4) that were described as "Massacres, Murthers, Savage Crueltyes, cowardize, ungrateful and perfidious dealings of Blood-thirsty Barbarians" (4). This apocalyptic vision of the Indian infused people with the ability to "fabricate memories of horrific experiences that never happened" (Suleiman 280) with the intention of creating more haunting narratives to externalize the construction of the New World. Further, Jacobus states that these 'fabrications' are "traumatic events [that] cannot be integrated into the survivor's life" (3), and I agree with her from a traditional point of view in which empathy is the cornerstone of the approach. The Americas and their space were the perfect scenario for several accounts of sequential apocalyptic realities, interchanging the witness in the "struggle with native, or natural powers [that] was still to come" (Berger 133).

If I were to provide a metaphorical analysis of the American Indian literary tradition as a house made of wood, its overall structure would be too weak to support the weight of modern architectural elements. The techniques and new materials have reshaped such tradition to attain a rebellious and sarcastic nature which has outdone itself, which means that, according to Larson, the "narrative history written by and about American Indians needs to be reviewed" (143). Writers such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Beth Brandt, and Qwo-Li

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Driskill have indeed sharpened their discourse by relying on controversial topics, the drag persona, and the postcolonial drama in the post-apocalypse world, which marks a detour from the mannerisms of the American Indian narrative that has consistently relied on the "continuous need to reconstruct themselves in the image of the lost past" (142). However, these are instances that draw from these writers' cultural first-hand perspective, which should not be regarded as more valuable nor more truthful than German-descent Tom Spanbauer's *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon* (1991). This is another instance of how outsiders 'dare' to explore the issues of identity and sexuality within the American Indian sphere, giving a postmodernist reading to a discourse that has evolved from the need to understand and belong, caused by a lack of acknowledgment and connection. This registers the problematic hidden behind the power struggle for the ultimate control of [cultural] space, provided the latter is not merely geographical. The need for survival has made the connection to the land an excuse to perpetuate the American Indian's *divine* right to stay, and spatialism has turned the physical space into a philosophical extension of the self, subjected to the poetics of memory.

Miller and Spanbauer succeed at incorporating authenticity as close to a lived experience. The perception of these experiences has create[d] a reservoir of opinions that progressively accumulate in order to validate social cohesion. The existence of the latter is subjugated to the collective idea that reality is given by and perceived in two halves, one of which obeys the myth of concern and the other one the myth of individual freedom,[23] according to Northrop Frye (Colombo 17). The concept of freedom and the concept of

[23] "The myth of concern is society's central mythology, the body of what it believes as a society and what holds it together. (Later Frye split it into primary concern, essentials like food, sex, property, and freedom of movement, and secondary concern, the structures of religion, politics, and ideology.) [...] Against this concern stands the myth of freedom, a sort of liberal opposition which criticizes the myth of concern from an individualistic, often scientific, point of view" (Colombo 17).

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death are mutually intertwined, coming to justify the need for an acknowledgment of the American Holocaust, which has been neglected by the discourse of power. The situation reached an inflection point in 2010 when the United States acting through Congress in the "Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010" formally "apologizes on behalf of the people of the United States to all Native Peoples for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by citizens of the United States" (Public Law 111-118, Sec. 8113). This effort at self-criticism fails to include the word 'genocide' before stating that "nothing in this section authorizes or supports any claims against the United States" (Sec. 8113); therefore, more than two hundred years later "governmental power [still] has the last word" (Larson 35). This self-critical mentality and *naming* are responsible for the progressive loss of power, tradition, and identity among American Indians, mainly due to their failure to belong to and take part in the contemporary American cultural mainstream. In addition to this, there is still a strong sense of power and tradition linked to the past, and though there are no limits to establishing the authenticity of tradition, contemporary writers are "links to a usable past [that] entails seeing them as harbingers of the future" (Larson 23). I partially agree when Larson suggests that "traditional Indian structures of language, story, and humor allow American Indians to use such opportunities to develop new literatures and criticism" (25), finding a way to overcome trauma and elaborate on a new identity discourse. The connection between past and present is indeed not only latent in content, but also in style, bringing contemporary American Indian tradition into the spotlight of contemporary trauma theory and post-apocalypse theory.

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The state of events that brand the traumatic history of American Indians has been in constant fluctuation between inner and outer forces. According to Herman, the subject *splits* due to social stress (Suleiman 276). It suggests that those who undergo traumatic events end up developing a multiple personality syndrome, yet this is more complicated than it seems. In most of these cases, the subject chooses to repress certain memories in order to find emotional peace and move forwards. In other less fortunate cases, the shock is so deep-rooted that the subject collapses into itself, releasing all the energy contained through internal rage, depression, substance abuse, and economic problems because of cultural dislocation. All these aspects have conditioned the elaboration of an identity discourse based on long-gone traditions, or else, based on the moral reclamation of trauma because of the need for society to rebuild itself once more. The understanding of such restraints in both the pre-apocalypse and post-apocalypse stages transcends the heteronormative feature of a tradition that was dispossessed from a far more complex system of beliefs that revered two-spirit people. Further, Harkin writes that given the fact that the space between Europeans and American Indians before and during the apocalypse had always been "a space of apocalyptic ideation" (1), I suggest that the more contact both communities had, the more advanced and deeper was their bank of apocalyptic ideation.

Contemporary non-Indian fabrications of American Indians and heterosexual American Indians have repressed the apocalypse moment of the lost berdaches. For them, the collapse of their reality happened at a larger level, leaving aside the individual drama of survival of the minorities. Several history books have been written and research has been carried out on the Trail of Tears, the Indian Removal Act, the creation of the reservation system, the American Holocaust, and the loss of native languages and mythologies. It

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seems impossible to detach the concept of tradition from these moving aspects of the native world, but tradition itself has been biased. The social fear of being identified with non-conventional lifestyles according to the norm has been the catalyst for a double deconstruction of apocalyptic proportions. Thus, while the concept of tradition is still spiritually—and conveniently—connected to spatialism, two-spirit people "experience homophobia in academia, among members of their own communities, against lesbians and transgender people, in family relationships, and in social confrontation" (Fuentes 86).

Before the apocalypse, the American Indian world was organized in a multi-gendered system that complied with societal roles given to all tribal members. This system acknowledged the presence of the *berdache,* a "morphological male [or female] who does not fill a society's standard man's [or woman's] role" (Williams 6). This term misrepresented all the practices that were not understood by the Europeans in terms of social roles given their transgressive nature. According to the results retrieved from the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the first known use of 'berdache' was circa 1806. Its etymological evolution registers an uneven adaptation to the social momentum controlled by power. The term derives from the Middle Persian term *vartak* which evolved into the Persian *bardag* meaning 'prisoner'; eventually, it made its incursion into Arabic as *bardaj* meaning 'slave' and hereafter to Southern Italian dialects *bardascio* and French *bardache* meaning 'catamite' (*Merriam-Webster*, 2016).[24] Since Europeans could not, did not want to, or chose not to accept that women and men could participate in work reserved for the opposite gender, nor that a man could perform a woman's role wearing her garments and vice versa, they turned to *berdache* as a way to epitomize its changeability.

[24] A catamite is a boy described as the receiving partner in male anal intercourse.

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This social sphere was of such a complex density that Europeans could not understand how it worked, recurring to more simplistic alternatives using religion to discredit the ways of American Indians. Europeans recurred to homosexuality to describe "interchangeable performative roles that were ritualised" in a "world [that] is made of two: woman and man. But there have always been the third one who is both, the *nádleehí*" (Fuentes 11; Jacobs 34-35). Remarkably, the European tradition of the Renaissance constantly evoked the beauty of the Greco-Roman era and the richness of its mythology, yet it casted a shadow upon the homosexual tendencies of some of their gods. In Greek mythology, in order to have sex with Callisto, Zeus disguised himself as Artemis to seduce her into his arms. Another instance was Aminias' suicide after declaring his love for Nacissus and being rejected by him. Even so, there are instances of homosexual pederasty, which was regarded as a traditional practice in Ancient Rome, in the myth of young Ganymede being abducted by Zeus to establish a pederastic relationship (Provencal and Verstraete 127). This hypocritical interest in condemning practices that were considered abhorrent was the first of many successful attacks on tradition. In consequence, "both the identity and the role [of two-spirits] were regarded as inferior within the new societal framework, so American Indians started to embrace discrimination towards their own kind" (Fuentes 11).

Historically, there is a time in which "being part of such a strongly identified group [berdaches] can be powerful" (Larson 117). Unlike their European counterpart, American Indians strongly believed in shamanism as a spiritual institution with the power to alter reality requiring, although not always, "supernatural legitimation" (Lang 163). The figure of the shaman was a figure of exceptional power who exerted it by controlling the past when s/he met spirits, or the future by using his or her foretelling power to make predictions.

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Furthermore, the shaman also held the position of the medicine person of the tribe because of his or her ability to cure through unearthly powers. Such an example is the account allegedly reported by Zuni We'wha, a prominent and celebrated male berdache who partook as cultural ambassador of the Zuni in Washington DC:

> [...] after a time I grew very ill and had to return to my mother's home. A shaman was sent for and, through the power of the Beast Gods, he was enabled to discover the cause of my illness by placing pinches of sacred meal upon me, which opened to him the windows of my body. He discovered the disease and declared that I had been bewitched, and commanded the material which had been thrust into my body to come forth. (Roscoe, *The Zuni Man-Woman* 45)

Other communities such as the Mohave strongly believed that a female shaman was far more powerful than a male shaman. However, berdache shamans were stronger than any of them (Vitebsky 93). Although it might seem purely magical or bestowed upon the subject by outer sources, much of this power came through mastering techniques or performing actions until complete accuracy was achieved. Williams affirms that although "much of the shaman's work centers on ceremonial mystery and magic, theatrical qualities are of great use in the shaman's performances," s/he is "much more than an actor" (33). This observation opens up of the possibility of tradition as a performative performance, in which identity is constructed and performed rather than granted by social or political power. If shamans sometimes accomplished credibility by using "thoroughly worldly capabilities of the individual" (Lang 163) and relying on performance and repetition, could berdache tradition be the result of recurring constructive individual quests for the self? It would make sense that in a pre-apocalypse world where berdachism redefined concepts of male and female, as a way for society "to recognize and assimilate some atypical

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individuals without imposing a change on them or stigmatizing them as deviant" (Williams 127), the individual opted for making him or herself to the image of his or her tribe, rather than allowing outer forces such as Christianity to dictate to them.

As has been mentioned, being a berdache did not make him or her qualified to be a shaman, although it enhanced his place in the community. Through visions and dreams, the shaman could make predictions regarding warfare, which was another important field in which the issue of performance tended to establish the role of the berdache. American Indian tradition established hunting as the preferred activity to determine whether a boy was going to stay home or take part in warfare. When young boys showed interest in grinding cornmeal, weaving, craftwork, and in general 'enjoyed' women's work, they "were expected to make a work decision by puberty" (Lang 57). This decision was generally to adopt the role of a male berdache who stayed off the warpath in terms of physical confrontation. However, as healers "Cheyenne war parties almost always had a skilled berdache curer along to take care of the wounded" (35). During times of distress, the berdache was expected to stay in the village and do women's work, although there are some accounts of berdaches who had a short-lived presence in war. One of the first descriptions ever made in literature about berdaches was made by Spanish explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca in *La relación of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca* (1542). He described them as "more corpulent than other men and taller; they bear heavy burdens" (Lang 68) and while doing the work of women, they were also skilled at hunting like men.

There were instances of berdaches who were morphologically bigger than other men who participated directly in warfare. This act subverted the conception of the berdache as a powerless individual that eluded conflict. Perhaps, the problem was the few instances

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recorded in history of berdaches taking part in active warfare, assuming there were more. To think of this lack of knowledge on the subject, a Euro-American strategy to discourage American Indians from continuing to revere 'deviant' conducts seems plausible. Forcing them into assimilation, and depriving them of their own history, was a tool to exert total control over a traumatic scenario. Participation in war made them noticeable for their bravery among the Crow and the Osage, for instance:

> One Crow berdache was named Osh-Tisch, which means "Finds Them and Kills Them." He got his name in 1876, when he turned warrior for that one day. He put on men's clothes and attacked a Lakota party in the Battle of the Rosebud, and was distinguished by his bravery. Among the Osage, a successful warrior had a vision that enjoined him to become a berdache, which he did. But he loved warfare so much that he periodically put on men's clothes and led a raid. (Lang 69)

These examples of social roles, among many others, reflect the power of the berdache in a time when and where he was respected. The alteration of the status quo by cultural assimilation condemned berdachism to its extinction. In previous pages, I mentioned the fact that tradition was biased. This predisposition follows a virtual discourse of power that reflected itself like a hologram on a plane. This reflection covers a limited surface and separates three realities in terms of a three-dimensional intangibility. First, the berdache's reality, which was doomed by the breach in the second reality, the American Indian's. This rupture unified what in my MA thesis was specified as 'white ghosts'—racism and homophobia—which will be explained in the next chapter: "Homophobia draws from racism the ability to neglect, deny, catalogue, put aside and minimize the target. Racism reunites the good thing about power and the bad thing about not being able to use that power properly" (Fuentes 73). This profound *vini-vidi-vinci* understanding of reality left the

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third reality, white reality, inaccessible. In the social stratum, power exists as an unreachable visual illusion that designs the universe of [any] tradition, making the subject believe that s/he is in control of his or her freedom to construct his or her identity. In consequence, the loss of berdachism as part of the American Indian tradition accounted for a total collapse of power and identity on the verge of the apocalypse.

3.2 *American Indian Tradition in the Post-Apocalypse*

The incidents recorded in American history over the last two hundred years are too many for such a limited space. The description of a pre-apocalyptic world reflects a "central concern with identity" (Larson 112) that has conditioned all cultural works, including literary and visual, produced in the last forty years. There have been several attempts to go back to the roots, a 'back to basics' stage where the problematic of identity conflicts with the "contemporary native personality: tradition, self, and the direction of others" (112). Evidently, the main problem that contemporary American Indian tradition faces is to find the bright side of acculturation, if in fact there is any. Today the American Indian world, when presented to the public, is linked to Hollywood representations that have gained either critical acclaim or have been condemned to be forgotten. Take for instance the depiction of the Mohican in Michael Mann's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) and the more-than-justified controversial casting of Johnny Depp as a Comanche in Gore Verbinski's *The Lone Ranger* (2013). Just like the juxtaposition between Miller's and Yuxweluptun's paintings, the authenticity debate does not escape the cinematic universe of a mourning society that is seen through the eyes of a post-apocalyptic lens.

James Fenimore Cooper's novel adaptation was received with high praise in the nineties for its cinematography and heart-wrenching soundtrack, for which the film was

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consequently awarded an Academy Award. Still, though the film is considered a cinematic masterpiece, *Chicago Sun Times* reviewer Roger Ebert wrote, "*The Last of the Mohicans* is not as authentic and uncompromised as it claims to be -- more of a matinee fantasy than it wants to admit -- but it is probably more entertaining as a result" (20 Oct. 2016). As a critic living in a post-apocalypse dimension, Ebert brings up the question of authenticity probably comparing the film to its original source, relying solely on Cooper's work, although he admits he is "the first one to confess I know little about how people really lived in the first decades of the European settlement of North America" (*Chicago Sun Times*, 20 Oct. 2016). It has been pointed out before that there is a considerable amount of research and bibliography regarding American Indians. Perhaps, this lack of knowledge on his part is due to how the education system has chosen to suppress systemically important details regarding American Indian and African-American history when teaching about the building of the land of the free. In the end, to have no surviving rivals there must be a secured path to a "forever disappearing world" (Shryock 37). It seems there is an attack against Ebert, but neither he, nor the Government's approach concerning the curriculum are the objects of this dissertation.

Ebert admits he knows little, yet, his position as a critic gives him the power to call into question the film's authenticity. As ironic as it may be, if the casting for the film is a catalyst to produce authentic work, in Mann's film Cooper's characters Chingachcook, Ungas, and Magua were performed by Russell Means (Oglala Lakota), Eric Schweig (Inuit/Ojibwe Anishinaabe), and Wes Studi (Cherokee). Whether the actions depicted in Mann's rendition of Cooper's work are completely reliable would bring into consideration broadening this research to include anthropology, ethnography, and sociology along with historiography to

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establish a solid argument. The mere impact of watching American Indian actors perform American Indians on screen gave *The Last of the Mohicans* the touch of authenticity needed to be credible and accepted by the audience, like the preceding line "based on actual events" does. Unusually, the authenticity of Mann's representation did not depend on the casting choice because the whitewashing in film movement had not yet gained the notoriety of the first decade of 2000s. Its authenticity was based on the power to portray tradition and make it believable.

The post-apocalypse is the end of the era of the witness. Verbinski's post-modern rendition of Comanche Tonto's narration of his attempt to bring justice to the West met the opposite fate of Mann's film. The split contrast between the American critics and the British critics, as the latter received the film more positively, suggests that there is a tremendous burden of self-criticism when looking at historical accuracy made in Hollywood. The casting of Johnny Depp in *The Lone Ranger* raised controversy on the grounds of authenticity for having a white actor perform the role of an American Indian character.[25] Contemporary films dispute over the post-apocalypse a-truth, in which authenticity is relegated to historical facts, leaving aside the human factor as the number one bearer of actual credibility.

Having white actors portray biblical characters of Middle Eastern descent or citizens of the Ancient Egypt reflects the institution of power that has been built throughout history. In the beginning of this chapter, the notion of power proposed was based on a web of labels

[25] To understand this, it would be advisable to consider Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), Darren Aronofsky's *Noah* (2014), Ridley Scott's *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014), and Alex Proyas' *Gods of Egypt* (2016). Although whitewashing in film is much older, the examples cited were chosen for their immediacy with this research.

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that contradicted themselves, arranged to reinforce stereotypes and political myths. Johnny Depp's Tonto is nothing but the ultimate consequence of a confusion between trying to make up for the past and misrepresenting it. Despite having a Comanche advisor on set, the character fails to meet the expectations of a American Indian character which more closely resembles *Pirates of the Caribbean*'s Captain Jack Sparrow than of its predecessor Jay Silverhills on ABC's TV series *The Lone Ranger* (1949). This brief analysis—or even criticism—of the film's authenticity sums up the notion of power that has been suggested. Some contemporary film directors for instance, are trying to eradicate labels by creating post-apocalyptic versions of a pre-existent condition. The creation of films such as *The Lone Ranger*, subjects the authenticity discourse to white power, enabling a never-ending mourning process that is thought to be overcome. Miller, Yuxweluptun, Mann, and Verbinski come to represent parts of a visual discourse of the American Indian apocalypse that came to an end not one, but three times after the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, the Last Massacre in 1911, and the Renegade Period of the Apache Wars, which ended in 1924.

Wounded Knee Creek witnessed a brutal clash of worlds in which the superstructure's tradition overpowered the American Indian one. After leader Tȟatȟaŋka Iyotȟaŋka[26] was arrested by U.S. officials to prevent the Ghost Dance,[27] he was shot due to an altercation between officials. The uncertainty that followed his death put the very survival of the Lakota at risk intensifying the exasperation of both parties. On 29th December 1890, a succession of events unleashed havoc upon the Lakota, which according to Wishart,

[26] Lakota for *Sitting Bull*. English: Tatanka Iyotanka.

[27] According to James Mooney, the Ghost Dance was a religious and spiritual ceremony in which "the time will come when the whole Indian race, living and dead, will be reunited upon a regenerated earth, to live a life of aboriginal happiness, forever free from death, disease, and misery" (777).

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"resulted in the deaths of more than 250, and possibly as many as 300, American Indians" (841). The notion of spatialism linked to the Lakota, and the constant siege they were exposed to by the seizing of their land, put them at loss in a world where no negotiation was possible. Therefore, the concept of land in the American Indian tradition is quintessential for the understanding of its folklore.

Euro-American expansionism is an echo of Columbus' arrival in Guanahani,[28] which led to the expansion of the Spanish Empire. It made use of physical and discursive power to seize the land in the name of the Catholic Monarchs, followed by the continental expansion 'justified' by the Manifest Destiny. However, the construction of an expansionist nation and its tradition was against the promise of fulfilment of the Ghost Dance, which also included reconnecting American Indians to a land that needed to be cleansed of Euro-Americans. Ghost Dance's eloquence and discourse came to shake the foundations of white power. Basically, the premise of the movement was that

> Indians had been defeated and confined to reservations because they had angered the gods by abandoning their traditional customs. Many Sioux believed that if they practiced the Ghost Dance and rejected the ways of the white man, the gods would create the world anew and destroy all non-believers, including non-Indians. (*History.com*, 2009)

The consequence of white fear is reflected in Major General James W. Forsyth's orders from Major General John R. Brooke:[29] "to disarm the Indians where they were camped, to under no circumstance allow any of them to escape, and to destroy them if they resisted"

[28] Guanahani was the aboriginal name given by the Taíno people to this island, which is thought to be the first piece of land spotted during Columbus' first voyage. Upon arrival, the island was called San Salvador, which is known today as The Bahamas.

[29] General Forsyth was in command of the 7th U.S. Cavalry on the day of the massacre of Wounded Knee, following orders of General Brooke to rush the cavalry to stop the Ghost Dance.

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(Cozzens 566). The apocalyptic nature of the conflict came to guarantee 'the end of time' for the Lakota, and thus, the American Indians as a whole. There was no room for transition, which led to a traumatic state of events included in Gross' definition as Post-Apocalyptic Stress Disorder (PASS). As has been explained, this condition has traits similar to the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder experienced by war veterans; however, the latter affects the individual whereas the former is raised to the level of an entire culture, without reaching a pandemic status (Gross 450). This *first apocalypse* is collectively known as the end of the American Indian Wars, although the conflict was not completely settled until the twentieth century. Though it seems obvious to state the shattering effect the conflict had on the Lakota nation and, subsequently, on the American Indians, it is relevant to understand how it contributed to the construction of the contemporary tradition. In the aftermath of the massacre, and more than a century later, post-apocalyptic American Indians look back at the conflict as a forerunner of how something came to pass and as a painful reminder of the struggle with identity and the sense of belonging. Wounded Knee stands as a symbol of transition where the individual understands that "the end of the world occurs, and then begins again from scratch" (Castleman 9).

On the other hand, the Last Massacre of 1911 reported a considerably smaller number of casualties compared to Wounded Knee, yet "it was among the bloodiest fights in Nevada history" (Vogel, *Las Vegas* Review, 2016). One of the limitations of the story was the lack of eyewitnesses to the crime, hence, the only accounts to which we have access today are mainly retellings of what was published in 1911 and word-of-mouth versions provided by the professed victors. Part of being humans in a post-apocalyptic world is to come to terms with the idea that history is not written, but redefined by those in control, so the more

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information they possess, the less access we have to the truth. Comparing nearly 300 casualties to nine—eight American Indians plus one member of the Nevada State Police—seems almost ludicrous, but beyond the loss of human life, "the impact on Native people reached beyond the death toll to the entire fabric of society, from the loss of leaders and spiritual knowledge to the loss of traditional ways of life" (Vernon 1).

Shoshone American Indian Mike Daggett also known as "Shoshone Mike," was killed along with seven other members of his family during what the media reported as an uprising. The massacre was an unequal battle between bows, arrows, tomahawks, and guns that followed the death of four cattlemen who had been killed by Daggett and his family in Little High Rock Canyon earlier in January 1911. The incident was headlined in the newspapers, spreading panic among the local population. As expected, "even the words used (in newspapers) to describe the Indians, like squaws and bucks, make them look as animalistic as possible" (Mullen, *Reno Gazette-Journal*, 2016).

This verbal process of objectivation was thoroughly used to present American Indians as people who still were triggered by animalistic practices, and needed to be civilized. Daggett and his family fled to Kelley Creek, near Winnemucca, where they were found by the Nevada State Police and were barraged with the fatal result mentioned before. The survivors, a woman, an 18-month-old infant, and three children, were taken prisoners. The children died of tuberculosis following the battle (Vogel, *Las Vegas Review*, 2016) and the infant was adopted. Such an apocalyptic event could only fuel resentment for a survivor, especially when the accounts of it differed and presented several contradictions, probably as a result of retaliation rather than fair justice (Mullen). It was as if the conflict had been set up to justify the slaughter. Writer Effie Mona Mack published *The Indian Massacre* in 1968,

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trying to provide new evidence on what she defined as "the last Indian massacre in American History" (130). However, Mary Jo Estep, the toddler who became the only official survivor of the massacre, feels "like [she stands] off from all of it" because "it's in the distance" (Geranos, *Los Angeles Times*, 2016). Trauma theory analysis implies that Estep suffers from the survivor's guilt syndrome, which is experienced by those who manage to stay alive in instances of rape, terrorism, and genocide among others, whereas others have not. A traumatic event cannot cause direct distress to those who have not endured it, and it could not be integrated into Estep's life not because she disassociated from it, but because she did not remember it vividly.

Wounded Knee preceded Kelley Creek by 27 years, and the discourse of power had not shown indications of change. America had paved its road to power with millions of casualties throughout the American Indian Wars: "Sixty million Native Americans died between 1500 and 1600" (Silko 15). More than three intermittent centuries witnessed the incessant charge of the apocalypse and its impact on the general American Indian population. Regardless of area and time, the community has found a way to *feel* for those who perished, as a way to ensure unity and spiritual peace. Although the wars redefined not only the history, but also the cultural space of the Americas, they could be considered as a painfully heretical rite of passage to reach maturity. Even so, the idea of finding peace through violence -as controversial as it may sound- has conditioned the construction of an empowered and renewed American Indian identity, based on counterattacking cultural appropriation. The *second apocalypse* happened too soon, and prevented American Indians from overcoming the grief of Wounded Knee. The idea behind 'last' in the Last Massacre seems to represent the verb meaning 'to continue,' rather than the adjective signifying

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'conclusion,' leading me to consider that the process was not indeed over, as Silko points out: "the Indian Wars have never ended in the Americas" (15). Whereas Wounded Knee was the result of white fear, Kelley Creek was the result of revenge.

The apocalypse north of the Mexican border started coming to an end after the death of Apache chief Victorio in 1880, following the Alma Massacre in New Mexico. Surviving members of his group were sent to Florida to join Apache leader Geronimo, in an attempt to regroup and resist. But six years after Victorio's death, an exhausted and outnumbered Geronimo surrendered to U.S. government troops (*History.com*, 2016). Apache insurgents then initiated a period known as the Renegade Period that lasted until as late as 1924, carrying out minor hostilities. Many American Indians escaped when the Indian Removal Act was passed in 1830, and later on when the reservations system was implemented by the U.S. government as established in the "Peace Policy" of President Ulysses S. Grant in 1868. This sequence of events counted for some wars and a significant number of American Indian massacres, both inflicted and suffered by them. The Apache Wars originated amidst the turmoil of the reservation era spreading north and south of the border. At the time, Victorio and Geronimo were two of the most prominent leaders of the period, and by the end of the 19th century, Victorio had been killed and Geronimo had become a prisoner of war.

The physical and political loss of two Apache leaders were symptoms of a bigger struggle that had been ongoing for decades. They tried to construct and defend a world which was subject to constant change through the redistribution of the land. President Grant's policy attacked the notion of spatialism in its core. The only possibility to succeed was to persevere and to fight back; however, years of bloody conflicts led to mental and

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physical exhaustion. Although the use of the expression 'hold one's ground' to define Apache nature is particularly ironic, especially after Grant's policy, it was courageous for the Apache to fight united until the end, yet as a community they could not stand the pressure of the apocalypse much longer. With the conflict coming to an end, and after years of failed forced assimilation and bloodshed, Geronimo's surrender stood as a symbol for the end of all ends: "there is a price to be paid, however, for the apocalyptic triumph over time. The self must be subdued, the soul fitted into an authorized version of the sacred story" (Fenn 108).

The timespan of *the end* extended more than three decades after Wounded Knee. Perhaps the first and the second apocalypses were more appalling in terms of life and death. The third apocalypse represents an echo of its predecessors; in the same way, it represents a reflection of what was left after the ethnic cleansing of the wars. Throughout these three stages of termination, there was a gradual sense of loss to trauma "associated with depression, drug abuse, and anxiety disorders" (Vernon 8). This, of course, was the first accounted and direct consequence of the apocalypse: a post-apocalypse world where judgment was impaired by the inability of the survivors to cope with reality. As was mentioned before, the apocalypses were fueled by white fear and revenge; however, what makes the Renegade Period a different kind of apocalypse is that it was elusive. It was not characterized by the havoc of its predecessors. This period was rather much characterized by the endeavors of a civilisation to deal with grief. The natural state of a renegade is to rebel against something s/he disagrees with, and it becomes clear that they were not ready to come to terms with the fact they were fighting for a cause already lost to white power.

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For this reason, the *third apocalypse* is perhaps the harshest, as it represented the unwilling acceptance of the status quo yet to come.

What followed was a unilateral construction of a white-powered world in which the survivors of the apocalypse were supposed to be relocated. The egregious Indian termination policy, which was implemented from the 1940s through the mid-1960s, was based on cultural assimilation with the idea of 'civilizing' American Indians. This period of political outrage favored what I consider a post-apocalyptic lethargy. From the end of the American Indian Wars until the outbreak of the American Indian Movement (AIM), in the summer of 1968, the question was "how to speak after the end of language" (Berger 3). This lethargy was induced by different causes: first, the social stress after 'recovering' from the wars, and the traumatic process of recovering and redefining *Indianness*; second, the linguistic extinction that followed. Many languages had suffered as the number of living speakers were reduced. For instance, according to F. Todd Smith, in the 1540s the population of the Wichita reached the 200,000 (407), and by the 1930s, the total population "was 300, an apparent decrease from 334 in 1910" (U.S. Census Bureau 41).

A considerable number of deaths during the apocalypse period were produced by diseases and the American Indian's lack of a strong immune system to battle them. Upon contact with smallpox, typhus, and tuberculosis among a considerably longer list of 'European' diseases, the general American Indian population was decimated. Further, if more than two centuries of genocidal war(s) are added to the formula, death data is scabrously measured by millions. The cultural impact of war had affected the core of *Indianness*, lessening the interest of some who had survived and wanted to go on living, but especially, of those who were born and raised after the war ended. In addition to this,

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survivors were forced to leave the reservations, which was another catalyst to the origin of the lethargy. The Indian Relocation Act of 1956 represented the total divorce of those American Indians who were urbanized from their reservations, and ultimately, their ancestral homeland.

The process of assimilation that had started by depriving American Indians from using their language, led them to a breakdown and eventual loss of communication with their ancestors. Whatever was considered *truly* American Indian was either objectified through "various language appellations" (Larson 21), crafting a whitewashed version of the past, or it was eliminated. Throughout history, every system of absolute power has found a way to diminish or completely avoid risk. Given the influence of discursive power, by eradicating the survivors' native tongue, the impact of manipulation grew deeper, and therefore, it helped to perform a dual post-apocalyptic construction of American Indians.

The gradual entrance into this world was characterized by a compelling establishment of American Indian urban nuclei, which had been proven successful towards the end of the century. The superstructure had managed to disconnect the survivors of the apocalypse from their past by making them live in an abstract society. In the manner of the Amish Rumspringa,[30] they were slowly exposed to western eccentricities, provoking a lack of interest in the past, as has been pointed out. It is for this reason that for nearly 44 years, American Indians participated in a collective lethargy not because they chose to do it, but because they were progressively induced to. This does not mean that they were unaware of their status, but much of their tradition was romanticized—and still is—sometimes with

[30] When an Amish individual reaches adolescence, s/he is given the opportunity to spend a period of time practicing Western customs including wearing western clothes, using means of transport and electronic gadgets, making use of drugs, drinking alcohol, smoking, and even engaging in pre-marital sex. This period usually ends with the return of the teenager to the community and his/her baptism.

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vested economic interests. To support this idea, consider the example of Geronimo who, after being captured, realized he was an attraction and benefited of the whites' curiosity. Perhaps, by tricking them into believing they were purchasing authentic regalia he wrecked vengeance on them for years of land-seizing:

> People would pay to take his picture, and they would also pay to own something that belonged to him. It is said that he went out equipped with bows and arrows he had made, an old jacket with dozens of extra buttons in his suitcase, and several extra hats. He would cut off his buttons and sell them, along with the hat he was wearing and other trinkets. Then he would repair to his tent, where his wife would sew on new buttons and get him another hat. Out he would go again to sell these items. (Whetzel 64)

The velocity shown by Geronimo in learning the 'white ways' of trickery goes against any previous conception of American Indians as inferior human beings. This example shows the importance of money in the construction of a name, but does the name guarantee the making of money or does the latter provide resources to make the name available? The answer depends mainly on the time of cultural and societal demand. In the beginning of the twentieth century, names preceded popularity and money came as a consequence of it, e.g., Geronimo's case. However, towards the end of the century, a more demanding and determined society earmarked money to strengthen the production of names. Such is the example of pop culture and its presence in the American mainstream, where the unique tends to be marginalized and the *production en série* is highly acclaimed. In the case of American Indians, money became a gateway to guarantee access to public services for other tribal members. The creation of an organized gambling system, including casinos and bingos, was inherited through assimilation in addition to other problems such as lifetime

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trauma, interpersonal violence, mental health disorders, depression, substance abuse, HIV, and alcohol-related problems (Balsam et al. 289).

The representations of the post-apocalypse are intersectional. In literature, the post-apocalyptic construction of American Indians, and more specifically, two-spirit American Indians, also draws from class and gender in order to make a cohesive discourse. The ridiculously short timeframe taken to undergo assimilation, compared to the total length of the apocalypse, shows that "contemporary society [is] driven more and more by market forces [...] characterized by disturbing social, racial, and economic equities" (Larson 25). To have a better understanding of how substantially fast the process occurred, it is relevant to mention that the period that separates the massacre of Wounded Knee from the Great Crash of 1929 only covers just under forty years of history. Between the end of the American Indian Wars and the birth of the American Indian Movement, the urgency for the system to proclaim its authority increased its systematic abuse of power to protect its WHASPM[31] hegemony.

The rediscovery and redefinition of *Indianness*, or in other words, a contemporary definition of 'what it means to be Indian,' cannot and must not be detached from the social struggle linked to economy and gender. It is important to consider James Clifton's observation that "originally, no native North America society subscribed to the idea of biological determination of identity or behavior" (Larson 30). This explains the complexity of the gender system that existed in the pre-apocalypse stage, and was targeted as a potential enemy for the construction of the new order. There was no biological determinism because the concept had not been developed by American Indians. Moreover,

[31] White, Heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and Male.

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they "were [rather] interested in such distinctions as language and other practical skills, family relationships, social facility, and loyalty" (30). Therefore, the foundations of the post-apocalypse lie deep in the inability of a WHASPM culture to acknowledge the existence of a genocide.

The consideration of three separate or alternative endings to the apocalypse contributes to understanding the final deconstruction of identity. The first initial shock provoked by contact with Europeans 'rapidly' escalated to a scenario of demonstration of survival and unpreparedness. How does someone prepare for terror? After 9/11 the world has been teaching us to believe, to feel, to live in terror, and we have been taught how to 'survive' in certain situations. When the time comes, our fear of death "often leads to the bizarre consequences of mass murder" (Larson 7). Our own unpredictability conditions our survival because some of us might choose to fight, whereas others might choose to surrender. Contemporary western tradition has been building itself on the fear of a third world war, the fear of nuclear annihilation, or an unlikely zombie apocalypse. Post-apocalyptic fiction has been well received, as it not only focuses on the problematic of a situation that escapes our control, but also with the eventual ruin of civilisation. One of the earliest examples in literary post-apocalyptic fiction is Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), published 64 years before the massacre of Wounded Knee took place. The daunting narrative about a man living at the end of our century shares some traits with the American Indian apocalypse ongoing at that time, and with the tradition derived from it: suicidal behaviour, children growing without parental influence, isolation, loneliness, the idea of survival, false prophets, war, and death. Our culture has always been attracted, terrorized and even *seduced* by the idea of death.

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American Indian pre-apocalyptic identity looked for a "positive self-identity, family, and community [as] primarily values on virtually all American Indian cultures" (Larson 6). This dream-like culture believed that "if you truly believe the earth is your mother, there is much less apprehension about returning to her at the end of physical existence" (7). They were prepared to die as they understood the concept of life and death as cycles. In the fervent upheaval of constructing a pre-apocalypse world, there have been several instances of creation myths as well as many origin-of-death myths which had been impersonated by Coyote, the trickster character whose "discourse functions as a cultural whole, meaning that the whole of the culture is involved in the process" (Gross 456). The *process* can be either the understanding of death as necessary for life, the process of colonization, or the beginning of post-apocalyptic reconstruction era. In any case, the trauma caused by such distress led to a collective failure at preserving Indianness, which eventually "led to the current state of murderous cultural divisions and destruction of the environment" (Larson 6).

3.3 *Post-Apocalypse Retreat: A New Identity in Gestation*

The twentieth century brought incipient changes to culture too fast. It is a universal truth that the world was not the same after two world wars and millions of deaths. Survivors of both conflicts were always trapped between reliving the past and facing the future; they were all children of trauma. However, the romanticisation of American Indians downplayed the issue of acknowledging a systematic genocide. Instead, the world preferred to cling to Hollywood representations of these communities and took them as a-truths per se. Louis Owens observes, "In fact, the Indian in today's world consciousness is a product of literature, history, and art, and a product that, as an invention, often bears little

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resemblance to actual, living American Indian people" (Owens in Larson 22). The AIM was not born as an ethnographic movement, but its political discourse was in favor of the recovery of the Indianness lost to the apocalypse. Years of indoctrination and forced assimilation damaged all considerations of *being Indian*.

While trauma had a much vaster negative impact on culture, it also became the means for the voices of a contemporary vehicle of spirit. The bright side of the post-apocalypse is that some of those who survived the apocalypse or were born after it, although deprived of ancestry and cultural connection with the past, managed to master the language of the colonizer and embraced biculturalism. American Indians were now 'civilized' according to white power standards, as they lived in the cities, worked in the cities, and had an education that satisfied the norm. And yet, the system should have known that the process of forced assimilation would eventually recoil. The era of language prohibition provided American Indians with the necessary tools to voice a powerful discourse in the language of power, fueled by cultural frustration and the need to reclaim the past.

One of the central voices of the time was Vine Deloria Jr, whose phrase Red Power came "to denote a renaissance in American Indian culture" that inspired the Red Power Movement in the beginning of the Civil Rights Era (Kelly 14). Being the son of a missionary, Deloria had access to a fruitful English-based education, turning into an author and theologian, also allowing him to participate as an activist in the vindication of American Indians' civil rights. The irony behind this movement was that the system never expected it could bring its own product against itself. During the apocalypse era, several tribes were tricked into signing unlawful treaties, taking advantage of their ignorance regarding legal wordiness. The most notable example was the Treaty of New Echota (1833) that eventually

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forced the Cherokee off their land, initiating the march known as the 'Trail of Tears,' and ended up with 4,000 casualties (PBS, 2016).

When Alcatraz was occupied in 1969 by members of the Alcatraz-Red Power Movement, the island and the penitentiary had been abandoned for six years. In an attempt to hold the land as part of a post-apocalyptic reivindicative discourse, they cited the terms of the Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868),[32] possibly to finally distance themselves from the stereotype of the illiterate savage confined to the reservations. In return, they managed to garner national attention, and made an impact on the Nixon administration and all subsequent activism could be traced back to the occupation. The inefficiency of Indian-thought suppression produced an unexpected rebound effect that sparked American Indian activism, and infused the literary scene with an authentic, argumentative role.

On the other hand, the production of critical minds was never under consideration when the idea of assimilation was proposed. Literature became the most common platform not only to show the lifestyle of contemporary American Indians, but also to denounce the atrocities they had been exposed to; however, "within the European time frame, Native people's literary evolution is small [...] and the historical framework has forced them to fight for a spot in the broader literary landscape" (Fuentes 2). These minds started to increase the production of literary works in the 1960s after Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday published *House Made of Dawn* (1968). The semibiographical nature of this novel unveils the rich complexity of publishing such a work in a post-apocalyptic society. His first-hand accounts of exchanging experiences inside and outside of the reservations supported

[32] For further information, visit The National Archives: https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/sioux-treaty. Web. 21 October 2016.

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Momaday's statement that "the greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined" (in Larson 22).

Despite Momaday's fears, all American Indians have been imagined at a given time. And this is what precisely has been one of the most difficult matters for them as a community: being imagined properly. Access to the language of power gave Momaday the devices to explain what it meant to be an Indian living in the city, going back to the reservation, and studying in the city by fictionalizing about his personal experience through imagination. This might suggest that his work is not authentic, bringing the authenticity debate back into question. But since one of the problems of being "imagined improperly" (Larson 24) was, and still is, stereotyping, his work became a unique rendition of 'the other' by dealing with the excess of or the lack of proper imagination.

The apocalypse was defined as a drama of survival that destroyed a millennial tradition, but the substantially educated children of trauma redefine[d] the post-apocalypse as a self-critical challenge to escape the practice of "inclusion-exclusion based on strategies of writing and representation" (31). For this reason, the 1970s and 1980s American Indian literature "found some of Indian peoples' best hope for recovery of identity, redescription of stereotypes, and resistance to further colonization. As a creative process, such writing is often postmodern in the sense that various seemingly established literary forms frequently give way to their opposites" (24). Works such as James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* (1974) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) stand as examples of the recovery of Indianness, despite the fact they reflect the reality of most contemporary American Indians, where they seem to be trapped between the traditional past and the American mainstream. Silko found a place in this mainstream by being classified as a minority writer,

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and her contributions to the literary scene made an impact on the visibility of minorities. In an interview in 1986, Kim Barnes asked Silko how she reacted to being classified as a minority writer, and to writer Ed Abbey's words that "to get published today you need to be three things: female, minority, and preferably lesbian" (Arnold 76): "What do I think about that? I think you should ask a lesbian ethnic minority woman, who's just trying to get her first novel published or her first book of poems published [...] There haven't been that many lesbian minority women who have gotten published" (76).

The pre-apocalypse white power discourse weakened when the American Indian literary movement gained literary and political weight. To [re]claim the respect and the recognition of the individual beyond its legality, became a cultural leitmotiv for the construction of a contemporary American Indian tradition. The subject matter was more complex than to justify a status within the federal borders of the country. The goal was to achieve absolute autonomy and self-determination in order to be complete, and in order to reach that status, American Indians need[ed] to speak and write freely about "the destructive aspects of colonization" and "the problem of the genocide" (Larson 49). I could advocate for an intersectional approach between post-colonial and post-apocalyptic theories, given the strong evidence of colonialism in American Indian literature. However, the literary corpus of this research was produced by LGTBQQ writers whose works transcend the human consequences of colonialism. The construction of this new identity expressively tried to avoid the us-versus-them post-colonial binary, and presented a cutting-edge point of view never explored before, regardless of gender. There have been numerous examples of literature written by women in history, but in spite of that, male writers seemed to hold the literary canon in the western tradition. Although American Indian literature was not exempt

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from that, so some of the critical minds like Silko and Joy Harjo finally found their poetic persona and their alter egos to tell their stories and be vindicated. Nevertheless, among the outlined group of writers that critic Kenneth Lincoln included in his book *American Indian Renaissance* (1985), Paula Gunn Allen became the spirit of an era, as she "undoubtedly marks the rise of queer Native literary criticism" (Tatonetti 157).

The idea of American Indian literary contemporaneity does not exist without Allen's work. Only a few years younger than Deloria Jr., Allen was one of the many children of trauma who managed to obtain an extensive education in the second half of the twentieth century. Perhaps the idea of the *spirit of an era* is too pompous because there were other writers whose contributions were as important as hers at the time; but Allen's work stands out as a linguistically-crafted war against heteronormative and patriarchal double standards against women, minority women, and lesbian minority women. She subverted literary conventionalisms including subtle hints of lesbianism in her novel *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* (1983), and by giving visibility to the topic of struggling with recovering true Indianness and the blood quota. Post-apocalyptic children grew up in a racial limbo in which purity started to gain strength in order to conceive the idea of membership. To be Indian, it was not enough to self-identify with one community or the other, there was the issue of blood quantum as well, and the social exclusion it carried with it. The social structure American Indians were living in by the end of the century was biased by the importance of differences.

The Pueblo people opened the gate to nearly four hundred years of apocalyptic pain. Dennis Herrick's novel *Winter of the Metal People* (2013), using the Pueblo's point of view, tells the story of the Tiguex War (1540-41)—considered the first American Indian War in

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what it is today the United States—and the slaughter perpetrated by Spaniards under command of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. Most of the survivors of the killing were women, who were taken as prisoners of war or sold to slavery (Herrick 21-22). From the beginning, the process of colonization had a misogynistic attribute in the way women who survived it were treated. They were mostly exposed to rape and physical punishment, along with verbal and psychological torture. The entire process of colonization was indeed a patriarchal march. I find this worth-mentioning because Silko and Allen are both Laguna Pueblo, and although there were instances of trauma in their works (Silko's *Ceremony* deals with the aftermath of military actions), Allen's literary and anthropological work was more of an open letter to centurial patriarchy:

> The discussions are neatly ordered according to middle-class white views about where women fit into social schemes [...] It is clear, I think, that the ground we are exploring here is obscure: women in general have not been taken seriously by ethnographers or folklorists, and explorations that have been done have largely been distorted by the preconceptions engendered by a patriarchal world-view, in which lesbians are said not to exist and women are perceived as oppressed. (Allen 252)

It is known that Allen's work was pioneering for focusing on "female consciousness" (Larson 82). When she published *The Sacred Hoop* in 1986, the subject of revisitation and recovery of the 'feminine' in American Indian traditions became central for the development of an influential discourse on power. As a shamanist-toned text, it winds up with a "reasonably accurate picture" (Allen 7) of a post-apocalyptic tradition that draws from western and American Indian traditions, in order to resist, coexist, or simply exist. Although she states that she did not pursue being an American Indian scholar (1), it was focusing on the research in this field that brought her closer to her roots as a Pueblo. Oral

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tradition was present in her life as part of her ancestors' legacy, a rather personal hoop that contained the *essentials of tradition*. Having access to the language of power, as she "did [her] undergraduate work mostly in English" (1), she [re]discovered the importance of the role of women in the past. Her change of focus in her feminist tradition from "continuance" to "extinction" (Larson 82), was possibly concerned with this [re]discovery.

All works regarding women in American Indian literature were centered on a rupture with the past, a measure to ensure the continuity of the survivors in the future by disassociating from any traumatic experience, which essentially made such works incomplete. Like the African-American tradition and the vast exploitation of the trauma that ensued from slavery, for the sake of achieving completion Allen advocated for the contemporary American Indian tradition to focus on women's oppression and the extinction of Indian thought including shamanism, the berdaches, and all mythologies. She recognized lesbians as minority within the minority, yet she never considered a gay person "a more traditional Indian person, because traditional Indians were commonly homosexual" (James in Larson 83). However, the change in the historical, literary, and anthropological panoramas of the late 1980s, acknowledged the resurgence of *berdachism* in literature as a counterattack against heteronormativity and "white supremacy as a racial politic" (83).

The occupation of Alcatraz was followed by a period of historical revisionism that aimed at reinterpreting the colonization of the Americas. This period set in motion what Baudrillard defined as a reversal of history, in which history is retroversed to infinity to escape its own end (11). The spirit of the movement was genuine and young, and perhaps this stimulated the literary production of the following decades. However, Lincoln's *American Indian Renaissance* (1985) represented an endearing volume of work that failed to

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comply with its expectations from the very title of the book. I disagree with the use of the term *renaissance* as it is more often likely to something that existed, stropped doing so and comes to life again. As was pointed out, despite having oral literature, American Indian written literature was *creatio ex-nihilo*. Thus, there cannot be a rebirth of something that was never born. Nonetheless, the concept also symbolizes the idea of resurgence and revival of something that had existed and stopped doing so. Lincoln loosely uses the term to refer to this prolific period of American Indian literature, which was key to the construction of the contemporary American Indian tradition. On the one hand, the renaissance does account for the expansion and impact of the works produced during this time, as Rebecca Tillett points out (86). And yet, on the other hand, its inaccuracy is reflected on the fact that to be reborn, there needs to be a birth in the first place.

If the movement is analyzed as the aftermath of the post-apocalypse, I could support the usage of the term. Its use is also submitted to what contemporary academia considers literature. Some definitions of the term emphasise writing as a definite characteristic for a work to be considered part of a literary tradition. Under these terms, pre-apocalypse American Indian oral literature does not qualify being included in the category of literature conceived according to the norm. Its orality made it traditional and unique, it built a bond between the past and the present through acting these stories by embellishing them as time went by, but it was not enough to address the birth that the renaissance was aiming at. Although contemporary definitions also include orality within the folkloric conception of American Indian literature, the power of the written word has an ever-lasting effect that is not carried away by assumptions of hearsay. This also brings up the question of

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authenticity, as *Black Elk Speaks* did in its time, but had he not shared his teachings through orality, we would not have had access to his words in print today.

Writers of the period included by Lincoln are Silko, Harjo, Allen, Momaday, and Louise Erdrich, among others. They all shared common traits as children of the post-apocalypse: prolific, *critical minds* who looked back into their roots to reconnect with a ceremonial past, its orality, and its mythology. They are symbols of the rise of contemporary *Indianness* in academia, as they witnessed the creation of departments of American Indian Studies in some universities, as well as a growing interest on Indians and non-Indians in the subject. One of the problems with Lincoln's word choice was that, although not explicitly, it excluded the berdache tradition. How can a movement exclude literature that has never been produced? As Allen pointed out in *The Sacred Hoop*, the collective interest seemed to pursue continuance by looking at the future, forgetting the destruction the apocalypse left behind. By the end of the decade, there was enough gay American Indian literature to be included in Lincoln's work. But perhaps, due to its appealing non-conventionality, and its unfortunate placement at a time where social stigma against the gay population grew larger,[33] Lincoln consciously obliterated the existence of the berdache in the elaboration of tradition.

When William Roscoe and a group of gay[34] American Indian writers decided to publish a collection of works by, and mostly for, gay American Indians, the idea seemed to be the perfect definition of a post-apocalyptic recoil: "by the time [the collection] appeared in

[33] The AIDS epidemic of the 1980s.

[34] The arbitrary use of 'gay' instead of 'LGBTQQ' obeys the chronological evolution of the movement. The first acronym LGBT was not in use until the 1990s, as a reaction to the first initialism LGB commonly used in the 1980s, but failed at representing the whole sexual identity spectrum. Thus, it has been subject to change to include transsexuals, two-spirits, and more recently, queer and questioning individuals.

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1988, sexuality, sex, and gender were understood by some anthropologists, sexologists, and other academics to be cultural constructions that could be investigated separately" (Jacobs 27). The birth of *Living the Spirit* was a sexually diverse rejection of society in pursuit of the autonomous self (Larson 47). Compared to Lincoln's work, which was progressive despite its controversial title and the exclusion of the berdache, this anthology was the result of critical thinking and its desire to be present and relevant for the world beyond literary borders. Although the following section of this chapter will deal in depth with this work, it needs to be placed in the chronological evolution of a tradition that existed, endured modifications almost to its extinction, and was later redefined. The magnitude of that work gathered artists, poets, storytellers, photographers, and historians to publish a modern shamanist-like piece, appealingly crafted in visual and written languages. The object of the collection was to redescribe stereotypes and tell a story. As a literary representation of the world after the end, it elaborated on a discourse of decolonization of the body, and the positive affirmation of survival and continuance: "Gay and lesbian America Indians today represent the continuity of this tradition" (Burns in Roscoe 2).

Upon arrival of the last decade of the century, the American Indian literary panorama had started an unstoppable and successful expansion of its universe. Momaday had been awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1969 for *House Made of Dawn*; Silko had won the American Book Awards in 1980 for *Ceremony*, followed by Erdrich's National Book Critics Circle Award in 1984 for *Love Medicine*, Roscoe had published the first gay American Indian anthology in 1988, and Allen had been awarded the American Book Award in 1990 for *Spider Woman's Granddaughters* (1990). This is just an example of a much broader specter of writers who were gaining notoriety in the American cultural mainstream. The society of

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the 1990s had a proclivity to progress, which made the reception of these works easier. Progress was steady, until the turn of the century brought a new era of political correctness that conditioned the new discourse as "repentance is part of post-modernity" (Baudrillard 35).

Many terms had fallen out of favor for their pejorative reference, which started to make the correct approach to certain communities difficult. For instance, in Canada and Greenland, the term *Eskimo* was substituted with 'Inuit' as is expressed in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 in the definition of 'aboriginal' (Part 2, section 35). On the other hand, in the United States American Indians have been struggling to find a collective agreement since the colonization because the nomenclature is subject to racial bias, individual preference, region, and age: Indians, Redskin, Savage, American Indian, Native American, Aboriginal, Amerindian, Indigenous, Alaska Native or as Larson comments, "Indi'n:"

> The word "Indi'n," with its dialectical elision, crosses the first boundary between native tribal peoples and immigrant Euroamericans. America is not India, we all know by now, and these tribal aborigines are nominally not In-*di*-ans. They do not spell or speak themselves as such; by inverse relation to "proper" English, indeed, they collate dialectically across a continent as differing peoples with hundreds of tongues [...] Pride in dialect constitutes inversion, transforming an oppressive signifier of otherness into a pride-inspiring prism, one which may be used for the critical inspection of "the other." (Lincoln in Larson 27)

A similar situation was presented with the term 'berdache.' According to Jacobs and as has been pointed out, the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that the term is somehow connected to the term 'catamite' and its modern sexual implications of 'a receiving partner in anal intercourse with a man.' For apparent reasons, the term caused outrage among the

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community of American Indian gay, lesbian, transgender, and other people; consequently, it was categorized as derogatory and insulting (4). Contrary to what happened in the white gay movement with the reclamation of the term 'queer,' whose purpose was to establish a "larger discourse on identity politics" (Fuentes 35), gay and lesbian American Indians challenged and detached themselves from the term 'berdache' in an attempt to respect "the universality of homosexual behavior" (Jacobs et al. 9).

The conflict between terminologies was powered by several misrepresentations and stereotypical concepts. At this point, it is relevant to remember that American Indian literature had also endured homophobia as a consequence of the apocalypse, powering a criticism heavily biased by the iconography and symbolism of the urban homosexual. For this reason, gay American Indians saw themselves at the beginning of the decade facing the problem of homophobia inside and outside their communities; searching for a proper term to address themselves in a respectful and honoring way—not forgetting to include the aspects of the old berdache tradition—and willingly redefining the post-apocalyptic gay American Indian. The 'end' of the berdache was itself a catastrophe that accelerated the painful, yet necessary, de-romantization of the concept. However, to part ways with the term did not have an equal or similar effect as to what it meant to detach from Indianness. The first was a voluntary "transfiguration of the subman" (Baudrillard 95), if the berdache is considered to be an inferior being that failed to meet the expectations of gay American Indian people at *fin de siècle*; the second was a traumatic separation from the prodigious event, "the event which is measured neither by its causes nor its consequences but creates its own stage and its own dramatic effect" (21).

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The burial of the berdache took place at the third annual intertribal American Indian/First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg in 1990. During the conference, the term *two-spirit* gained broad popularity as a more appropriate and politically correct approach to distance themselves from the terms 'berdache' and 'gay.' Its roots can be traced back to the Ojibwe words *niizh manitoag*, literally meaning 'two-spirits,' which eventually came to represent "categories, identities, and gender roles absent from the European tradition" (Fuentes 12).

The transfiguration of the berdache was an embellishment of a pre-existent entity that had been socially condemned. There was an anthropological necessity, or even desire, to redefine it in order to contribute to a particularly memorable heritage. Post-apocalyptic traditions are concerned with the idea of immortality, presenting the world of the future with a legacy linked to our tangible present, in order to correlate with an emotional past. For instance, the South Dakota State University Centennial Time Capsule was sealed in 1982 to be opened in 2081. More recently, two time capsules were unearthed on Illinois State University's South Campus, revealing never-seen-before memorabilia from 1959 and 1961 (Denham 2016). This "reabsorption of the metaphor of life into the metastasis of survival" (Baudrillard 95) supports the idea of moving forwards in a space-time continuum that never ends due to its spherical nature. In other words, the shortest distance between two points, e.g. life and death, is a straight line that does not exist. The walk of life is affected by returning external variables that condition, to an extent, the construction of the self. For this reason, the revision of truths and facts, the transfiguration of the berdache, and the immortality of the two-spirits can be seen as a "chaotic formation" (111) that diverts history from the end.

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Despite its transfigurative nature as an umbrella term, *two-spirits* was not widely adopted by all members of the community because first, it carried different connotations in some languages such as the Athapaskan, in which the term references the living and the ghosts (Farrer 248); and second, there were different conceptualizations of gender and sexuality: "Some [LGBTQQ] Native folks have rejected the term *Two-Spirits*, while others have rejected terms such as *Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Trans,* and *Queer* in favor of *Two-Spirits* or tribally specific terms. Still others move between terms depending on the specific rhetorical context" (Driskill 30). The consequence of embracing or rejecting this/these term[s] is that "it complicates the gender debate" (Fuentes 3), and obstructs the construction of a homogeneous power and identity discourse. The term challenged the anthropological desire to analyze the tradition as a series of fields, rather than as a sovereign identity. The conception of a man or a woman 'gifted' with a soul of each gender did not adjust to certain communities' ideation of gender such as the Navajo or the Lakota, who took refuge under the terms *Nadles*[35] and *Winkte* respectively (Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh* 53).

Many writers in the North American landscape have identified themselves as two-spirit. The scope of such a term extended to include indigenous people from the United States and Canada despite the tension it might have created "between signifier and signified" (Larson 29). Throughout the 1990s, 'two-spirit' consolidated more as a spiritual rather than a descriptive identity, as it believed in the inclusion of philosophical beliefs that transcended western conventions and recognized their place in the circle of life, as Vernon suggests (22). The reference to the circle and its cyclic nature, brings back the use of language as a vehicle of power. In order to manipulate readership, the media made a

[35] *Nádleehé, nádlehí, nadleeh*. Alternate spellings suggest an emic approach on cross-cultural studies (Jacobs 29).

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thorough use of wordiness to describe American Indians as uncivilized and savages at the beginning of the twentieth century. The rise of anti-gay politics in the nineties witnessed the use of the same verbosity against the gay community in the United States. After James C. Hormel was nominated by Bill Clinton to be the first openly gay U.S. ambassador in Luxembourg in 1997, it caused major outrage among republican militants who attacked him [and the gay community] publicly for supporting "an offensive lifestyle," and for being "degenerates" and "weak, morally sick wretches" (Franke-Ruta, 2013). On the other hand, gay American Indians were trying to take pride in their identity in a post-epidemic society that saw thousands of people perish because of AIDS; and yet, "many assimilated Natives [...] replaced tribal specific names for men who have alternative sexual orientations with 'faggot,' 'pervert,' or 'homo'" (Vernon 23).

Homophobia and AIDS are recurring subjects in the modern construction of a two-spirit power discourse due to their liability and its effect on the American Indian population. AIDS has become a post-apocalypse havoc because of the social stress it brings into the population, and its power to decimate a community. Vernon remarks that today AIDS is considered the new smallpox (1), and the situation has been aggravated in the nineties and early 2000s with the geographical isolation of some reservations. During the four hundred-year apocalypse, tuberculosis, diphtheria, smallpox, and yellow fever among others, were responsible for quite a large number of deaths. It seems the situation has not changed more than four centuries later, because the inability or the *à propos* inefficiency of the health system is leaving many infected American Indians -who are mostly, but not necessarily, two-spirit- to die, as denounced by Vernon.

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To achieve a state of fulfilment and completion, two-spirits need to externalize their views on death and destruction as part of the rebirth of their identity. Further, they need to get past their visibility as legal numbers to be dealt with governmentally, and they also need to surmount the new stereotyping. To understand the impact of stereotypes on the process of the construction of contemporary American Indians (Larson 21), we need to think metaphorically about reflection and refraction. Reflection happens when a ray of light bounces off an object, regardless of its surface; whereas refraction happens when the same ray bends upon the same object. Images of the past come back in the same direction to our present. American Indians were portrayed as savages, blood-thirsty, and uncivilized to justify the Euromerican idea of otherness.

The post-apocalypse redefined the stereotype by categorising them as alcoholics, gamblers, with proclivity towards obesity and diabetes, and prone to substance abuse, unhealthy people who were considered misfits overall. Hence the question is whether stereotyping reflects or refracts through the rough lens of modern history, and the answer is both. It reflects as it contains the basics of stereotyping, which rely on name-calling, the creation of abstract and mistaken a-truths, and the fear towards the other, and despite time and space, the result is the same as the process that came from its original source. On the other hand, it refracts because it has an impact on the object as it bends through socio-historical convex and concave lenses, redirecting stereotyping and its effect towards the American Indian as an individual (convex) or as a community (concave).

The situation for two-spirits was not favorable in such a panorama. Stereotyping affected them both, internally and externally, as they were sometimes categorized as 'faggots' by other American Indians and by a broader community that was mainly white. In

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addition to this, the state of the silenced AIDS crisis among American Indians also had a negative effect on them, because two-spirits were thought to be more prone to infection than any other member of the community. Also, finding a proper terminology to identify with was still a matter of controversy, especially with the anti-gay movement gaining strength all over the country. The act of '*being* Indian' in a post-apocalyptic society that was still burning after the wars of Vietnam and the Persian Gulf became a matter of prudence, but '*being* a gay Indian' or a two-spirit also created pressure and stigma within the American Indian community, leading them to internalize -sometimes- social shame and homophobia by 'closeting' themselves from their peers, forcing them to leave their reservations for the cities to find a place they could finally belong, only to finally end up being "alcoholics, [....] indigents, [working] as prostitutes, and [having] multiple partners" (Vernon 27). As Larson states, all these elements combined have channeled a complex construction of a contemporary [gay] American Indian identity (33).

Queer Native literature or Two-Spirit American Indian Literature[36] established a canon of texts in the late 1980s, paving the way for the birth of a critical discipline in the academic field. For instance, Mohawk writer Beth Brant came to represent how "traditional Indian structures of language, story, and humor allow American Indians to use such opportunities to develop new literatures and criticism" (Larson 25). Her work as an editor in *A Gathering of Spirit* (1988) and *Living the Spirit* (1988), as a writer in *Food & Spirits* (1991), and as an activist and lecturer in *Writing as Witness* (1994) is as influential as Allen's. Her technique and "purpose of a lifetime of activism, lecturing, and creation on behalf of race, gender, and sexuality" (Fuentes 1) were reflected in her constant contesting of identity, given the fact

[36] Henceforth referred to as TSAIL.

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she was a white-skinned blonde, as she was product of miscegenation. Many terms identify Brant in the TSAIL scope, from Mohawk to mother, and from feminist to lesbian. The constant revisitation of these themes was present in her narrative development of bi-spatial universes, where the female role was the norm (Fuentes 3), and where one of the central topics was the understanding of being a Native lesbian.

Living the Spirit included works by eleven lesbian American Indian writers, but it took fifteen years to see a Native lesbian protagonist after Allen's *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, until author Carole LaFavor's *Along the Journey River* (1996) and *Evil Dead Center* (1997) appeared on the literary scene. As Tatonetti observes, "the [time] span between these novels saw the slow but steady rise of a body of GLBTQ2 literature" (157). The fact there was an ongoing literary and academic escalation was enough to allow to take pride in openly acknowledging one's identity. Brant, Cherokee Asegi poet Qwo-Li Driskill, Menominee writer Chrystos, and Allen are examples of openly-identified two-spirit people whose voice was and is still heard.

Throughout this research, the struggle between power and identity became evident, constant, and unsettling. There has been—and still is—a constant allusion to the process of loss and endurance that has modified and conditioned the presence of two-spirits. During the nineties, some writers chose to adhere to the concept of two-spirit because it seemed rightful and philosophically logical, regarding identity and anthropological links to the past. Others found the 'label' too romanticized because it based the projection of identity on souls dwelling in the same body, which could have been considered hostile or even macabre by some communities. Therefore, I find myself unable to provide a more insightful definition of a two-spirit person other than that of: a third-gendered being who, regardless

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of his/her morphology, finds a balance between the old berdache and the new gay. It is even more complex when transsexuality and cross-dressing are considered, because there is no linguistic form appropriate enough to address them fully.

Cross-dressers are misidentified as transvestites, an old-fashioned and derogatory concept in academia. The fact that some people still consider biological sex as a catalyst for the designation of gender, makes the choice of the terminology even more convoluted. The nineties were an era of social awakening, in which minorities started to [re]gain the prominence they had lost in the previous decades. Despite this growing visibility, transgendered people were now becoming targets of progressive transphobia, which reached its climax with the murder of transgender African-American Rita Hester in 1998 (S. Allen, 2015), and later with Navajo two-spirit Fred Martinez's murder in 2001 (Fuentes 20). The nineties' society had the 1973 *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*'s Dr. Frank-N-Furter as a reference for the day-to-day cross-dresser as they were considered ludicrous, and deviant transvestite figures who were fun to look at. Perhaps, Michael Spivak's gender-neutral pronouns *e, eir,* and *em* (Dibbell 138) would be more appropriate to address two-spirits, though their usage might suggest there is an absence of gender.

The review of the berdache tradition in this section has encountered that cross-dressing was an important part of *berdachism*. Men wore women's dresses and vice versa, not because it was a matter of style but because it was a matter of identity completeness. Euromerican tradition considered such practice as deviant behaviour, together with same-sex marriage, and same-sex intercourse. When analyzed, old berdaches were probably

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presented as paraphilics[37] and afterwards as *travesties* when the term was coined in 1832. The social changes of the last decades of the twentieth century fueled the deconstruction of the transvestite in order to build a new identity true to its philosophical essence. After the term 'cross-dresser' was adopted and the term 'transvestite' was repealed in favor of political correctness, the question of whether two-spirits were to be considered cross-dressers or not became an important issue. Although cross-dressing was a key element in the construction of *berdachism*, it was not completely recovered by the contemporary tradition, probably due to its westernization. Jeans substituted tunics and trainers substituted moccasins. The children of trauma had found a way to cope with the present by embracing its fashion as part of their new *mixed* identity, the same way *being gay* started to be en vogue as part of a post-modern tendency to normalization.

Despite the rising homophobia in America during the nineties, this period was a symbol of small chronological victories for the American Indian community. As a group who had experienced the end of the world and had to learn how to speak after the loss of language, having the American Indian Languages Act of 1990 signed by President H.W. Bush triggered the feeling of success and a better-imagined future: "the status of the cultures and languages of American Indians is unique and the United States has the responsibility to act together with American Indians to ensure the survival of these unique cultures and languages" (Title I, Section 102, 2). Moreover, with the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1994 signed by President Bill Clinton, and the following decree of the month of November each year to be National American Indian Heritage Month in 1996, American

[37] Paraphilia was defined as a mental disorder in which the subject suffered from sexual arousal to certain behaviours such as dressing up in the garments of the opposite sex.

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Indians started to trace new—though not geographical—border lines, that enabled them to reconnect with their ancestors and contest the cultural appropriation of traditional and sacred objects of their culture.

Scattered pieces of this damaged culture started to be put together in a post-apocalyptic world, where identity politics have become a double-edged sword. Twenty years later, the world still attends to the belittlement of such culture. For instance, the President of the United States Donald Trump's remarks toward Senator Elizabeth Warren exemplify this abuse. She self-proclaimed her American Indian heritage, although no evidence was ever presented to corroborate the fact. This deliberate action is framed within "the increasing popularity of claiming to be an 'Indian' [that] creates another challenge for cultural definitions of identity" because "many contemporary status Indians... have no native [sic] American biological ancestry at all" (Larson 33). President Trump repeatedly attacked her by calling her 'Pocahontas' (@realDonaldTrump, *Twitter.com*, 2016). If the President of the United States himself relies on the stereotypical misrepresentation of a captive, what hope is there for the institution of tolerance and social respect?

The western world had been bombarded with apocalyptic advertising before 1999. The unfounded social fear of an imminent apocalypse, and the panic of the Y2K potentiated by the media upon the arrival of the new millennium, evidenced the world's unpreparedness to contain mass hysteria. Many people truly believed the end of the world would occur on 31st December 1999, and yet, six billion people woke up the following morning to their disappointment. A similar case happened on 21st December 2012 and the possibility of the end of the world, blaming the failure of the Maya calendar to keep its count beyond that day in *our* calendar. History has proven to be cyclical, and so it has the illusion of the end of

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the world. The necessity of holding on to ideas of renewal, survival, and transition have characterized us since the dawn of civilisation. However, the thanatophobia developed towards our own extinction has been present in the cinematic and literary universes for quite a while now, as a friendly reminder of what could still happen.

The American Indian post-apocalypse world is a work in progress, in which the end of the world supplies enough trauma to elaborate on "the interaction between the mind and the experience" (Larson 63). Western civilization's recurrent idea of the end cannot attain such balance, because in this tradition the end is conceptually imaginative rather than empirically depicted. For two-spirits, this interaction between the mind and the experience is a struggle between the past, present in the mind as the pragmatic understanding of *berdachism* as part of their new identity, and the present, represented by feelings of alienation since they "no longer expect anything from some future 'coming'" (Baudrillard 9). The frustration arising from the pressure to reconcile their dual identity, not only as American Indians, but also as two-spirit, sets the tone for a *post*[38] tradition, in which first-hand experience will energize the production of a more sophisticatedly offensive, critical, and raw body of literature.

3.4 *Two-Spirit Rising: The Making of the Aesthetics of Identity*

In the interest of becoming two-spirit or constructing a new gay American Indian identity, the main aim of the movement's precursors has been to adhere to redefinition by recuperation. Contemporary TSAIL explores topics regarding self-awareness in the community, humor, coming of age in a post-apocalyptic world, the role of the urban in sexuality and sensuality, love, high fantasy, and thoroughly piercing criticism. Writers of the

[38] Postmodern, post-millennium, post-human, and post-apocalypse.

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Two-spirit Rising, a term I consider appropriate to describe the beginning of a new era in TSAIL right after the beginning of the millennium, have managed to recuperate older concepts such as the idea of spatialism. However, the concept has changed as it is not as antiquated and romantic as before; it is defined more as a place where the soul dwells, rather than to where it belongs, which does not necessarily come to be the ancestral land of their predecessors. Urbanism has played an important role in the change of view of spatialism in the process, to the point of creating a sense of no-man's-land because they feel they cannot be completely gay Indians or two-spirit anywhere. It seems that the reservation expels them and the city devours them.

The 'Two-Spirit Rising' is an ongoing period whose usefulness helps to determine the aesthetics of identity. It is difficult to set an expiration date, but it hopefully will continue to expand and evolve rather than to die out, until writers and, eventually, the community manage to put the pieces of a traumatised culture together. *Living the Spirit* was compiled during the Reagan administration, which could be seen as revolutionary given the extreme conservativism that grew in disgust with the Sexual Revolution. However, the Two-spirit Rising period started in the middle of a divided political climate mostly powered by terror. Protests against the Iraq War in 2002 and 2003 began as a social weapon to threat the system. In addition to this, the 2000s saw the increase of LGBT rights in the American mainstream, which made it more difficult for the government to keep ignoring the absence of equal laws for LGBT people. The turmoil of the first decade of the century was the breeding ground for a period of gay American Indian writers who:

- Considered individual space more of a facility and physical place where the soul lives rather than a spiritual connection with the ancestral past.

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- Redefined the concepts of queer erotics by focusing on their identity as a sexually-spirited identity, working with body-flesh and spirit-soul dichotomies.
- Favored the transition from heteronormative thought towards two-spirit societies, by creating a platform "with which large numbers of individuals across North America could identify" (Gilley 29).
- Made literature accessible to their nations and gendered communities, allowing them to popularize the genre among non-academic audiences.

Throughout the 2000s, representations 'at the end of the world' have improved to raise awareness and increase social acceptance. Present-day society is preconditioned to live in fear of being wiped out by the nuclear threats of North Korea and Russia, the rise of the extremist Islamism, the European refugee crisis, and the aftermath of a possible dissolution of the European Union. The presence of the United States in all these scenarios has made them the target of a successful culture of terror, which has evidently influenced the literary and cinematic production after 9/11. Writers of the twenty-first century tend to present subtler representations of a physical end, perhaps because American Indians have "a healthier perception of death" (Larson 66), and they deal with deeper layers of meaning regarding the construction of the being in and out of Indian Country. American Indians are not immune to terror, of course, as they have learned to take part in the collective phobia towards the illusion of the end. But their tribal worldviews of death and terror can be considered additions to the practical aspects of their social structure, and if they do so "without the sense of loss, nostalgia, and regret that often results in hugely destructive projections of fear and insecurity" (Larson 67), there will be a new homogeneous discourse of power and identity.

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If the period of post-apocalyptic recoil has *Living the Spirit* as its landmark work, the Two-spirit Rising period will consider *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-spirit Literature* (2011) a literary and critical banner that spent twenty-three years in the making. It does not mean that writers were committed to the production of such a volume for that time, but in the introduction editors provide a chronological evolution of the literary production between the 1970s and the 2000s, a period of literary fertility and the development of a self-critical and more pragmatic mentality regarding *Indianness.* This period is characterized for its ceremonial essence, as it unifies temporarily "the past and the future with the present" (Larson 68). Writers of this period acknowledge the presence of historical traumas, but despite their attempts to accomplish healing in order to move forwards, they cannot detach completely from the apocalypse. Perhaps in a more far-fetched approach, this inability to disconnect completely from the traumatic event could be seen as capture-bonding, which fuels a neither-with-you-nor-without-you feeling that prevents the achievement of completeness.

Contemporary gay American Indians protect and celebrate their tradition through literary subversions of the oral tradition, "redescriptions of historical and family stories" (Larson 84), emphasizing the value of storytelling, relying on the power of language, gatherings, and through the reflection of their real and lived experiences, as Larson comments (103). These gatherings are "social events, usually held over spring and summer weekends, where people come from all over North America at the invitation of another Two-Spirit [sic] society" (Gilley, *Becoming Two-Spirit* 43). In these events, the aim is to create a feeling of closeness, a sense of homogeneity in which everyone feels comfortable, as a result of making sex and gender difference a part of public American Indian identity by

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"bringing together gay and Indian social worlds" (44). So, post-apocalyptic tradition covers so many aspects of the social spectrum, that there is no simple explanation that contemplates the wholeness of its definition.

In the socio-historical context, the term 'tradition' has been subject to four hundred years of modifications under strenuous policies of power that have caused identity to falter several times. The conception of tradition before, during, and after the apocalypse is a way to understand the traumatic essence of a discourse that some might find repetitive. There is no way to detach from the immediate past, especially if there are still survivors who tell and retell their stories. Eventually, future generations will possibly look at the apocalypse as an inflection point, a cultural landmark that will have reshaped their identities by then. The grandchildren of trauma and those after them, will become authentic descendants of those who once endured the apocalypse, and will be addressed the same way modern society addresses traumatic events' survivors: as people with a special, though not necessarily good or bad, connection to our collective history. Thus, the post-apocalypse approach is more suitable because of its chronological relevance and the collective understanding of the end, given current society's obsession with termination.[39]

The fear that arises from the constant bombardment about global warming and the imminent melting of the polar caps, the media and the constant sense of panic, and the recurrent thought of the world coming to an end, construct a homogeneous discourse of power that collides with social deconstructions of such discourse. Is modern society

[39] TV shows such as *The Walking Dead* (2010), a series about a group of survivors in the aftermath of a zombie apocalypse; young-adult dystopian works such as *The Hunger Games* (2008), *The Maze Runner* (2009) and *Divergent* (2011), where groups of teenagers are exposed to traumatic episodes now regarded as normal; and the revision of feminism in the outcome of the destruction of the world in George Miller's *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) set the tone for the critical socio-anthropological debates around the end of civilization in the following years.

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beginning to challenge the system's discourse by contesting its reliability in a world where access to information, social demand for equality, and loss of religious force are changing the panorama? Contemporary gay American Indians are also part of the cultural mainstream that deals with death, as the rise of AIDS—considered the new smallpox epidemic among American Indian males— is a recurring topic in TSAIL.

Larson has provided a comprehensive study of the contemporary American Indian tradition, and I agree with him when he concludes that "the focus of existence is quite different for Indians, who persist in remaining as concerned with lived experiences of the 'real' world as they are with the world in which imagination moves and has its being" (154). Identity is still intrinsically determined by imagination, which conditions the acceptance of what is authentic and what is not. The American Indian writers of the 1980s onwards have fictionalized about their past to suppress their differences from other members of the community, which "echoes the need for unification of the past and future with the present" (153).

After *House Made of Dawn*, the TSAIL production sky-rocketed to build a solid corpus of literature in less than fifty years. Other literatures have achieved that after centuries of literary production and exploration of several styles. The fact it grew so fast has shown the imperative necessity of finding a way of expression, and its critical reception empowered them to keep it up rather than to slow it down. Roscoe was a central figure in the process. Thanks to his editing work, *Living the Spirit* saw the light in a time in which reading American Indian literature *about* American Indians *by* American Indians was unconceivable. The process is a drama of survival, and American Indians are perhaps the strongest members of the current American mainstream. Genocide, loss of language, forced

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assimilation, cultural appropriation, trauma, alcoholism, AIDS. Despite the system's reiterated attempts to exterminate them, they have found a way to make a stand and stand their ground, using the language of power to prove their versatility, and moreover, to show how most of them embrace biculturalism.

Four centuries of casualties and political hypocrisy have weighed on American Indians in favor of the WHASPM government(s) of the United States. The same time span has given them the resilience to wait, to adapt and to adjust to make the most of their situation; to analyze and come to terms with a hostile state of affairs; and to finally prove that the pen is mightier than the sword. Hence the following chapter will delve into the first section of *Living the Spirit*, to provide an insight on the central concepts of this research that were lost in the process of cultural assimilation.

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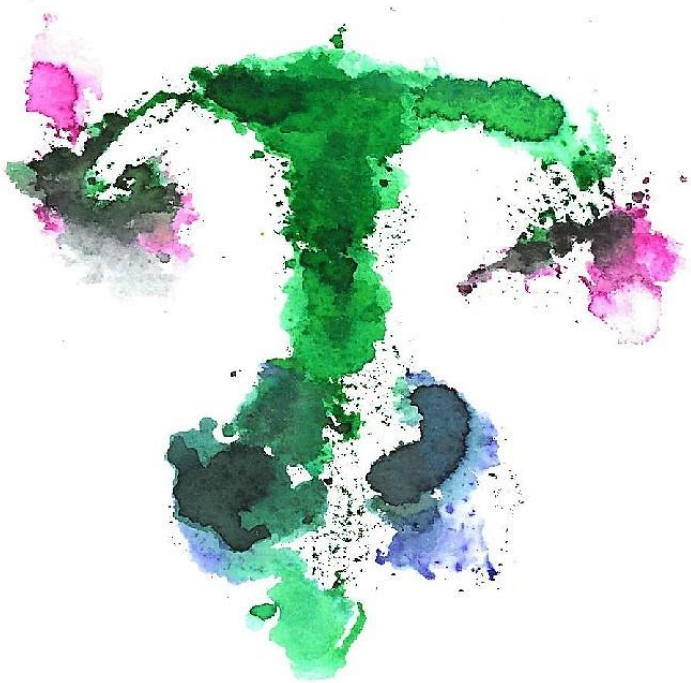

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Chapter Four

Oúŋ kčhí nağí[40]

All of Creation is related.
And the hurt of one is the hurt of all.
And the honor of one is the honor of all.
And whatever we do affects everything in the universe.

(Passed down from White Buffalo Calf Woman)

Western projections of American Indians have traditionally romanticized their exoticism. They have recurred to stereotypes that have reflected the reality to which individuals of the post-apocalypse have been exposed: a dialogue between tradition, sexuality, and postmodernism at the turn of the century. This discourse on the uniqueness of [gay] American Indians was shaped by Will Roscoe when he edited *Living the Spirit* (1988), a cutting-edge production that debuted on the American literary scene of the late 1980s. The necessity of creating a literary corpus propelled the redefinition of the collective understanding of sexuality and the recuperation of the *queerness* that once was intrinsic to American *Indianness*.

Prior to 1988, the literary and academic production concerning American Indians was virtually non-existent, and American society had almost reached the end of the millennium holding on to a pre-established Hollywoodesque image of them. Thus, the *critical minds*— the American Indian intellectuals produced by the superstructure— called upon the imperative obligation to [re]educate 'Indians and non-Indians' for the sake of cultural preservation. Given the tendency to conservatism and limitations in content and form of

[40] *Life and Spirit* respectively, retrieved from the New Lakota Dictionary Pro, V.1: 2014. November 2016.

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the American school system, it is expected that such system would not include teaching about homosexuality in the American Indian tradition. Therefore, it is highly probable that in present-day America very few people acknowledge the existence of berdachism before the Europeans arrived on the continent.

Living the Spirit's first section is an almost shamanistic response[41] to that lack of socio-cultural awareness in and out Indian country. It has been assembled with the aim of elaborating on the idea that American Indians were more than warriors and medicine people: "As artists, providers, and healers, our traditional gay ancestors had important responsibilities," says Northern Paiute Randy Burns in the preface to the collection (1); that their sex and gender system was far more complex than the one set by Euromerican standards, and that their authenticity produced an identity discourse heavily influenced by sociological and cultural accounts. Burns' encyclopedic tone embellishes the mechanical dialectic between the factual data and the discussion, impregnated with a communal feeling of oneness throughout the first part of the anthology.

Compared to the first section, the second is more a visceral and first-hand experience. The vertebral column of the anthology is a statement on life and spirit, powered by the sexual native queerness that Americans robbed from America's history. It depicts a traumatized generation fighting the social stigma of racism and homophobia, while dealing with a painful [re]construction of *Indianness*. This part follows a braid-like pattern that weaves poetry, short stories, fiction, and personal accounts with photographs and illustrations to create an experience of authenticity. Thus, this chapter will provide an in-

[41] This section grants the reader access to the physical and spiritual world of the berdache. Its informative nature works as a 'healer' in the process of identity construction to overcome the wounds of trauma. Thus, the works contained in the first part and their authors could be seen as curators of the greater culture, hence acquiring shaman-like attributes as healers and providers.

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depth analysis of a selection of texts that include: Beth Brant's "Her Name is Helen," and "Coyote Learns a New Trick;" Paula Gunn Allen's "Selections from *Raven Road*;" Ben the Dancer's "Gay American Indians;" Lawrence William O'Connor's "A National Disgrace;" Kieran Prather/Jerry's "Becoming Indian;" Erna Pahe's "Speaking Up;" M. Owlfeather's "Children of Grandmother Moon," and Chrystos' "Today Was a Bad Day Like TB." This selection radiates a sense of tradition that constructs a viral two-spirit discourse of power[lessness] and belonging, amidst the death of the berdache, coping with the aftermath of trauma, and the quest for *Indianness*: the construction of contemporary identity.

There would not be a reclamation of identity without general support "to understand the violence committed against us, by us" (Brant, *Writing as Witness* 16). After the foundation of the American Indian Movement and the awakening of American Indian activism, there was a necessity to call upon unity and moral support. Gay American Indians have been facing double oppression because of racism and homophobia, and their existence has been threatened by the inability of the superstructure to eliminate these WHASPM constructs. For this reason, the object of analyzing a body of work produced nearly twenty-eight years ago from a post-apocalypse, yet contemporary perspective, lies in understanding its relevance for the rhetoric of the body and the discourse of identity, as well as its cultural compromise for the future.

The process of identity construction has been happening at a fast pace following the publishing of Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* in 1968. Society has redefined the discourse of identity in time and space so quickly that it has become challenging. The constant revisitation of concepts, terminologies, and approaches have made it difficult, though not

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impossible, to establish a single critical linearity for the analysis of TSAIL literature. The contemporaneity of racism and homophobia plays an important role in connecting the past and the present, which was conceived as one of the main aims of this research: to provide a theoretical, critical, and literary approach to establish the conception of a post-apocalypse gay American Indian tradition in the American cultural mainstream.

Certain groups among different generations after the Second World War have been acquainted with different levels of trauma and they could identify with some aspects of the American Indian experience. Generation X (up to early 1980s), and more recently, Millennials (born after 1985) have used the generational discourse to familiarize themselves with racism and homophobia with the intention of empathizing to achieve a mutual philosophical understanding. In the following pages, there will be a reflection on the concepts of life and death, oppression, the decolonization of the body, the elevation of the spirit, the revival of identity, and the reconstruction of a longed-for *Indianness* in a post-apocalypse society that dwells in a constant state of 'ending.' This state of active imagination puts literature at stake in a world of dreams and visions, visited by American Indians with some understanding of what to expect and how to deal with the experience. However, this process has been westernized and consequently trained to fulfil ideas of behaviour. Hence, the question posed is what would gay American Indian writers do if they woke up to a post-apocalypse dream under the superstructure's control?

4.1 A Post-Apocalypse Dream: Exposition

The definitions of 'dream' and 'apocalypse' are symbolically intertwined. A dream is defined as "a series of thoughts, images, or emotions occurring during sleep;" "a visionary creation of the imagination;" "a state of mind marked by abstraction or release from

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reality;" or "a strongly desired goal or purpose" (*Merriam-Webster*, 2016). An apocalypse[42] is defined as "a great disaster" or "something viewed as a prophetic revelation" (*Merriam-Webster*, 2016). Most humans are unable to recall dreams or nightmares accurately, thus they group together images of what is remembered and interpret their meaning. On the other hand, having a prophetic revelation is an unlikely *performance* that history, anthropology, and mysticism have attributed to special or peculiar beings such as the sibyls and the Pythia at Delphi in the Greek tradition and shamans in the universal tradition, given their presence in nearly every culture. Both concepts share a moment of creation and imagination which support the popular belief of premonitory dreams as a revelation of a future event. Further, they are also subject to social constructions of endurance as both have "the quality of continuing for a long time" (*Merriam-Webster*, 2016). In this sense, I propose Paula Gunn Allen's poem "Some Like Indians Endure," the opening text of *Living the Spirit*'s first section, as a post-illusive text. These texts encompass the concept that ideas are based on a post-human illusion of freedom central to the decolonization and recolonization of the body after its destruction; and that a culture's metanarrative's big truth is more an elusive/illusive consensus reached as a response to trauma, rather than an empirical fact.

4.1.1 *"Some Like Indians Endure" by Paula Gunn Allen*

The body is a physical confinement that acts "as a stimulus to the sociological imagination" (Shilling 21), and portrays a dual status as an object of importance for sociology and gender studies, as well as a social construct. During the apocalypse, the perpetrators were in a position of power to "convert their fear and mistrust of the female

[42] The use of the undetermined article opens the possibility of having more than one apocalypse per the definition provided.

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body into attempts to control and reduce the physical space women occupy in society" (Chernin in Shilling 65). For American Indian women, regardless of their sexual identity, these attempts have been established as murder, war imprisonment, slavery, and the heterosexualisation of the body "for white men's pleasure" (Green in Finley 34). However, they never faced actual extinction as the aim was to reduce their presence to the point of being controllable: "According to colonial logics, Native women need to be managed, because they lack control over their sexuality and therefore their bodies" (35). No power system survives without oppression, whether it be literal or figurative. The act of human population planning was, as Finley postulates, the ultimate goal to use 'biopower,' and hence oppression, to own the body and manage the land (36): "they were massacred / lots of times / they always came back / like the grass / like the clouds / they got massacred again" (Allen 9). And yet, it is improbable that this vicious circle of death, reproduction, and miscegenation was in the perpetrators' mind during the apocalypse. Therefore, when American Indian women returned as half-blood individuals, a consequence of systematic rape as a means to exert power on captive women, they did so inheriting the patriarchy.

The heterosexualization of the body never materialized, at least entirely. It started a progressive separation of the sexual body from the idea of *Indianness*. Consequently, lesbians, two-spirit American Indian women, and 'dykes' were coerced to undertake the disappearance of indigeneity: "like indians [sic] / dykes have fewer and fewer / someplace elses to go" (Allen 11). Although there is no mention of a physical place, there is a cornering feeling that conforms with the evolution of society at that time. Despite the rise of LGB rights—transsexuals were not included until the 1990s—, the movement empathized with gay white people, and not with minorities. Each subgroup had to embark on their own

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quest for social recognition within the subsequent spheres in the gay world. The heteronormative world produced an implosion of the social structure that restricted all non-compliant groups to a limited area. For this reason, of all the existent minority individuals, an 'American Indian bull-dyke' was in the worst position imaginable. She was faced with a dilemma to ensure her endurance, which unveils the problematic of self-identification in a post-apocalypse world, where the body is key to the process of remembering and survival.

Allen's free verse poem is a discourse of connection where "everybody is related" (12). She acknowledges the separation of the sexual body and its belonging to the earth, but she has in her mind that "dykes are indians" (9). It is questionable to analyze such separation as arbitrary. Doing so, the colonization and later distortion of the body justifies, first, a lack of identification among members of the same community, and second, the use of transitory homophobia as a literary device to prove the opposite idea. Shilling writes that "women's bodies are actually *affected* by social relations and institutions" (67), as opposed to their male counterpart. Lesbians faced similar or even more severity than their heterosexual colleagues, which led them to detach from the greater being of the community. This cultural divorce was reinforced by the idea of the urban Indian promoted in the twentieth century following the Indian Relocation Act of 1956. With the arrival of gay Indians to the metropolis, the philosophical and ideological rupture placed dykes and Indians nearly at opposite ends in the Foucauldian spectrum of biopolitics, guaranteeing the fulfilment of the human population planning.

The obsessive necessity to control the "global mass" (Foucault 242) through demographics, forced the individual's biological determinism out of the social equation to exert power through colonial indoctrination. The 'critical minds' thus were figurative slaves

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of the superstructure, which had consolidated its position of power when English was imposed. And even then, despite pursuing a complete English education, native lesbian writers were victims of heteronormative American Indian slavedrivers and came across racism and homophobia. As stated by Brant:

> If you ask why you have not read or heard of [Native Lesbian Writers], ask it of yourself. The answer lies in the twin realms of racism and homophobia. Some of us cannot get published. And this has nothing to do with the excellence of our work. It has to do with who will be courageous enough to see us in all of our facets of being. And of course, this has to do with power and who has it and who exercises it over us... And what of the Native lesbians who have internalized homophobia to the extent of feeling they have to hide in order to be published and therefore offer up diminished pieces of themselves. They suffer. *We* suffer. (Jacobs et al. 31)

Natives of the second half of the century were "targets for a variety of moral panics" (Shilling 58) because of a post-apocalypse the-cure-may-be-worse-than-the-disease point of view. Panic in the western culture was founded as a form of terror to control masses, and targeting American Indian alcoholics who were supposed to "drink all the time" (Allen, *Living the Spirit* 12), substance abusers, and AIDS carriers empowered the disconnection Allen presents as imaginarily unified.

On the other hand, another approach would be to consider transitory homophobia as a literary device pretending to identify with the perpetrators and exercise power to discredit them, as well as the myths and stereotypes that surround homosexuality. Throughout the verses, Allen plays with this resource in a constant categorization game, where the 'dyke' and the Indian tend to be presented as one, but later they are written as separate entities. In the process of decolonization of the body, she takes control on a linguistic quest for the self "in a world which is orientated to the successful achievement of control" (Shilling 184)

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that departs from a detached *I*: "i have it in my mind" (Allen, 9), "but i don't know" (9), "i'm with indians / when i'm with dykes" (9), "dykes remind *me* of indians" (12). She continues with a deictic *you* when she addresses her potential reader: "once *you* have it / *you* can't be taken / for somebody else" and "like indians *you* can be / stubborn" (Allen 10) to bond with him or her, dragging deixis into a spiral of self-identity where the 'you' is not 'you,' but the 'I' from the start. Yet again, she detaches and observes the relationship between dykes and Indians from a third-person perspective using *they*, paying attention to the damage and "terrible things" (11) they do to each other: 'they' has a polysemous nature, because she assumes dykes damage[d] dykes, Indians damage[d] Indians, dykes damage[d] Indians, and Indians damage[d] dykes. Finally, she adopts her role as a Laguna Pueblo self-identified lesbian woman who is part of the colonized community, taking control through the use of the subject pronoun *we*: "we own", "we never go away / even if we're always leaving" (Allen 12).

Finley argues that 'biopower' has affected her relationship to the body (31) because it has been subjected to the desires of the superstructure's heteronormativity. Perhaps Allen's choice of the term *dyke* complies with power's aims of providing "firmly established interpretations of the world and generalized rules for the body management, behaviour, and appearance," (Honneth, Joas, and Gehlen in Shilling 178) performing an act of identification with the oppressor. However, by comparing Indians to dykes, not in a derogatory way, Allen contests and reclaims the term to identify and tell, unveiling "the need to denounce an inhospitable situation" (Fuentes 47) and turning her pen into a knife (Brant, *Writing as Witness* 13). This situation revolves around Berger's idea of the unfinishedness of the body. To be complete, the body and the self must be in harmony with

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a line of thought where trauma is *externalized* through human activity, *objectivated* and accepted by future generations as a fact, and *internalized* to make the [post]apocalypse a substructure of consciousness (Shilling 178). Without this process, the physical body is presented as *incomplete* and thus "the death of the self is presented to the mind as a particular problem" (179).

In this sense, colonization is a process that contemplates the death of the self to achieve total assimilation. Not only the dyke separates from the Indian, but the self separates from the flesh, making death visible externally and internally. The fear of dying does not exclusively consider the actual loss of the body, as it returns to earth according to the American Indian tradition; it is the fear of losing memories and thus strengthening Momaday's biggest fear of going unimagined that concerns Allen. Suleiman writes that "memories of trauma cannot be dissociated or repressed" (279), and these memories only exist if the individual internalizes them and makes them part of his or her life. Without trauma, the victim has no empirical experience to make his or her case relevant. A blend of first-hand experience and oppression makes the trauma more reliable, which is why Allen insists on 'remembering' both as a warning of something that came to pass and could happen again, and as a mechanism of survival that triggers authenticity:

> and dykes remind me of indians
> like indians dykes
> are supposed to die out
> or forget
> or drink all the time
> or shatter
> go away
> to nowhere
> *to remember what will happen*

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if they don't

they don't anyway—even
though the worst thing happens
they remember and they
stay. (12-13)

The visibility of death in Allen's words reflects thousands of American Indians who survive poorly in a modern world that has stripped their bodies of their living meaning. Moreover, to understand the living meaning of the body, it needs to be recovered from its partial heterosexualization, and this is only achieved through its final decolonization by contesting the ownership through the self. It is important for contemporary American Indian writers to fight for the value of the living body, as for powerful sectors of society dead bodies do not matter: "death represents the ultimate end of the self and, once it has been buried or burnt, places severe limits on the body as a bearer of value" (Shilling 186). In 1998, 21-year old gay student Matthew Shepard was beaten, tortured, and left to die until he was found eighteen hours later (Hughes, 2016). When 16-year old transgender Navajo Fred Martinez was beaten to death on 16th June, 2001, "his body lay in the blistering summer sun for several days before two young boys stumbled across him" (Emmett, 2016); and when 17-year old African-American Trayvon Martin was shot on 26th February, 2012, he was identified as a *John Doe* following his body's admission to the morgue (Trotta, 2016). Shepard, Martin, and Martinez's deaths are related "to everybody / in pain / in terror / in guilt / in blood / in shame / in disappearance" (Allen 12). The bodies of these individuals stand as symbols of a culture that denies the existence of WHASPM privilege, and the systematic use of categorization for the sake of demographics, in a broad attempt to

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exercise as much 'biopower' as possible. And yet, Allen challenges the superstructure by stating that regardless of its presence, the body somehow prevails.

The rationalization of survival through the resurgence of the spirit is a shamanistic act of contact with tradition. Although there is naturalness in the way American Indians approach[ed] death, time has become a variable to add value to the body; thus, dying has become a fearful experience, especially if the spirit suffers in the process. This prevalence of the spirit is a dialectic process where the survivor has used his/her culture to perform an external construction of the post-apocalypse. The hostility of the post-apocalypse world has been tangible at different levels within the matrix of realities faced, not only by the survivors and their future generations, but also by the instigators, causing collateral damages to the societal structure in the process. Therefore, in order to counterattack the aggression of a WHASPM world, Allen chooses time-travelling to establish a dialogue, like a chant, that channels her presence through the past: "so it gets important / to know / about ideas and / to remember or uncover / the past / and how the people / traveled" (11). In addition, far from falling into the discipline of typecasting, she uses natural references as a way to recover the new traditional Native body.

Contemporary gay American Indians are hybrid organisms which are partly real, and partly fictitious, that result from lived experiences in the past, and the ever-changing world they live in now. Given that reality is subjective, they are real because they exist, and they are fictitious because there is a part of them that has been fabricated according to social codes. The new traditional body is a post-apocalypse machine which, besides having a defensive nature, has a cultural backup with a restoration function that allows it to recover its past. Allen's references to the moon, the sun, the stars, and "the persistent stubborn

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grass / of the earth" (13) are the essentials of this backup that will allow the regeneration they need, instead of embarking on a nonsensical rebirth (e.g. the Neo-Nazi movement) that misses the point for "the possibilities for [their] reconstruction" (Haraway 27).

The traumatic events leading to the post-apocalypse left [gay] American Indians with millions of dead bodies, plus some other millions of dead selves who managed to resurrect as zombified 'ideas' that resembled the past: "indian is an idea / some people have / of themselves / dyke is an idea some women / have of themselves / the place where we live now / is idea / because whiteman took / all the rest" (Allen 10). Eventually, these *zombies* became social hybrids or cyborgs, with a human part that had internalized the pain and the melancholia emerged after the separation of the 'dyke' from the Indian, and a machine part formed on "an idea / like indians" (Allen 11) that shielded and defended the human part ensuing its endurance and survival in a hostile world. The new traditional Native body's evolution towards a post-apocalypse cyborg serves as the example of construction exposed by Haraway in *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1983). For Haraway, "liberation rests on the construction of consciousness" (150), and Allen's transition from the mind to the earth, which are basically the alpha and the omega of the poem, is the ultimate appropriation of this new body that has been consciously constructed to resist with its complex machinery of memory, spirit, and flesh.

Allen's discourse has bridged the past and the present, decolonizing the native body, reclaiming the *dykeness*, and rearticulating the identity discourse. Its ambivalent tone has swayed between impeachment and survival, which have been essential to overcome the extreme social makeover and include, as Muñoz defines it, disidentification, which "neither fully accepts nor rejects dominant cultural logics but internally subverts them, using the

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logic against itself" (Smith 53). As a "strategy that recognizes the shifting terrain of resistances" (53), disidentification comes to play an important role in the post-apocalypse tradition because the status quo is in constant tension and hegemony is still being contested. Hence Allen's versified hybridity and queerness (52) opened a comprehensive line also followed by Maurice Kenny's "Tinselled Bucks: A Historical Study in Indian Homosexuality."

4.1.2 *"Tinselled Bucks: A Historical Study in Indian Homosexuality" by Maurice Kenny*

Kenny's essay was published in the Winter 1975/76 issue of *Gay Sunshine: A Journal of Gay Liberation*, and was chosen to be included in the collection due to the possibilities it provided "for queer American Indian people that were not necessarily mirrored across the nation" (Tatonetti 156). There are two important characteristics that summarize this essay: one, the historical quality with which Kenny revisits the concept of homosexuality in the American Indian tradition, alternating anthropological studies with literary references to support his claims; and two, its polyvalent nature as a personal work, as a discourse of truth and power that is mostly accurate, and as a post-apocalypse cultural regeneration of two worlds that collapsed on each other.

Systems of power need leverage to win the struggle the oppressed liberate internally. On the one hand, there is the seed of both research and historical revisionism to prove the perpetrator wrong; on the other hand, there is the necessity to engage in constant conversation with the past and that involves remembering trauma. His narrative shows that trauma will condition all the TSAIL produced throughout the late twentieth century. Kenny's poignant opening line goes back to the genesis of the apocalypse, when "Spain

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loosed an army of priests upon the Indians to take souls for God and gold for the King" (15). Using this point in time is necessary to begin the reconstruction of the transitional timeline of a discourse on traumatised identity. Kenny's moral obligation to debunk the "distortion and outright lies [that] were used early in American history" (15) is attached to the idea of the berdache as an archaic symbol of identity. As the apocalypse progressed, the much-celebrated figure of the berdache was progressively destroyed, providing American Indians images and resources to feed their ideation of the apocalypse.

As power is a matter of relationships that involve language (Kirsch 41-42), Kenny proceeds to revise the history of homosexuality establishing the relationship(s) between the present and the past, raising questions about possible, yet unproven instances of situational sexual behaviour among cowboys and U.S. soldiers, challenging the canon pre-established by heteronormativity: "it may be easily assumed that cowboys and soldiers practiced homosexuality. Even America's legendary heroes fall under suspicion [...] It is easy to propose that there existed a sexual fraternity at certain times" (15). In addition to this, he declares that American Indians condone homosexuality and that the berdache still exists, despite the contemporary American Indian who "has been programmed by white society so that his former mores and measurements have been changed to fit his ever-assimilating environment" (28). The idea behind the concept of *programming* connects Kenny's work with Allen's through the presence of post-apocalypse cyborgs. Kenny suggests that they have been instructed to operate in a particular way (through a heteronormative set of codes) at a specific time (the late twentieth century). These social hybrids have been manipulated by consecutive systems of power whose main aim has been to exercise 'biopower.' Through battles of indoctrination and assimilation, they have

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divided the two-spirit and the Indian, representing a major failure in the conception of more complex American Indian sex/gender systems.

The sarcastic and accusatory tone of Kenny's essay shows evidence of emotional attachment, which makes it more personal although not necessarily more authentic. Personal judgment can bias the objectivity of an individual regardless of his/her attempt to detach him/herself from the subject matter. Because of the virtually non-existent literature on the topic, Kenny's research was revelatory. Moreover, the intensity of the essay makes it questionable at times because it is difficult to separate the author from the person, and the trauma from its recovery. Thus, Kenny becomes a cyborg who has internalized the pain of the loss of the berdache and uses writing as a machine to defend "the traditional past, the glory, the freedom that can never again be known by the Indian and an honor bestowed upon a *winkte*" (30), turning into a product of his own words.

The passion with which Kenny discusses truth and power is called into question because it is biased. The essay does not analyze the flow of power in the conceptual revisitation of the berdache, but contains instances of Foucauldian power when the individual experience is in the spotlight. It becomes evident that there exists a critique against the exercise of 'biopower' that decimated the berdache, but is it accurate in terms of truth? If *truth* is defined as "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements" (Foucault 133), then Kenny's work is not entirely true. However, it could be considered true because of the common mistake of associating truth with authenticity, and it has been demonstrated that one is not subject to the other. As a matter of fact, both concepts can coexist with one another without interference.

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Kenny's allusions to Euromerican categorization and the trickster are colliding elements. They are both components of truth and power in each tradition, in the sense that typecasting provides the perpetrator with a signifier, a powerful way to control the signified per his conception of the truth which, according to Kenny, was scarce because "anything that smacked of heathenism, religion, art, or sex was thoroughly destroyed" (15). Moreover, the trickster is a versatile symbol as it appears before mortals as a spirit, a god, a goddess, a man or a woman exhibiting a picaresque intellect in praise of unconventionality. The trickster's power lies in the ability to manipulate those who are intellectually more vulnerable to his/her deceptions. Because of his/her power, one of the aims of the perpetrator was to eliminate the figure of the trickster; however, s/he existed in the oral tradition and was passed onto future generations guaranteeing his/her survival.

The cultural collision whose "cultural flows [affected] the way in which we experience and view the world" (Kirsch 22), was an overpowering struggle for the imposition of truth that ended up with the victory of the trickster upon the perpetrator. Therefore, Kenny conducts his narrative through a conception of power that derives from intolerance and destruction, and a conception of truth that is based on a discourse of surviving cultural audacity.

Kenny's bias is product of his self-identification with the perpetrator. One of the main points of recovering from trauma is to be able to identify with the event that provoked the current emotional state. However, this identification will not be as objective as desired due to the emotional distress it causes in the survivor. His conception of truth, where he revises history and presents the audience with an extensive chronology of the berdache, is morally influenced by his necessity to reconnect with the past. The loss of the berdache, the

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imposition of western sex/gender systems, and the social stigma that emerged from the process have conditioned his conception of the truth. It would be controversial to assume that his historical study of Indian homosexuality is partly on the verge of narrative fabrication, because parts of it are based on accounts produced by the superstructure and hearsay. Kenny himself never experienced the apocalypse of his ancestors; however, as a social hybrid he found a way to cope with the inherited cultural trauma of the past.

In the literary context for American Indians there has not been a process of regeneration because its literary tradition emerges after the injury. This does not mean that the content of such a tradition has not been exposed to several injuries throughout four hundred years. Kenny's essay represents a regeneration in content, though not in form. His work is a landmark because it could be regarded as one of the first historical studies on the subject that was aimed at the [gay] public, regardless of their ethnic origin. Whites and non-whites had access to the visibility of a tradition that some thought had been lost. What makes it a regenerational work is its ability to come to terms with trauma, whether it is objective or subjective. It achieves completion because it deals with the process of destruction, and contests its place in history by affirming that "the current taboos against his [the berdache] nature will then have changed sufficiently so that he may make a contribution to and function once more in that reorganized culture" (31).

One of Allen's final verses recites "they remember and they / stay" (13) and Kenny's closing remarks begin by stating "the Sioux *winkte* still exists" (30). This stage of indomitability was unimaginable in the earlier stages of the post-apocalypse. The period of lethargy and silence complicated the assumption that [gay] American Indians had survived. They still existed, but because of the separation from the past, most of them did not

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acknowledge the naturalness of their identity in the past: "homosexuality [was] accepted if not condoned within most primal societies. In certain societies, the homosexual was made a fetish or became an integral part of society" (16).

The post-apocalypse regeneration came after the self-acceptance of nature's power bestowed upon men and women who were 'made different,' according to Kenny (30). Gay American Indians embraced the glorified past of homosexuality in their tradition, not without inheriting the "ignorance and abuse directed toward them by their own reservation brothers and sisters" (31). The traumatic part was to accept the fact that the world had changed dramatically for worse, and by assuming one identity or the other (gay, lesbian, transgender, two spirit and/or Indian), there would be consequences. Despite homophobia, heterosexual American Indians became bullies after being bullied by the dominant culture. Most of them had the power to condemn what was thought to be traditionally and morally 'wrong,' which stood in opposition to the attitude towards sex that they had in the past:

> Compared to white attitudes toward sex, Indians were utterly uninhibited. They suffered no embarrassment [...] the American Indian was completely innocent of the notion that something he enjoyed might be "wrong." "Wrong" would have been an incomprehensible concept to them in that context. (Blevins in Kenny 16)

The heteronormative world collapsed in its attempt to exercise power on the American Indian dynamics of sex and gender, and berdachism disappeared in its attempt to remain alive in the middle of a typecasting storm. The ruins of this dual collapse served as the foundations for a palimpsestic discourse where the post-apocalypse remodeled the existent individuals without proliferation of new cultural flows. Thus, Kenny presents himself unconsciously as a biological being, like a *hydra* who possesses the ability to regenerate

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into a miniature version of itself, and as a social hybrid that utilizes that regenerated version to construct upon the past a more resistant structure to preserve the new traditional body.

The construction of such body requires an adaptation to the social environment in which it is being constructed. This adjustment rises from the necessity "to say something about the mind/body relationship" (Shilling 13) and how this relationship is socially subject to the biological, sociological, and economical construction of gendered bodies, which led Midnight Sun to publish the essay "Sex/Gender Systems in Native North America" to provide "the perspective of a queer Native American on non-Native ethnographic material" (Cox 86).

4.1.3 *"Sex/Gender Systems in Native North America" by Midnight Sun*

Sun begins his discussion by stating that "sex/gender systems must be seen in historical materialist terms" (45). Analyzing the text from its closing remarks backwards shows that [post]modernism has reshaped the body to satisfy the roles "related to the means of production of the society in which they occur" (47). The new body and its hybrid system of sex/gender has been assigned value, and it has been commodified for the stability of society's organization. The stigmatization of prostitution and sex, for instance, is a contradictory understatement when contemporary social systems publicly condemn the existence of prostitution, and yet many members benefit from it.

New disciplines in the academia, such as Women's Studies and Gender Studies, have given visibility to the problematic of sex and power in and of it, directly affecting the construction of a social discourse based on the promotion of a sex/gender system that

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favors the "immutable biological forces" (Sun 32) that rule western systems. The relevance of Sun's essay lies in its contribution from the field of Gender Studies after studying the Mojave, the Navajo, and the Peigan from a socio-economical perspective attempting to clarify "the existence of different gender systems among native people" (32). Sun's essay is also polyvalent in nature regarding its aims to communicate, inform, spread, and divulgate knowledge and information. It has a didactic purpose in the sense that it provides thorough details about the social systems of the communities selected, and insights of how gender and sexuality worked in their systems. Although these concepts look similar, it is important to point out the differences between them:

a. *Communicate*, involves the necessity of the speaker to establish a dialogue with his/her receptor involving the discussion of information: "[h]ere I delineate differences between the three cultures described in an attempt to explain some of the factors that contributed to the construction of their sex/gender systems" (45).

b. *Inform*, the aim of the speaker is to provide facts in an educationally and instructively, without expecting any reply: "[t]he Navajo recognized three distinct categories of sex and gender: male, female, and *nadle*" (40).

c. *Spread*, appeals to the accessible access of information and knowledge by the masses, without the necessity to establish an academic bond with the content: "I will use three major case studies to illustrate various native concepts of homosexuality, lesbianism, cross-dressing, and gender roles among the Mojave, Navajo, and Peigan" (36).

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d. *Divulgate*, comprises the idea of making knowledge available to critical minds through formal and/or technical systems of communication: "[t]he advantage of this approach is that it allows us to see a society's social organization—and its berdache or cross-gender roles—in terms of that society, without filtering data through cultural perceptions alien to the societies we study" (47).

Sun's work, however, does not share Kenny's need to include traumatic events from the past. This ethnographic review is more of an attempt to reveal America's intrinsic queerness and to familiarize the audience with the fact that homosexuality has always existed. Further, it shares with Allen's the concept of the decolonization of the—commodified—body. For Sun, the gendered body is subject to production, thus it is internally connected to economy. From an economical perspective, it is understood that in the capitalist system, the superstructure is the owner of the body, and through its exploitation, it enlarges its benefits. Economic colonization is perhaps the most primal form of colonization, and by overpowering powerless cultures by short-cutting their access to prosperity, it becomes easier to control the gendered bodies of their communities.

There is no actual list that explains the various processes of the economic decolonization of the body. Sun even discusses the *viability* of the cross-gender role in terms of economic development because "women were not required to fulfil functions defined by men and because the sexual division of labor was defined so as to allow the possibility of mixing or combining male and female work roles" (46). The berdaches became an asset because of their physical morphology, allowing them to perform hunting duties along with pottery duties alike. Focusing on the sustainability of the berdache, Sun returns the socio-economic power to the tradition that preceded him. It is a way to observe

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the stability of the American Indian system prior to the actual catastrophe of colonization. However, although his attempt is to establish that systems are under the control of the whole culture rather than the individual's, and that his ethnographic discourse returns the status of the economic independent body before colonization, Sun also presents cases of economic dynamics to compare the past to the present.

For instance, the Peigan women had little room for economic independence, and the "manly-hearted role," or berdache, "allowed certain women to achieve relatively high social and economic status, but in male-defined terms" (44) and "manly-hearts conducted business affairs without interference [...] they dominated their husbands and controlled their family's economic affairs" (42). Moreover, for the Mojave, the *alyha*'s cross-gendered body "avoided some aspects of the masculine role, while engaging in certain production activities related to both gender roles, gaining access to additional economic opportunities" (37); and for the Navajo, *nadles* "undertook the duties of both sexes and excelled in their dual economic roles" (40). Andersen and Collins write that "each society has a distinctive history and institutional configuration of social inequalities" (268) and this principle applies to American Indian communities before the apocalypse. Each community had a patriarchal or matriarchal social organization and each member occupied a determined status, whether it was spiritual or merely economic, yet eventually the berdache became a burden. The national economy showed that by 1989, there were 30.9 percent of American Indian families in poverty, with an income of 8,328 dollars per capita, adding up to an annual income of 21,750 dollars (Waters and Eschbach 423). Although Sun does not openly make a contrastive analysis of the present and the past, he does clarify that the valuable attributes of the berdache provided the families more wealth, but again, these numbers reflect that

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"the traumatic event and its aftermath became central" (Berger 22) for the ultimate colonization of the capital body.

The necessity of a dual analysis of sex/gender systems through economy was indeed influenced by the role of economy in the Reagan administration. Sun's ethnographic approach was on the verge of looking at the communities, and thus the body, as a projection of the physical capital. The body had a place in the market, and as a commodity, it needed to remain profitable to exist. Therefore, Kenny's and Sun's works complement each other because there is a chronological study of the existence of homosexuality based on social interactions and economic dynamics. In both instances, the presence of the body is central to the construction of the contemporary gay American *Indianness*, reclaiming the intrinsic attributes of homosexuality in American society.

Allen's work was more focused on the social impact of the death of the dyke and the separation from the Indian, but Sun's approach to the *nadles*, the *ninauposkitzipxpe* or manly-hearts, and the *alyha* was mostly economic because in terms of capital "the relation between a social class and its body schema does not mean that the dominant classes across societies will always pursue similar physical activities" (Shilling 134) and "when production changes, gender roles and cross-gender roles change, as well" (Sun 47). The idea of a social hybrid and his/her new traditional body envisions death and economy as cycles of the new order. To come to terms with the inevitability of the end, there has been a long mourning process in which the post-apocalypse society has given a starring role to the body. The anti-aging industry is putting up one of the final battles to divide and conquer death. The American Indian body has been subjected to social and economic domination since the

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arrival of Euromericans, and it is still happening among native women and men who have turned to the commodification of their bodies to earn a living.

Sun' work shows a fraction of the richer and far more complex sex/gender system within the American Indian society. Some communities have looked at berdaches as economic assets, others as spiritual beings with shamanistic attributes. Still, regardless of his/her economic contribution to the community, the endurance of the berdache was a political symbol of social expansion in a time of economic recession. American Indian writers acknowledged the importance of the assigned value to the body, and moreover, they also acknowledged homosexuality's and lesbianism's inability to provoke gender reclassification (Sun 47). The complexity of the sex/gender system left aside the economic component of its existence, because there is no point in denying the participation of economy in social [re]classification. Therefore, Sun aimed at changing the way whites and non-whites looked at natives by altering the perception of their reality, in the same way production changes in the capitalist system. What was inferred from his connection of the body to the means of production was that the native body was an independent economical entity that was forced into the western system of mass production, but its durability proved to destabilize such system by surviving its collapse.

4.2 *A Post-Apocalypse Dream: Development (I)*

The vision of a post-apocalyptic dream that surpassed Reagan's obsession with the end of the world, "we may be the generation that sees Armageddon" (Dugger in Berger 135), materializes in its own eccentricity. Like Kenny and Sun's essays' polyvalent nature, dreams are also multi-layered accounts of a subconscious reality triggered by daily fears and desires. Such sequences are generally neither chronological nor logical as they tend to be

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particularly coded by the brain. All images are thus conditioned by socio-historical landmarks that have reshaped human thinking. The 'development' of this post-apocalypse dream is, according to Jung, the beginning of a storyline (80) that will lead writers to the climactic point of the American Indian literary movement at the turn of the century. The military productivity of the twentieth century with two major world conflicts, followed by wars and the escalation of terrorism have empowered social and emotional detachment. Amidst this period of tension, authors like Roscoe took advantage of the appearance of historical revisionism to look at the unconventionality of gender despite its chronological evolution or its involvement in military conflicts.

4.2.1 *"Strange Country This: Images of Berdaches and Warrior Women" by Will Roscoe*

Roscoe's contribution is both an ethnographic and monographic text about berdaches before 'the end,' similar to its predecessors in the anthology. Its title reflects the unfamiliarity of the settler culture with such an 'eccentric' tradition, especially after American Fur Company trader Edwin Denig wrote: "Strange country this, where males assume the dress and perform the duties of females, while women turn men and mate with their own sex!" (Lang 277). In opposition to previous works of the anthology, Roscoe's is the first one to alternate ethnohistorical texts with images, intending to reinforce the illusion of authenticity and help the reader to unfold his/her imagination to recreate the Indian world before its collapse.

This appeal to the power of sight came in at the expansion of globalization, which had been stalled throughout most of the twentieth century mainly due to military conflicts. Historically, there was a time in which paintings were a symbol of status, and wealthy

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families would pay considerable amounts of money to be immortalized, fulfilling their desire to surpass the end of the physical body. By the time Roscoe had published his study, paintings had been substituted by photographs and their ability to "alter perceptions and, at their best, change lives" (Draper, *Nationalgeographic.*com, 2016). Draper, a writer for the *National Geographic Magazine* has written that "what propels them [photographers] is ferocious determination to tell a story through transcendent images" (*Nationalgeographic.*com, 2016), which brings back the debate on the definition of literature and its authenticity. Do illustrations tell accurate stories or are they substantially modified to convey a message? If they are modified, then it is correct to assume that photographs provide an authentic frozen frame of an instant—and yet, such an instant can be staged. Whether they are prepared or not, they do help to construct the vision of an avant-garde world that, despite the technological backwardness, had a superior and more progressive social system than that of the Europeans.

Postmodern society continually refashions the business of death. The morbidity that surrounds 'the final moments' of our human existence has developed a gloomy interest in our failure to finally beat death. Back in the nineteenth century, post-mortem photography was a disputable, yet common practice for people who wanted to have one final memento with/of their loved ones. The pictures captured the moments after the end, an oxymoronic state to help their transition into mourning. The production of images that describe the 'solemn hour' is the final practice of control over bodies, a strange and powerless exercise of power with no guaranteed success. Images are practical examples of this attempt to have existence under control. The images contained in the appendix of this dissertation do not technically represent the final moments of American Indians during the apocalypse,

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thus the colonization process needs to be put in perspective to understand them. After 400 years of conflict, to have illustrations and pictures made and taken towards the end of the nineteenth, early and half of the twentieth centuries is a symbol that "reconfigures itself into prologue and premonition" (Berger xi).

4.2.1.1 *"First Encounter"*

In the last sentence of the text, Roscoe describes the aftermath of the Timucuan after being in contact with Europeans, and stands as a reminder of the apocalypse: "Timucuan culture did not survive its exposure to European 'civilization.'" When the Spanish finally left Florida in 1763, the eighty-three Christianized Timucuans still alive went with them" (50). Such an action comprises what has been exposed and defined as apocalypse throughout the course of this research, or as Berger defines it, "some form of utterly destabilizing disaster" (22). Roscoe's choice to open this section with the rise and fall of a complex culture in terms of social advancement was probably related to its synchronicity with the birth of the imaginarium of the berdache. Before colonization, the only reference for Europeans to something vaguely related to the native berdache were the catamites of the Greco-Roman tradition, and the young male sexual slaves. For this reason, English, French, and Spanish faced a diachronic and synchronic split towards the evolution of the term *berdache*, after the use of *hermaphrodite*, *garçon effemines*, and *hombres mariones impotentes* during the competition for the control of Florida (Roscoe 48).

The representation of the berdache in "First Encounter" is archaic, and focuses mainly on their attire and sexual practices, emphasizing their inclination to participate in sodomy (50). These traits were the landmark for the posterior construction of the image of the berdache adopted by the settler nation(s). It is important to notice that these images were

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considered *images* and *representations* by outsiders, so there was no possibility that berdaches themselves considered their sex/gender system a 'system' and even less likely the catalyst to produce an identity discourse. Nevertheless, Roscoe points out that religion played the most important role in the extinction of Timucuans, and thus all subsequent discourses were going to be heavily conditioned by religion: "Francisco de Pareja, a Franciscan missionary sent to Florida in 1595, routinely asked his male and female converts to confess homosexual acts" (50). The use of the word *convert* in the context of colonization is interesting. Religious conversion was one of the most important weapons for breaking the will of the colonized and forcing them into assimilation, and such conversion was—at some point—as supernatural as any shamanistic tradition, given the fact there was a belief in a superior being who entered the soul of the newly-converted being, reassigning him or her to an exclusive monotheistic faith.

4.2.1.2 *"California Shaman"*

In this text Roscoe clarifies that "berdaches were not always shamans [...] and, in many tribes, berdaches specialized in crafts, such as basketry, rather than religious roles" (51). There has been an important effort to separate religion from ideology on the side of American Indians, seeking neutral grounds that are not affected by stereotyping. However, it is impossible to elaborate on the image of the berdaches without taking religion and the devastating role of missionization into account. European mentality was forged on several apocalyptic visions—Sodom and Gomorrah—that led up to the misinterpretation of the Book of Revelations, allowing the church a scaremongering nature that controlled the masses. The Enlightenment, however, challenged its nature as a hegemonic entity through deism and atheism, and by the time this happened in Europe, two centuries of

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philosophical and religious indoctrination in the colonies had already passed, confirming that "the apocalyptic break from Europe had successfully been achieved" (Berger 133).

The epigraph "*He never came back…"* implies that *he*—a subject that plurally extends to the level of a culture—, within the gay American Indian context, was presented with an unsettling event that forced him to leave. This event is, according to Herman, the opening of the traumatic history of the individual. Roscoe is guiding the reader through proto-images of the berdache at the dawn of the apocalypse, and there was a reconfiguration of the state of events in process. An apocalyptic epigraph like this places the audience at a crossroad of "life and symbolization" (Berger 22) where the will of the individual to take on a symbol and incorporate it into his/her life is tested. Defending the thesis of missionization and its destruction, Roscoe exposes the case of a berdache found by Spanish Franciscan fathers:

> Among the gentile women… there was one who… had all the appearances of a woman, but judging by the face and the absence of breasts […] they concluded he must be a man. Taking off his aprons they found that he was more ashamed than if he really had been a woman. They kept him there three days, making him sweep the plaza, but giving him plenty to eat. After he had been warned that it was not right for him to go about dressed as a woman […] they let him go. He immediately left the Mission and never came back to it. (Palou in Roscoe 50)

From this excerpt, it is inferred that: first, Europeans structured their society according to biological morphology, simplifying the organization of members consistent with their physical attributes, a reflection of their much less developed sex/gender system; and second, men wearing female clothes were a symbol of public humiliation to establish masculinity as a driving force. The religious turmoil behind the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the colonies was mostly justified by a puritan history and the constant backlash

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on women for being 'the wrongdoers of mankind.' While berdaches were being stripped of their aprons, women were being burnt in colonial Massachusetts, attempting to demonstrate the power of religious conservatism. It is no wonder that *representing* women was thus a threat to the establishment.

The fact that the berdache was 'warned' about his misconduct reflects the fear of the berdache, or in other words, the fear of the unknown. As was mentioned before, despite examples of male prostitution in Europe, the acceptance of reversed roles as a common trait was full of "animism, sacrifice, mortification, repugnance! Everything abnormal, everything wild" (Ozick in Berger 101). Moreover, the patronizing behaviour of 'feeding him well' was another example of 'biopower,' presenting the Spanish as controllers of goods and providers for the weak. Therefore, missionization aimed at centralizing the world through the power of God and his wrath because of homosexual society's apocalyptic behaviour, and because of it, "disease, demoralization, and poor conditions resulted in a drastic reduction in population and the loss of tribal culture" (Roscoe 51).

It is understandable that the fracture of the American Indian tradition occurred after exposure to a sexually repressed culture. The natives from the post-apocalypse had internalized all the homophobia and social stigma derived from the construction of a subjective imaginarium of the berdache, and it became an impediment in the construction of a discourse of self and social acceptance. Both of Roscoe's cases deal with religion as the promoter of the apocalypse among American Indians, and they also deal with early accounts of homophobia and its impact on the social perception of the berdache outside of the native community. For Europeans, berdaches acted in the manner of medieval jesters, dressing up in regalia as part of a bigger performance. They never considered at first, the

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importance of the role of the berdache not only as a multifaceted being who could carry out male and female roles, but also as medicine people revered because of their talents—often with shamanistic supernatural powers. The settler nation's psychology and culture of honor conditioned the limitation—and almost extermination—of the berdache; but rescuing Allen's verse, "we never go away" (12), it is evident that berdaches became the subject matter for anthropologists, writers, and artists who dedicated themselves to "provide a valuable record" (53) in times of annihilation. Being extraordinary has been the subject of millennial cultures. The Greek and the Roman fought for their honor and the glory of being remembered after death. Roscoe's "Dance to the Berdashe" opens with a familiar epigraph that breaks with the bleaker first section of the anthology, restoring the honor berdaches once had: "*Extraordinary privileges…"* (53).

4.2.1.3 "*Dance to the Berdashe"*

The text revolves around the description of the painting by George Catlin of the same name (Fig. 4), a pictorial approach to the symbol of the berdache. Roscoe's two previous accounts are abstract, theoretical descriptions of the berdache that may have been misinterpreted by the audience; however, a painting has the inner power to convey a message through its representation of reality. All literary accounts of berdaches were based on subjective perceptions and hearsay, which calls into question the veracity of such texts. The authenticity around the production of illustrations has been mentioned before, especially because some of them could have been either fabricated or made a posteriori. Still, Roscoe 'certifies' that Catlin himself "witnessed the ceremony depicted in this painting while visiting the Sauk and Fox Indian" (53).

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Dancing had an important role in American Indian traditions. It had a multiple nature, as it could be held publicly, semi-publicly, and privately. They used dancing circles to pray, and to express gratitude after victory in warfare, to contact with the Great Spirit or in Catlin's case, to honor the tribe's berdache. The concept of honor was related to the importance of the knowledge acquired by the berdache, and although "being the only one of the tribe submitting to this disgraceful degradation, is looked upon as *medicine* and sacred" (53). The representation of a festive world collides with the conceptions of the apocalypse hereby exposed because there is no presence of distress. Roscoe himself proceeds to elaborate on Catlin's description of the event in the painting almost as if it was a personal anecdote. There is a display of anthropological knowledge, folkloric descriptions, and a literary-pictorial bridge between the 'hermaphrodites' of the 1500s and the honored characters of the nineteenth century who used "the intimate knowledge he had gained of them [his sexual partners] during their sexual encounters" (54). The berdache was teased by men, and he teased them in return using knowledge and sex as power.

It becomes evident that berdaches were far from being ignorant people; therefore, it would not be daring to assume they were in total control of situations most of the time. The *he* in "California Shaman" never came back, and he was "still in the villages of the gentiles and going about as before, dressed as a woman" (Palou in Roscoe 51). He chose to play the game of the perpetrator by following his rules until regaining his freedom; then he went back to his old ways but avoiding strategic places so as not to be caught again. That act required bravery before a group that overpowered and outnumbered the berdaches. In the case of Catlin's painting, the berdache is central because of his role in the community, but at the same time, he is central because of the knowledge he possesses. It was not

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intellectual knowledge what was pursued by natives, but masculinity among those who engaged in situational sexual behaviour—or transitory homosexuality during hunting periods, for instance—was important to the way they were perceived in the tribe, and the berdache became to represent the *trickster*, the figure who knew exactly how, when, and where to play a trick on someone. It was expected that the importance of the berdache diminished as time went by, and despite the initial representations of the berdache as a hermaphrodite, other disciplines saw beyond the physical attributes in order to realize the real power of the berdache. The Sauk and Fox Indians held an annual dance for the berdache(s) in their tribes because the power they represented was indeed extraordinary.

There are no shamanistic nor supernatural allusions to 'power' in this sense; it is more about the social power to gather to pray, dance, or be thankful. In a way, the berdache in some tribes could be perceived as a populist figure in the positive sense, as it contained the ideology of the culture he represented without any political reivindication, in stark opposition to colonization. There have been examples of their passivity towards the process, an echo of sexual submission that transcended the social role; and there have been accounts of berdaches who broke the paradigm and performed as active, masculine men for the sake of endurance. Thus, Roscoe's question "preference or selection?" posed in *Changing Ones* (1998) could be answered by paraphrasing one of Simone De Beauvoir's most notable quotes: one is not born, but rather becomes a berdache.

To think of berdachism as a matter of preference or selection automatically gave social Euromerican models power to look at the berdache as a figure presented with a choice. It might seem so, especially when in some tribes "a child's gender was decided depending on by their inclination toward either masculine or feminine activities, or their intersex status.

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Puberty was about the time frame by which clothing choices were made to physically display their gender choice" (*T-Vox.org*, 2016). However, this inclination was intrinsic to sexual identity and orientation, which is similar to contemporary views on homosexual identity because it is not a choice, but rather a self-discovery. In the twenty-first century western world, there are detractors of homosexuality who still believe in it as a deviation, and raise moral judgment on the open-mindedness that society seems to be experiencing toward transsexuality, marriage equality, and acceptance of a multiple sex/gender system. Compared to the behaviour shown by the Spanish fathers at the Mission, there is irrefutable evidence that prejudice is still present centuries later. In the manner of the European Renaissance, contemporary gay natives are rediscovering the philosophy of the berdaches and their influence at political, literary, anthropological, and historical levels. The history of homosexuality has thus left us examples of these notable characters presented by Roscoe, such as 'Finds Them and Kills Them' (Fig. 5) and 'We'Wha' (Fig. 6).

4.2.1.4 "*We'Wha*"

In this text Roscoe elaborates on the Zuni berdache who was socially accepted by Washington D.C. The implications that supposed the presence of a berdache in the capital of a heteronormative nation are notable, as according to Roscoe, "Zunis today still recall stories about We'Wha" (55). The act of becoming friends with anthropologist Matilda Coxe Stevenson gave him/her enough power to play the ethnographic game white people were fascinated with. The same way the berdache acquired sexual knowledge about his partners in the Sauk and Fox tribes, We'Wha attended as an observer and learnt the ways of the 'other,' as an analyst who was performing on his/her hosts the same studies that were performed on the Zuni and him/herself. Writer Edward Wilson provides a clear example of

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We'Wha's wittiness and cleverness when returned to Zuni: "[S/he] assured [his/her] compatriots that the white women were frauds, for [s/he] had seen them, in the ladies' rooms, taking out their false teeth and the 'rats' from their hair" (Roscoe 57). His/her remarks on the construction of the image of white women discredited the power of their projections.

We'Wha's presence in Washington, however, can be seen from two separate perspectives. First, there was genuine interest on the side of Washington's society to meet this Zuni "priestess, princess, and maiden" (55); second, there was a scientific, circus-like interest in presenting him/her as an object of study "weaving at the Smithsonian" (55) with the intention of civilizing him/her, as noted by Stevenson when a congressman gave We'Wha a box of silverware "thinking that this Indian, having had the environment of civilization for six months, would carry back its influence to her people" (Roscoe, *The Zuni Man-Woman* 71).

The result of this visit resembled the nature of the trickster, as it is unclear who gets to trick whom in the end. We'Wha's description of white women was the conclusion of six months of mingling with the ladies of Washington, and his/her distribution of the silverware among children and priests to be used as toys and sacred tools was a slap in the face of those who were "desiring to aid in Christianizing and civilizing the Zunis" (71). These acts were unconscious attempts at breaking away from the Pocahontas-like representation of the female native, or in other words, an attempt at decolonizing the body from imposed codes of behaviour and physical representations of beauty.

The ideal of beauty for nineteenth century American women was believed to correspond with their inner character, and fashion was highly influenced by Victorian

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tendencies to slim the figure. Per Roscoe, We'Wha never wore western clothing because "[s/he] considered [him/herself] a representative of [his/her] tribe" (73) and s/he always appeared in public wearing his/her aboriginal clothes. S/he did so even in the event of his/her death, where "to symbolize his berdache status, We'wha [sic] was buried in a woman's dress, with a pair of man's pants slipped on beneath" (Roscoe, *Living the Spirit* 57). This final act conveyed part of Allen's insistence on survival and endurance, and part of human desire to achieve the utopia of the afterlife. We'Wha's visit to Washington was never to assimilate him/herself into the dominant culture; it was a more of a matter of exercising diplomacy and becoming acquainted with the 'enemy':

> [His/her] comportment is best understood in light of the long-standing Zuni policy of friendship with the United States. In this period, the Zunis were especially anxious to obtain the government's assistance in protecting their shrinking land base from squatter and encroachment. Anything that kept the Zuni cause before the American public and its elected officials was a boon. [...] We'Wha did just that. The image and the reputation of the Zunis were well served by that pueblo's leading berdache. (Roscoe, *The Zuni Man-Woman* 73)

By refusing to wear western clothes or using silverware accordingly upon his/her return to Zuni, We'Wha developed a sense of identification and pride that was lost in other communities. For him/her, being a representative berdache of the Zunis was an honor despite their being "dismayed to find their cultural autonomy under the attack by the same government that they had once aided and served as allies" (98). There was a halo of tradition around his/her figure, as s/he embodied the basic characteristics of the berdache, and at the same time developed the same cunning as Geronimo at earning cash "washing clothes for the whites and selling his weaving and pottery" (Stevenson in Roscoe 55). This cutting-edge image of the berdache contributed to the expansion of an imaginarium where

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there was room for other concepts besides trauma and discrimination. It proved that there was a time when berdaches were socially acknowledged and respected for their power and their legacy. Most of berdaches disappeared towards the end of the nineteenth century, and their presence was virtually non-existent during the twentieth century, which does not mean that there were not any berdaches at all. For this reason, 'We'Wha' and 'Finds Them and Kills Them' were perhaps the last notable, traditional berdaches towards the end of the apocalypse.

4.2.1.5 *"Finds Them and Kills Them"*

The berdache was essentially conceived as a being who avoided conflict and determined his existence as a passive subject, both socially and sexually. The definition of the berdache as passive *per se* attends more to Shilling's definition of the body as a passive container: "[it] acted as a shell to the active mind (which was identified as distinguishing humans from animals)" (26), whereas the external qualities of the berdache—mostly morphological attributes and clothing—were projections of what the outsiders interpreted as a preference, but in fact were an extension of the self. 'We'Wha' and 'Find Them and Kills Them' thus were passive containers of an endangered culture; vanishing projections of bodies that possessed outstanding minds but were condemned to go unimagined.

'Finds Them and Kills Them' forged him/herself a new identity, 'Osch-Tisch,' a name s/he earned in 1876, "when [s/he] turned warrior for that one day. [S/he] put on men's clothes and attacked a Lakota party in the Battle of Rosebud, and was distinguished by his bravery" (Williams in Roscoe 59). S/he embodied the transgressive nature of the complex sex/gender system feared by Euromericans. The dialogue between the man, the woman, and the intersex was an active discourse of self-acceptance, and therefore, a reivindication

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of their identity. For 'We'Wha,' representing his/her tribe as a "Zuni princess" was not a choice because there was no other possibility for him/her to present him/herself before Washington's society. In Osch-Tisch's case, despite being a respected berdache and regarded as a Crow leader (59), s/he voluntarily chose to present him/herself as a man-warrior before the Lakota. The complex dialectic between these characters revealed the difficulty of coming to terms with what was socially accepted and what was not. Why did 'Osch-Tisch' choose to dress up as a man while partaking in an offensive against the Lakota? It would be logical to assume s/he did so because as a Crow leader and a belligerent in the conflict next to the United States, s/he preferred not to be on the white man's spotlight, as women participated in war conflicts as nurses, cooks, and menders only; therefore, dressed in the manners of a man, his/her leadership would not have been questioned.

Contemporary gay natives have found themselves with instances of berdachism as a special characteristic shared by some members of the tribe, whereas in other cases they have been ridiculed and denigrated. The construction of a contemporary discourse of identity based on these previous accounts seemed problematic, because despite Roscoe's attempts to present images of berdaches, their figure was much conditioned by sexuality and "political oppression has been translated into sexual oppression" (Goldberg in Warner 5), thus using sexual performance to fabricate the berdache's political inability.

Cross-dressing in berdachism was one of the most important features of its tradition. It externalized the berdache and presented his/her world with an economic and spiritual status. Becoming a berdache meant embracing the richness of the complexity behind the attire, intertwining the man and the woman with the intersex, and exhibiting it with pride.

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For this reason, compared to We'Wha, Osch-Tisch's case was more traumatic. We'Wha refused to wear men's clothes because s/he found pride in being accepted as a berdache, and s/he participated in events held by women. Osch-Tisch on the other hand experienced the fear of the white man and his religious-based prejudice when he and a group of berdaches were intercepted by an agent at the turn of the century who "cut off their hair, made them wear men's clothing. He forced them to do manual labor" (Williams in Roscoe 61). It was as if there was a fear of a queer society.

After this event, the agent was substituted with a Baptist minister, bringing religion and its cultural bias to destroy berdachism. The minister "continued to condemn Osch-Tisch until his death" (Roscoe 61) fracturing the solid respect the Crow once held for *badés*,[43] imbuing them with fear and repression. The berdache body gradually lost his/her ceremonial role, until s/he was regarded as another body who deserved no special attention. From being considered a leader to being forced to undergo early traumatic shocks of pseudo-conversion therapy, Osch-Tisch experienced the death of his body because of reshaping. Not only the Crow but many other tribes participated in the deconstruction of the berdache by empowering the construction of heterosexuality. Religious texts offered primitive visions of same-sex relationships that were discredited by several institutions, reinterpreting such texts, and rewriting them, although not literally. The whole act of reshaping that affects the body of the individual starts at the institutional level, trying to level the culture and the relationship with the world (Shilling 177).

After Osch-Tisch's death in 1929, "no others took up the *badé* role" (Roscoe 61). In apocalyptic terms, that was the end of all ends because there was no return. Religion had

[43] Berdaches.

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risen as an institution of fear, echoing the Spanish Inquisition, using hate-speech and name-calling as weapons to systematically indoctrinate the remaining berdaches into secrecy. Remaining berdaches assimilated into heteronormativity and those after them "[dressed] like men and [blended] in more" (Roscoe 61), opening the doors to a dark period in which homosexuality in Indian Country was progressively less condoned and more condemned.

Since "First Encounters" Roscoe has drawn a graphic of proto-homophobia in America and the widespread disruption of native life. This graphic is a mathematical hyperbola where both branches are connected through the event of colonization, extending each other into the infinite of the past and the future. He also writes about the Mojaro (Acoma) and Hastiin Klah (Navajo) not providing any different information or outstanding facts that differentiate them from We'Wha and Osch-Tisch, except perhaps for the fact that Klah "helped preserve Navajo religion" (63). Roscoe concludes his article with the analysis of images of warrior women through the accounts of "Slave Woman," "Pine Leaf," and "Running Eagle."

As of today, the image of the female native body has been hypersexualized. The Pocahontas myth has damaged the construction of an independent body free of stereotyping. There has been no interest in revisiting history to make it either accurate or acceptable. The sexualization of the native body has "showed the unequal power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized" (Finley 34). The body was there to provide pleasure to white men, and when they survived military offensives, they were taken prisoners to be—though not exclusively—sexual slaves. As in Osch-Tisch's case, the sexualization of native women started at the institutional level, where men and religion were in charge, and thus, behind the categorization of women.

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The Bible and the Church have insistently presented women as weak, prone to sin, and unworthy of holiness, except for the Virgin Mary. Women were banned from cult, and eventually excluded from the history of religion and its sacred texts, with a few exceptions such as the Book of Judith, included in the Septuagint, where the victory of Israel over Nebuchadnezzar's invading troops is attributed to her participation in the conflict, after decapitating Holofernes when she realized he had fallen in love with her; and the Book of Esther, where she frustrates the genocide of her people after becoming Queen of Persia. In *The Sacred Hoop*, Allen mentions the case of researcher Robert Grumet who, after having himself identified "a number of women chiefs who held office during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (34), found historical incongruences and concluded that historians had deliberately omitted documented information regarding the status of women in the Coastal Algonkians:

> Both Heckeweldger (1876) and Zeisberg (1910) failed to mention women in their lengthy descriptions of Delawaran leadership during the westward exile. Eight out of the eleven sources listed in Kinietz (1946) noted that women could not be chiefs. The remaining three citations made no mention of women leaders. These same sources stated that "women had no voice in council and were only admitted in certain times" [...] The ethnographic record has indicated otherwise. (34)

There is record of matriarchal societies/gynaecocracies among American Indians. The Navajo, for instance, determined descent from the mother's line, and residential patterns were matrilocal (Spain 58); the Hopi, per Schlegel, were and still are matrilineal as well as matrilocal (45); the Iroquois women had enough voice to even make the decision to go to war. Conservative views would consider these women to be more masculine because of the roles they performed, hence at some point they could be called berdaches, but there is no record to support this claim. However, the growing interest in presenting women as the

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weaker sex, unable to control their desires, content, and timid, was of much interest throughout the nineteenth century. Roscoe counterattacked the heterosexist vision of the world with the image of the woman warrior, a much-needed depiction of women to finish with the typecasting of female passivity.

4.2.1.6 *"Slave Woman"*

'Slave Woman' was a Chipewyan woman who worked as the mediator between the Cree and the Chipewyan during the times of pelt trading. Canadian aboriginals made the most of their relationship with the English and the French, who showed interest in the pelts they wore, rather than in the lands they occupied, because of the Canadian wilderness and sub-zero temperatures. 'Slave Woman' was the name given to the Chipewyan woman captured by the Cree who spoke with the post governor in 1715. Crees were a patrilineal society and could have started the negotiations with the governor themselves, as other communities had been displaced by force. Yet, their leadership and masculinity was called into question when Slave Woman proved successful at promoting the truce.

A woman speaking for a man could be considered by some as an act of moral and/or spiritual emasculation. Although Slave Woman was not part of council because she was not Cree, her role as a 'slave' was much richer and complex than if she had been chief. It does suggest that some men still held respect for other matrilineal societies, and their value was not rendered to their status as free individuals or war prisoners. Roscoe's epigraph to the story "*She interpreted and persuaded until her voice was hoarse…*" is depicted in Franklin Arbuckle's painting "Slave Woman" (Fig. 7). It was the act of speaking, the use of linguistic interpretation, and ultimately persuasion that made Slave Woman a standout character in

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the imaginarium of women warriors, due to the result obtained from her actions, but not by her actions per se.

In a way, she performed her role as a man, appealing to logic as a branch of persuasion: "[…] but Slave Woman persuaded them to wait for ten days while she went on alone" (65). There was a general tendency in western society, after the nineteenth century, to think of women as irrational, emotional, hysterical, and unable to think logically. However, Slave Woman retorted with a set of methods to prove her logical thinking after facing the harshness of the Canadian winter, in the middle of a conflict with casualties on all sides. By embodying the logical thinking of a man in the body of a woman, she succeeded in her mission to stop the bloodshed by morally deceiving her male counterparts. As a result, they accepted from a woman what they could not obtain as men.

The text is a post-apocalypse reconstruction of traumatic events; thus the figure of the woman warrior in this scenario is that of the heroine. At the very beginning of the text, Roscoe clarifies that despite the fruitful trading relationship between the English and the French with Canadian natives, "the impact of contact with foreigners led to widespread disruption of Canadian Indian life. Diseases, depletion of game, conflict between Indian groups in competition for land or trade, and conflict with Europeans decreased native populations and altered living patterns" (64). This is what Berger considers a representation of the Holocaust, defining it as "the paradigmatic instance of an apocalypse in history" (59). The role of Slave Woman during this apocalypse is loaded with symbolism because, although her story is not officially told, she stands as a symbol of fidelity and resistance of her people and the others, complying with the role of heroine: "On the tenth day, just as the Crees were about to leave, Slave Woman returned" (Roscoe 65).

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Nevertheless, there was a deeper layer of meaning to her act. Returning was part of fulfilling her promise to come back, but she never admitted she was going to arrive "with a large body of her countrymen prepared for war" (65). This *tricksteresque* move on Slave Woman's side proved her as a woman with remarkable abilities as a military strategist, and moreover, it was reminiscent of the berdache from Sauk and Fox tribes, whose power to gather numbers of significant people around him/her was legendary. She used her influence to construct a discourse of logic based on fear, alluding to famine and extinction if hostilities between the Cree and the Chipewyan continued. She represented—unconsciously—the figure of the trickster as 'the cure,' while at the same time fooled the Cree into waiting for her and her army, a Hegelian dialectic in which she presented the problem, reacted to it, and proposed a solution, all three stages reached within her limits. Consequently, Slave Woman's image recovered the "heroism, service, and devotion" of the feminine, and gave power and self-determination to the native female body regardless of its condition as berdache: "Women became hunters, warriors, mediators, and even chiefs in many tribes in North America. Some were female berdaches—they lived and dressed like men and married other women" (65).

The post-apocalypse seeks and allows the creation of heroines because heroes have failed. Conventional saviors were unsuccessful, and writers have become graphic artists, confiding to *super* heroes and heroines the fate of the world ever since the 1960s. The concept of heroism has been associated with bravery and courage, different philosophical qualities that history has attributed to a few women only. The evolution of the image of the warrior has displaced stories within other matriarchal traditions that moved away from matriarchy into patriarchy as a result of social pressure. Yet, despite women being victims

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of a system of oppression, they have managed to stay fearless. Roscoe's *Pine Leaf* opens with an epigraph dedicated to her courage that sums up the imaginarium of the women warriors: "*She seemed incapable of fear"* (67).

4.2.1.7 *"Pine Leaf"*

Whereas Slave Woman stood out for her ability to interpret and persuade, Pine Leaf came to represent the mind and muscle connection. She is described as "endowed with extraordinary muscular strength, with the activity of a cat and the speed of the antelope" (Beckwourth in Roscoe 67). Her bravery, for "she was one of the bravest women that ever lived" (67), and her morphological structure were central pieces to build her reputation among the Crow, "a matrilineal tribe that places women in high status" (Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* 253), although she was not a Crow by birth. She had been born to the Gros Ventre nation and later abducted and raised by a Crow warrior. The latter claim however, could only be true if Pine Leaf's story is accepted as that of Woman Chief. The problem Beckwourth's account presented to the experts who challenged its accuracy, and even the existence of Pine Leaf, is that I is mostly based on hearsay. Similar to *BES*, the question of authenticity and accuracy conditions the perception of the reality we read and interpret, doubting the veracity of the information despite the attempt at romanticizing the story and presenting Pine Leaf as a free, sly spirit:

> "After serving with her on several war parties, Beckwourth asked Pine Leaf to marry him. She responded, "Do you suppose I would break my vow to the Great Spirit? He sees and knows all things; he would be angry with me, and would not suffer me to live to avenge my brother's death. When Beckwourth persisted, she replied, "Well, I will marry you."
>
> "When we return?"

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> "No, but when the pine-leaves turn yellow."
>
> Several days passed before Beckwourth realized that pine leaves do not turn yellow. (Roscoe 67-68)

Whether she was Pine Leaf or Woman Chief, this idea of commitment to a higher cause embodies the idea of worthiness and the devotion of the heroine to provide help, making herself unreachable in service of a greater cause. Roscoe mentions the remarkable similarities to Woman Chief, "a Crow warrior woman whose life is well documented" (68). Her access to weapons and her dexterity "to kill and butcher buffalo in the field" (Bataille and Lisa 341), and her subversion of the traditional berdache role made her a superior character. Given Denig's descriptions, she would fit into what present-day western society defines as a masculine woman, though not necessarily a butch. Also, despite supporting wives, there is no substantial evidence to assume she was a lesbian. Contrary to the male berdaches who dressed up as women and performed female roles, Pine Leaf "dressed as a woman but pursued male activities" (Bataille and Lia 341):

> She was taller and stronger than most women, and long before she had ventured on the warpath she could rival any of the young men in all their amusements and occupations [...] she would spend most of her time in killing deer and bighorn, which she butchered and carried home on her back when hunting food. (Denig in Roscoe, 69)

Her skills at hunting and warfare granted her a higher status among the Crow council, especially after becoming the head of her family and her foster father's lodge following his death in battle (341). The figure of the woman thus transforms into a source of responsibility and pride, since all male duties are confided in her to guarantee their survival. Her identity as a warrior woman is validated through dynamics in which choosing a new leader is not based on gender, but rather on the ability of the fittest to adapt to their

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surroundings physically and intellectually, and comply with the functions of chief. This return to basics is essentially a matriarchal turn that permitted women to regain power. As bearers of life, they were symbols of supremacy and utter respect who would die to protect their own. This idea is also deeply connected with the image of the selfless heroine who adopts sacrifice as a way of life, but acknowledges her own potential to endure. Roscoe's presentation of native women from the past with strong, leading roles was necessary and almost synchronized with the rise of the American Indian Movement.

The importance of Woman Chief to the construction of confidence and self-acceptance lies in her representation of freedom. Woman Chief's choice to marry another woman and support a total of four wives during her lifetime is, in terms of heteropatriarchal societies, transgressive in form and content. The post-apocalypse is characterized by the feeling of hopelessness for the past and the necessity to rebuild it in a way that endures the passing of time. Such frustration is represented by the loss of control over the female body, and precisely the collapse of the world allowed women to reclaim the sovereignty of their bodies, altering all the structural elements of the American Indian Tradition.

4.2.1.8 "*Running Eagle*"

'Running Eagle' embodied courageousness in the line of Woman Chief, standing out as a military figure in the field of battle. Further, as a woman she represents the post-apocalypse heroine at her best. Her story's epigraph "*I shall never marry…*" (69) is a one-line definition of her character. Heteropatriarchal societies had—and still have—a tendency to centralize power around the discourse of traditional family. The relationship between women and men has been established through canonical law, and the construction of marriage contemplated the institutionalization of family "and its twin patriarchal

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institutions of male authority and female fidelity" (Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* 39). Forced marriages were also part of the evolution of universal society, and in times of social oppression toward women, being a native woman voicing her unwillingness to marry was a challenge to androcracy.

Although at a very young age both girls were trained to hunt and, in a way, to fight, perhaps the main difference between Woman Chief and Running Eagle is that though both ventured into the performance of roles of the opposite sex, Running Eagle "began to dress in men's clothing while on war parties" (Schultz in Roscoe 71). One of them chose to identify herself with masculine roles dressed as a woman, while the other one embraced fully the essence of the opposite sex. Throughout childhood it was very important to instruct children according to their preferences, bringing back Roscoe's debate on preference and selection, and the outcome of that learning process would define their future personalities by providing them with a solid construction of the self. Running Eagle's choice of wearing male clothing to war is moved by a leadership issue that is like Osch-Tisch's, trying to offer an image of bravery and unquestionable control, which chiefs and warriors would be glad and pleased to be around. The fact that dressing and behaving as a man, Running Eagle "gave feasts and dances" (71) puts into question the issue of berdachism as entertainment. The question as to whether these leaders chose to wear the opposite sex's attire to give a war performance requires a westernized approach through the concept of *drag*.[44] Were Osch-Tisch and Running Eagle drag?

[44] Drag is an identity concept deeply associated with gay culture. The idea behind the concept is to achieve the total representation of the other self by means of attire and behavioral emulation with representational goals. Other aims such as spiritual and self-expression have also been included as possible causes to perform as drag queens—male who performs female gender roles—and drag kings—female who perform male gender roles—, although the latter is less frequent in contemporary pop culture.

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In terms of situational behaviour, sex and cross-dressing were parts of the construction of the—homosexual—self. We'Wha lived his life as a Zuni priestess wearing female clothes; Osch-Tisch dressed as a woman and wore men's clothes at war for a day; Woman Chief performed all her roles dressed as a woman; Running Eagle followed Osch-Tisch's footsteps probably unaware of his existence. In all these instances and many others untold by historians and ethnographers, the relevance of clothes as a symbol of distinction is in evidence. Post-apocalypse superheroes and heroines wear distinctive clothing[45] to make them standout in the crowd and acknowledge them as 'superior' beings. The function behind the duty of the figure of the post-apocalypse superhero is to restore hope among the survivors of the past, and this restoration includes a show-time display of skills in warfare, diplomacy, and social abilities. Hence, in terms of spiritual and self-acceptance Osch-Tisch and Running Eagle are indeed drag.

The image of Running Eagle as a berdache is confirmed when "her companions immediately proclaimed her 'Girl Chief' and 'Medicine Girl,'" according to Schultz, (Roscoe 71). This high[er] status meant she was trusted, and thus, she became a symbol of freedom, independence, and a counterattack on masculinity. To subvert androcracy, Running Eagle not only dressed as a man but she also held a strong position against marriage. As mentioned before, she reconfigured the power relations in her community by clearly stating her desire "to be a friend to all" and that she wanted "all to look upon me as a sister and nothing else" (71). There is no mention in Roscoe's text of whether she bore children or not, but assuming she never married, she probably chose to adhere to asexuality as a

[45] Wonder Woman's original suit was designed to portray brighter shades of the American flag while defending a nation in constant distress. Assuming she performed a role like her male counterparts—Batman and Superman—and there was a human side to her superheroine nature, all of Marvel's and DC Comics' production is, by representation, drag.

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lifestyle. Despite the fact that young girls and women were frequently seen at her lodge, there is no mention of Running Eagle's venture into sexual practices with them, thus the image of a sexual[ised] trailblazer as in the case of Woman Chief is substituted by that of spiritual leader and counsellor.

The 'medicine girl' eventually achieved a status that was to be respected and not taken under common law. Her rebellious nature defined her as 'deviant' in terms of heteropatriarchal discourses. By reclaiming the ownership of her body, she debunked the idea that "queer Native women need to be disciplined and controlled by colonial sexual and gendered 'norms'" (Finley 35). All superheroes and heroines are deviant in terms of what the norm dictates should be and should be not accepted, and even so, they are all queer in the sense of being victims of typecasting and ostracism due to their 'odd' nature. As stated by Shultz, after people from her tribe acknowledged her as chief, the general opinion was that "the gods had implanted in her a nature far different from that of any other girl that ever lived. She was neither to be judged nor governed by the tribal laws regarding women. She was to be honored and respected for what she had done" (Roscoe 71). So, like Woman Chief, she was esteemed for her accomplishments and not just for her gender. Queerness became their legendary trademark beyond their deaths.

The choice to present them as post-apocalypse heroines is an alternative to conventional uplifting narratives of self-improvement. The colonization of the body provoked a dystopian vision of the self that has been subjected to patriarchal institutions powered by heterosexism. Interestingly, all these women were ahead of their time, which is an ironic post-modern whim 'written' in the past. They all coincided in the challenging of androcracy by debunking myths of powerlessness, which nods back at Allen's opening

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poem. Perhaps the literary quality of this first section is that in content, it is cyclical as it always returns to Allen's powerful words of endurance, which become a sort of motto and leitmotiv that lights the spark of an identity revolution. The result is a nearly-academic approach to the history of the berdache and its presence in North America on the verge of post-humanism in a world constantly evolving. What Roscoe presents, however, is an a-truth drilled on the page, because despite the research, history has contaminated the evidence and hearsay has overruled the role of authenticity; therefore, what the reader sees is Beckwourth's, Schultz's, Denig's, Point's and, eventually, Roscoe's interpretation of a simulated status quo accepted as authentic.

4.3 *A Post-Apocalypse Dream: Development (II)*

Dreams can either be [re]constructions of not-yet-lived narratives or subconscious retellings of imprecise genesis. In the constant evocation of 'the end,' there is a need to invoke and revisit the origin of the event that led us to our final processing of life. This call for the past is the result of a quest and our questioning of the self in the circle of life, and it defines the way we have been constructed genotypically and phenotypically. This means that to process the end, there must be an understanding of the beginning and how all elements blended together in a millennial equation to isolate and solve the variables of tradition and truth.

The final section of this part, "Ever Since the World Began: Berdache Myths and Tales," collects several origin myths that tell the story of how the world was reconfigured in a queer way, providing answers to the 'how' and the 'why' that fuel the identity discourse. Every beginning is characterized by chaos, and these texts are not absent of it, as chaos and disorder are part of the apocalyptic nature of creation. Despite the rich mythology around

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the origin of the berdaches and their roles in origin myths, "A Conflict of the Sexes" (Navajo), "Coyote, Fox, and Panther" (Okanagon), and "Double Sex" (Navajo) will be analyzed as queer texts constructing a narrative of identity and berdachism. It is also important to remember that mythology is powered by the supernatural to deify and mystify the earthly to make it *wakan* (holy). Thus, most of these texts tend to describe the berdache as a supernatural being, a tendency that is reminiscent of the comic artists of the 1960s, relying on superior powers to account for the presence of a god-like figure on earth. In a way, various traditions share similar aspects when describing the supernatural nature of their icons. For this reason, it is understandable that these communities considered the berdache as a gifted, powerful, shape-shifter, and animal-whisperer being.

A queer reconfiguration of the native world calls for the understanding of its peculiarities in terms of identity and berdachism. Not all origin myths have a berdache as a central character, but instead they present a queer alternative that does not necessarily venture into lesbianism. For instance, Beth Brant's short story *This Is History* (1991) deals with the falling of Sky Woman from Sky World, a queer character whose curiosity made her queer and worrisome. However, her queerness has nothing to do with her possible sexual identity. Far from being recalled as a traumatic event, Sky Woman's falling is a landmark that initiates a new era of self-discovery. Therefore, origin myths are primal narratives of language, acceptance, identity, and power that share similar characteristics of oral literature, combining a set of elements to set the foundations of tradition.

There is a struggle between the physical and the spiritual or between accepting the supernatural origin of the berdache and the ethnographic, anthropologic, and historic evidence that proves his/her empirical existence. Some people would believe that

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homosexuality is an inalienable part of human nature, because heterosexuality cannot exist without it. As a matter of fact, such categorization could not have been made possible without the existence of other categories to challenge its supremacy. Others would believe that homosexuality is a learned 'deviant' behaviour and homosexuals must be re-educated through conversion therapy, for instance. Whether homosexuality and/or berdachism are regarded as physical or spiritual variables, there is an unmistakable exercise in racism (Brant, *Writing as Witness* 20)—and homophobia—when trying to elaborate an identity discourse that has, in part, a supernatural genesis.

4.3.1 *"A Conflict of the Sexes" (Navajo)*

The Navajo take a turn to explore the benefits and disadvantages of separation, while using the figure of the berdache as a reconciler between two worlds. In some American Indian cultures, the western concept of traditional family and its institutionalization of marriage were present,, as recorded in "Running Eagle." Lang writes about the accommodating status of the *nadle* in the Navajo culture, and how they were represented "as being better women than the women themselves" (71). The concept of gender elite was the actual source of discord between First Woman and First Man after he discovered "his wife with another" (Roscoe 84), keeping the identity of *another* as a secret until it is eventually revealed as *nadle*. There is no mention nor probability to suspect she was committing adultery despite First Man's misleading reaction towards the encounter. His silence and his refusal to eat or drink are indicative of a person whose masculinity has been wounded. House argues that "no one sex or gender is elite, but they are equal, just as First Woman and First Man. Should there be another conflict or separation of the sexes, then possibly the *nádleeh* (male-female or female-male) will pursue the Creator's divine powers

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of balance" (Jacobs et al. 226). Her mention of the *nadle* as a source of power to bring order from chaos is a reminder of the hermaphrodite's supernatural conception in the origin myths.

The *nadle* in the Navajo origin myth is both the reason for the rupture and the solution. It is a [post]apocalypse figure who is "clearly the inseparability of male and female" because of his/her "distinctive expression of the male and female ordering of the universe" (Epple in Jacobs et al., 187n) that alters the reality of First Woman and First Man. The nature of his/her *nadle* status was questioned when First Man asked his four chiefs to bring the hermaphrodite to him:

> When he came First Man asked him if the metate and brush were his. He said that they were. First Man asked him if he could cook and prepare food like a woman, if he could weave, and brush the hair. And when he assured First Man that he could do all manner of woman's work, First Man said: "Go and prepare food and bring it to me." (Roscoe 85)

This strict questioning of the *nadle*'s identity is what Lang considers a Navajo's disapproval of the women's desire for autonomy (71). However, Thomas states that *nádleeh*—the term—is "intertwined with control, ambiguity, knowledge, and continuity of Navajo life and culture within Navajo space" (Jacobs et al. 160-161). Therefore, First Man's attitude shows his insecurity as a man whose masculinity is being contested, so he alters the state of affairs in a way so that "the hermaphrodites take sides with the men and together with them maintain the arrangement of the relation between sexes" (Lang 71). For this reason, to strike at First Woman's desire for autonomy, First Man followed the voice of the Great-Coyote-Who-Was-Formed-in-the-Winter and crossed the river with all the men

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from his tribe while looking back and observing how the females were laughing, and "were also behaving very wickedly" (Roscoe 85).

O'Bryan's choice to use *wickedly* in her translation from the Navajo draws attention because of the socio-linguistic power associated with the word. Probably derived from Old English *wicca* meaning 'witch,' the term 'wicked' has always been used to describe or to associate with evil events that are morally wrong and mischievous. Furthermore, the concept of witchcraft has always been linked to women, thus separating the witches—usually female—from the wizards—generally male. However, someone with the power to make magic regardless of his or her gender was a supernatural shaman in the American Indian tradition. What kind of behaviour enclosed the word 'wickedly' in this myth? Given the fact that all women were left alone with no men on their side, could this be a wink at morally condemned actions such as sexual freedom to experience lesbianism? Women's desire for autonomy was contested by the *nadle*'s multiplicity of choices regarding marriage and sexual partners, since they had the male privilege of choosing to whom they would marry (Lang 295).

The myth's Sodom-and-Gomorrah-esque development depicts two opposing worlds, giving themselves to false idolatry— "one woman brought forth a big stone. This stone-child was later the Great Stone that rolled over the earth killing men" (Roscoe 85)—and to killing to satisfy their passions— "the men [...] killed the females of mountain sheep, lion, and antelope" (85). After the rupture between the sexes time went by and both communities seem to strive. One year later, laziness overpowered women because they lacked the masculine component in their lives (Lang 336) and their immersion in "chaos" pushed them to join the men unsuccessfully, as they drowned in the river that separated

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them. Men were happy and had plenty of stock, but after they started killing female animals they were struck by lightning as a warning to immediately stop. Playing with the symbolism around *nadle*, he is mentioned right after the myth says that "First Man and the chiefs hunted and planted their seeds" (Roscoe 85). It is probable that *nadle* was not only there to "ground the corn and [cook] the food" (85) but also to serve as a sexual companion to First Man and the four chiefs; more specifically, he would have been a passive sexual partner receiving the seed of these men.

The *nadle* was the central figure that eventually provided women with the resources to lead a good life, as First Woman said to her husband at the end of the myth. In the Navajo tradition, *nadles* were "associated with all the wealth in the country" (Lang 70), and were regarded also as symbols of prosperity, which is seen through his labor in the male community fulfilling his nadle roles. Men achieved happiness during their time away from women because they counted on the nadle to help them both, domestically and sexually, and because "thanks to the *nadle* [sic], the men are later able to maintain the sexual division of labor" (Lang 336). The *nadle* is the figure who was always in control precisely because of his/her "motivation for achievement" (70), and because as Jacobs says, s/he possessed knowledge about everything and everyone. As Lang says, "they know everything—that is, they 'know' the masculine and the feminine equally, [based on] their dual sexuality, which alone enables them to fulfil both roles in the first place" (72). Without the *nadle*, the Navajo would 'cease to exist.' This shaman-like figure in the Navajo tradition is similar to the Sauk and Fox representation of the berdache, an extraordinary being who knew many secrets about his sexual partners. Therefore, in this way the power of the nadle

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does not lie in his morphological adaptability to his surroundings, but in his ability to exercise his "ambivalent gender status" (73).

As opposed to the Christian tradition in which Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed, the worlds of First Woman and First Man reunite, acknowledging their mistakes and committing themselves to living a prosperous life. Although the myth is not sexually explicit, if we understand the role of the *nadle* in the Navajo, there are conclusions which are easy to reach. The men had the *nadle* on their side because they knew s/he could perform as a woman and as a sexual companion. This is what is considered situational sexual behaviour, which was common during long hunting periods in some American Indian communities. On the other hand, the 'wickedness' of women was fueled by their desire to break free, which led them to explore and push boundaries in the face of their men. However, despite the queerness of *nadle* and his/her intervention, the myth itself confirms Lang's statement about the Navajo men's disapproval of women's desire for autonomy. It is a conservative story from all angles: the ones in power thrive, while the ones they left behind succumb to their own self-destruction; the women admit mistakes have been made, but with the help of their husbands they could lead a good life.

As O'Bryan stated, "on the occasion of the separation of men and women, he [*nadle*] goes from his undifferentiated hermaphroditic state over into the feminine role" (Lang 336). This change is possibly the nadle's supernatural feature that describes the berdache in the origin myths. In a more complex reading, the nadle thus is a "paradigm of subversive action" and a "model for political agency" (Butler xxii). There is deliberation towards his/her gender chameleonic subversion, and such deliberation affects the political reorganization of the world after women and men reconcile, leaving the nadle wandering through five

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worlds[46] (Lang 336). Moreover, it could be argued that *nadles* are cyborgs whose hybrid machinery responds to the needs of male power embodied by First Man and his four chiefs. In this sense, the consideration of the supernatural hermaphrodite as a revolutionary social hybrid does not escape the realm of logic, in which the mind, the spirit, and the flesh collide giving birth to berdaches. Afterwards, upon that reconciliation, s/he goes back to his/her androgyny form making him/herself dually available. Such capacity to change denotes astuteness and dexterity because s/he granted himself a position within First Man's world by presenting himself "in a woman's role, equipped with all the requisite working utensils" (336). So, in a way, his/her queer identity as a *nadle* is tied to the development of wage labor (Kirsch 66) because men are granted economic success during the time of the separation and s/he is also tied to his performance of the self.

The commodification of the *nadle* body is a direct consequence of social evolution. By the time the text had been published, industrialization had taken over most of native life, in the sense that capitalism had appeared to reconfigure the borders of the native body. This perpetuated the patriarchy and its idea that without the presence of men, women were doomed to suffer an apocalypse of their own which started, per Lang and Matthews, with the death of the females while crossing the river (336). In this scenario of socio-economic chaos, the *nadle* resurged as a trading coin that stabilized the market. After the end—the conflict of the sexes—there were constructions of hypothetical utopias in which genders could survive without one another. What women and men were not counting on was the post-apocalypse nature of *nadle*. S/he is not a "response to catastrophes perceived as all-encompassing and irreversible, as coterminous with the entire existing order" (Berger 181),

[46] See Lang's *Men as Women, Women as Men*'s chapter 20, "Gender Role Change in Native American Oral Traditions" (331-341) for further information regarding the origin of the nadle in the Navajo mythology.

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but s/he represents a kind of dark matter that holds the Navajo together in one single universe made of different worlds. His/her multiplicity is what makes him/her stand at the same level of the trickster given his/her ever-changing, shape-shifting nature. Then, it is a cornerstone for the American Indian tradition, subject to its own post-apocalypse representation(s) of the end, to conceive *nadle* as a nuclear figure whose value is both socio-economic and identitary, and whose value also lies on his—supernatural—ability to alter the reality perceived by others by playing drag.

Roscoe's travel through the ancient tradition of the berdache reached its genesis towards the end of the first half of the anthology. This example of non-linearity is necessary because fact from fantasy must be differentiated to understand the myth. The previous myth deals with the berdache as a supernatural hermaphrodite who flirts with the spiritual world abruptly falling on earth, causing disturbance and eventual harmony. This tendency is cyclic as is related to the circle of life and death, regeneration, and subsequent abundance. However, despite its subtleties regarding the sexuality of the berdache, the myth is left open to suppositions. Nonetheless, the conclusion is that the berdache comes to share features of the trickster. The trickster and his/her discourse involve the whole of the culture around a figure that responds to conflict with wit, humor, and foolishness, finding the brighter side of trauma. The trickster, as the berdache, is a sexual figure that embodies the essence of American Indian identity. His/her disinhibition towards sex, gender subversion, and identity make him/her a comic social hybrid that uses his/her internalization of trauma to elaborate a complex alternative reality. S/he focuses on his/her ability to perform and finally, to obtain benefits from his/her exploitation. Therefore, the

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trickster becomes a Robin Hood-esque character forged in the manners of coyote, the mythological creature that alters all established orders.

4.3.2 *"Coyote, Fox, and Panther" (Okanagon)*

The myth exemplifies Coyote as a character intrinsic to native tradition. James Teit's epigraph to the Okanagon tale reinforces the idea that the Coyote and Trickster are figures of comedy around which "sexual jokes and humorous episodes of mistaken identity occur when Trickster changes or combines genders" (Trait in Roscoe 89). Fox and Coyote are friends who live together. In this way, the Okanagon tale places two of the most notable characters of native mythology together sharing their intellect, "the physical details, the spiritual labor, the ritual, the gathering, the making" (Brant, *A Gathering of Spirit* 8), to exemplify the oddities of two social hybrids with assigned roles that seem to change throughout the tale.

In native tradition men oversaw hunting and procured game for their communities, hence Fox's assigned role fitted into the masculine trait. However, Coyote—another male character—is described by Fox as "powerful and gifted" and asks him "to break our spell of bad luck, so that we may procure game" (Roscoe 90), incurring into the supernatural definition of the berdache in origin myths. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Coyote is understood as an ambivalent character who possesses a dual nature that he can use for his or their own benefit. As both characters began to starve, Coyote entered a shifting phase that turned him into a woman to trick someone to find food provisions for Fox and himself. And like the Sinkaietk story, "Coyote [transformed] himself into a girl in order to win the chieftain Cougar [Panther in the Okanagon tale] and his immense food

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supply for himself, which he succeeds in doing, although here also the fraud is finally seen through" (Lang 338).

Coyote's ambivalence exists because s/he is ambivalent in the native tradition and, as Haraway argues, because s/he "disturbs nature/culture ontologies" (Markussen et al. 12). There is no fixed gender assigned to Coyote, thus the construction of his/her image is subjected to the sociocultural imaginarium of each community. For instance, in *The Sacred Hoop* Allen depicts the image of women where she came from, presenting a varied range of women who partied, who were tired, shy, and aggressive. However, she emphasizes that "from Laguna I take images of Yellow Woman, Coyote Woman, Grandmother Spider (Spider Old Woman)" (45). These women are presented as the givers of light, medicine, weaving, and life. In other traditions, such as the Crow, Coyote is an Old Man who created the world and all living beings in it. This dual representation of Coyote complies with his/her depiction as an anthropomorphic figure regardless of biological sex. His/her humanization, as well as his/her portrayal as a trickster, are "founded on the tribal perception of the essential humor of earthly life" (97). Humor is precisely the tool s/he uses to *disturb* Haraway's referenced ontologies because through laughter and obscenities, Coyote/trickster alters the communication between nature and culture (Markussen et al., 12). Therefore, Coyote's superhuman's powers—as s/he has been anthropomorphized within supernatural ideas of alterity—have given him/her the ability to survive all the [de]constructions of reality before and after the apocalypse, thus making him/her a post-apocalyptic Robin Hood-esque pseudo-hero.

Survival for Coyote in the Okanagon tale is not as dramatic as the linguistic load of the term suggests. The simplicity of the motive—hunger—makes the story a cartoonish

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imitation of life, and yet, this hunger is Coyote's ultimate incentive to perform in drag. For this reason, it is reasonable to think that there is always a need to push the boundaries of the norm, to challenge the perception of reality. In the Okanagon tale, however, there is motivation and irreverence. Survival becomes an artefact of manipulation and sarcasm, a new mechanism to cope with social reconfigurations. It is in the moment prior to sex with Panther when Coyote begins to play his game: "I am a maiden and have never known man" (Roscoe 90), so he uses negotiation to establish a new state of affairs to provide plenty of food for Fox and him on the premise of mutual acknowledgment and consensual sex. During the three-day period Coyote took advantage of Panther, he broke all patrilocal traditions and went back home while lying about his whereabouts, allowing a build-up process in the tale that ends up with climactic Panther's public humiliation when the real status of Coyote is revealed by himself: "Coyote ran about above the sweat-house and howled like a coyote. He shouted, "You will never have a good wife, Panther, you bad warrior, you bad man of the warpath!" (91), turning the Okanagon tale into a story of success where changing genders took effect.

"Conflict of the Sexes" and "Coyote, Fox, and Panther" have in common the description of the male reaction to deception. After Coyote's revelation, Panther is ashamed and says nothing, in the same way that First Man took refuge in silence and lack of appetite after seeing his wife with a *nadle*. Both tales have a strong sense of patriarchy because the male figure is presented as important, chief-like, and therefore must be respected and treated accordingly. At the same time, as origin myths, they must alter the cultural dimension to justify the actions pursued: the men leaving the women behind, Coyote performing in drag for food. In these tales, however, through the figure of the

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hermaphrodite/berdache men appear as weakened despite their apparent physical superiority to women. In addition, it is the hermaphrodite who disturbs reality and allows the construction of a discourse of identity that presents him/her as vital to the prosperity of a culture. These myths are unconsciously motivated by economic subsistence: the grinding of the corn that helped men survive on the opposite river bank, and the necessity of taking food to survive. These are examples of the hermaphroditic/berdache body as gross domestic product given its relevance in the socioeconomic structure of the community, because as providers and caretakers, berdaches had a natural motivation to nurture.

4.3.3 *"Double-Sex" (Navajo)*

As opposed to its Navajo predecessor in the anthology, "Double-Sex" does not portray *nadle* as a hermaphrodite, but rather as a "doubly sexual" (Hill in Roscoe 91) berdache who shares the comic malice of the trickster to take advantage of his/her surroundings, recurring to shape-shifting powers at will. This short account is the most supernatural representation of the berdache, starting with his representation as Bego chidii, the son of the sun. This elevation of the berdache to a [demi]god status—he was born after the sun touched a flower which became pregnant (91)—exemplifies the reverence toward *nadle* in the Navajo tradition. In the myth, Bego chidii was born a man but his gender was constructed when "he was put in control of many things, such as game and domestic animals. He was a berdache and the first pottery-maker" (91). Hence his biological status as a man at birth, was taken over by his berdache construction upon growth. By being in charge of game and animals, Bego chidii performed his male roles without interfering with his development of pottery as a *nadle*. However, the social construction around Bego chidii revealed his eccentricities as a *nadle*, thus turning him into a queer character that did not fit

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into its category as wakan: "In many aspects, be'gotchidí [sic] appears as a supernatural equivalent of the earthly *nadle*: bisexual and infertile, but at the same time uninhibited and unconventional in sexual matters, he is associated with both feminine and masculine areas" (Lang 337).

This unconventionality was mentioned by Teit in the epigraph reprinted from *Okanagon Tales* before the tale of "Coyote, Fox, and Panther." He argued that sex was not a fixed trait (Roscoe 90) among American Indians, yet it helped to shape their construction as a cultural whole. His name describes his sexual motivation to cruise the world, as "be'go" means 'breasts.' Richard offered a literal translation of his name as "One-Who-Grabs-Breasts" (Lang 337) because "he would make himself invisible, then sneak up on young girls to touch their breasts as he shouted 'be'go', 'be'go'" (337). This abusive behaviour complied, partly, with the trickster's nature to make the most of a situation by taking advantage of someone's misfortunes. His actions are described as annoying and they obstruct the natural flow of native life. But as Richard observed, he appears in other stories as the generous creator of domesticated animals who gives them away and, at the same time, takes care of them (337).

This representation of a double-sexed character with double morality delves into a more complex image of the berdache as a subversive character that uses transvestism to obtain a personal benefit. For instance, Bego chidii's transvestism is not a literal call to contemporary conceptions of cross-dressing, and not even similar to Osch-Tisch's and Running Eagle's choice to dress as men for battle. His presence as "a rainbow, wind, sand, water, etc." (Roscoe 91) are other 'natural' examples of transvestism in which he is indeed performing the berdache role. His choice to embrace nature as his business card does not

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make him closer to a spiritual world separated from the physical one. Furthermore, he is altering the course of reality by establishing an alternative scenario between two worlds where men, women, and sex are at stake: he grabs breasts and testicles, and touches men and women when they are having intercourse (92). Despite his description as a god-like figure, his behaviour does not fit into the Navajo's expectations of a berdache, mainly because nadle's dual sexuality "is said by the Navajo themselves to bring luck and wealth" (Lang 72), and Bego chidii's attitude towards sexuality brings discomfort and separation.

This separation is, per Hill, the Navajo way "to distinguish between 'real *nadle*' (i.e. intersexes) and 'those who pretend to be *nadle*' (i.e. transvestites)" (Lang 68), although such distinction did not "have an effect on the cultural status of the two *nadle* groups" (68). Is it possible then that Bego chidii was not a real *nadle*? Despite the power of mythological stories, and that his father was the Sun God, his dual sexuality could be an a-truth, a representation of nadle's real sexuality reinterpreted by his father and accepting it as a mythological truth that was never called into question. This is not an affirmation about Bego chidii not being doubly-sexed, but given the revered status the *nadle* had in the Navajo tradition, he seemed more of a pretender rather than an actual *nadle*. His double sexuality revealed that he was, in fact, an openly bisexual character because he enjoyed touching breasts and testicles alike. Such 'depravation' in terms of mythological tradition trespassed the limits of the comic, and began to picture the berdache as an ill-driven figure who was obsessed with sex.

Independently of the other myths, "Double-Sex" does not link the berdache to economy, despite mentioning he was the first pottery-maker. Bego chidii's queerness derives from its unconventional attitude toward sex. He is queer not because he is strange,

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but because queer represents his ideology, and thus his identity. Despite its shortness, the text is a discourse on identity politics because it constructs and deconstructs the subject—Bego chidii—within a berdache social framework. However, the negative aspect of its analysis is that to understand how this [de]construction works, there must be an initial approach to the berdachism in the Navajo tradition, otherwise, the conflict that arises between the myth and the fact blurs its comprehension. As a matter of fact, the hermaphrodite, Coyote, and Bego chidii are constructions of the same identity that managed to evolve and survive into the post-apocalypse world. In contemporary terms, all these roles come to represent different categories of queer, following the heteronormative model of categorization that uses labelling as its main tool.

"Artists, Healers, and Providers: The Berdache Heritage" is an ethnographic identity discourse that intertwines fact and fiction with hearsay, a-truths, and reinterpretations of reality. Despite its lack of literariness, its literature is rich in the sense that attempts to reconstruct the past using the ruins of the apocalypse. The colonization process has been an attack on self-determination. All pre-conceptions that ever existed were destroyed to be substituted by the perpetrator's hegemonic interpretation of the world. In this sense, the apocalypse was a recurrent issue because each traumatic event symbolized the fall of another part of the native culture, and the rise of a new hybrid, though not necessarily an enhanced one. For this reason, in a time where the world was trying to achieve utopias and "Reagan's interest and belief in the biblical apocalypse" (Berger 135) conditioned the reality of the American mainstream, there was a necessity to build a bridge to the past, to go back to the moment 'ever since the world began,' and recuperate what once was natural, intrinsic, and culture-defining.

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Roscoe's compilation of texts is the cornerstone of an identity manifesto that is trying to construct a contemporary gay identity in a post-apocalypse world. It is a Jungian[47] reconstruction of a narrative that happened at both conscious and unconscious levels, where there has been the exposition and the development of a storyline, outlining the characters, the setting, and the theme(s). Because it is a conscious and an unconscious process, this retelling of the past is subject to alterations that might confuse the facts; therefore, everything that has been written has a fraction of a-truth in it.

To conclude a dream, there must be a climax and a lysis, which correspond to the following chapters. In them, the second section of this anthology, and selected texts from *Sovereign Erotics*, will be analyzed in an attempt to find the dream's resolution. *Living the Spirit* is the purely literary counterpart that voices the problematic of finding a contemporary gay American Indian identity in the post-apocalypse. The climax of this dream is the vehicular power of literature to problematize the unresolved traumas of the past, looking for a new paradigm of self-acceptance.

[47] For further information on Jung and his theory of dreams, archetypes, and the collective unconscious see *The Archetypes and Collective Unconscious* by Carl G. Jung. RFC Hull: Princeton University Press, 1981.

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Chapter Five

Líla hóthaŋka iyépi[48]

For those of us climbing to the top of the food chain, there can be no mercy.

There is but one rule: hunt or be hunted.

(Frank Underwood, *House of Cards*)

Self-acceptance was under Reaganism's vision of absolute social harmony which, as stated by Pete Daley, was concentrated into "Family, Neighborhood, Peace, Freedom" (Berger 154). American society was being marketed as "an entire reconciliation of all oppositions of class, race, and gender, the repair of all families, the achievement of utopia" (154), while the lack of response to the AIDS epidemic that started in the 1980s was hurting Reagan's administration public perception. In an era of illusions of grandeur, gay American Indians found the spot to speak up and problematize their situation in a market-driven society. Gay American Indians were trapped between the disappearance of berdachism and the need to find their a-truth—an interpreted simulation of *Indianness*—to redirect their quest for social acceptance. Erna Pahe, M. Owlfeather, Chrystos, Maurice Kenny, Paula Gunn Allen, Kieran Prather, Lawrence William O'Connor, Ben the Dancer, and Beth Brant were the critical minds who talked in a loud[er] voice to unify traces of scattered identities through literary texts setting the foundations of a discourse on identity politics of power in the future yet to come.

[48] *They talked in a loud voice,* retrieved from the New Lakota Dictionary Pro, V.1: 2014. December 2016.

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In the present chapter, a selection of texts from the second part of *Living the Spirit*, will be given a post-apocalyptic/post-colonial reading, attempting to establish the outcome of cultural trauma and how these texts debunk Reaganist history's denial of historical and social traumas, "claiming that all wounds have healed and were, therefore, never really wounds" (Berger 154). The turmoil of the era witnessed the fracture of a society that was, far from Reaganism's idea of wellness, wounded after the military downfall of civilization. Dehumanization was being empowered by Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or as coined by Gross, Post Apocalypse Stress Syndrome (PASS) (450). American Indians were doubly and deeply immersed in a philosophical struggle to redefine themselves because dehumanization was expanding the breach between the past and the present. Consequently, younger generations accepted a-truths as authentic statements about their cultures, without calling into question their veracity. Therefore, this reconstruction of native tradition and the need to reconnect to find a cure for *Indianache*, represents the climactic point of a post-apocalyptic dream that started with Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968).

5.1 A Post-Apocalypse Dream: Climax

The term 'climax' alludes to the most exciting point of an event. All selected texts have an extolling quality to them that elaborate their own discourse of authenticity while their authors verbalize the problematic of identity in a maze of hybridity and critical epistemology. The pride of the berdache collides with contemporary [re]definitions of the self, and for the first time, gay American Indian writers have spoken openly about the racism and homophobia that have reshaped a tradition constructed upon different levels of consciousness. Both homophobia and racism have become leitmotivs that embody the fear

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of the superstructure, and how they [co]exist under terms of 'biopower.' It is the fear of becoming versus the fear of being, a struggle that occurs in an a-true panoptic universe controlled by governmental bodies.

5.1.1 "*Children of Grandmother Moon" by M. Owlfeather (Shoshone-Metis/Cree)*

This autobiographical story—unintentionally—encrypts the symbolic discourse of a gay native Generation X that still mourns for a long-gone past. This grieving *is* necessary precisely because "the first generation has begun to age and die" (Berger 67) and the third generation starts to lose contact with the survivors of the apocalypse. Like Berger, the term *generation* is used in a bio-demographical sense (67), clarifying, however, that the first generation comes to represent both survivors and victims, and the third generation is the representation of the first and second generations' offspring coming of age, who consequently, face a multi-layered problematic of identity since they had become a whitewashed simulation of their ancestors. However, the Lost Generation-esque tone of the story presents the 'I' with tribulations regarding perseverance against self-exile, spiritual alienation through self-awareness of the cultural trauma, and indulgence toward public shame.

Its opening poem is perfectly connected to the end of the story through the idea of "a lost age" (97), recreating a literary hoop that seeks to restore pride to berdachism after being destroyed by acculturation: "In the old days, groups of berdaches lived on the outer edge of the camp. They lived together in a tipi or group of tipis that were usually the best made and decorated in the camp. The old-time berdaches had a pride in their possessions and in themselves" (104). Because of the third generation's loss of connection with the survivors, this call on the past is a much-needed route to basics and to find what the

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problem was, because the dwellers of the post-apocalypse have been "marked with the imprints of catastrophe but without clear knowledge of what exactly the catastrophe was" (Berger 49). After the apocalypse, the representation of the American Holocaust was all over the place and too many aspects were covered to be comprehended at once: loss of language, decimation of population through systematic killing, evangelization, indoctrination, family separation, political warfare, corruption of the self, bashing of tradition, whitewashing, among others. And yet, Owlfeather seems to be aware of the consequences of such catastrophe and states so in a traumatic way: "There is no work here, little or no pride; there is depression, desolation, no hope" (Roscoe 99). This dystopian scenario leaves no space for development, and if there is some development, it is subject to extremely harsh conditions where both the environment and the new order play an important part.

Dystopian/post-apocalypse literary production is constructed in the oxymoron 'after the end,' in which the social strata has been reconfigured by 'biopower.' This Foucauldian notion of mass control through state discipline has affected the evolution of society following the catastrophe, producing two disproportionate groups that answer to social conditioning: submissive followers and rebels.[49] As a rebel, Owlfeather narrates the celebration of the great summer 'Sun Dance,' which had been suppressed in an attempt to prevent natives from gathering in numerous groups. Despite all native practices and beliefs having been prohibited upon punishment of jail, "the dance was held on a Mormon

[49] George Miller's *Mad Max: Fury Road*'s Furiosa, for instance, represents a hybrid character who serves Immortan Joe, the egomaniac and bigoted leader of the citadel and the War Boys, and revolts against his institution of hypersexualized and objectified women. Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*' Katniss Everdeen embodies the essence of a dystopian adolescent who fails to comply with The Capitol's authoritarian demands and leads to a nationwide revolution that ends up overthrowing the government. These examples are accounts of 'gangsterized cultures' where "corruption and greed dominate, unchecked by either weakened public institutions or individual leadership" (Larson 25).

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rancher's property where the government had no jurisdiction" (Roscoe 101). Gatherings were tools to "provide the social relations important to community and identity maintenance" (Gilley 45), and the fear of being unable to control natives forced the government to interfere with them: "In one district of my reservation the dance was stopped by cutting down the Sun Dance pole in the midst of the ceremony" (Roscoe 101).

These events are reflections of the apocalypse Owlfeather is seeking through his call to the lost age. Terror, in its broadest meanings, has always been part of western culture. Contemporary definitions of terror are fueled by misconceptions,[50] historically speaking, Euromericans progressively extended terror all over North America and there still is controversy over the usage of the term *genocide* when applied to natives. As Owlfeather narrates, "if an Indian man wore his hair long, which was his pride, he could be jailed and punished" (100). Cutting down the dance pole and punishing someone for wearing his hair long were 'technologies of power' that increased trauma to achieve population control (Foucault 140). According to this, it could be argued that assimilation is an act of state terrorism because its survivors carried on living to develop major depression and anxiety along with PTSD/PASS: "the culture is shattered, broken… and the people's lifestyle is in tatters and perhaps even still in culture shock to some degree. After all, my great-grandmother and great-grandfather saw the last of the buffalo killed" (Roscoe 99).

As was explained in the previous chapter, assimilation caused a double breach in tradition that produced a social hybrid between the western and the native, someone whose sense of belonging is dissimilar and subject to the a-true cultural mainstream.

[50] The war on terror unleashed after 9/11 and the rise of ISIS in recent years have biased the social conception of the Muslim community worldwide. The palpitating Islamophobia extending globally is a direct consequence of a society that is ruled by generalizations.

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Terrorism thus affected native culture collapsing its architectural skeleton through religious bias and philosophical conservatism toward homosexuality: "the view of the gay Indian man or woman has been twisted to fit the mix of Christian and Indian beliefs in contemporary tribal culture" (Roscoe 100). One of the most notable consequences was that "the vision of the berdache was forgotten or suppressed to the point that it was no longer mentioned and barely remembered" (101). Berdachism had lost its centurial war to social criticism and its heteronormative standards, and the post-apocalypse had recruited a new generation that was either aware of cultural trauma and verbalized it, or chose to step aside and move away from the common past.

The criticism that poignantly addressed homosexuality reshaped the development of America's modern society deconstructing "patterns of equality in favor of extreme supremacies" (Fuentes 74). Those patterns were pre-established by the dominant culture which discriminated against sexual orientation, gender, economic status, and religious beliefs. The encryption used to control was programmed into tribal members as if they were cyborgs in need of an update, [re]adjusting levels of consciousness and awareness to produce an upgraded version—or downgraded, depending on side of the spectrum—of the self. These 'changes' promoted their quantification as social bodies, who ultimately functioned according to a set of codes within the cultural whole.

Owlfeather narrates that "[i]n the old days [...] the people respected each other's vision. Berdaches had an integral place" (100), but as in Osch-Tisch's story, the repression toward the exaltation of the berdache was so cruel that it eventually disappeared. If berdachism was mentioned again, "it was with shame and scorn, due to the influence of Christianity on Indian people" (101). Racism and homophobia forced natives to question

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their status and their true nature despite the revered old ways. As tools of terror and technologies of white power, they created a hybrid aware of his/her own non-conventional features, aware of the danger s/he would be exposed to being outside their communities, but realizing that although "the gay community is the only place where they can be open about their sexuality [...] gay social circles posed a potentially harmful environment to them" (Gilley and Hawk 295):

> It is unfortunate that among today's gay Indians the great tradition and vision of the old-time berdache has been suppressed and is nearly dead. Gay Indians today grow up knowing that they are different, act in a different way, and perceive things in a different light from other Indians. They know these things, but sometimes are afraid to act of acknowledge their gayness. (Roscoe 103)

These new hybrids found shelter in the urban gay scene, forcing themselves to migrate to find personal liberation. The question is whether they pursued liberation on their own terms, or if they did so following non-Indian scripted patterns: "many go to the city and follow the way of the non-Indian gay society—taking up the latest trends in fashion, carrying on in the bars, or dancing the night away in discos and after-hours clubs and, of course, having sex" (103). There is an evident pattern of recurrence that leads to self-destruction derived from the reappearance of traumatic events, usually as nightmares. This saw the proliferation of ashamed individuals who hid their lifestyle and interests from society, and the departure of gay natives who sought "refuge in the gay bar scene" (Gilley and Hawk 295).

If natives stayed in their community they were likely to experience social exclusion and homophobia, and if they found protection in the cities, they were at risk of being pointed at for being outcasts of their own communities, and ultimately, for not complying with social

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standards. This shame however, was a catalyst for the rupture of social dynamics in tribal communities:

> It's okay for you to go to bed with me. I will talk to you in bars or when I want to fuck. But don't come around me in Indian society, at pow-wows, or other tribal functions. I don't want our people to know. Nobody knows my secret but everyone knows what you are and what you like to do. (Roscoe 103)

The fear of being gay was greater than the fear of becoming one. Hence lives were lived in secrecy to create the illusion of a safe space: "Staying in the closet for self-preservation becomes the only option for many Two-Spirit men who want to participate in social and religious communities. Most individuals who are open about their gender transgressions and sexuality are publicly and privately rebuked or simply ignored" (Gilley 56). Not revealing the truth about the self jeopardizes the idea of self-acceptance, yet again there is no law that forces individuals to *come out*; therefore, the result is a worrisome decision between taking pride in being gay or allowing the superstructure to [pre]condition his/her existence. The [traumatic] event of coming out has a state of a realization of the self, in which there is an outline of the individual's reality as homosexual; and a state of courage, where the 'issue' is verbalized with two possible outcomes: inclusion or exclusion. A negative outcome following a negative expectation does not alter the cultural whole, yet it does affect the individual's: "it is no wonder that many succumb to alcohol or drug addiction and early death" (Roscoe 103). Hence, for Owlfeather it is evident that these events have triggered the institutionalization of homophobia.

Gilley and Hawk state that gay natives "feel alienated from their tribal, ceremonial and social communities" (295), but they always find their way back to the reservation. As

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Owlfeather describes: "I did return because there is something here that exists for an Indian person nowhere else: the sense of belonging, of family and of the land" (99). One of the most notable examples in TSAIL is Beth Brant's short story "This Place" and its heart-rending opening lines:

> "Mother, I am gay. I have AIDS." The telephone call that it almost killed him to make.
>
> The silence. Then, "Come home to us."
>
> David came home because he was dying. He expected to see his place of birth in a new way, as if he were a photographer capturing scenes through diverse lenses." (*Food & Spirits* 49)

Brant's short story presents the nearly-naturalistic drama of leaving the reservation to enter the city jungle with its power to kill, and the final epiphany before death to understand that family and land represent the lost age Owlfeather mourns. In Owlfeather's story, he narrates a similar drama in a more chaotic way, unveiling the trickery of the gay scene and its consequences. Brant's David comes out as gay to his mother and confesses he has AIDS. Owlfeather writes about his first love and how dumbstruck he felt when his lover moved away (Day 77). Both stories deal with a breaking moment, a personal apocalypse because it represents the collapse of the characters' present, and because of its revelatory nature about what is yet to come. The characters find catharsis through the revival of traditions regardless of tribal's social criticism. Brant's central character has therapeutic conversations about the past with different characters that put him in a trance; in Owlfeather's first-hand experience, he arbitrarily goes back to the reservation because it is the power of tradition fueled partly by a long-gone lovesickness what draws him back. What he reveals is that there is no real place for natives beyond their reservations, despite the danger they might represent.

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In a way, it could be established that this is a text about loss: losing love, and losing identity: "Western lifestyles are combined with traditional lifestyles, and a number of people get hopelessly lost" (Roscoe 99). In this ongoing process of loss, the individual ends up looking for a total disassociation from the traumatic event. To move away from the reservation is a personal endeavor at achieving such disassociation. Thus, natives become escapists of a "paradox between the old and new" (99). On the other part, if they choose to stay or to return, some of them live semi-closeted lives, as Gilley reports: "some Two-Spirit men do actively participate in their communities and are assumed to be gay by friends and family, but they are seldom open about their sexual orientation out of fear or alienation" (54).

Owlfeather comes out and states that he does not hide his lifestyle nor his interests from people, so he chooses to stay out in the clear. In the end, trauma develops a complicated system of choices that sometimes are deliberate, while others are spontaneous. Owlfeather's text is a powerful tool that elaborates on a discourse of a lost identity derived from losing trust and faith, and for the "desire for social belonging" (Gilley 55). Consequently, natives have become too critical and their anxiety over homophobia and alienation has led them to internalize rage, progressively evolving into frustration, and ultimately into stress (Gross 452): "[…] some get angry, some get drunk, and some deny the Indian culture or anything Indian because they think it is useless in this present day and age" (Roscoe 99).

Herman's idea of the split subject following traumatic events could be applied to Owlfeather's story. Either coping with or denying the existence of trauma, some victims 'create' alternate personalities that sometimes coexist with each other. In his adaptation to

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homophobia in his community, he broke the norm by not complying with social standards pre-established by heteronormative societies. His choice to *not pass* as heterosexual conditions his human adaptation to life. Therefore, he 'produced' multiple personalities in the process: the young and restless lover from Idaho, the heart-broken individual, the self-acknowledged homosexual, the migrant, and the prodigal son. Each stage observed contradictions that reconfigured his traumatic history that took him to his personal genesis. By going back, he begins his recovery and his therapy integrating pain and melancholia into his catharsis: "I am not saying that we should all go 'back to the blanket' or return to the reservation. But somehow, there should be a blending of the old with the new, to develop more within ourselves and our consciousness" (Roscoe 104).

It has been established that berdachism died long ago. The exercise of 'biopower' saw its results when the "tribal communities and Native society as a whole [remained] hostile to their [gay natives] sexual orientation and gender difference" (Gilley 53). Owlfeather narrates his own experience of rejection and secrecy: "I don't want to have people call me a queer or a faggot, but I want to be with you" (Roscoe 100). Gay life had become a source of myths and stereotypes of objectification around the self-destructive mode gay natives set themselves in. However, Owlfeather is aware of the dark side of the urban gay scene and clarifies that is a *western* trend, [in]directly blaming the dominant culture for the outcome. American Indians had access to large amounts of alcohol and substance abuse upon assimilation, which was—and still is—one of the biggest public health problems and/or consequences of the apocalypse.

With the death of the berdache an era came to an end. The lost age of the opening poem reflects not only on Owlfeather's memories of his grandmother's stories, but also on

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the need to bridge with the past again to preserve the last traces of a disappearing world. At the end of the text, Owlfeather presents the reader with what he thinks is the solution to the identity conflict, and he states:

> I believe this is exactly what needs to happen again with gay Indians today. There is a need to take pride in one's self and to respect other gay Indian people. There is a need for a resurgence of that old pride and knowledge of the place. Traditions need to be researched and revived. If traditions have been lost, then new ones should be borrowed from other tribes to create groups or societies for gay Indians that would function in the present. (104)

The naivety of his words still show the pain of forgetfulness. He mourns the berdache, and he advocates the restoration of berdachism in native culture. His critical standpoint toward the gay scene shows the opposite of what heteronormative systems of power expect from homosexuals: depravation, alcoholism, drug abuse, perversion. Owlfeather's text is an ode to the past, a critique of the present, and a developer for the future. As an individual who "is out," he embodies the role model for newer generations who are inclined to set themselves apart from heterosexual ideology. He makes a literary stand that works at different social levels, a cultural investment which is "the sense of ownership an individual feels in the success of continuation of a particular social group or community" (Gilley and Hawk 294). Despite the multigenerational internalization of colonization, Owlfeather's cultural investment is richer because it imbues the process of identity construction with pride, and encourages others to embrace their past and speak about it, to reconstruct a system of tolerance, respect, and gratification where identity is central.

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5.1.2 "*Speak Up" by Erna Pahe (Navajo)*

Answers to questions in interviews are expected to be genuine and a reflection of the individual's state of mind. These answers are, in fact, authentic because there is no prior alteration, although the speech might ultimately be manipulated by the individual and his/her interviewer to make it suitable for the subject matter. Pahe's "Speak Up" is a transcription of an interview held in July 1985 while she was president of Gay American Indians (GAI), in which she analyzes the matters of seclusion, political power(s), coming out and being out, performance of the community, and "GAI's involvement, visibility, and advocacy in the Indian community" (Day 77). "Speak Up" is about the collective 'I' that shares comparable emotions with other individuals coping with the superstructure. There is a confessional tone to the transcription, yet its authenticity could be believed and/or questioned. However, the act of 'speaking' proves the action meaningful, and thus, the act becomes a contribution to a greater discourse.

Pahe does not openly address seclusion by this term, yet her life at the boarding school on the reservation could be an example of it. The reservation is the first level of seclusion detaching individuals from the [cultural] mainstream. American Indians have developed a system that 'thrives' based on their own laws and social structures, limiting themselves to live an existence conditioned by verbal and non-verbal boundaries coming from the outside world. Moreover, most of them have been socially indoctrinated 'to recruit' the population and achieve its docility, similarly to the machinery employed to ensure the Removal Act. Allen explained:

> They [the British] took Cherokee men to England and educated them in English ways. These men returned to Cherokee country and exerted great influence on behalf of the British in the

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> region. By the time the Removal Act was under consideration by Congress in the early 1800s, many of these British-educated men and men with little Cherokee blood wielded considerable power over the Nation's policies. (*The Sacred Hoop* 37)

The boarding school works as the second level of seclusion. Having students and faculty under the same roof created a controlled atmosphere that reminded them of their equality as natives in opposition to their division from the white society. 'Biopower' used this division to ensure that natives were manageable. To control a family-oriented society, there had to be several degrees of separation that had an impact on the individual's freedom. Pahe states that natives eventually became urban and rural, a set of political labels that breached them from within: "What does that [urban or rural] mean? We're all Indians so it shouldn't make any difference. But that's the division that constantly gets thrown at us. And it's true—they were working to keep us separated" (107).

The cosmopolitanization of natives contributed to the exclusion and romanticization of rural natives. Those who lived in the cities were a phenomenon of acculturation, whereas those who remained on the reservation were considered *real*. The superstructure had fabricated paradoxical perceptions of reality where rural natives were typecast as rather ignorant, whereas urban natives, who had access to knowledge and "who have lived in Flagstaff and heard the criticisms" (108), were discriminated against. Therefore, natives were amidst a complicated fight for self-determination in terms of identity derived from this binomial categorisation explained before which, as stated by Andersen and Collins, "emerge because of the specific societal conditions in which groups live in" (268).

The segregation of natives has been "reproduced through 'New Racism' practices that [were] subtle, institutional, and apparently nonracial" (Bonilla-Silva 3). Having a society

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divided to feed the 'us versus them' narrative also pushed the Navajo to divide their group from within, using the excuse of family and respect for the elders to avoid talking about homosexuality: "It's not anything that's ever talked about. It's not dealt with" (Roscoe 107). Not *dealing* with the subject matter led to a paradoxical denial of its existence where not speaking about it forced the individual to talk about it: "But, you know, it's kind of like they've [elders] led us into it, too, saying "Speak up, speak up—say your piece" (109). The contemporary Navajo were experimenting a post-apocalypse segregation similar to literary dystopian societies.

The Navajo had been secluded on reservations and forced to develop their lives within their limits. Further, they had adopted western systems of education along with their systems of thought. The social structure was [traditionally] family-oriented; therefore, all kinds of 'diversions' such as homosexuality were kept a secret: "it's not anything that's ever talked about. It's not dealt with. You're a member of the family, that's the priority" (Roscoe 107). The superstructure had provided the Navajo with an illusion of free will which, in the end, was subject to federal considerations. Consequently, it helped to divide their social structure into urban, rural, heterosexual, homosexual, educated, illiterate, rich[er], poor[er], conservative, liberal, spiritual, and mundane, among other groups, all separate constructions included into the category of Indian.

Those who belonged in the homosexual group were left, according to Gilley, in a situation of anxiety (66). He states that the action of 'coming out' has a heavy emotional burden on the individual because s/he is making a statement about identity politics. Though coming out "is intended to emphasize and celebrate one's difference," (66) in

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contemporary societies it is regarded as a double-edged sword with positive and negative consequences. Gilley explains:

> Generally, there are two opinions on being openly gay. Some see being openly gay in their communities as a positive move toward self-acceptance and a positive step for social and political progress for gay and lesbian rights. On the other hand, some individuals view being openly gay as potentially harmful to their social standing, family relations, employment opportunities, and safety. (80)

For Pahe, coming out represented a positive act of liberation and social rebellion. As she came to terms with the acceptance of her identity, she found a way to deal with anxiety and the trauma of a possible sociocultural alienation. Moreover, 'coming out' is symbolically an act of reclamation. Her body as a native woman and as a closeted lesbian has been owned by the legacy of the superstructure. Owlfeather celebrated the Sun Dance as an act of rebellion against the government, whereas Pahe 'came out' to speak about her place in the universe, breaking a millennial tradition of not talking back to their elders: "When I came out here I finally got that feeling that I had control over my own life and didn't have anybody else to answer to" (108).

Pahe gained her freedom after the decolonization of her body. In American Indian contexts, autonomy is framed between the trauma and the individual's [in]ability to move on in silence. After Pahe's coming out, her family still was at the processing stage to achieve complete healing. Nevertheless, there would not be such a tiresome process if there had not been a heteronormative social pre-conditioning that meant contemporary natives have had a difficult time accepting homosexuality.

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If, as explained by Gilley, to come out is to emphasise one's difference (66), contemporary gay natives should acknowledge they are indeed different. There is no biological determination behind the previous statement, but socioculturally speaking, their own [post]apocalypse experience make them unique. However, to internalize such a difference, the urban/rural contrast plays an important role in self-definition and self-acceptance in one's community. Toward the end of Owlfeather's text, he mentions the efforts made by gay natives living in the cities, and how their positive feeling stands for a self-descriptive motto: "*We are here, we exist, we are INDIAN, and we are GAY!!*" (104). On the other hand, while Pahe's statement in favor of difference holds similarities with the one in Owlfeather's text, it reflects the social burden of being out and being exposed to social criticism regardless of your position: "Well, you're out there, you're trying to be different. You're trying to say yes, you're an Indian, but you're trying to be a *different* Indian than the rest of us" (111).

To be different is then another attempt at separation by the superstructure to *make* individuals different. With the fear toward postmodern homosexuality, the heteronormative platform has pressed the construction of "same-sex desire as symptomatic of an unnatural, abnormal, socially pathological human type—the homosexual" (Seidman in Warner 108). It was the concept of being different that propelled the National Social Movements (NSM) of the 1970s and 1980s, and more specifically, the LGB movement which later became the LGBT Rights Movement. Pahe's position describes the counterattack on heteronormativity by showing that the rise of a new generation of critical thinkers had an urge for knowledge: "The straight Indian community is willing to give out that information [historical background on berdachism] now. They're really getting

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behind the gay Indians because it's a new issue, it's a new group of people full of energy" (111).

Although there is a critical approach toward the straight community and their withholding of information concerning the berdache, there is no total recovery of berdachism. This reaffirms a statement mentioned before about the illusion of freedom and free will, in which it was understood that the individual is never in total control of him/herself, but s/he is unconsciously performing a role that has been programmed through social conditioning. In other words, even though there has been a development of critical thinking, it has been limited by the outreach of the superstructure.

Pahe comments that gay American Indians have found ways to subvert this peculiarity by "playing the game of the government" (111). However, the ambiguity in her answer allows a double interpretation in which they are either players with the government or they are being played by it. In playing *with* the government, they are honoring their past by being contemporary tricksters. On the other hand, a more reasonable interpretation is that natives are victims of the superstructure that manipulates them to change the situation in its favor. Pahe says: "They make cutbacks at Indian health clinics in order to give additional monies for, just using an example, AIDS. But how much of that research actually goes on the reservation or in the Indian community?" (111). This mistrust of the government has historical origins at a time when blankets infected with smallpox were given as "gifts" (Vernon 8), in addition to several treaties that were not honored throughout recent history.

In the sociohistorical context of Pahe's interview, the beginnings of Reagan's administration, critical minds had to be cautious, yet firm if they wanted to make a stand in the American cultural mainstream. This was partly because there were conservative

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political figures who held significant prejudices against American Indians. When asked about the roles gay natives could play in contemporary politics, her locution was closed and straight to the point: "Politically, we will play a very neutral role" (112). After Jimmy Carter's presidency, America's turn to Reagan supposed a return to middle-class conformism. In addition, it supposed a social drawback because stereotypes around females seemed to gain strength once more—not that they had ceased to exist during Carter's term in office: "You go out there into the straight world and it's really amazing the stereotypes. Men can do this and women can't do that. Or women can do this and men can't do that" (Roscoe 112).

Pahe's satire becomes more obvious in addressing the issue of performance: "the straight community is so worried about staying within their little box and making sure that I look like a female when I'm out there, or that I really play the role of a male image" (112). Although she goes to say that anybody can do anything in their "little gay world" (112), there is room for disagreement, especially when the illusions of freedom and free will are considered. Everything is conditioned by power, and Pahe's intent through GAI to add a third party to the political panorama is the product of the fusion of different social programming: "it's very people oriented, very mutual, very middle in trying to bring all the facets of the world together" (112). Despite Pahe's socialist tone, she states that American society is prepared for the neutrality gay American Indians could provide, regardless of the ideals of the administration. Academic and literary research proves that America is not ready for "that neutralness, where people can understand just how to be people" (112), given the prejudice that still exists against minorities.

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Pahe's interview is a discourse of self-acceptance based on the exaltation of difference. It has been observed that American Indians have had to contest their identity because they have been a-truly [mis]represented. Moreover, within their own hetero-communities, newer generations are forcing their members to at least acknowledge that the American Indian tradition had a queer past of which it was deprived. Denying the past had the opposite effect because some individuals decided to recover it. It is a powerful decolonization because it means breaking bonds with the colonizer—whether it is the settler nation or eventually, those who perpetuated colonization after being colonized themselves—, with whom the colonized has developed a complicated relationship of dependence. Even though Pahe reached individualism, independence, and self-acceptance, her dynamics with her family were still determined by the colonizer's mentality and his bias against differences and diversions.

Pahe is the voice of the collective 'I' because she acts, as Brant defines it, as "*the* [spokesperson] for our races" (*Writing as Witness* 9). Her answers are cohesively tied together creating a linear truth acknowledged through self-experience: "I'm a witness!" (Roscoe 107). In the end, some American Indians refer to themselves as grandchildren of the moon, given the strong presence of family in that linear truth. David mustered the courage to call his mother and come out to her because, despite being ashamed, he felt utter respect for her. Pahe became a mother, and despite the complex relationship with her family, she explains that respect for their elders is vital in the Navajo tradition. The Navajo saw the birth of nadle, the intersex who escaped the stereotypes of the straight world. The heterosexual world has constructed a society that is still not ready to assimilate that intersex nature and its equality, whether it is male-female or heterosexual-homosexual.

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Finally, there is a spiritual link to natural elements, but the recovery of the blood bond has symbolic connotations. It is the way to overcome the apocalypse and its incipient divisions of the community. Families have been torn apart, broken, and reshaped to the point where not even communication is possible. Post-apocalypse Indian families share a common past, and *Living the Spirit* was published with the intention of presenting their descendants with a common present as well. Pahe's interview is a depiction of this process where the old meets the new, where conservatism and liberalism collide amicably in the process of becoming an adult. It is also a needed revival of berdachism because during the 1980s, there was a need to tell American society that natives still existed, that gay and lesbian natives existed, but most importantly, that their dual—or multiple—existence had existed long before the arrival of colonization. The amalgamation of authenticity, reality, and existence takes full form in Kieran Prather/Jerry's "Becoming Indian." The text is based on a series of interviews with Jerry, a member of the Hupa community between 1985 and 1986, and Prather reflects Jerry's struggle to survive in a post-apocalypse world, in which a-truths have become the equipment to construct the individuals' dual culture.

5.1.3 "*Becoming Indian" by Kieran Prather/Jerry (Hupa)*

The consequences of the apocalypse deprived American Indians from following the natural course of evolution. The abrupt end with which they were faced with has reconfigured their identity to the point of existing without cultural referents, and thus, future generations have become social hybrids who did not know how 'to be Indians.' Those who had come of age in the second half of the twentieth century decided to revisit a-truths used to create the native imaginarium, and reconstructed a post-apocalypse [id]entity who had yet to be codified in the manners of the past, in order to learn *how to be* an Indian. Up

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to that point, western systems of categorization had been assigning sex and gender based on genotypical rather than phenotypical traits, due to the loss of the cultural paradigm during assimilation.

This feeling of cultural void is present in Prather's narrative as there is an emotional detachment from tradition. The opening line "I come from a medicine family. My aunt is spiritual leader of the tribe now" (Roscoe 119), places Jerry at the center of a powerful institution. Allen reported in *The Sacred Hoop* that "*medicine* [sic] is a term used for the personal force through which one possesses power. Medicine is powerful in itself, but its power can be used only by certain persons, under certain conditions, and for certain purposes" (72-73). Given this context, coming from a family with such a power was a matter of honor and respect. However, Jerry's view of the Hupa culture as materialistic and wealth-related pushed him to disconnect himself from it and to fit into a cultural void caused by assimilation.

Research conducted by Gilley and Hawk has proven the dramatic effects of detachment from tradition and the confusion of the individuals who grew up between two cultures. They believe that the feeling of alienation from their communities is a consequence of fear of coming out as homosexuals (294), causing an immediate feeling of displacement. Jerry grew up on a reservation with integrated white population, but at age thirteen, he became a foster child away from it. That development as a member of the white community minimized the relevance of trying to stay/be Indian, and eventually, he became a stranger who found no comfort when he returned to the reservation years later, forcing him to set off for San Francisco and "[forge] links with others who had also experienced alienation. In San Francisco Jerry found acceptance and identity" (Roscoe 123).

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Being rejected or growing up with fear of being rejected are disturbing assumptions that impact individuals entirely. Gay American Indians have been exposed to a double feeling of displacement within the community, and on and off the reservation. San Francisco had become the gay capital of the country by the 1970s and was the mecca for gay people in distress who found no place to belong in their own communities. Jerry had found a place to grow beyond fear while exposing himself to his own self-destruction. The cycle much of post-apocalypse victims have experienced is similar: displacement > confusion > anger > acting out > self-destruction. The identity discourse that was being built by American Indians after World War II was heavily characterized by the following concepts: a) they had been displaced because the contemporary world had been reshaped after military conflicts, and there was no place for them to be; b) having no place to develop as individuals created confusion because they moved to and from the reservation, fueling alienation with distress; c) the inability to come to terms with the situation was a catalyst for social anger among them, thus d) they started acting out the trauma of colonization, which eventually e) degenerated into a self-destructive machinery of alcohol and substance abuse: "I first experienced drugs at school. They were easy to get; a lot of people used them" (Roscoe 123).

Jerry represents the failure of the superstructure to integrate problematic youth into society. However, he could also represent the system's success at exercising annihilating 'biopower' by deconstructing him to the point of nullifying his existence and pushing him to self-destruction. Gilley and Hawk state that post-colonial theories propose that "factors for risky behavior, such as AOD (alcohol and other drug) use or risky sex, are the result of multiple generations internalizing colonization" (294-295). It is right to assume that Jerry's

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self-destructive behaviour, which started with drugs and moved into a quick escalation to prostitution, "petty thievery, robbery, forgery, and fraud" (Roscoe 123), was his way of coping with his inner trauma(s) while trying to stay afloat in the urban jungle. Further, he commodified his body to support the use of drugs, thus handing power back to those who inflicted pain to his own culture, the 'johns.' Williams recalls the case of Michael One Feather, a fifteen-year-old *winkte* who fled the reservation to live in Minneapolis and "started dressing as a woman, and earned money by giving blowjobs to straight guys who thought they were buying a woman" (213). Jerry, like Michael, took a fancy to easy money and exploited the morbidity of the young Indian, playing a vicious game in which he was targeting white targets while being targeted by them.

Assuming that Jerry's was, as Larson argues, a post-apocalypse world, the nature of his actions was comprised within the code of dystopian worlds, in which there are no restrictions toward antisocial behaviour. Even after Jerry reached bottom in 1980, and started "reclaiming his Indian life" (Roscoe 124), he found himself surrounded by other natives with "economic difficulties, problems with police and parole boards, alcoholism and drug addiction, the need for a job or a place to stay, connecting runaway youths with their families and tribes, and so on" (124). For Jerry to reclaim his *Indianness* meant realizing his life had entered a vortex that would lead him to imminent death. He had allowed society to recolonize his body through the corruption of his morale, and he willingly chose to go to a recovery house to recover his body from the physical exhaustion, and his peace of mind to establish the nature of his new self.

Among American Indian societies, being gay is not a matter of pride like it once was. Jerry, like many others young Indians on the reservation(s), had to split his self between

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two cultures that opposed each other, one that shamed the gay while the other one embraced it. The problematic of self-acceptance justified a progressive detachment from the community, precisely because "the distance between his [Jerry's] two cultures had grown immense" (Roscoe 123). Jerry stopped visiting his reservation for a long time, perhaps due to his inability to cope with his homosexuality because of his young age. Of course, being gay and becoming Indian was a difficult task that came to Jerry after years of self-destructive behaviour, problems with the law, losing lovers, and hitting rock bottom: "Jerry's transition was slow but steady" (Roscoe 124).

Prather's account of Jerry confirms that tendency to rebellion in TSAIL texts. Jerry's daring adventures with sex and drugs were part of a rebellious act against the established codes of the Hupa and society in general. For this reason, to have a transition there must be safe zones for the individual to move between them, regardless of the order in which they are placed. In Jerry's case, the transition had a rollercoaster nature as it peaked when he left the reservation, and started going down quickly until he faced the moment of making decisions about his future after being released from prison a second time. Then, Jerry started to improve once he visited the recovery house and started reclaiming his identity, progressively to find peace with himself at the end of the ride. Like actual rollercoasters, Jerry's body and mind were being physically and psychologically tested. At this point, Jerry's behaviour could be analyzed as Fight-or-Flight Response, a mechanism in which "whenever we perceive that we are in danger our bodies make a massive response that affects all our organ systems" (Bloom 3).

Bloom writes that "each episode of danger connects to every other episode of danger in our minds" (3). In Jerry's case, the first episode of danger was using drugs, followed by

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prostitution and the inevitability of sexual violence; hustling led to a well-established criminal life that reached its climax when he stabbed a policeman in 1974. Upon release from prison, Jerry saw himself trapped between the uncertainty of the future and the undeniability of the past; therefore, he had to choose between fighting or running away. By accepting his gayness "as an essential part his personality rather than using it as a tool to manipulate others" (Roscoe 125), he started to create a safe environment "to help counteract the long-term effects of chronic stress" (Bloom 3). As part of his transition, he managed to come to terms with his personal struggle and started working as a counsellor at an Indian rehabilitation center. This job allowed him to remember his trauma and work with it for therapeutic purposes, both for him and for the community: "I feel I have something to offer to them. The important thing is for them to identify with me because I am an alcoholic. But I think it is important that I am also an Indian, and I know what experiences Indians in urban areas can have. I know, and I care" (Roscoe 126).

To know and to care was Jerry's way of integrating trauma into his life to overcome pain. In doing so, he constructed a new world through what Berger proposes in as a dialectic of externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Gross 437), because he is "better able to break down the barriers he has built between his cultural heritage and himself" (Roscoe 126). Jerry's externalization comes through his 'wish' to learn about the world that is out there and has already been institutionalized. His subversion of traditional conventions was his way of exercising an extrospection of his reality, which has been—voluntarily—deprived from a cultural heritage, allowing him to create his own perception of the world.

The result of his externalization of the world is a fabrication of constructed objectivity by which Jerry makes his world factual. Objectivation is what eventually makes his reality

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similar to other young Indians who share the same dialectic process. It has a double meaning because it is exclusive, and yet it is available so everyone who share similar processes can identify with it. The final stage is Jerry's internalization of the reality he has created to the point of making it meaningful. The moment he left prison and decided to undergo a detox treatment was the moment when he finally internalized the horror of his previous years, and tried to find the answers to define himself in those new terms: "I got in touch with a part of me that I had been denying. A part I couldn't see. Now I see it… and feel it" (Roscoe 126).

Given the definitions of the apocalypse, Jerry's world collapse could qualify as a personal apocalypse in which the past ceases to exist in a dramatic way, allowing the external reality to own his body. However, Jerry's choices might have been product of a personal decision or triggered by external stimuli by which he was prone to fail either way. Every single aspect of the 1970s-social panorama became part of Jerry's dialectic process which led him to become more involved with his own culture later on. Nevertheless, his greatest transition beyond distancing himself from his criminal past and getting involved with his culture was the one from gay to Indian.

For a person who was exposed to foster care, growing up in different families, learning to deal with different ideologies while denying his/her own, and who had no self-respect, to come to terms with his/her past and accept it as his/her own is a tremendous effort toward the recovery from trauma. Curiously, Gilley devoted a full chapter of *Becoming Two-Spirit* (206) to the gay-to-Indian process because it is easier to document a gay person trying to become Indian than an Indian trying to become gay. If this statement were based on the way reality is constructed, everyone could be anything they wanted; however, transience is

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not contemplated in the process of gender/identity construction. Jerry's gayness, for instance, was innate and though he had problems accepting it, he managed to incorporate it into his definition of the self: "When I accepted myself, I found acceptance with my people [...] My clients and the people I work with know I am gay" (Roscoe 125).

Prather presents the reader with a non-fictional character Jerry, who finally owns his gayness, and yet he does not own his past, hence he needs to fight to recover it. If he had problems accepting his gayness, he had even deeper problems in accepting his cultural heritage. All victims of trauma have difficulties with forgiveness, especially when they feel responsible for initiating the process that led them into their current situation. Jerry did not blame anyone in particular, but only when he made peace with himself, did he change the way he perceived the reservation and instead of a non-belonging scenario it became a source of strength: "That's what the reservation is for me now. Like a support group, I guess. But it's more than that. It's a spiritual source... It's where I get strength" (Roscoe 126).

Through Jerry, Prather elevates the problematic of identity, self-acceptance, and self-destructive behaviour to the level of the entire American Indian community. Moreover, Prather indicates that there was a tendency among young Indians who left the reservation to engage in 'inevitable' activities: "And for a gay teenager into drugs, street prostitution is an inevitability" (Roscoe 123), and there was also a tendency to alcoholism as Jerry admitted to be an alcoholic toward the end of the text. These series of dangers triggered the Fight-or-Flight Response in Jerry are part of the isolation and loneliness that individuals experience while they go on their quest for the self. American Indians as victims of PASS, suffer from identity undermining because they had been denied their heritage. In Jerry's

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case, however, nobody denied him his heritage but himself because he pushed himself away from the community through a selfish act of emotional detachment. Thus, recovering from a long-term period of cultural denial, self-destructiveness, and crime became a challenge for Jerry and all American Indians who wanted—or needed—to reconnect with the past.

To become an Indian in a post-apocalypse world there must be a painful construction of the self. All native identity discourses are based on the reclamation of Indian life, a revival of the tradition to find the *Indianness* lost in the apocalypse. Prather's text is a vivid account of the personal struggle of the individual who has been to hell and back, and embodies the frustration provoked by the internal rage of not knowing one's identity. It is remarkable because it shows the evident transition honored in the title of the text, as there is a split in the subject that helps him to move forward. Jerry was also the incarnation of forgiveness though not in religious terms. His loneliness brought him back to the reservation to reconnect with that sacred hoop that existed around his medicine family. During the revival of the tradition, having this kind of role models proved that even though Indians were, as Allen wrote, "supposed to die out" (Roscoe 12), there was a spark of life in the post-apocalypse. Nevertheless, gay American Indians found themselves helpless in the middle of a dehumanized society that rejected homosexuals during the AIDS hysteria of the 1980s.

Although Jerry's and Michael's stories have happy endings, research conducted by Vernon shows that "life for youth today is extremely difficult" (60), and though this affirmation was made in 2001, it perfectly reflected the situation of young American Indians and their exposure to HIV/AIDS back in the 1980s. Lawrence William O'Connor's poignant

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contribution to the corpus of this research deals with the AIDS crisis among male American Indians and the inability of the government to find a solution to their ongoing genocide.

5.1.4 *"A National Disgrace" by Lawrence William O'Connor (Winnebago)*

According to an article published on the website *Inside Higher Ed*, California State University at Sacramento professor Maury Wiseman was involved in a controversy back in 2015 around the recognition of the term 'genocide' in reference to American Indians. American Indian student Chiitaanibah Johnson challenged the professor's interpretation of the term and accused him of saying that "American Indians were not victims of genocide because genocide implies intention, and most were killed by Europeans' diseases, not settler or U.S. aggression" (Flaherty, *Insidehighered.com* 20 January 2017). From Wiseman's perspective, a genocide is an action carried out with motive and intention, thus American Indians' immune system's unpreparedness against European diseases did not qualify for recognition. Yet, O'Connor writes that, "gifts of smallpox-infested blankets were distributed to Chief Pontiac's people by the British commander [sic] Sir Jeffrey Amherst in 1763" (Roscoe 129), re-opening the debate of the origin of the smallpox among American Indians by stating there was a premeditated and deliberate conduct that contributed to the genocide of the Odawa in 1763. Vernon takes a step further and affirms that "in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it [smallpox] caused widespread demographic disaster, often killing whole tribes" (1).

O'Connor's text is highly visceral, as it compares the AIDS crisis of the 1980s to the "disease, decay, and alcoholism [that] were introduced among the native people" (Roscoe 128). His didactic tone aims at educating his audience about the past of their country. O'Connor constructs the contemporary Indian upon the memory of those who were

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decimated by the Euromerican: "the first Americans' native land became their graveyard" (Roscoe 128). This description allows for a palimpsestic reading of such a construction, by which the past has been covered to re-write a whitewashed version: "the greatest tragedy for the American Indian is that the white man wrote the books, printed the newspapers, and produced the John Wayne movies" (128). This assumption leaves no space for authenticity because American Indian society was being scrutinized under post-apocalypse lenses that saw them as entities who had not managed to escape their future and had started to become "the vanishing Americans" (128).

For O'Connor, every Indian has great numbers of dead Indians in his/her past. For him there cannot be a construction of the self without trauma, thus remembering "the onslaught of the white man's epidemics" (129). And at the same time American Indian victims of AIDS, whose immunity had been compromised, also had numbers of dead patients in their past. The conception of seropositive Indians and contemporary Indians was built upon the premise of death as trauma instead of as a natural process.

The deconstruction of the Indian had made him stand between two apocalypses, as suggested by Berger: one in which the historical event "evidently has no name" (110), given the fact that historians and researchers do not agree on the usage of 'genocide' or 'systematic killing' to justify 'biopower;' and the other where "the thing that *will* happen *has* happened" (110), allowing AIDS, substance abuse and alcoholism to become the new deterministic factors threatening the remaining native population. American Indian society has failed to resist an imperial attack waged from several flanks to guarantee extermination. O'Connor's severity places the blame on an unspoken entity which institutionalized power: "Germ warfare was invented in America as a means of

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extermination" (Roscoe 129). However, it would be absurd to consider that HIV *was created* or that was exclusively the "white man's disease" (Jacobs et al. 3).

In the reconstruction of *Indianness*, contemporary natives have been forced to identify themselves as low-profile Americans with the "lowest standard of living, socially and economically" (Roscoe 129). In addition, the definition of the self transcended the reflection of the past; beings who sometimes required "proof of tribal enrollment" (Roscoe, *Changing Ones* 105) because they were mixed-blood, adopted or had been dislocated (105). The American Indian of the late twentieth century had to define him/herself according to blood quantum and percentages. Construction of identity was submitted to racial and sociological considerations that transcended the urban-reservation duality. O'Connor's text is a critique and a denunciation of the situation of many Americans and, more specifically, American Indians who were dying of AIDS. Contemporary natives have been trying to rely on the image of the berdache to construct an acceptable version of the self that created "extraordinary hostility" (Roscoe, *Changing Ones* 105), while fighting the stereotypical a-truth that had been institutionalized around the figure of the Indian prone to infection with HIV and STDs, initiating him/herself in alcoholism, and becoming a drug addict. Kirsch says that "the radical action that was prompted by the recognition that AIDS was a disease that gained pandemic status from lack of attention is now being superceded by a belief that the proper integration of queers will have the power and prevent over-discrimination" (73), thus exposing the lack of attention toward the growing number of deaths among Indians: "It was never important that Indians were perishing in such great numbers. The only good Indian was a dead Indian" (Roscoe 129).

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O'Connor complains about the colonization of the Native body through biological warfare and deals with the post-traumatic aftermath of constructing a new doubly-colonized identity: "Our government displays the same lack of concern today as it did when Indians were vanishing" (129). This double colonization produces a new state of affairs born of the clash of emancipation with recolonization. This is an example of Frye's myth of freedom, as those who live in the post-apocalypse assume they have broken chains with the past and have regained control over the Native body, while the appearance of AIDS in the American Indian community as a white man's disease counterattacks that thought, thus turning O'Connor's text into a dystopian plea for recognition and assistance:

> America also has the challenge of waking up to the seriousness of the AIDS situation. A great deal more needs to be done by nongay Americans, or this nation's treatment of AIDS victims will also be remembered for all times as a national disgrace. I hope a lesson can be learned from history. (Roscoe 130)

This closing paragraph is the epitome of a painful process of identification. It is an appeal to revise the obliterated sentencing given four centuries ago upon arrival of terminators. Its dystopian nature marks a detour from the utopia marketed by Reaganism because it shows a clash between powers, within and without the different social systems. The attitude toward the virus and the virus itself represented the heteronormative fear. For a superstructure built upon the trustworthiness of God the institutionalization of homophobia and its unresponsiveness to the AIDS crisis were interconnected and justified. For this reason, O'Connor's menacing tone eventually softens up, showing a two-faced individual who has the mechanisms to denounce their situation while being weakened by the power that controls budgets and access to healthcare. Contemporary American Indians

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had to fight against the stereotype of socio-economic and cultural poverty, thus representing the darkest side of Reaganism's view of absolute harmony.

The thread that starts interconnecting all these TSAIL texts is the reconstruction of *Indianness*. It is difficult for theorists, historians, and researchers to provide a definition for the term that bridges the present and the past. Living in a post-apocalypse world empowered a feeling of general ignorance that began with the inability to recognize the world the individual lives in, and ended with his/her failure to identify him/herself with imagery from the past. The whole community had to deal with death as trauma instead of looking at it as a natural process, mainly because it was forced upon them. Those who outlived trauma did so by relying on storytelling to transmit the pain their ancestors had to go through in order to live; therefore, despite the absence of written texts, trauma made its way through traditions that managed to survive the genocide.

Perhaps some people like Chiitaanibah Johnson consider that a contemporary definition of *Indianness* should include a section on genocide. Yet, there would be an immediate annihilation of the essence of what it means to be an Indian. Defining individuals using past traumas as a point of departure is to construct a house made of cards. However, it is necessary to look back at it to reconfigure the nature of the individual, because it is from the past where lessons are learnt. For this reason, the question "What is a *real* Indian?" has a complex answer that is bound to connect several universes to provide a satisfactory answer. Gay American Indians are individuals who, in an act of survival, have managed to decolonize the Native body but failed to keep their ownership before the appearance of AIDS. They are descendants of the apocalypse who did not undergo the smallpox epidemic of the eighteenth century, but faced the gruesome reality of being abandoned by the

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government at the peak of the AIDS crisis. And yet, despite the double colonization of their bodies, they have waged intellectual war against 'biopower' by verbalizing the problematic behind the marketed a-truths of Reaganism.

A final reading of O'Connor's text title would suggest that the national disgrace, more than the ineffectiveness of the Indian Health Service, is the oblivion to which American Indian history has been condemned. Despite the birth of American Indian Studies programs in several universities throughout the United States, the development of a critical corpus, and more importantly, the establishment of an American Indian literary tradition, there is still a collective ignorance of the past. The role of Hollywood in the portrayal of natives has been mentioned, and although there have been attempts to recreate the Pre-Columbian era, most of them have failed at representing *Indianness* and the essence that made natives what they were. On the other hand, written literature has tried to be more puristic about deciphering and writing about abstract concepts regarding American Indian culture and identity.

The *disgrace* was to whitewash the past and deny the existence of cultural trauma, as well as to abandon minorities for the sake of 'biopower.' Regardless of the homogeneity within native communities, the generalized feeling of abandonment has united them to accuse and protest. Literature has thus become a war cry to recover the sense of belonging. As another contribution to the individual's need to belong to a greater social universe, Ben the Dancer's "Gay American Indians" focuses on "a strong feeling of a united identity" (Roscoe 131).

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5.1.5 "*Gay American Indians" by Ben the Dancer (Yankton Sioux)*

Post-apocalypse artistic representations are chaotic, dislocated, and desolate. These characteristics are also contained in literary texts producing 'post' works that represent the a-truth of the moment in which they are produced. The analysis of the previous texts reveals how trauma has shattered tradition into pieces of a recognizable past. Indians have had to find themselves in the aftermath of a lost age, had to learn how to speak up and take a stand against the superstructure, and had to become themselves while deconstructing an image sullied by self-destructive behaviours. Amidst such a bleak scenario, Ben the Dancer offers a gentle approach to the figure of the [gay] American Indian by creating sanctuary, which refers to "the process involved in creating safe environments that promote healing and sustain human growth, learning, and health" (Bloom 12).

Being an American Indian is, by definition, being associated with trauma, in the same way that Jewish people are directly associated with the Holocaust. Ben the Dancer's text represents the opposite purpose of Holocaust literature, which finds its driving force in re-enacting traumatic events due to a possible case of addiction to trauma (Bloom 9). Through his revisitation of the Sioux culture and their concept of identity, he offers contemporary [gay] American Indians usable knowledge about the ways of the past to construct a new identity that blend "their gay lifestyle with tradition" (Roscoe 133). This lifestyle is far from berdachism because it has been adapted to urban scenarios where gayness is universal and inclusive, as it welcomes individuals from all backgrounds. The main idea of his text, however, dwells on the dual quality of *Indianness* which affects the individual intrinsically as well as it affects his/her community at a universal level: "many Indians feel their Indianness is something that envelops not only the individual but the whole community. It also

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introduces a larger meaning to the word family. All of this also applies to gay Indians" (Roscoe 131).

As American Indian society needed to rebuild itself, they turned to a mechanical construction of the cultural whole they lost. It is mechanical as opposed to natural because tradition is forced rather than transitioned onto the modern generation(s). Tradition became a subject of study, a commodified asset which could be accessed by everyone rather than taught and learnt in the old ways. This is what Ben the Dancer states when he writes about the division of culture, albeit contrary to his colleagues, he does not do so with regret. He understands that there is a difference of priorities between generations, that values have changed, and that [native] society has been reconfigured in socio-economic terms to satisfy the urban growth of a country that has relied on capitalism to establish its hegemony:

> The ways of the old were honorable and wise, but sadly less and less of this finesse is being passed down to the modern generation. The Lakota, who are united by a common culture and language, are now being divided by American mainstream values, such as income, religion, rural versus urban life, and gayness. (Roscoe 132)

His approach is not in traumatic terms, yet his text is a post-traumatic elegy to contribute to the reconstruction of a healthier imaginarium where there is room for pride. In terms of the structure of this dissertation, his text is a dream-like state utopia in a post-apocalyptic setting that fails to understand the importance of the past. His way of creating sanctuary is by bringing the whole community together to the basic point of existence that erupts from the old ways, and then reconfiguring it to transcend it. Despite worlds having collapsed on each other, there has been a progressive elaboration of a discourse that,

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according to Ben the Dancer, has room for tolerance. As has been mentioned, the modern world is developing quickly in terms of technological advances, yet more abstract concepts like tolerance, gender, and sex are subject to a struggle to firmly establish themselves as modern theoretical and linguistic entities.

It is precisely when Ben the Dancer writes about broad-mindedness that he complies with the commitment to emotional intelligence explained in Bloom's model: "the ways of the traditional Lakota are to accept things rather than to change them; to learn to work with things and try to live in peace with them. This does not mean total agreement with the gay lifestyle, but it does mean tolerance" (Roscoe 132). To achieve that intelligence, current members of the community must "implement a cultural change" (Bloom, *NTAC Newsletter* 16) to understand the importance of the weight of the past and how it correlates with the present state of mind, emotions, and behaviours in order to create a platform of mutual respected, and eventually, tolerance: "In traditional values there is a definite place for gays" (132).

What is the obstacle that prevents other communities from advocating the Lakota's open-mindedness toward the gay lifestyle? The answer comprises different ideas with no particular order: secrecy, injustice, violence, and helplessness. However, the status quo has been sequentially changed by external agents that have forced the individual to stand amidst several apocalypses before and after the appearance of the American mainstream as an authority of change. Depending on the critical mind, the acknowledgment of such an authority comes with a higher price that not everyone is willing to pay, because as was previously stated, to think of American Indians in purely traumatic terms would suppose their annihilation as portrayers of culture in the imaginarium of our civilization.

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Additionally, to neglect them would push "cultural development [to come] to a standstill and [to stagnate]" (Roscoe 132). For this reason, Ben the Dancer's most critical part of the text can be read as a way to learn from their dysfunctional behaviours and exert a criticism of western values:

> This [negligence] is when foreign values set in and create contradictions within the culture and its philosophy. In the case of Indian gays, it breeds intolerance and nonacceptance. This, combined with the harsh reservation life, makes the Indian gay lifestyle hard to live. (Roscoe 132-133)

American Indian values clashed with western values, giving birth a to bipartite culture that has progressively detached from its roots, as if it was disassociating itself from the traumatic part of its past. The individual has been pushed to participate in a post-apocalypse battle where the 'us versus them' from the previous centuries has become a more complex war between the *whole*, the *them*, the *us*, and the *I.* For people like Vernon, who write about American Indians being abandoned by the government regarding AIDS and health care, the war is tangible. For others like Pahe and Owlfeather, the war is social and intellectual, and it has become a face-to-face kind of discussion. Ben the Dancer does not see the world at war through his text, but he does admit that there have been consequences that have stabbed culture to death. However, the text itself is committed to social responsibility, as his final claim advocates communal care while people are responsible for what they do to themselves, and must contribute to the greater good of the community: "Luckily, there are Indians fighting to keep Indian traditions and values strong. There are also gay Indians who blend their gay lifestyle with tradition and who have made a good place in American society for themselves and others" (Roscoe 133).

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There seems to be no psychological development in a post-apocalypse environment because individuals have been divorced from their identity. Further, there seems to be no interest in the reconstruction of such identity because existence has been reconfigured by 'biopower.' Evolving nearly as a human-less species, American Indians have embraced resentment as a way of coping with the inherent loss of their selves to a culture that fractured them. Despite everything, Ben the Dancer offers a brighter side of the story. He does say that there is tolerance, that there is a place for gays, letting contemporary gay American Indians know that there is a possibility for them to recover their *Indianness* without losing their gayness, and that essentially for the descendants of berdaches, one cannot exist without the other. However, he also admits that being gay is not easy due to social constraints, which are extended to the whole American Indian community: to be an Indian in a white world is a difficult task.

"Gay American Indians" is a spark of hope in the raw world of TSAIL literature, and it also sums up the concept that everything worth-having does not come easily. Identity itself is a hard idea to fight for, and to maintain it intact is even more difficult, especially after years of modifications, influences, negligence, and absurd dynamics of power that have produced nothing but division. Ben the Dancer's social responsibility to create sanctuary is completed, as he conveys a message that calls for active participation to guarantee growth and the establishment of a healthier community. He ultimately works as a reconstruction officer who channels a whole culture's internal rage into a hybrid text that transcends the drama of survival, and focuses on the importance of tradition and the sense of belonging to bridge the future and the past: "this led individuals to feel they belonged to a whole society" (Roscoe 131).

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Nevertheless, it is important to remember that to conceive this literature as 'raw' is to understand that the reconstruction of *Indianness* is constantly contested by the agency of 'biopower;' therefore, critical minds will use—and have used—their raw emotions and internal rage to charge against institutionalized a-truths in the interest of recovering their identity. In this instance, "Today Was a Bad Day Like TB," by Menominee poet Chrystos, is a graphic representation of the struggle of American Indians against the detraction of their culture in favor of a recreated reality and its ownership, in which white people promote a colonizing behaviour by belittling a culture in [re]construction.

5.1.6 "*Today Was a Bad Day Like TB" by Chrystos (Menominee)*

Continuing the spectrum of "angry denunciations of white expropriation of native cultures" (Roscoe, *Changing Ones* 115), Chrystos' poem is a visceral exposure of an open wound in which she, as a mixed-blood Menominee individual and self-identified Urban Indian (Valimaa 1), shows utmost discomfort with the presence of white people around her trying to appropriate, commodify, and objectify her heritage. This cultural auction of memorabilia occurred in a critical time, as modern generations of American Indians have been looking at their own past attempting to find their place in a society ruled by a demeaning superstructure. For this reason, it is advisable to remember that the poem was written from a native perspective denouncing facts that, at the time of its reading, were likely to be unknown or similarly perceived by non-natives, but today construct a traditional post-apocalypse discourse of identity loss.

By separating the title into two individual universes, Chrystos compares her present to the point of inflection that exposure to European diseases meant among American Indians. Looking at the final verses of the poem, she travels to apocalyptic times when tuberculosis

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was the main character, equating her feelings of repulsion to the discomfort of an illness that settles in your lungs, allegorically building a colonizing image in which the flow of oxygen and life are subjected to the agency of the white man: "Today was a day like TB / you cough & cough trying to get it out / all that comes up is blood & spit" (Roscoe 180). The graphic content of the final verse reflects the inner poison contained by years of internal rage that has been accumulating from the cultural bullying. Tuberculosis then is no different from AIDS, as both illnesses were weapons unleashed during the apocalypse; therefore, her inability to get *it* out reveals that is impossible to get rid of the socio-cultural toxicity into which they have been immersed. The subjugation to these illnesses makes the image of the contemporary American Indian fragile, and the collective imagery of the savage Indian succumbs before a weakened entity who has been deprived of living life on his/her own terms. Thus, the critical minds have used this as a catalyst to verbalize their outrage and focus on counterattacking the superstructure.

Chrystos' Indian is not the regular Indian projected by the Euromerican imaginarium. As the poetic persona is undetermined, it will be assumed that these verses account for a first-hand experience. Descendants of the apocalypse are no longer mesmerized by the power whiteness can exert upon them; on the contrary, their lack of interest in them potentiates their disgust at their attempts at owning a culture that might belong to them because of "the complexity of contemporary Indian identity" (Larson 33) and the role of fractions in the percentage of American Indian-ness in blood: "Maybe they have an old Indian grandma back in time / to excuse themselves" (Roscoe 180). This affirmation by no means suggests that there is inaction on the part of American Indians regarding their status before both, society and government, but the verses "I turned away / Can't charm me" (180) are

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examples of this loss of interest in re-colonization. In a way, this is Chrystos' reaction against patronizing behavioral patterns which still exert colonization by means of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation of the subjugated culture. Her Indian struggles with white people's simplicity regarding the complexity of her culture, and finds herself trapped between the trivial and the sacred: "Saw white people clap during a sacred dance" (Roscoe 18). Triviality thus turns into a post-apocalypse villain that diminishes a millennial culture to symbols for auction that can be purchased, and symbolically owned and exhibited as memorabilia:

> I turned away
>
> Can't charm me
>
> thinking of the medicine bundle opened in a glass case
>
> with a small white card beside it
>
> naming the rich whites who
>
> "own" it. (Roscoe 180)

Contrary to American Indian culture, Holocaust survivors never witnessed the appropriation of symbols inherent to their culture being displayed by pop culture. In these terms, the Nazi swastika has been much more exploited in terms of merchandising than the Star of David. American Indians have been subject to the American mainstream, and their culture has been trademarked as symbols that the public do not acknowledge as disparaging to native culture.[51] Chrystos sees a Haida raven design on a white man's backpack as a result of trivialization:

[51] For instance, Chief Wahoo has been the target of controversy ever since he was introduced as the mascot

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> Today was a day when I wanted to beat up the man
>
> in a backpack with a Haida design from Moe's bookstore
>
> Listen Moe's, how many Indians do you have working there?
>
> How much money are you sending the Haida people to use their
>
> raven design? (Roscoe 180)

Chrystos' poem is a critique of the presence of the white man that transcends the limits of power. Differently from other writers, Chrystos' discourse does not explicitly include any references to the traumatic events that led to the deconstruction of *Indianness*. For her there is no need to mention what everybody should know, as it is—or should be—common knowledge. Yet, the mixed feelings of despair, anger, and exasperation that she feels when she urges herself to correct a "young blond hippie boy with a red stone pipe" (Roscoe 180) on his denomination of it as a Sioux pipe instead of a Lakota one shows that, as a postindian, she still suffers the consequences of the apocalypse. Chrystos is a victim of PASS trapped in a slow-term recovery.

As a self-identified urban Indian, Chrystos sees herself exposed to socio-cultural dynamics different from those on the reservations. As stated by Balsam et al., "findings from the handful of studies on urban Natives suggest that this group may experience unique social stresses" (289). On the reservation, there is no need to contest one's identity as native and symbols and tradition are generally respected, considering Ben the Dancer's remarks about the progressive loss of tradition in modern generations. Chrystos was exposed to stereotypes around her figure, the sexualization of native bodies, alcoholism and substance abuse, AIDS, cultural appropriation, misrepresentation, depression, cultural

for Major League Baseball's Cleveland Indians in 1947. Further, Crazy Horse's name was used as the name of a malt liquor, in the line of the popular image of American Indians as heavy drinkers.

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dislocation, interpersonal violence, mental health disorders, among others. Part of her life as an urban Indian is to find her *Indianness* in these terms, facing problems as part of her culture, questioning whether white people's recklessness is a common attribute to western civilisation or if it is product of their ignorance about the past. She hisses, burns, and wants to beat up those who have taken her culture and display it from sportscars, in glass cases, or on backpacks. Her stress is visual and her discourse is virulent.

To conclude, she is a victim of the Reaganist denial of wounds. As Berger said, the first years of Reaganism were built by "claiming that all wounds have healed and were, therefore, never really wounds" (154). The way the public denied the presence of these wounds—cultural appropriation, identity loss, social disadvantages, inequality—derived from apocalyptic discourses of power. If white culture owns native culture, it also owns the right to tell its story, its authenticity, its origins, and even lecture and/or instruct American Indians about their past. When Chrystos corrects the young hippie boy about the pipe, she wonders about how he managed to obtain it, and the resulting exchange of words is a failed attempt at being condescending before someone who has no interest in remarks from rich white people: "I'm wondering how you got it / & the name is Lakota not Sioux" / "I'll tell you," he said, all friendly & liberal as only / those who aren't angry can be / I turned away" (Roscoe 180).

In symbolic terms, Chrystos' poem acts as a dart with the superstructure as its bullseye. However, despite its powerful and visceral discharge, and its contribution to the reconstruction of *Indianness* in terms of 'unforgetability,' her text lacks Ben the Dancer's emotional intelligence, precisely because traumatic feelings are skin-deep and she is still heavily biased against the dominant culture. Whether she is right or wrong or whether she

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falls into reversed racism or not allows for a deeper research of its own. However, her poem is a graphic contribution to the construction of an identity discourse that needs to remind American Indians of "who the enemy is" (Collins 456) in order to fight it, decolonize what it took, and claim its ownership back.

Triviality and whiteness have become post-apocalypse doppelgängers. Together with the brotherhood between racism and homophobia, the quartet has erected a wall around American Indian culture that has ghettoized it and condemned it to its own fracture. Despite "the mutilation of spirit they had undergone" (Roscoe 137), writers such as Ben the Dancer have seen the greener side while others much more critical like Chrystos have denounced the superstructure's agency. Nevertheless, in the poem "Her Name is Helen," Brant explores the consequences of urban Indian life through the story of Helen, a self-deprecating lesbian who has managed to survive behind the bar where she works, while taking pictures of herself to prolong her existence. Brant's text tells many stories of culturally dislocated Indians who sought refuge in the cities, either because it was a voluntary choice or because they were forced to do so. Helen embodies the final product of the apocalypse, a self-destructive victim whose identity manifesto is a series of Polaroid pictures that allow her to see herself clearly though limited by her own reality.

5.1.7 *"Her Name is Helen" by Beth Brant (Bay of Quinte Mohawk)*

Balsam et al. wrote: "While alcohol abuse and dependence among Natives vary significantly by gender, tribe, and age, urban Natives overall are at particular risk for alcohol-related problems" (289). Also, Gilley and Co-Cké stated that "the gay community may be a social context that sometimes challenges their ability to stay healthy by minimizing the hazards of risk-taking behaviors" (294). Helen, a Native woman, worked at a

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bar, where her costumers were white women who recreated themselves by touching her, and regarded her as a being who was there to be liked, to be thought of as a tragedy, and to be taken care of. She stood in between these allegations of risky behaviour and alcoholism as a work in progress who was not even a hybrid, as she was helped—or instructed—on "how to act more like an Indian" (Roscoe 177).

Helen became [more] Indian, but she failed to reconcile with her identity. As many urban American Indians, there was no actual sense of belonging. None of them seemed to belong to the city nor did they belong to the reservation, thus their identity crisis is stoked when the question was asked: "Are you a *real* Indian?" The city was regarded as a place to create sanctuary, but it failed to become so because, as Scudeler writes, "many First Nations people [and American Indians] come from remote reserves and find themselves in the Downtown Eastside to deal with problems that are often legacies of the residential school system, such as substance abuse and subsistence sex-trade work" (203-204). For some, the city finally became the lesser of two evils.

There was no mention of Helen's origins, except for her nostalgia when "she talks about home, / about her mom, / about the boarding schools, / the foster homes, / about wanting to go back to see her people" (Roscoe 177-178). She represented the failure of the apocalypse. The only way she re-enacted the past and talked about it is "when she's had enough / vodkas and Lite beer" (177), so there was no possibility of retrieving her memory in a sober state; there needed to be a sacrifice to get to it. She achieved total inhibition after she drank, and as she drank she acted more like an Indian given the collective image fabricated around them. She allowed her clients to touch her, thus in a way, the act itself was a denigrating way to exert power over her body. White women "who liked Indians"

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(177) could refuse, but instead Helen "is touched by her hands" (178). Chrystos would theorize about this as the ultimate act of colonisation, and she would not be far from truth. However, alcohol and sex are a mental state that allow her to be free. By embodying the stereotypical Indian she exerts freedom.

This inability to live her life away from self-destructive behaviors suggests that Helen bonded with her trauma. Her self-deprecating status led her to neglect herself to the point of annulling her existence. She only existed when she felt numb, and she achieved such a state while being intoxicated. In so doing, she relied on alcohol to recuperate bits of a life shattered by time. Although it would be intrusive, it would be logical to assume that Helen's health was compromised. According to Gilley, "ill health is perceived in terms of several intersecting factors: lack of self-esteem, alcoholism and drug abuse, and HIV infection" (110). She fitted into the pattern of an ill individual dwelling in the aftermath of a broken childhood lived between foster homes and boarding schools. Her lack of self-esteem probably derived from the fact she had come to terms with the idea that being an Indian in the city was not easy. There was nothing to be proud of and her criticism toward herself turned vicious, for which she needed to be reminded of her heritage: "You should be proud of your Indian heritage, / Wear more jewelry, / Go to the Indian Center" (Roscoe 177). This need for affirmation was not sought by Helen but carried out by her peers in an attempt to show they cared, to build a stronger relationship that ended up exchanging positive feedback about life experiences.

Furthermore, Brant aims the focus at Helen's identity by repeating, as if it were a drill from a boarding school, verses that compose her social profile as an urban American Indian: "Helen doesn't kiss," "Doesn't talk much," and "She takes pictures of herself" (Roscoe 177-

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179). This repetition clarifies that Helen did not partake in kissing, perhaps to resist colonisation. Kissing was a practice that came associated with Euromericans and it spread throughout the continent; therefore, as a ritual or symbol of affection and/or erotic approach it was intrinsically linked to colonization. Although she embraced destructive behaviors resulting from that process to exert freedom, within that freedom, she had the power to deny her lips to those white women who touched her.

For this reason, not talking much brings back berdache notions from the past. It is important to remember that prior and during the encounter between Indians and whites, in some communities the berdache was also a confidant who knew and owned secrets. S/He had access to these secrets during intercourse with same-sex members from the community. Helen did not need to engage in sexual activities to have access to secrets. She worked in a bar "serving up shots and beer" (Roscoe 177), and the cultural mainstream has presented us with the figure of the bartender as a therapist, as the only person some people can turn to when they need to vent: bartenders have made life better. Helen poured the drinks and listened, she did not talk much, and as a result, everybody loved her.

Nevertheless, her lack of self-esteem was fueled by not knowing who she truly was and not realizing her own potential as a woman who could attract other women to look at her. As was mentioned before, she neglected herself and could not "imagine that there are women / who see her" (Roscoe 178). The only image she held to was an a-true projection of herself that went along the lines of cultural bullying. While some Indians had no trouble being Indians, others suffered the trivialization of their culture and were brutally slammed by racism and homophobia. Moreover, some of them were exposed to social ridicule up to the point of erasing themselves from the community:

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"I'm a gay Indian girl.

A dumb Indian.

A fat, ugly squaw."

This is what Helen says. (178)

By failing to imagine before realizing there was something greater than the actual reality, Helen confined herself to the limits of it, entering a world of dementia where she did the same thing every day expecting different results. However, her body lived to die as she was sure "she's going to die when she's fifty" (178). The construction of Helen's identity reflected the problematic with members of hybrid cultures and how they developed/evolved in different settings. There is no discourse for Helen other than that of extinction because her behaviour would cause her to cease to exist. Her traumatic reality was marked by the eight years she needed to reach her chosen milestone to leave this world. Was she considering suicide? Cultural and social dislocation put urban [gay] American Indians at risk, mainly because they have not been able to break the wall that ghettoized their culture; therefore, Helen was likely to take her life, as Vernon says: "they suffer from low self-esteem and depression, they engage in reckless behavior, and they attempt suicide" (69).

In Allen's "Selections from *Raven's Road*," there was a short conversation between Allie and Raven, the protagonists of the story, in which there was an allusion to extinction: "We're extinct," said Raven to which Allie replied: "Well, so's everyone" (Roscoe 150). Allie grinned and made a post-apocalyptic statement that reflected directly on Helen's existence. Helen has had girlfriends and her customers gave her presents, but there was no family to take care of her. They are all gone though not necessarily dead. Every member of

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the community who lived in the city was exposed to a terrible reality they could not escape. Loneliness took the shape of the gay bar scene and unknown demons joined in. As a nearly-extinct individual, Helen's last resource to know she still existed was to take pictures of herself. The photograph then became a symbol of survival but not hope.

Photographer Susan Sontag defines a photograph as:

> It is not just the result of an encounter between an event and a photographer; picture-taking is an event in itself, and one with ever more peremptory rights—to interfere with, to invade, or to ignore whatever is going on [...] After the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality. (8)

Part of being Helen was to face the event of her life every day. A woman, an Indian, a lesbian, a worker, a drinker, a melancholic being who longed for the past, an individual who self-deprecated for a living, and yet managed to go inside Polaroid booths and take pictures of herself: "she closes the curtain and the camera flashes" (Roscoe 176). There was no photographer, and that made the event colder but intimate. Helen was protected by the limits of the reality she confined herself to and portrayed herself in it. She created an image for posterity, "so she will know she is there" (179), but more importantly, to let the world know that Helen *was* there. By immortalizing her face in a photograph, Helen outlived the apocalypse because even though the body would disappear, her image would stay forever. She chose to drink to obviate the pain and she could have been manipulated to some extent at that stage, but Helen proved to be in total control the whole time. She took pictures of herself to decolonize her body and establish herself as an independent individual, regardless of her living status. She was not afraid to die because she had lived a

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painful life, thus by dying she reached the ultimate freedom. Her name *was always going to be* Helen.

Brant's poem builds a discourse that has reflected the lives of many American Indians living in the big cities. It is for this reason that Helen becomes the epitome of a hybrid culture that was failing to integrate, not only because it was a difficult process but also because of the heavy burden of the past. Chrystos' poem shows how feelings were still skin-deep and some of them were not ready to move on. In opposition to that, Brant's poem shows an individual who was burnt out and ready to meet her maker. She knew for sure she would die when she turned fifty, hence there was no need to engage in pointless fighting. Every move she has made, not kissing, not talking, and immortalizing herself in pictures has built her own identity as a living tragedy. It would be safe to say that taking pictures was her way of making peace with herself, of giving coherence to her existence, and ultimately, of creating sanctuary to overcome the trauma of the past.

Despite considering American Indians as victims of trauma exclusively would annihilate their cultural background, some works such as Brant's need to be defined by trauma and its consequences, and only through those means can contemporary American Indians understand the struggle(s) they have had to—and still must—face while trying to reconstruct *Indianness*, and trying to find themselves. Brant's poem is part of her contribution as witness of the effects of the post-apocalypse, and it is also a subtle vindication of resistance against colonialism.

The appearance of Brant's text in the revival of Native culture was necessary—and it still is nowadays—for contemporary generations to take pride in their identity as Indians and as

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members of the LGBTQQ community without forgetting, like Chrystos, that the road travelled has been inflicted with pain. Helen is part of a new culture that emerged during the second half of the twentieth century, a culture whose discourse has a long [hi]story that has tried to rebuild from the ruins of trauma an empowered identity, involving the community in the process.

As a gifted author, Brant has explored several themes in her writings, without detaching them from the queerness that characterizes them. Helen is just an example in Brant's character repertoire that also includes Native symbolism, and the introduction of the trickster and its function "as a cultural whole [because] the trickster does not die; he comes back to life again in new guises, new narratives" (Gross 456). "Coyote Learns a New Trick" appeared in her collection *Mohawk Trail* (1985), and is an example, on a brighter note, of the cunning and even trickery of some Native cultures. Through this story, Brant explores the issue of cross-dressing and lesbianism as a comic relief, while using animal symbolism inherent to Native culture to find safety through self-mockery.

5.1.8 "*Coyote Learns a New Trick" by Beth Brant (Bay of Quinte/Mohawk)*

To associate trauma, pain, and laughter is unorthodox; however, comedy is tragedy plus time. Greengross says that "the time that elapses since the tragedy is not the only consideration but also how closely the tragedy hits home, and how severe it is. In other words, distance can be measured in both time and space" (*Psychology Today*, 27 January 2017). Further, McCoy affirms that despite looking for comfort, relief, and connection after someone has experienced tragedy, "laughter can also provide comfort, connection, strength, and relief. And sometimes humor—as opposed to comedy or a joke—can also

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provide information, or a new perspective that enables coping" (*Humor in America*, 27 January 2017). This transformation of pain into comedy to cope with trauma in Brant's text is carried out by Coyote, a versatile character who rejoices in trickery and makes fun out of the misfortune of others. Although she does not write about trauma as such, Brant uses Coyote as a post-apocalypse symbol of cultural endurance who has outlived trauma, and finds a way to exert liberatory power through humor:

> He [Coyote] has been taken [...] as a metaphor for all the foolishness and the anger that have characterized American Indian life in the centuries since invasion. He is also a metaphor for continuance, for Coyote survives and a large part of his bag of survival tricks is his irreverence. Because of this irreverence for everything—sex, family bonding, sacred things, even life itself—Coyote survives. (Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* 158)

In Brant's story, Coyote is a woman, a mother who decides to perform the "latest bit of magic" (Roscoe 164) and reaches into her bag of tricks for accessories to assure her portrayal of a man. She tells her puppies that she is going out to 'perform,' and she does so wearing male clothing and bounding her breasts, nullifying her femininity so she can fool everyone by trying to pass as a man. The spitted cowboy boots, the sleeveless undershirt, the buttoned-up shirt, the fedora, and the bulge were all parts of a representation of the world that was based on a masculine perspective that, as observed by De Beauvoir, was "confuse[d] with absolute truth" (133). Coyote complied with the representation of a traditional man "perfecting her new deep voice and showful walk" (Roscoe 164) and looking "like a very dapper male of style" (163).

Since Coyote was a character famous for her wit, the fact of her choosing to represent herself in drag has a revelatory nature. As a mother, she has performed her role as a

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heterosexual partner who has been granted privilege by the state (Schilling 145). However, her performance of the trick involves the subversion of such privilege "ideologically and materially" (145) for which she chooses to play the male game and seduce Fox, the "la-di-da female who was forever grooming her pelt" (Roscoe 164). Coyote's need for mockery pushes her to explore the world of cross-dressing. Although male-to-female cross-dressing has been thoroughly documented, e.g. We'wha and Osh-Tisch, it is important to remember that despite its lack of documentation, there have been examples of female-to-male cross-dressing such as the cases of Pine Leaf and Running Eagle. They began to dress up in male clothing mostly for war purposes, thus garments transcended fashion to become purposeful and practical. Likewise, Coyote's experiment is functional because her goal is to accomplish a total transgender status to bring society into her queering of the world.

Coyote finds comfort in her new attire. This apparel is made of two external layers composed of male garments, those who fulfil the social projection of a man in a men's world, and her a-truth of a well-endowed man with a deep voice and cockiness. Coyote's fabrication of a man is partly naïve because she has relied on stereotypical versions of him in order to consummate her act and, because of her inexperience, she is confronted by Turtle, who is not fooled by her performance: "Turtle fixed her with an astonished eye and hurriedly moved toward the weeds, grumbling about creatures who were too weird to *even* bother with" (Roscoe 164).

Coyote's attempt at 'passing' does not go as planned, probably because her representation of a man oversteps the boundaries of what is socially accepted. Her discourse on masculinity is failing because she does not believe in it strongly enough to make others believe in it. For this reason, Coyote reassures her new identity through

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semantic affirmation, thinking of a *man* and what it denotes to be one: "I seem to be lost. Can you tell a man like me where to find a dinner to refresh myself after my long walk?" (Roscoe 164). Brant, Turtle, and the reader know that Coyote is not a man; however, Coyote does not know that her adjacent reality is aware of her trick. In a way, Coyote falls victim of her own lie, and by stating that she is a man, she denies it as in the liar's paradox: the liar makes a statement that he/she affirms to be a lie, and if he/she is lying, he/she is actually telling the truth about lying.

Contemporary readings would interpret Coyote as a lesbian character. Although Kehoe argues that "clothing is remarkably multifarious, simultaneously signaling reproductive category, class, occupation, age, ethnic affiliation, and political philosophy" (Jacobs et al. 268) and that "dress must be chosen; one's body is a given" (268), Coyote's garment does not suggest that she is, in fact, a lesbian. Western society has attributed the butch/tomboy role to lesbians who have chosen to dress up 'like a man' while not trying to be one. Furthermore, they have empowered the misconception of roles in lesbian and gay relationships, usually attributing male roles to female partners and vice versa, thus masculinizing such roles. It is through this subversive act of cross-dressing that she realizes the revelation of her true self. Therefore, the text is a comic journey of Coyote's fauxpologetic, yet accidental discovery of her true sexual identity. Moreover, her intention to make a fool out of Fox and "then reveal her true female Coyote self" (Roscoe 165) is an act of coming out that is conditioned first, by choice, and then by hesitation:

> Coyote thought maybe she'd wait a bit before playing the trick. Besides, it was fun to be rolling around with a red-haired female [...] And her paw feels real good, unzipping my pants. And oh oh, she's going to find out the trick, and then what'll I do? (166)

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The *trick* acquires a semantic level as it starts embodying an action in progress rather than a fixed noun. As was said before, Coyote falls victim to her own trickery and results in being tricked by Fox. Her discourse on masculinity has completely failed as she is exposed by Fox while starting intercourse: "Why don't you take that ridiculous stuffing out of your pants?" (166). Thus, the trick stands for the discovery of her identity, as she feels comfort in bed with a female. While Prather's story is about a gay man who had to learn how to become an Indian, Brant's story is about an 'Indian' who discovers and learns how to be a lesbian in a heteronormative world, thus projecting onto Coyote Brant's own personal story as a mother who discovers her sexual identity.

In addition, the trick, as well as Coyote, becomes another symbol of endurance, as it has outlived the trauma of evangelization and retained its complexity regarding gender/sex considerations. For others, such as De Beauvoir, "the lesbians play first at being a man; then even being lesbian becomes a game; masculine clothing, at first a disguise, becomes a uniform" (398), but in Coyote's defense, while she was playing at being a man, she was unaware of her sexual identity due to her confinement to play the standard role attributed by society as a heterosexual mother. Her ignorance turns evident when she sees herself vulnerable before Fox in a flirting battle that she does not quite understand as such, but she realizes "she had to get this joke back into her own paws" (Roscoe 165). These acts make Coyote relatable because she plays by the rules of a dominant society, while using humor to channel adversity and make the most of it in terms of comic relief. Besides, she embodies the decolonized body that must learn how 'to be' in a world where *being* is taken for granted.

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Beyond knowledge, Fox exemplifies experience. Not only she is not fooled by Coyote, but she is the one who introduces her to the world of lesbian sex. By exposing Coyote, Fox becomes a friendly character who has acquired sexiness through the text by flirting with Coyote, and using language as a subtle way to create sinuous imagery to debunk Coyote's transgendered purpose: "'But I can think of several things that are equally as pleasurable, can't you?' And she winked her red eye" (165). In the end, Coyote realizes that discovering her true self was not going to change her womanhood and motherhood. In fact, it is deduced from the very last line of the story that she regrets not having discovered herself sooner: "This is the best trick I ever heard of. Why didn't I think of it?" (166). As an individual who used to mock everybody, being mocked becomes a matter of strength and relief.[52] Thus, to conclude, Coyote's thought of making a good story becomes her own therapy to deal with her coming out/discovery experience in years to come, exemplifying Brant's versatility and contribution to the field of TSAIL.

By the end of the 1980s, when *Living the Spirit* was published, American Indians had too much information about topics that had been rewritten by the superstructure. The collective necessity of reconstructing *Indianness* pushed them to think outside the box, and thinking of American Indians in terms of homosexuality came to be a matter of common history to everyone. However, whereas white writers were fighting for their rights to be gay/lesbians, writers such as Chrystos, Brant, and Allen were engaging in a double-edged struggle in which they had to establish their identity as members of such minority, and

[52] Greengross writes that "over the years, there were even jokes about 9/11" (*Psychology Today*, 27 January 2017), thus there is a tendency to talk about traumatic experiences and satirize about them to find connection and comfort through humor.

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his/her sexual identity within their community. They, as vehicles of denunciation, needed to educate society and to create awareness.

The final work to be analyzed in this chapter is Allen's "Selections from *Raven's Road*." This collection of excerpts narrates the story of Allie and Raven, two lesbian characters framed by their desires to be and to become, while exploring Allie's past and her discovery of her identity as queer. Like Chrystos, Allen's contribution works as a reminder of the presence of the white man as an oppressing figure, not only in terms of masculinity, but in terms of institutionalized heterosexual whiteness. But more than that, the story builds a discourse on the recovery of femininity, entangling it with her own compilation of essays *The Sacred Hoop* (1986), and the relevance of the berdache/lesbian in the American Indian tradition.

5.1.9 *"Selections from Raven's Road" by Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux)*

Following World War II, the United States reorganized the armed forces after the creation of the Department of Defense, issuing a standardized policy restricting homosexuals from serving in the army until 1993: "Homosexual personnel, irrespective of sex, should not be permitted to serve in any branch of the Armed Forces in any capacity, and prompt separation of known homosexuals from the Armed Forces is mandatory" (Frank 9). The policy was abolished during Bill Clinton's first term and was substituted by the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy, lifting the military's ban on LGB people. Some people who were openly gay were barred from fighting in Vietnam, and some others pretended to be gay to avoid being sent to the frontline. And yet, many closeted homosexuals and lesbians succeeded in passing the screening process and obtained higher

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ranks and honors. For instance, in Allen's text, Commanding Officer Barbara Brandon is a semi-closeted lesbian captain who "had been military all the way" (Roscoe 141) and had managed to rise in rank within a system of conservative power.

The excerpts revolve around the figure of Allie, a Cheyenne woman who was "sent to boardingschool when she was very small, abducted more than sent, by white government agents" (137) and evolved to represent the image of the traumatized Indian. She grew apart from her family, she lost contact with her culture, and suffered "gross neglect, laced more or less sparingly with abuse, and liberally dosed with daily, hourly, fear and humiliation" (137). Allen refers to Allie's trauma as a "mutilation of spirit" (137) that turned her into a social hybrid who had been trained to be *like* a white person, yet knowing she could never *be* one. Allie "learned another kind of drunkenness" (137) and started an emotional deconstruction that sent her to jail after being arrested for prostitution. The system, exerting its power like a parent over his/her child, gave her the options of joining the army or going back to school, either of them non-negotiable. And yet, paradoxically, she was given the power to choose what to do with her life. It was a dual passive-aggressive contest over the ownership of the body.

The 'fear of becoming' versus the 'fear of being' is the natural struggle that characterizes Allie. Her character was shaped by violence as a tool to establish social hierarchy. Allie's learned helplessness—once the individual gets used to trauma, s/he fails to try and escape from danger (Bloom 3)—has conditioned her fear of being because she had been trained to be simultaneously both more Indian and less Indian. This Schrödingeresque dynamics undermined her possibilities of being a real Native by whitewashing her culture while expecting from her to be "the kind of Indian white propaganda had determined was the

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only kind there was" (Roscoe 137). American Indians were being contested, probably because some of them were product of racial mixing and could pass for whites, thus they needed to prove their *Indianness* by being 'more Indian' but not too much, in case the superstructure gets offended:

> She had faced frightening white authorities often in her life, so often that she was all but indifferent to their power. She knew it was only physical power in the end, and she was accustomed to beatings, solitary confinement, and social ostracism. Being deprived of white company was not much of a punishment, and branding her as socially unacceptable, deviant, unwanted, was the same as naming her Indian. (141)

On the other hand, Allie's 'fear of becoming' materializes after being discharged from the military. She imbues herself in the idea of freedom, which she herself sees as a utopia because "even then she knew the difference between discharged and free. Indeed, she knew that no one got discharged from America" (135). By acknowledging her "place in the universe" (147) and that freedom is a myth, she knows she—they—will never be welcomed while the superstructure exists. Hence, the 'fear of becoming' socially visible as a lesbian, struggles with the 'fear of being' Indian in a heteronormative environment that counts on physical and emotional violence to make them both, Indians and lesbians, disappear.

Allen moves backward and forwards between three major aspects of Allie's life: an afternoon drive after a self-discovery retreat in the hills, her relationship with Barbara mingled with flashbacks of boarding school, and her relationship with Raven, a woman she initially confused with a man. After being discharged from the military, Allie made a voluntary choice to lose herself in the hills to 'find herself.' She represents the nature of the American Indian revival, an individual who has an idea of his/her past but needs

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reaffirmation to move forward. Consequently, she vindicates her identity by identifying herself as an eagle, a wild, fearless animal that possesses vitality, and has a vast angle of vision of its reality: "Eagle am I [...] An Eagle I fly" (134).

As a young woman "fresh out of the service" (135) she embodies the characteristics of an eagle; however, by stating that no individual is really free from America, Allie reveals that eagles can also be tamed and turned into pets. Therefore, the system will always find a way to coerce the lesbian/gay individual in a minority to live in secrecy because his/her lifestyle is not cisnormative. Nevertheless, courageous individuals will also find a way to resist and endure the process through which they are systematically left out of the social universal design.

From the dawn of civilisation, secrecy has been the most usual tool of resistance used to overcome oppression.[53] Being selective about whom to tell a secret becomes a matter of survival, while lying in order to keep it might carry psychological repercussions in the life of the secret-holder. In this sense, homosexuals and lesbians have survived the severe oppression of heterosexual institutions by living in secrecy, or in the closet, using a more socially accepted euphemism. Thus 'coming out' and 'being out' have been established as figures of speech to disclose one's sexual orientation/identity. Allie becomes part of this secret world when Barbara introduces her to the Silver Slipper, "a lesbian bar that was discretely tucked away on the second floor of one of the downtown buildings" (141). During her exchanges with lesbians of all sorts and her life in the military base, Allie develops a

[53] Early Christians, for instance, hid themselves in catacombs in Roman times to practice their religion freely. The assassination of Julius Caesar occurred because the senators who perpetrated it managed to plot one of the greatest conspiracies of all time without raising suspicions. According to Luise White, "lies are constructed [while] secrets are negotiated" (1).

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healthy identity as a lesbian that is firmly established once she finishes her retreat in the hills and comes out to herself: "An eagle am I [...] And queer as hell" (140).

In the timeline of the story, her retreat and subsequent coming out experience follow her discharge from the military service, which seems contradictory because she had a lesbian relationship with Barbara during her time on the base. Moreover, Allen recalls Allie's experiences of exploration and discovery back in boarding school as a playful event, yet revealing of her own nature: "kissing, playing with each other, shy and filled with laughter, bold and scared they'd be caught. She'd always wondered what they'd do if they found out" (142). This reference to the transience of lesbianism refers to older behaviors that existed in the past. As has been explained, during long periods of hunting men would engage in sexual intercourse with other males or berdaches (transitory homosexuality). When they returned to their communities, they went back to their families and continued to perform the roles they have been previously assigned.

Barbara represents experience and desire. She surrounds herself with girls who look up to her "because she kept her private life private and only took lovers she could trust" (145), thus it is safe to assume she chose to negotiate the secrecy of her life rather than disclosing her sexual identity openly. Historically, Barbara's identity development is enclosed among the variable acceptance of homosexuals and lesbians during the first decades of the twentieth century, going from awareness, to scandal, to acceptance, to conservatism, to war. In terms of trauma, it is presumed she experienced the effects of the burden that meant to be a lesbian in such a conservative time, as well as probably experiencing social pressure to be a woman. For this reason, she knows the extension of white male power and how damaging it can be. Her background story is what pushes her to tell Allie that she

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should find somewhere safe to be when she retires because she did not *belong* there. The linguistic charge of the term 'belong' draws Allie's attention to her lover's acknowledgment of homophobia in the military corps:

> You don't belong here, you know, and I'm retiring so I won't be here to run interference for you anymore [...] There's gonna be hell to pay around here soon. They'll be going after the lezzies, and unless you want to stay and stool for them so you can keep your playpen rights or get busted all the way down to minus nothing, you'd better get out. I can stay, of course. I don't think they'd go after me because of my rank, because letting a queer get this far wouldn't look so good for them, but I'm getting out. (147)

The expression "hell to pay" is what gives in Barbara's traumatic past as a lesbian. The sense of alert that emanates from such utterance is her attempt at exerting power over Allie to induce her to leave. Through Barbara, Allen tells newer generations that they are living in a world where their notion of normality is not shared by the greater majority. It is an attempt at telling the reader that, in order to avoid conflict, s/he must run from it if s/he has the tools because, as explained by Bloom, "if a person is able to master the situation of danger by successfully running away, winning the fight or getting help, the risk of long-term physical changes are [sic] lessened" (3). Her identity as a lesbian was forged around emotional violence. The fact she is white as opposed to Allie, does not imply she is absent from trauma; yet, she uses her compelling power to prevent others from undergoing the same experiences she probably did.

The other aspect of Barbara is her iconicity as a symbol of desire. Allie "had felt her stomach go weak with desire every time the woman [Barbara] had looked at her" (141), allowing her feelings for her to take over. She succeeded in attracting many other girls who

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were considered the captain's girls "who answered to Barbara Brandon's beck and call and were happy to do so" (145). Sex thus became a trading tool for protection and secrecy, and at the same time it became a device to objectify them and own their bodies, thus wielding an ultimate act of colonization over the body.

After following Barbara's advice, Allie choose "an honorable discharge" (147) with which she could do something with her future. For a second time in her life, she had the power to decide in her own benefit, while still being subjected to America. It was honorable because it would not affect her reputation as a member of the corps, and because she would be following her true self. After that, she retreated to the hills and started a quest for her own identity. Barbara's discourse thus becomes a silent force used by Allie to blend the past with the future.

The third and final aspect explored by Allen but less explored in the anthology is Allie's relationship with Raven, and it does so through cross-dressing. In this sense, Raven represents the trickster of the story because of her ability to deceive Allie at first sight by making her believe, unintentionally, that she is a man: "He was dressed in western clothes, boots, pants, shirt, and Stetson, all black. The hat was adorned with a silver and turquoise concho belt and a feather that rode its neatly shaped brim" (148). By the time Allie realizes 'he' is a woman dressed as a man, the reader is before an interesting woman who: had explored her sexuality since she attended boarding school; had endured a terrible adolescence between prostitution, alcohol, and jail; had had powerful feelings for a woman, and who finally had come out to herself and accept herself as a proud Native lesbian.

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The most relevant aspect of this section is the interaction between both females around the topics of social extinction and their place in the universe of the contemporary United States. These conversations are connected to the imagery of cultural trauma, hence creating a thread of continuity. Allie's relationship with Barbara exemplifies a part of what it meant to be and to become a lesbian in an exclusive men's world, and her retreat to the hills was her way 'to create sanctuary' after leaving who she considered a lover and a mentor. However, it is through a conversation with Raven about their place of origin that they manage to construct a solid truth of what has happened to them at a cultural level:

> "What's that?" Allie had never heard of Mississippesh, but there were hundreds of tribes—she couldn't know all, or even most of them.
>
> "We're extinct." Raven gave a short laugh.
>
> Allie grinned. "Well, so's everyone." (150)

Through these lines, all previous texts are connected in a traumatic linearity that reveal how the critical minds of the 1980s addressed the issue of colonization. There was no cultural blending, there was a systematic ethnic cleansing that eradicated entire communities from their lands. Allie addresses with subtle severity the issue by adding a grin as an ultimate resource to make humor out of tragedy. The only way to reach such level of emotional intelligence is through experience, maturity, and understanding. As soon as they both determine their places in the world, they start remembering how the government used the Iroquois and the Navajo as secret weapons at war (151). They share experiences and, above all, knowledge that justifies the mere presence of them before each other.

Allen writes that all this happened "before she had become what she [Allie] was, while she was still becoming" (135). As a character, she evolved from an abducted girl sent to

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boarding school to find her place in the universe as a Cheyenne and as a lesbian. Throughout her life, Allie built her own discourse of survival based on traumatic recollections of the past stained by destructive behaviours because of cultural trauma, and made peace with her past. She found tenacity in her actions and eventually, she became daunting, no longer fearing the world she lived in anymore. Once she established her identity and accepted it, she found her way to her *Indianness*, which seems to be hidden in the power of oneself. What Allen proves is that the quest for *Indianness* is not about looking for someone to blame; it is about being able to transcend trauma and find the strength to persevere.

Throughout this chapter, certain literary works by great writers have been analyzed from a post-apocalyptic perspective. These texts become the literary commandments that will set the grounds for a prolific literary production in the following years. American Indians have been exposed to trauma for a long time, and the system's denial of it is the first step toward their annihilation. Some people, myself included, would prefer the term 'genocide' to explain the horrors of centuries of killings. Others would stick to political correctness and use generic terms such as war, conflict or epidemic to avoid liability. However, that is one of the functions of literature: to serve as a vehicle of denunciation and make it available for the world to see.

In addition, the research conducted shows that there was no critical theory written prior the production of TSAIL; therefore, it is after *Living the Spirit* and the individual work of every writer that the academia begins to approach the field from a formal point of view. As post-apocalypse people, American Indians live in a dystopian world where shock still plays an important part in their life. For this reason, trauma theory has been applied to

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understand how these victims became social hybrids, who were indoctrinated and trained to comply with the imagery produced over the years, an a-true representation of the native individual.

This first literary corpus has been crafted in a way so that the reader could learn from the past to understand the present. The reader understands that there has been a cultural rape of apocalyptic proportions, and that what s/he is reading is the voice of millions who were not able to outlive the horror. The present of the anthology, the America of Reagan and the AIDS crisis, was a time of socio-cultural turmoil that had been in gestation for many years. American society demanded more, not only in economic terms, but also in terms of identity. After 'losing' the Space Race to the Soviets, Americans needed to empower themselves again, and started questioning their identity as one people. The only way to fuel with Americanness the "We the People," was to examine the past, and historical revisionism reached a climactic point during the late twentieth century. For once, the norm was being contested by the people who were choosing spokespeople to elevate their truths and dissect the system's discursive power.

To conclude, *Living the Spirit* was innovative in content and style because it was a true work of *arts*, and Its versatility supposed a socio-cultural landmark. The solid discourse elaborated by the critical minds was the harvest of many seeds that were watered with memories, tradition, and loss. After this analysis, it becomes clear that homosexuals and lesbians had a more complicated task since they were facing double cultural backlash. However, the fact that American Indians organized themselves regardless of gender to produce literary works to verbalize their realities as gays and lesbians was a small victory against trauma, a step in a long way to overcome the cultural loss. The years following the

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publishing of this anthology were crucial for the reconstruction of *Indianness* which was much-needed, but it was not until twenty-five years later that another work of the kind, *Sovereign Erotics* (2013), provided a more contemporary insight in the field of TSAIL.

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Chapter Six

Sól uŋkáyapi[54]

We'd stared into the face of Death, and Death blinked first.

You'd think that would make us feel brave and invincible.

It didn't.

Rick Yancey, *The 5th Wave*.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the world had been predicted to end a significant number of times. Western society feeds on the drama of the end, and has created a fruitful business around it that comprises the funereal and the arts. In 1991, before the Operation Desert Storm was launched, Louis Farrakhan pronounced that "This war, should it start in a few days, will be that which the scriptures refer to as the War of Armageddon which is the final war… it will engulf the entire planet" (Gardell 162). In 1999, the world was overcome by panic upon widespread rumors that the computer bug Y2K would crash all computer systems, subsequently causing society to stop functioning. A few years into the new millennium, in 2003, the planet was expected to collide with a large planetary object, usually referred to it as Planet X or Nibiru. More recently, in 2012, the world was subject to the eschatological prophecies following the end of the Long Count of the Maya calendar, a profitable world-gone-mad disaster drama exploited by doomsday-director Rolland Emmerich in *2012* (2009). However, the world has been preparing for an end that would never come and yet, though the paradigm of our reality has been constantly nurtured with apocalyptic prophesies, the world continues to outlive its extinction.

[54] *We are gradually becoming extinct,* retrieved from the New Lakota Dictionary Pro, V.1: 2014. February 2017.

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It is imperative to understand that in this context *the world* is meant as a physical entity which does not encompass civilization; the world has managed to surpass the limits of our prophetical, yet damaging endeavors. Following the last Quaternary Extinction at the end of the Pleistocene epoch began the transition towards the Neolithic, and our vestiges as terminators became evident, as there has always been a low-key destructive nature to human beings. After the end of the migration that marked the beginning of the Pre-Columbian Era in the Americas, the evolution of humans has been dictated by power. The subdivision of the new settlers into nations and tribal communities followed space, community, common values, and physical strength. With the establishment of Indigenous Peoples as the first inhabitants of the continent began a period of ignorant prosperity that ended in 1492. The following centuries produced a discourse on genocide and extinction to restructure anthropological history and question our status as empathic creatures. Vizenor refuses to think of American Indians as the "Vanishing American ethos" (Vizenor and Lee 4), and yet they keep struggling to exist despite having survived their first extinction. Is it coincidental that American Indian tradition is so spiritually linked to the physical world in terms of nature that survival is intrinsically linked to each other?

After *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology* was published, the 1990s became a revelatory era for minorities, especially for the LGB community which expanded its acronym to include transsexuals for the first time. While American Indians were struggling for visibility native homosexuals and lesbians, who still carried out the berdache label as part of their identity, were fighting to overcome the negativity that linguistic history and socio-cultural signifiers had attributed to the term: "Berdache is now considered to be an inappropriate and insulting term by a number of Native Americans as

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well as by anthropologists" (Jacobs et al. 3). The de-romanticisation of the berdache promoted the collective necessity to find an alternative in a world of labels, and in 1990 the term *two spirit* or *two-spirited* was coined "by Native American individuals during the third Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg" (LaFortune in Jacobs et al. 2). Although the term was widely accepted, some communities understood the term as paranormal, even unholy, thus resorted to embracing western systems of identification regarding their sexual identity. Nevertheless, in this chapter the term *two spirit* will henceforth substitute the denomination of 'berdache' to adequate its analysis to the time in which the literary corpus was produced.

The first gay American Indian anthology was published in a conservative era of marketed harmony. Though works such as Brant's *A Gathering of Spirit* (1988) and Gloria Andalzúa's *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1983) shared similarities with *Living the Spirit*, no other anthology had comprised an exclusive body of literature dedicated to and by two-spirit writers until *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature* was published in 2011. This second great compilation of voices shared their experiences in a time when *ability* and *possibility* had become figures of speech under Barack Obama's administration slogan: Yes We Can. Contemporary two-spirit writers had witnessed the creation of an academic discipline around their field, accompanied with a fruitful literary production that had covered the last twenty years prior to *Sovereign Erotics* becoming a milestone.

The anthology is a work of resistance as it solidly establishes its presence in the cultural American mainstream. At the community level, American Indians have been forced to

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adapt to their a-true projections in the world.[55] *Living the Spirit* became the first work that attempted to deconstruct such projections by providing first-hand experiences to prove the contrary. Although coping with mainstream projections of Natives has been explained, contemporary American Indians look[ed] for referents in the past to establish a 'universality complex,' which draws from Jungian psychology its unconscious collectivism combined with patterns of emotions and perceptions around the individual's experiences, seeking an empathic connection among different members of the community to create post-apocalyptic resistance. However, as discussed by Vizenor, "the Indian was an occidental invention; the word has no referent in tribal languages [...]. Who could have ever presupposed some one [sic] composite or all-purpose "American Indian"?" (Vizenor and Lee 6-7); therefore, how can a community accomplish the challenge to become visibly homogeneous when its own nature is culturally multi-faceted?

In the anthology's introduction, Driskill et al. write: "This collection draws on this model of *creative resistance* that elders like Brant started decades ago. We envision this anthology as a collection of maps and stories for those who come after and for those who may already be on their journey" (1, emphasis added). If *Living the Spirit* was a work of survival, *Sovereign Erotics* became a work of resistance to tell a world engulfed in the gender revolution that their voices were still being heard. In order to do so, the anthology was divided into four sections that thread the past with the present trying to set the grounds for a solid universality complex: I: Dreams/Ancestors; II: Love/Medicine; III: Long/Walks; and IV: Wild/Flowers. The creativity that surrounds the collection marks a significant improvement from its predecessor for being stylistically daring, although, thematically, it still draws

[55] The most recent one has been depicted by Native actor Zahn Tokiya-ku McClarnon, who portrays Hanzee Dent, an American Indian who founds the Fargo Mob in FX's series *Fargo* (2014).

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substantial influences from the past. This collection is crafted as a heavily symbolic trail signpost to present two-spirits—and the whole American Indian community—as time walkers who have walked off, and are still walking on different roads in their quest for *Indianness*: "this collection is certainly not a beginning, nor is it an end" (Driskill et al. 14).

In the following pages, specific texts will be analyzed from the perspective of [cultural] trauma theory, which will be applied to all four sections, and post-apocalypse theory, which will be applied to sections I and IV. In addition to this, cultural theory will be cited for the heuristics of what Gilley defines as "New Age Lesbigays" (121), as well as post-colonial and queer theories, to show how two-spirit writers are struggling to keep up with a paradoxical society in which the more it includes, the more it excludes. From section I, Kim Shuck's "Warrior," Joel Waters' "Kid Icarus," and Malea Powell's "real Indians" reflect on the residues of the past for a discourse on identity and authenticity; from section II, Malea Powell's "A meditation partially composed in a D.C. coffeehouse because there isn't anything better to do in this city of dead white fathers…," Qwo-Li Driskill's "Love Poem, After Arizona," and Jaynie Lara's "Being Two Spirit" construct an emotional landslide around the issues of trauma and self-vindication; from section III, Qwo-Li Driskill's "(Auto)Biography of Mad," Luna Maia's "[sic] authentically ethnic," and Qwo-Li Driskill's "Pedagogy" surround the reality of living in a post-apocalyptic society; and from section IV, M. Carmen Lane's "Remember: She Bought Those Panties for You," and Sarah Tsigeyu Sharp's "Rebirth" are the closing pieces that stand as symbols of creative resistance and open the door to a possible cultural healing.

The decisive tone of this compilation puts two-spirit writers on the verge of a revolution against biopower that is still being executed today. Take for instance the

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protests around the Dakota Access Pipeline which have been ongoing since April 2016. The pipeline was projected to run from North Dakota to Illinois, while running under the Lake Oahe, near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. The actions of President Obama's administration toward the subject, although positive and late, were regarded as a "massive failure" (Cooper, *The Week.* February 2017). Moreover, President Trump overturned President Obama's decision and "cleared the way for two major oil pipelines that had been blocked" (Baker and Davenport, *The New York Times.* February 2017). Although times have changed, the struggle for visibility is still the subject matter for American Indians, regardless of their sexual identity or gender classification system. At the same time, this work redefines the image of the post-apocalyptic Indian who has woken up to a reality projected through their universality complex, and the a-true representations of a world where conservatism is gaining strength politically and socio-culturally. After following the dream-like phases of exposition, development, and crisis, they have finally reached the final stage or lysis, through which two-spirit writers try to find a resolution for their situation. However, beyond its literary value, its therapeutic value turns into a plausible discourse based on the needs for closure and endurance on the edge of extinction.

6.1 *A Post-Apocalypse Dream: Lysis*

Edkins argues that "empirical psychiatric research suggests that personal healing depends on closure, whereas cultural trauma theory suggests that the possibility of social change hinges on a resistance to mechanisms of closure and forgetting" (Bistoen 126). Likewise, Stamm et al. also state that historical trauma includes "lack of resolution of the existential, communal pain" (94). The situation turns critical because the individual who has been classified as a trauma victim is in distress as he/she needs to move forwards but does

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not have the mechanisms to do so; therefore, he/she gets emotionally stuck in a loop where he/she re-enacts traumatic events, causing him/her to be a liability for the greater community.

The texts in this section reflect the traumatic cultural hybridity that was inherited by the citizens of the post-apocalypse, those who Vizenor calls post-Indians, and the presence of a communal pain that has not disappeared, nor is it intended to do so. This collection was put together following an evolutionary pattern, as if the reader were following a map pursuing, text by text, the ultimate truth. In *Sovereign Erotics* writers urge themselves to debunk the argument that their truth is only true as long as it is a whitewashed truth, because otherwise they would be accepting their reality as a representation of the world after the end. Then, the questions proposed in this dissertation arise again: how can contemporary American Indians provide closure for their community? Even so, how would two-spirit writers construct a discourse on healing without turning back to melancholia when they are constantly challenged by the superstructure? Or how could they reach the universality complex as a community following a systematic fracture that has its origins in a paradoxical homogeneity?

6.1.1 "*Warrior" by Kim Shuck*

It is impossible not to construct a romantic idea around the concept of war in a world where "war has become rationalized" (Schilling 154), and the media's hard work has turned it into a source of epic disaster that is mostly awaited and demanded by the audiences.[56]

[56] Perhaps the best example to support this claim is the result of Miguel Sapochnik's imaginarium, director of "Battle of the Bastards," the ninth episode of HBO's series "Game of Thrones" whose bloodbath was critically acclaimed and, according to Sarah Hughes from *The Guardian*, "[is] an ambitious, involving and dramatically satisfying hour of drama which thrusts the audience into the heart of the action and makes them, however briefly, taste the reality of war" (February 2017). The figure of Jon Snow, the lonesome

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However, Shuck's text does not elaborate on the rationale of war as a beautiful thought, she projects her feelings on a partially post-apocalyptic text that is constructed between the romanticisation of the apocalypse and its effect on the individual and social institutions. "Warrior" thus is a reactionary piece that is "in constant tension with its predictive function" (O'Leary 202) as an apocalyptic work, too, that serves as a "solution to the problem of evil that operates on both rational and a mythic level" (O'Leary 195).

The opening verses set the timeframe in a previous, much darker era that involves warfare. The poetic voice is, in a way, re-enacting a moment constructed by the poetics of memory and the empirical evidence that such moment indeed happened: "There are bullets hiding in the trees near the creek. / They could be from any one of three wars, / Various skirmishes / Or the one massacre" (Driskill et al. 25). The discourse around the bullets and the tree is about survival, and the power of nature to overcome the wounds caused by power. The bullet, as a western invention, stands as a symbol of perennial pain whose main aim was to destroy rather than damage, as "in the context of war, others must die in order for the dominating body to live with itself" (Schilling 97). The American Indian genocide proves Schilling's statement as it works as a dramatic enactment of the apocalypse. Nevertheless, beyond the bullets' destructive power, they did not manage to pierce the tree completely, thus turning it into a symbol of natural strength outliving the horror and romanticizing its wounds as scars of war.

As a post-apocalyptic text, it contains references to trauma that has not yet been overcome. Shuck presents a reality that is still shaped around the image of the apocalypse,

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warrior still standing awaiting for a cavalry charge holding Longclaw in his hands, remains fixed to this day in the eyes of followers, detractors, and critics who have constructed around it a discourse of the beauty of war.

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and uses the tree to channel the poetic voice's internal anger derived from it. It is culturally known that time is a healer and it is expected that after two decades, writers start to detach from the idea of the genocide, adapting themselves to the times and denouncing their current situation rather than reflecting on the past. Yet, it is important to remember the one-hundred-year timeframe proposed by Gross to overcome the cultural trauma that the American Indians were exposed to. Taking into account that the climax of the greater apocalypse took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Gross' estimated time has been proven inexact since the past is still a matter of deep importance in contemporary TSAIL. Similarly, Holocaust literature still draws from the essence of its trauma to tell stories despite their common denominator. Moreover, post-colonial literature still problematizes the consequences of power and colonialism. Trauma never disappears but the individual learns to cope with it and molds his/her existence around that decisive moment, developing cultural symptoms regardless of space and time: "The idea of catastrophe as trauma provides a method of interpretation and posits that the effects of an event experienced as shattering may actually produce its full impact only years later" (Berger 26).

As the tree grows, it sinks the bullets deeper into its bark. Such symbolism stands for the cultural symptoms that Berger mentions, because if the tree has become the lonesome warrior and a representation of the American Indian community, its scars affect the whole culture, as stated in Shuck's dedication: "for Carol Lee, *and the rest of us*" (Driskill et al. 25, emphasis added). The apocalypse being a plural event, its direct consequence was to cause the community to perceive the world as perpetually threatening "by new situations and the unknown" (Schilling 97). Individuals suffered—and still do—from Post-Apocalyptic Stress

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Syndrome (PASS) and there still is a general sense of despair masked by the anger produced by survivor's guilt: "War trophy / Prisoners of war / Justification" (Driskill et al. 25). The romanticisation of war excludes the fetish behind torture and [cultural] rape, which were controlling mechanisms to exert biopower on behalf of the dominant body and justify its *modus operandi*. There still exists a taboo around the use of torture as a means to an end—if there is any—yet torture has been turned into a less of a red-flagged sexual fetish that plays around the erotica of dominance regardless of its demographics.

Another symptom present in Shuck's text is the institutional collapse after the apocalypse. The native world and the white world collided against each other, and the socio-cultural construction that followed that clash collapsed because it was deemed unsuccessful. Schilling argues that the dominant body—the state—constructs desire as "a lack that demands compensation" (97), whereas I argue that the post-apocalyptic body's rhetoric is constructed upon faux gratification following conceptions of [un]wanted desires as a consequence of violence and fear. It has been established that violence also contemplates psychological torture and slurs as artefacts of society's new order; however, the lack of communication between the dominant body and the subjugated body affects that order causing it to be imbalanced. Though the dominant body needs to kill in order to survive, it also needs the subjugated body as workforce, whether literally or figuratively. For this reason, traumatized communities cannot work together with the dominant body due to the absence of mutual understanding: "The residue of a failure to communicate / lies invisible in the landscape" (Driskill et al. 25). The invisibility of war does not deny its existence; for this reason, war stands as the ultimate communicative failure in history.

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The setting described by Shuck is bleak, almost dystopian. Although it revolves around survival, the poetic persona is an extension of that survival but in terms of damage and pain, similar to those who have survived natural disasters. There is a feeling of desolation that overcomes the military semantic field and suggestions become a cry for help in such circumstances: "We might organize / Send jackets / Canned food / Powdered milk" (Driskill et al. 26). Shuck presents the image of a survivor in need of basics to outlive his/her survival who is also looking for cognition, and is addressing his/her reader in an almost imploring tone seeking for his/her advice: "We might publish our objection / Burn our offerings / Learn to carry a gun. / We might throw rocks / Light candles / Sing songs, / *Enact other forms of cosmetic surgery*" (26, emphasis added). This reference to cosmetic surgery is Shuck's act of disassociating the signifier and the signified, to break the link between the Indian and the imagery constructed around him/her. At this point, the poetic persona has reached a complete stage of despair that reconfigures his/her state of mind where, like Snow in "Battle of the Bastards," is faced with the only choices of fighting or succumbing to oblivion.

Bloom's idea of emotional intelligence "is recognized as an important component of any [...] environment that hopes to be productive and healthy" (*Creating, Destroying and Restoring Sanctuary*, 70). In order to achieve such intelligence, there must be a process of healing that allows the victim to distance himself/herself from trauma and create a safe zone to develop a healthy post-traumatic identity. In Shuck's poem, this process seems to be attained in the final verses where the poetic persona obliterates the pain by demanding cooperation with his/her own healing process: "How about this: / Help me pull the bullets from the trees. / Learn my language. / I'll learn your history" (Driskill et al. 26). Nevertheless,

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Bloom also states that "emotional intelligence is slow to develop or eroded when fear, recurrent crisis, unrelenting stress and unmanaged conflict come to dominate" (20); therefore, as long as American Indians hold on to their traumatized past, their identity discourse will be diminished by their inability to move forwards.

As was suggested, Shuck's poem links the survival of the Indian to the survival of the world after the hecatombs of the past. If the trees are still standing after man-induced and natural disasters, the Native community can also muster endurance as long as they find the strength to fight a common enemy. However, this first text shows that despite the initiative to work together and elaborate a cultural discourse on Americanness, there are still issues that have not yet been solved and need to be addressed before they become chronic—if they have not become already. The allusion to the natural world being defined by men is another allusion to the apocalypse that has been being constantly re-enacted over the last twenty-nine years. The so-called American Holocaust has served its purpose and has been exploited not only by heterosexual American Indian writers, but also by two-spirit writers who have used it to denounce a discrimination that transcends ethnicity.

Shuck's work is undeniably powerful and rich in imagery. Her domain of *their* language and the difficulty of condensing images with a meaningful message is elegant; however, identity discourses need more than elegance and linguistic dexterity in order to be institutionalized and prevail. Post-apocalypse and trauma theoretical analysis suggest that this text is far from being the solution to the problem of evil considered by O'Leary. It still is a text "in constant tension" (O'Leary 202) that resists closure, although it tries to set a progressive tone in motion towards the end of the poem; however, once the final verses are reached, there has been an emotional detachment because of our tendency to rationalize

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war and trauma when it does not affect us. The lack of empathy and our post-humanity also fail at giving the text the opportunity to obtain something different from it. While we have selfishly assumed that tragedy is part of life, they have not yet abandoned their state of cultural trauma, and the collision between both concepts produces a rhetoric of post-apocalyptic bodies that feeds on a violent cultural disassociation.

The discourse must be limited and perfected by more positive undertones to prove that the community is focused on "renewal, continuance, and memory" (Driskill et al. 13), rather than on the re-enactment of the past to channel the apocalypse as *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. However, as has been mentioned, some communities develop a kind of Stockholm syndrome by becoming attached to trauma, and they are incapable of existing outside of its limits. Within the literary field, Holocaust literature is perhaps one of the most notable examples, because had writers not been exposed to such horrific events, there would not be extensive research conducted in the field of trauma. It is suggested, yet not completely affirmed, that American Indian writers are emotionally attached to colonization. Following the change of the status quo they lost track of their identity, and without colonization, they cannot exist. Albeit dramatic, literature has become the empirical source to prove it.

If literature works at a mythical level as a platform of emotional projection, Joel Walters' "Kid Icarus" is an example of resignation wherein the poetic voice has assumed his place in the white universe *given* by a western god. Walters relies on the myth of Icarus to channel the poetic voice's inner desires to fly and become something great, but greater powers will not allow him/her to do so, condemning him/her to an eternity of self-criticism and shame. It remains in the same vein as Shuck's text because it works as a post-apocalyptic text where the loss of hope, the sense of despair, and the adoption of religion

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proposed by Gross reinforce the focus on continuance proposed in the introduction to the anthology, and reconfigure the post-apocalypse.

6.1.2 *"Kid Icarus" by Joel Waters*

Daedalus showed his craftsmanship by creating a flying device to challenge King Minos' power. His intelligence provided his son Icarus the weapon to flee from Crete, yet his son's over-ambition turned him into a representation of narcissism and tragedy. The higher he flew, the faster the wax of his wings melted causing him to splash "unsignificantly / off the coast" (William Carlos Williams 386) and drown. Lisboa says that "we are inquisitive and sometimes greedy. Curiosity is desire, and we want out desires to be satisfied" (13). Icarus paid for greed with his life, which becomes a satirical signifier when the poetic voice thinks to itself, "He'd be Icarus" (Driskill et al. 28), as s/he sees an American Indian child "trying to fly" (28). Out of the myriad flying analogies in the American Indian tradition including hawks, eagles, and ravens, why did Walters extract the imagery out of Greek mythology and blended it with Christian references to angel-like figures and heaven? G. Bistoen affirms that "the destruction of the sociocultural life-world [after the apocalypse] was so complete that it amounts to 'symbolic death': the total erasure of one's identity" (130); therefore, the answer to this question lies in trauma and the aftermath of acculturation.

Waters makes his text relevant relying on the use of Greek mythology, but the lack of American Indian iconicity proves the text's inability to be unique, despite his knowledge of western tradition. Although such symbols exist, the incapability of establishing emotional connection with them due to cultural formatting gives way to a discourse of submission: "We are the meek" (Driskill et al. 28). The myth of Icarus has been artistically explored by the arts and revisited by William Carlos Williams in his ekphrastic poem "Landscape with

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the Fall of Icarus" (1960). Besides, in the field of psychoanalysis, it has been used to describe a person with high ambition, fascination with fire, and enuresis resulting in a cluster called the Icarus Complex (Eng 108). Though there is no artistic novelty in his use of the myth, Waters finds in it a source of delusions of grandeur that characterize younger generations who were born in the post-apocalypse. Newer generations learn about colonization through biased historical discourses and are exempt from any kind of objectivity. As a result, the emotional detachment as the consequence of the rationalization of war desensitizes the individual by making him/her fearless, and thus, prone to fail.

As the dual protagonist/antagonist of the text, the poetic voice is at a crossroads between a utopian sense of hope and his/her understanding of reality. Observing the boy pretending to fly, s/he acknowledges that hope is an enduring feeling: "Every Indian has a silver lining" (Driskill et al. 28). The boy was born in a post-apocalyptic society that has been striving for peace after the Second World War, yet military peace does not account for individual struggles. He represents the cliché of a blank page to write a better future rather than a native palimpsest. The kid Icarus embodies the dreams of a community who has been neglected. Nevertheless, he becomes a paradoxical understatement by becoming a symbol of collapse, product of the superstructure, that is responsible for giving him the illusion of freedom and eventually leading him to his demise: "But we will not inherit a thing / Even if we could rise / With our degenerated bones / Most of us around here know / It's a no-fly zone" (28-29).

The inclusive discourse of submission—the whole community is affected regardless of their sexual identity—is fueled by the poetic voice's understanding of reality. This complies

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with the negative capability principle of post-apocalypse theory, where the text is an opportunity—to make a problem visible—and a liability open to mysteries, certainties, and doubts (Larson 3). Waters' perception of reality channels experience through a self-critical poetic persona that understands the limits of his/her opportunity. Self-criticism is not achieved through emotional intelligence but through constant exposure to backlash. During and after colonization, the superstructure devoted all efforts to fabricate an image of the Indian based on violence. After centuries of iconic development, Natives were modelled around the construct of vice as a lifestyle, hence evoking a feeling of rejection projected by both society and themselves onto themselves. To recover their lost *Indianness* they had to understand that the world was unequal, and the social imbalance would always have them at risk. For this reason, Waters acknowledged that despite their attempts at partaking of western society, they would never be a part of it because "it's a no-fly zone" (Driskill et al. 28) in terms of hetero-constructs.

Reality is also loaded with imagery extracted from Christian mythology. The conception of heaven as the ultimate Shangri-La is Waters' way to reach a large readership: "How amazing / Those golden gates must be" (29). The globalization of marketed religion through arts has generated fixed images in our collective [un]conscious. Besides, despite the separation between Church and State, Christianity has found a way through religious fanaticism to exert power under social support. Even so, Waters' use of this imagery shows on the one hand, how potent western religious imagery is as it does not need introduction, and on the other hand, the feeling of cultural appropriation he would incur by using American Indian references. Exposure to social backlash forced assimilated Indians to detach themselves from their tradition; therefore, newer generations trying to reconnect

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with their past might have felt they were appropriating something they were entitled to but did not feel the right to have: "But I cannot imagine standing / On a white cloud / Tracking mud into heaven" (29). The poetic persona sees him/herself as an unwelcomed mud-tracker not worthy of consideration either religious or social: "I would never be let in" (29).

This realization collides with the false sense of hope obtained from the poem's title and its opening verse. The silver lining succumbs to the loss of hope channeled through Waters' experience. The third principle of Larson's post-apocalypse theory is contained in the text, as it reflects a real experience produced by an Indian writer. It is a post-apocalyptic text because it is authentic and produced in the aftermath of collapse, and is also traumatic because it still is subtly connected to the moment of implosion that reconfigured its reality. The apocalyptic image of a "Gabriel-like Indian / Blowing into his plastic / Bag trumpet" (29) diverts the iconography from traditional western depictions associated with angels blowing golden trumpets. As opposed to the conception of destruction, this apocalyptic hint suggests a darker, revelatory discourse that represents "a vision of extreme cultural trauma" (Berger xvi). Beyond the discourse of shame, there is a discourse on death which connects with the myth Waters ascribes to his poem: "Perhaps I should've kissed him / It'd be the closest I'd ever get / To taste the sweet vapors / Of a Heaven" (29). The poetic persona suggests that death brings recognition, an affirmation that goes along the line of the apology offered by the U.S. government where it "apologizes on behalf of the people of the United States to all Native Peoples for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by the citizens of the United States" (Public Law 111-118, Sec. 8113). However, the final assumption *of a Heaven* also shows the despair of any social recognition. Upon his/her death, the poetic voice could find solace in any heaven

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as long as it is a place where s/he is acknowledged for who s/he is and not for what society has made out of him/her.

Another analogy suggests that the trumpet stands for alcohol and other vices that qualify as self-destructive behavior. The American mainstream has exported the image of the intoxicated American who drinks out of a bottle wrapped in a paper bag. Social profiling includes this individual in a category that combines low income, homelessness, abandonment, and religious despair. A great number of city Indians qualified for the 'intoxicated American' role. This feature has been used by sectors of society to empower the stereotype of the damaged Indian as irreversible. Waters' poetic persona, however, regrets not kissing the Gabriel-like figure who seems to be drinking. To think of the kiss and the transference of the "sweet vapors" (29) is his/her only comfort. Therefore, regardless of the interpretation, the poetic persona only finds comfort through extreme options that are either lethal or life-threatening. The only difference is that the apocalyptic reading of the text suggests that it is lethal because of the superstructure's agency—death as trauma—, whereas it is life-threatening because alcohol intake is a choice, notwithstanding whatever originated the drinking problem.

Waters uses the myth of Icarus to elevate his discourse high in the sky, only to watch it fall. His ambition to establish a different discourse turns this text into a paradox of the myth despite its resemblance with the fall of the Native community in a time where there "must be a return to equilibrium" (Lisboa 15). Waters' text is well-crafted to the point of becoming a representation of Daedalus' wings. It is a device designed to escape the superstructure's panoptic labyrinth that, like King Minos, controlled everything but the literary universe. It is also Walters' artifact to reflect the inner struggle of present, past, and future generations

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with unsolved doubts and certainties. Icarus becomes a symbol of negative capability, whose authenticity is not contested but whose innovation is constrained by western ideologies. However, the lack of American *Indianness* is substituted by a less sophisticated form of it still hatching out of stereotypes enhanced by trauma. It shows a fine work in progress that should focus on candor rather than the Christian imagery that outshines the intention to reconnect with the native past.

This work in progress towards the reconstruction of *Indianness* continuously poses the question of *what is a real Indian?* Critical theories show that Indians are post-apocalyptic individuals who still suffer from cultural trauma and use literature as a vehicle to cope with it. As was said before, in order to produce an effective dialogue there should be a critical effort to elaborate a disinclined discourse that focuses on the current state of affairs, rather than on the unfixable past. Lisboa states that "those who, either through a failure in the system or due to their individual resistance, remain recidivistically different, must either be destroyed as threats to the existing order or triumph over it and ultimately replace it" (167). All contributors to *Sovereign Erotics* are creative resisters who are part of a cause to overthrow the superstructure. Is *real* necessary for the construction of a common bloc? How real does an Indian need to be to be[come] an Indian? Malea Powell's "real Indians" elaborates on Vizenor's idea of resistance to the vanishing American ethos that struggles to not remain unimagined in the post-apocalypse. These questions will be answered through an analysis in which self-identification is the *ethos* and *pathos* of her discourse.

6.1.3 *"real Indians" by Malea Powell*

If Vizenor has argued that the term 'Indian' is not a definition but a simulation, and contemporary American Indians have been re-constructing their *Indianness* using those

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simulations as authentic, then real Indians do not exist, at least not in terms of pre-apocalyptic representations. The problem is the division of the dimensional reality behind literary production. Reality has been constructed to satisfy communal interests, regardless of whose reality we are talking about. According to Jack Forbes, for instance, reality denialists "want to read about the mystical, about rituals and ceremony. They seem to be less interested in reading about genocide and politics or love and sex" (21). Contrary to what denialists want, he has stated that American Indians "want to write about everything and anything and the same seems to be true for their audience, that is, *everything* and *anything* pertinent to the contemporary lives of [American Indian] people" (21). Therefore, defining reality and establishing who is an 'authentic' Indian and who is not has become a challenge, or even more, a conflict.

Powell has redirected her readers' attention to the title of her poem. She is writing about *real* Indians not *Real* Indians. Perhaps she has chosen to ignore the rules of capitalization of the English language to show rebellion. She could have also lower-cased their reality because it is not real but a case of hyperreality, a consequence of colonization and therefore, an immanent inferiority complex. Or a simpler reading suggests that she has satirized the projection of the Indian by using a lower case letter to show that what is not real, does not exist, yet it exists as a mental construct as long as it is constructed in the brain. Conceptions of a-truths have been blended together with what is real and what is fiction, creating a new dimensional projection of the real that, like trauma, expands both synchronically and diachronically: "water-pitted caves whisper the voices of my elders / but we are here now, not there" (Driskill et al. 57).

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The acknowledgment of the present brings along a dimensional conflict of reality: "or maybe / here isn't here at all" (57). The feeling of non-belonging to either space or time is a direct consequence experienced by those who have survived traumatic events, and in the case of cultural trauma, by future generations. Degloma has argued that "structures of feeling [...] allow trauma to emerge as a macro-level collective memory and cultural identity" (107), which supports Powell's feeling of catastrophe. Everything that was 'Real' was remapped, reconfigured, reconstructed, and replaced. To think of their elders is to invoke the power of collective memory, and to admit they are individuals wandering in between the real and the hyperreal is to create a—new—cultural identity.

Given that hyperreality is a condition where "there is no clear distinction between where [reality] ends and [fiction] begins" (John 1), Powell's Indians are still captured in that blurred line that extends between a long gone past and the impossibility of existing without the superstructure's cultural models. The imposition of white symbols has been key to succeed in exerting biopower. Alcohol and burgers are part of American Indians' new hyperreality, and because there is no original to go back to, they cannot exist without them. As has been mentioned, they have been robbed of their traditions and forced to adopt the western *ethos* without being a part of it. Powell's image of the white man confirms Eyerman's assumptions that the individual bears witness to outer catastrophes by provoking a feeling of [anger] and consternation (41): "the land twisted black like winter wind, the sky a / smear of pink cotton candy stuffed into the greedy mouth of a white man / whose teeth grind us into the plains" (Driskill et al. 57).

Is there a difference between *Black Elk Speaks* and "real Indians"? The former insists "on its own capacity to reflect reality completely" (Staub 434). Does it mean that Powell

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fails at producing authentic work? The answer is quite clear. She has complied with the third principle of Post-Apocalypse Theory and is reflecting real experiences by and as an American Indian writer. The problem is that her real experiences have been whitewashed and owned by the superstructure's agency, and the audience could question the veracity of the text given the significant symbols of white culture: "[o]rdering a PakASak of 30 with cheese plus some chicken rings and onion petals to go" (57); "A & W rootbeer stands open only in the summer and the sound of the Twigh Twee singers as they warm up before first grand entry and the way that white castles / **never** / taste / when you buy them frozen" (58).

For Powell, frozen burgers are like *real* Indians: they are not the same. It is the perfect analogy to explain authenticity. According to Larry Olmsted, White Castles have been marketed in the United States for ninety-five years, and ever since 1994 they have promoted the slogan "What You Crave" (*USA Today.com*, 14 Mar. 2017). Powell says that the frozen burger does not have the real experience of not "peeling away the warm gooey bun from the steamed meat center to add hot mustard and pickles" (58), and therefore, do not satisfy your cravings. Going a step further, Powell's game of references leads us to play with the slogan of the company: customers crave real burgers, not fakes. In this sense, Powell's *real* Indians have a different taste and they do not seem to fulfil the general public's expectation of what a real Indian is. In any case, the hyperreal game behind the white pop-cultured symbolism allows the reader to question everything, and ultimately create a simulacrum of American Indians that takes place in imagination.

PakASak, rootbeer, chicken rings, and white castles embody colonialism. The colonization created "an atmosphere of hostility to things Indian and to the development of shame and identifying with the indigenous community" (Forbes 20). These symbols have

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projected the new American Indian existence on a world dominated by white emblems, the struggle between commodification and consumerism, and the modification of the terrain. Powell's text shows that its voice has internalized white culture and cannot get away from it. It stopped being a simulation and has become a simulacrum in which reality has been perverted and pretended to become unreal. Thus real/Real Indians have partaken in consumerism because "commodification is universal" (Berger 9), and they have consumed 'white' products the same as we have. The difference is that we have binged on McDonald's under pretenses of globalization, whereas they have done it because of acculturation. Ours has been a choice, theirs has been an imposition.

The greatest accomplishment is to stay alive against all odds. For American Indians living has been translated into survival, despite the complexity it poses to describe them. As professor Stefan L. Brandt has argued, they [American Indians] have had "a ghostly presence [...] in the dominant white imagination" (21), and invisibility has propelled the questioning of their reality in and outside their communities. Blood quantum or oral storytelling? American Indian handmade garments or cultural appropriation? To determine what must be considered to qualify as 'real' there needs to be a balance between present, past and future that according to Larson "can be achieved" (43). Is reality ascribed to the poetics of memory? Memories are often fabricated because they are conditioned by subjectivity and imagination, thus the perception—and the definition—of reality is also determined by our own individual experiences.

Momaday has said that "the greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined" (Larson 22). Powell's last line defeats Momaday's fear by dissolving the impossibility of memory: "remembering who we are" (58). They get together and they sing, dance, eat, and

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drink, yet they cannot just be real. They are a-truths, simulacrums, virtually irreal, but they are not *real* Indians, at least not in terms of what the American cultural mainstream has projected throughout history. They exist as lower-case human beings because they have not yet been acknowledged by who they have been, but by what the superstructure has wanted them to become. By just being alive and able to remember, Indians imagine themselves, and they will always exist through imagination and memory: "what I hear when I'm here is the sound of us not dying or disappearing" (58).

Part one of *Sovereign Erotics*, "Dreams/Ancestors," is a literary expressive tour that works as a platform to project emotion and meaning. The natural warrior within [gay] American Indian writers has been empowered through time contributing to a common cause, regardless of how authentic s/he is. To elaborate a discourse of continuity there must be an anaphoric reference that makes it meaningful, but above all, real. If humans were unable to remember, they would become zombies enslaved by their limitations of their present, which makes this section of the anthology especially relevant. However, anchoring in the past makes them unable to overcome the cultural trauma established in *Living the Spirit*. As has been said, they are limited by their present, which at the same time is still heavily conditioned by their past. Therefore, Larson's idea of balance between time-space dimensions is still far from materializing.

There needs to be a quest for a social antidote to counteract the poison of colonization. The second section of the anthology, "Love/Medicine," reflects "the power of passion and erotic desire to tend to aching spirits and lonely hearts, to be the healing balm of a tender touch or heated embrace" (Driskill et al. 8). In *The Sacred Hoop*, Allen contemplates 'medicine' as powerful and can "be used only by certain persons, under certain conditions,

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and for certain purposes" (73). Medicine has been considered both a remedy and a killer, as it sometimes accelerates the fatal outcome. Literature has been more than a platform of emotional projection; it has been the artifact used by writers to self-proclaim as healers without being considered quacks. Though the reconstruction of *Indianness* is still in process, writers must keep writing so that their words become the panacea for their trauma.

6.1.4 "*A meditation partially composed in a D.C. coffeehouse because there isn't anything better to do in this city of dead white fathers…" by Malea Powell*

In some cases, victims of trauma have channeled their experiences through comic relief. Others, such as Powell, have satirized about it and turned to sarcasm to make their point. Through cynicism, Powell has ignored all maxims of the linguistic cooperative principle and has produced a text that has a cathartic effect. It can be argued that such catharsis has had a medicinal effect on Powell's discourse, or even more, its objective(s). Although its contemporary associations connect meditation to abstract processes of thought, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as a discourse "intended to express its author's reflections or to guide others in contemplation" (*Merriam-Webster*, 15 Mar. 2017). Powell's meditation thus is a therapeutic and sarcastic discourse where cultural trauma has allowed victims to find comfort in erotica and narration.

Powell has deconstructed the pragmatics of language through an irreverent, non-conventional, and ironic text that has been 'partially composed' in a city that had regarded American Indians "as footnotes in the larger project of colonization and settlement" upon the signing of the Constitution in 1787 (Brandt 15). To refer to Washington D.C. as a 'city of dead white fathers' is both cynical and factual. This act of subversion is part of Powell's unconscious revisionism and [re]narration of the past. She has defused the grandiosity of

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the city by downgrading the status of the Founding Fathers, as a "[disruption] of the established foundations of collective identity" (Eyerman 49), and by verbalizing the silence of trauma and victimhood: "the remains of a meal eaten in a city built on blood and bones and stolen swamp-land" (Driskill et al. 84). She has promoted her personal trauma to a cultural trauma through the acknowledgement of Abraham Lincoln as a "president who hanged dakotas [sic]" (84) and American history's veneration for his figure. Her sarcastic remarks come in italics, reproducing the transcription over the Lincoln Memorial almost as if she were trying to get a reaction from the reader. The irony lies behind the white marbled statue of a president who abolished slavery while killing Indians, and the superstructure's need to magnify his memory by neglecting theirs.

This profound *meditation* takes place at a coffeehouse, where her discourse on the irony of the capital of the nation is equated to ordering "muffins *and* eggs" (84). Powell intertwines the informality of such reference with the existence and proliferation of sexual identities/preferences. The narrator addresses an invisible character which could be any of us in an attempt to construct a sense of collectivity. Powell manages to do so by universalizing the 'muffin' reference to the vagina, and playing with a graphic sequence of symbols shielding her sexual innuendo: eggs, bananas, and muffins. This wide-ranging experience is in fact a human condition. The reorganization of the environment is subject to the evolution of times. For this reason, as language changes so do the pragmatics behind it and the scenery which works as signifier/signified. The urbanization of language has brought with it a new era of double meanings that allows the message to be encrypted and, at the same time, contradictorily clear. She eventually attributes the banana—as a phallic symbol—the euphemistic "symphony of colonialism" (84) because, as Forter has argued, "it

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emphasizes the momentous, potentially traumatizing consequences of the fact that each of us is implicated in the world of adult sexual meanings" (261).

More troublesome is the conjoining of the banana and the muffin all in one. Powell's sarcastic tone is her way to work through the 'normalization' consumers of "banana nut muffins" (84) are exposed to. Further, she uses the verb *pretend* as a critique to mock at the superstructure's agency to [try to] control individuals' sexual preferences. To prefer bananas over muffins, muffins over bananas, or banana nut muffins are different expressions of the [new] normal which has been gaining strength over the recent years, following the outbreak of the gender revolution.

The climax of Powell's text is the final, nearly stream-of-consciousness rant that summarizes years of unresolved cultural trauma and its effects on the many levels of social strata:

> i [sic] don't know suddenly in a heap of tangled wires at our feet as we cook and eat and stare and talk across a continent unconquered, undiscovered that exists only in the pause between drumbeats and makes me ache for an escape from holocausts even though that's almost all we have in common, that genocide assimilation story well that and muffins… (85)

This final section reflects Kidron's idea that trauma is permanent. However, similar to Holocaust testimonies, Powell's narration of a common past facilitates a process of identity reconstruction. Moreover, it reflects emotional experience and interpretative reaction. References to pre-apocalyptic times where the land was undiscovered and unconquered is a calling to the past for help. In a way, talking about a moment lost in time seems to offer an emotional escape to direct victims, survivors, and/or descendants of traumatic events. In

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clinical terms, it is therapeutic because it allows them to create a safe place where they can retreat to in case of emotional emergency. In doing so, the emotional bridge permits the bonding necessary to put together the common shattered past. In addition to this, the emotionally charged struggle between the individual's trauma and the collective trauma turns this conversation of undiscovered lands into an act of "collective memory [as it] is re-narrated [and] worked through" (Eyerman 48).

This emotionally conflictive outburst is apocalyptic. After lines of discomfort and sarcasm, Powell shows the effect of the apocalypse: "that's almost all we have in common" (85) in a reference to escaping from the Holocaust. The apocalyptic past robbed them of who they were, and the final lines entangle a pseudo-good versus evil meaning-making narrative that revolves around the idea of death, whether physical or symbolic. However, as the narrator recognizes that 'escaping' is almost all they have in common, s/he has understood the fact—the traumatic event—and s/he can interpret it and understand it. This would not have been possible if they had been anchored in pre-apocalyptic times, in which all 'symphonies of colonization' were nothing but abstractions yet to come.

Still, not only is escaping the only thing that draws American Indians together, but also "that genocide assimilation story" (85). The narrator is so emotionally detached that despite the mass atrocity behind the American Indian genocide, s/he refers to it as *that* story as if it were part of a literary repertoire. In spite of the narrator's lousiness, s/he still cannot avoid thinking about the preponderance of the genocide. It shows the conflict between the impossibility of memory and the active negotiation with the selective memory: newer generations of American Indians acknowledge there has been a common traumatic past, but some of them have chosen to undermine its impact in the present,

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while others have chosen to let it go since it never affected them directly. As has been said, contemporary trauma is based on subjectivity and self-reflexive interpretation. As minimalist as it seems, the presence of trauma is still a constant that determines "the fine equation of all [they] don't know" (85).

Powell's own 'icing on the cake' recovers the satire after the climactic acceptance of the genocide as a common denominator: "that and muffins…" (85). Despite the ambiguity behind the narrator, I have chosen to project her as a female two-spirit/lesbian narrator who shows preference for 'muffins' rather than bananas. Albeit childish, the powerful imagery behind it is enough to build a discourse on commonality between other female readers who also share the narrator's preferences. As Eyerman has discussed, trauma has affected "a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion" (Hughson and Spaaij 285), and Powell has used this cohesion as a channel to collectively shape the past, the present, and hopefully the future.

Notwithstanding the medicinal power of verbalization and narration, Powell's text is unique because it reflects the mechanics behind thinking about something and talking about it. The text's fluidity is almost incomprehensible unless read aloud, which might be Powell's intention. Taking a piece that attacks white American symbols, written in the capital of the nation, and read aloud to make it clear sounds like a political statement of cultural vindication. However, despite its therapeutic nature, it fails to contribute to a discourse on social healing. It does not work as an antidote because Powell's text works as poison and antidote at the same time. On the one hand, it offers a cathartic way out to create sanctuary, while on the other hand, it still uses the discourse of assimilation to empower the poisoning. As a result, the text becomes an irreverent representation that,

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regardless of its unique attributes, reflects the emotional limitations of a community unable, yet yearning to move on.

On a more straightforward note, Qwo-Li Driskill's "Love Poem, After Arizona" has more of a social commitment than a political statement. His use of symbols and mastery of the language make it a sensual experience that certainly extols the beauty of lovemaking. Driskill has contributed to the literary panorama without disentangling love from the luring presence of the superstructure. His poem is a sovereign and articulated act of resistance to agency and the passing of time because such text in itself represents *"only a remnant of what once existed"* (Forbes 20).

6.1.5 *"Love Poem, After Arizona" by Qwo-Li Driskill*

Definitions of 'sovereignty' have ranged from autonomy to control. Whether or not control is exerted upon oneself or a collective body, it needs discursiveness in order to achieve its goal to seduce or be seduced. In *Queer Indigenous Studies* Mark Rifkin has stated that "Driskill refigures sovereignty, shifting from the idea of an exertion of juridical control over a dead quantum of space to the emotional interdependence and physical joining of lovers" (Driskill et al. 177). Additionally, Rifkin also says that eroticism in his/her poem is a not simply figurative "embedding of history in the flesh" (182), it also sustains the presence of the past (Kidron 535): "and know empires are never gentile," "taste in your sweat/the iron of Spain/that never conquered us," "forget wars/waged against us" (Driskill 86-87).

The act of 'knowing' materializes only after the individual has survived the [traumatic] event and s/he is allowed to interpret and understand the present reality. The poetic persona is aware of the consequences that derive from being a gay mixed-blood Indian who

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has been exposed to the control of empires. His/her metaphor of the empire is an obvious critique of the superstructure, an extension of the apocalyptic past that still exists in the present. S/he circles the act of knowing through the creation of a private and intimate world to show that affection is strong. Here the use of *baby* as an opener is both personal and an extension of the poetic persona's "responsibility, achievement, or interest" (*Merriam-Webster*, 17 Mar. 2017): "Baby/let me press my palm/against your chest" (Driskill 86).

The empire itself is an abstract representation of the apocalypse. The feeling we get is that of resistance, despite the insistence of the superstructure on conquering lands and bodies. The experience of the poetic persona is not called into question; we must thus assume he knows for a fact the jurisdiction of power. Yet, behind the empowering verse "that never conquered us" (86), there lies the first reference of three to a discourse of "Indigenous occupancy and dispossession" (Rifkin 183). In an act of reaffirmation, such mentions are reminders of the battles 'love' has been through to materialize. Stable demonstrations of affection after trauma often help survivors to integrate their past in the present/future.

The second reference to war, as opposed to outliving the conquest, presents the conflict with an open ending: "There is too much time for war" (86). All impact and consequences of war expand, as Degloma has suggested, diachronically in time (109). Moreover, Degloma has also argued that PTSD flows through time, and the poetic persona has a real understanding of it. It is a way to state the imminent presence of the superstructure, which will wage war whenever they feel is needed. Furthermore, it is a kind of *carpe diem* verse that tells his lover to live within the sphere constructed by the intimacy

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of a speech of love. It also subliminally tells him to concentrate in the 'here-and-now,' as the superstructure's inevitability might strike when least expected.

It has been impossible for Driskill not to challenge the prevalence of the past without calling for it through its suppression. In other words, s/he uses ironic process theory[57] masked with 'love' to trigger the cultural trauma and relive contradictory feelings of survival: "Just for tonight/forget wars/waged against us" (87). Therefore, by urging his/her lover not to think about trauma s/he is actually asking him to do so, perhaps in an attempt to stop him from forgetting. The process of collective construction of the self needs that individuals partake in the same process, at the same level. Otherwise, the experience becomes blurred by subjectivity and personal bias, thus forcing those participating in it to reconsider the sense of themselves.

However, despite Driskill's 'white bear problem,' it is important to analyze how it has backfired on a greater level. The moment when we are told *not to think* about something, is the moment when we *start thinking* about it because it is an involuntary reaction. The poetic persona asks his lover not to think about wars 'just for tonight,' and there is the slight possibility that upon meeting each other, the debate on wars is not materialized but simply thought. On the other hand, the more we think about something, the more likely we are to either develop an obsession or to be ignored. The Indigenous discourse on occupancy and dispossession has become a recurrent thought that has cost American Indians their invisibility. It was a formula that was successful at the beginning, but recurring to the setbacks of colonization has dulled even the most beautiful, erotic, and passionate

[57] Ironic process theory or the 'white bear problem' was first suggested by Fyodor Dostoevsky in "Winter Notes on Summer Impressions" (1863). According to Lea Winerman he wrote: "Try to pose for yourself this task: not to think of a polar bear, and you will see that the cursed thing will come to mind every minute" (*APA* 17 Mar. 2017).

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demonstration of love. Unluckily, they are not the Jewish survivors of a Holocaust and their experiences are deemed less traumatic or not traumatic when/if they are compared at all.

In spite of everything, Driskill's poetic persona portrays a solid identity. S/he knows his/her origins and his/her implications, an act of emotional intelligence that can only be achieved once survivors have learned how to cope with trauma: "We are two mixed-blood boys" (86). This self-denomination has come with the burden of colonization present in it: "a [term] product of European preoccupation with racial classification" (Larson 30). However, it might be argued that the poetic voice has achieved emotional intelligence by making peace with his past, and that by doing that he has lost power. It certainly reopens the question around Powell's text about the authenticity of Indians. It has been thought that mixed-bloods are not part of the Indian social whole. Further, Larson has contended that "the power to define what it is to be an *individual* Indian or tribal member resides in part with the federal government, but there is also substantial tribal authority to define individual membership" (31). Therefore, by admitting the status of *being* mixed-blood, they are reclaiming and owning their identity to decolonize their bodies, though they will be never fully decolonized.

Through the recovery of their bodies, they can alter the social order attacked by Forbes: "Indians, whites, and the entire backdrop of culture around whose duplicities and paradoxes the game is organized" (Larson 37):

> We reweave the order of the universe
> dream away borders
> awake
> to the light
> of a continent. (88)

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The dissolution of the physical world is Driskill's way to work through—trauma—and live on it. His/her 'design your universe' philosophy is the ultimate act of resistance to the superstructure. It shows that no matter the power they try to exert on them, and the ever-lasting presence of trauma, they will never be robbed of their imagination. As long as individuals are able to create, they will be able to think, and eventually, project through different platforms. Driskill challenges the superstructure by ascribing to themselves, *we*, the reconfiguration of the universe. In a physical dimension, that universe could be either geographical—the land—or individual—the body. The sensual touch between the poetic persona and his lover also represents their resistance against "apparent distance of time and geographies of state-orchestrated dislocation" (Rifkin 184). This induced dislocation stands as the superstructure's impossibility to understand the geography of the land, and further, the geography of the body.

The land was sacred and never owned but given, and such a statement could almost be applied to the body. To 'dream borders away' is to restore the respect taken away during the apocalypse, and more importantly, to understand that bodies have no boundaries, an analogy that fits perfectly in the description of the American Indian gender system. Its complexity has been far from unattainable and the superstructure has been unable to fight the colossal multiplicity against its binary simplicity. Perhaps the most revealing verse, 'awake,' is the final strike against the systematic downgrading of American Indians. Being awake means being conscious, and if there are going to be reconfigurations of the social order, they will be actively done with full capacity and knowledge, instead of acting passively before the world is whitewashed.

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Compared to Powell's text, Driskill's poem is not cathartic but it has a medicinal purpose. The bitterness of the colonization is still present, but he tries to wash it away by deliberately asking his lover *not* to remember. It is a less traumatic and apocalyptic text because there is neither a sense of an ending, nor an addictive remembrance of trauma. However, it is post-apocalyptic because it tries to amalgamate the past and the present through the fusion of mind and body. At the same time, once the fusion is completed the text projects itself onto the future, allowing the possibility of imagination to coexist with inevitability. Finally, the text is 'trapped' between two inevitabilities: firstly, the certainty that the superstructure will strike back, and secondly, the unavoidability of colonization. This way, Larson's second principle of temporal expansion goes into effect.

Regardless of the beneficial effects of narration, as Herman has argued, [gay] American Indians have always gone back to the moment of social rupture. Verbalizing their situation is a form of "Love/Medicine" that has helped them channel their darkest [inherited] emotions. However, the recurrence of colonization as a symbol has become a suspicious literary trope, depriving TSAIL literature of its visibility because the superstructure considers it irrelevant, fabricated, and sometimes, non-existent. Further, it has propelled the debate of authenticity to who has the right to be a victim. The question around 'what is a real [traumatized] Indian' is still open to enlarge its definition, as it is the question about being Two-Spirit in Jaynie Lara's "Being Two Sprit."

6.1.6 "*Being Two Spirit" by Jaynie Lara (Weye Hlapsi)*

Behind the linguistics of the term 'two-spirit' there has been a complex debate on authenticity in identity politics. Moreover, beyond the discussion about its etymology, gay American Indians have questioned its sociocultural meaning and its effectiveness as an

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umbrella term to homogenize a heterogeneous discourse on identities. Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang have also stated that "the decision by Native Americans [...] and the First Nations [...] to use the label *two-spirit* [sic] was deliberate, with a clear intention to distance themselves from non-Native gays and lesbians" (3). Despite the efforts to delimit its definition, Jaynie Lara's opening line suggests that the implications of the term have not yet been socially defined: "What does it mean to be 'Two Spirit'?" (Lara 93).

The superstructure has 'trained' American Indians to be *real* Indians, focusing on the magic behind the rituals, the natural references, the lost languages, trying to pass as authentic while reinforcing stereotypes. Likewise, contemporary gay American Indians have shown proclivity toward the recuperation of berdachism, doing so by coining the term 'two-spirit.' The modern homosexual imaginarium collided with the collective reconstruction of their *Indianness* lost and, as a consequence, they were all formatted as cyborgs in need of an update. Being robbed of identity essentials put all American Indians at the same level of amateurism, regardless of their sexual identity. Consequently, gay American Indians also had to learn how to be gay and how to be Indian without overlapping.

Lara's poem shows the emotional burden of not being openly two-spirit in the Indian community: "yet hiding who we are" (93). Gilley has stated that both "being out" and "coming out" are "significant situations of anxiety" (66). In addition to these, "being closeted" has also been responsible for high levels of stress, since individuals have forced themselves to perform in the heterosexually dominant panorama. Despite the respect being a berdache commanded in the past, there is no pride in being openly gay/lesbian in contemporary social contexts in Indian Country, as it escapes the community's reasoning:

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> Two-Spirit attempts to make their sexual orientation and gender difference a part of their public Indian identity are usually met with confusion and hostility. Despite individuals meeting the symbolic requirements of female jingle-dress dancing to the last detail, by being an anatomical male they create a form of performance not intelligible in dominant Indian ideology. By being openly gay or transgendered, they run the risk of being unintelligible to other Indians. (Gilley 81)

Thus, in order to perform accordingly, the identity of the poetic voice has been constructed in secret. Although the need to reconnect with tradition is imperative, it has clashed with her perception of reality. The only thing she wants most besides reconnecting with pre-apocalypse traditions is to be able to live her sexuality openly: "Deep in my heart, /I want to walk hand in hand /with my love" (93). This poses a sociocultural conflict product of the cultural trauma American Indians have been exposed to. It has been mentioned that they have been robbed of their queer past, and berdachism was present long before Europe's presence on the continent. However, the growing and systematic discrimination annihilated its existence in only four centuries, and acknowledging the presence of such a long-gone tradition has gone against the products of the heterosexual Indian ideology producing, as described by Gilley, two opinions:

> Some see being openly gay in their communities as a positive move toward self-acceptance and a positive step for social and political progress for gay and lesbian rights. On the other hand, some individuals view being openly gay as potentially harmful to their social standing, family relations, employment opportunities, and safety. (80)

Lara wants to join her two identities in time and space because, according to Shick, her suffering demands to be acknowledged and voiced (1840). American Indians have been neglected in global politics, and two-spirits have been ignored by their own community

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which disparages non-cisnormativity, and allows for the proliferation of social criticism and homophobia: "My love has held me at night, /kissed me as I cry over /comments made about who I am" (93-94). To join her pre-apocalypse tradition with her two-spirit present is a post-apocalyptic attempt to assure her a favorable outcome, or in other words, a way to negotiate the variables to control the future. Such control is impossible in terms of uncertainty which is a constant in the equation. Yet, in terms of individuality, it is [more] plausible to make decisions to alter the status quo that permit a healthy recovery out of situations of anxiety: "I dare to put my arms around the woman /who loves me for who I am" (94).

The turning point of coming out occurs in her imagination. It is the internalization of the myth of freedom, as exerting one's sexuality has become a matter of public opinion, and thus nobody is ever fully free. The last verse reflects the consequences of her act, which is only translated into 'stares' and 'whispers' because they cannot cause any harm: "I watch the stares and hear the whispers carried in the air" (94). In her imagination, working through the experience of revealing her true self is an act of bravery and self-determination, but conditioned by its own emotional load. Her crying at night stands as a symbol of frustration both external and internal. She does not cry only because of her powerlessness before her community's judgmental remarks, but also because of her inability to disrupt the barrier between the external Indian and her invisible lesbian self.

Lara's poem is a personal experience that calls for a collective reading of the Two-Spirit community. Their lifestyle has been discriminated and, in a way, colonized. To be openly two-spirit, gay, lesbian or transgender has been conditioned by the superstructure's reach into the reservations. Because of their inability to understand the multiplicity of genders,

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cisnormative heterosexual American Indians have adopted the roles of their white counterparts. Further, although all processes of identity reconstruction have been painful, gay American Indians have been tormented by the status of their authenticity. Are real Indians two-spirit? How much of a modern Indian does an individual need to be to reject homosexuality as part of his/her pre-apocalypse tradition? Since berdachism has been documented in approximately 155 communities, by denying the first question, and producing an answer around percentages of blood quantum for the second one, it would be to disrupt or even more, neglect reality.

Lara's first line has multiple answers as each individual will narrate his/her subjective experience as a two-spirit. Like trauma, being a member of the LGBTQQ community is subject to interpretation, given the fact that all experiences are different. Gilley's remarks on "coming out" as a defining experience do not offer objective accountability. In spite of the wholeness that emanates from the reading of her poem as a collective experience, the discourse on reconstruction is still a work in progress. Further, it is innovative that Lara has not concentrated on the use of the discourse of Indigenous occupancy and dispossession. She has rather focused on the consequences of colonization and how the social order has affected the conception of the berdache in her whole culture. But more importantly, she has provided an answer to her opening verse by implying that 'two-spirit' means to live your sexual identity in secret, being unable to partake in the—cisnormative heterosexual—social agenda if you choose to 'be out' since the community would not be able to understand or tolerate it.

To conclude, Lara's poem shows that homophobia and discrimination are still present. There has been no change in that subject since the Two-Spirit Rising, however, it is not the

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writers' fault to narrate their present experiences as writing has become a powerful solace. As colonization, homophobia and discrimination in the gay community have not come to an end yet, which simultaneously is a way to recolonize their bodies again. The two-spirit discourse on *Indianness* is mutilated because it cannot be reunited with its queer part, thus love and medicine have failed to become the panacea.

The third section of *Sovereign Erotics*, "Long/Walks" is the largest in the anthology, as it exposes the real struggles "for dignity and recognition, the loneliness and shame" (Driskill et al. 9) experienced by two-spirits in the post-apocalypse. The selected texts reflect the crudity of what follows the traumatic events of a whole culture: emotional detachment, institutional collapse, failure to identify with sociocultural models and traditions, and the sense of doom before the inability to [re]act to the superstructure's bullying. As has been described, individuals who have survived such events find themselves in the aftermath questioning all levels of their reality. Given the individuals' failure to identify with tradition, in spite of their gender and [sexual] identity, there has been a tendency to live in constant anger in no-man's land. In this case, Luna Maia's "authentically ethnic" exemplifies the feeling of invasion that continuously affects her "identity-making practices" (Kidron 514), while struggling with socially-induced anger to deconstruct her fabricated image as a *real* Indian.

6.1.7 "authentically ethnic" by Luna Maia

Maia's free-verse poem is intrinsically connected to Lara's. Though the latter openly questions the meaning of 'being two-spirit' and its 'authenticity,' the former elaborates a distressed identity discourse about REAL versus real. Although the difference seems purely stylistic, as it also conveys an emphatic purpose, Maia's narrator separates the emphatic

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REAL—Indian or Mexican, related to his or her origins—from the lower-cased real, which encloses the actual state of being. This separation pictures the narrator trapped in between two worlds with overlapping realities, in which experiences and symbols have been contested, appropriated, and [re]narrated.

The narrator's outburst is provoked by a letter in which s/he is being lectured "about Native Americans and fry bread, /how it wasn't until federal rations that Indians made fry bread" (124). Though she continues to explain how the girl who sent the letter was wrong, she keeps referring to fry bread, and begins a sequential chain of food and cultural references, producing a Pollock-esque speech that manifests her anxiety. Fry bread is a symbol of "endurance and gathering, reunion, and cordiality" (Fuentes 49), however, poet and activist Suzan Harjo has stated that "[f]rybread is emblematic of the long trails from home and freedom to confinement and rations [...] Frybread has replaced "firewater" as the stereotypical Indian staple in movie land" (in Lobo et al. 276). If Harjo's reasoning is shared by other members of the American Indian community, it could justify the reaction of Maia's narrator to being lectured on traditional elements that are reminiscent of white power.

The cultural clash between fry bread and tortillas is another evidence of frustrating cultural hybridity. On the one hand, the narrator reacts negatively to the sender's assumption that fry bread is part of *her* personal tradition: "and No I don't think that is an /AUTHENTICALLY-ETHNIC TRADITION EITHER" (124). It is, as Harjo has defined it, a deadly but extolled symbol of Indian identity (276) that should have no place in contemporary debates. Further, fry bread is what Kidron would define as a successful memory-work/identity-making practice that bridges the past to survivors of a distant past (514), or to "new and deculturalized Indians and wannabes" (Lobo et al. 276). On the other

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hand, the narrator is framed by her reality as a mixed-blood. She questions her identity as Indian both by blood and cultural influences, and her reaction evokes frustration because of non-belonging:

> How can I call my myself a REAL Indian, when I have
>
> tortillas and pan dulce in my vocabulary?
>
> how can I call myself a REAL Mexican, when I have
>
> French and German blood running through these
>
> veins? (124)

Thus, non-belonging is a constant inherited from cultural trauma. By assuming that most American Indians today have mixed background, the reality of the apocalypse is acknowledged. Since many women were abused and raped during the colonization, the products of those abuses were not considered real Indians because, like fry bread, they were reminders of the perpetrator's agency. Also, they would not have ever been legitimately recognized as part of the white system, especially considering the second-class treatment they received. Dina Wardi and Alan L. Berger have argued that "the parent is said to overburden the child with the role of substitute or "memorial candle" for the lost ones and the role of surrogate, expected to reexperience [sic] vicariously the parent's lost childhood or youth" (Kidron 518). For this reason, some individuals have been unable to develop a personality of their own, as it has been always subjected to family-ties and the emotional burden carried with them. However, they have failed to fulfil the role of memorial candle because "deculturalized Indians" have not been direct victims of the apocalypse, yet they have been unable to escape their collective past.

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Kidron has concluded that "identity and memory work juxtapose to allow children of survivors to reinvent themselves as descendants of trauma" (538). Maia's narrator has been unable to reinvent herself in these terms. Her image has been doubly constructed, but any of them reflects the reality they are meant to portray. On the one hand, she is the product of the superstructure's imaginarium, an a-true version of a myriad possible selves. On the other hand, she has constructed her image using the patchwork technique because cultural trauma has torn the social fabric. Therefore, the narrator pictures him/herself as a sort of broken toy, the result of cultural 'patches' embroidered in disintegration: "I am not real, to choose an identity is putting on a /costume, playing make believe" (125).

Nevertheless, despite all these considerations, the aim of Maia's poem is not simply to deconstruct her narrator's authentically ethnic personal experience, but to substitute it with a narrative of survival. Non-belonging, cultural hybridity, and anger are part of them. Kidron has said that "once recalled, childhood events may in turn jar more personal memories of fragmented parental tales of trauma and survival" (522). Thus the narrator turns to the power of memory to defend her claims that "it was survival. /the history of my ancestors is about survival, /not being authentically ethnic" (124), stretching the temporal continuum to relive her memories. By thinking of pigeon soup, fresh tortillas, and her grandfather walking with him/her to "Mexico City to buy pan dulce" (124), the narrator negotiates with his/her memory the impact of previous memories. Degloma has stated that this impact "is conceived to pass through time via the social and genealogical linkages of families, ethnic groups, and nations" (111); therefore, both her hybrid identity as a Mexican-American Indian of European descent, and the inherited cultural trauma fuse to fulfil the

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universality complex. For this reason, the text stands as an example of post-apocalyptic resistance.

The last verses, however, are defiant and pessimistic at the same time: "I don't want to make you believe anything, /you already have it figured out for yourself" (125). The narrator will not partake in acts of pretension or *passing*, for which s/he will not identify herself as a REAL Indian but as a real one. The current state of being is that she is a hybrid, a cultural cyborg, and a queered individual. S/he knows that it is pointless to choose an identity because the superstructure will be there to question it. S/he cannot be a REAL Indian for the same reason Lara's narrator cannot: the discourse on *Indianness* has been socially mutilated. Consequently, the final verse shows that due to the lack of unity, no matter how hard American Indians try to get rid of stereotypes and social constructs, the superstructure's vision will somehow prevail. It is an inversion of René Descartes' proposition *cogito ergo sum*. By figuring 'it' out by ourselves, we are thinking before them, thus they cannot escape our judgment. Therefore, all conceptions around American Indians come 'to be' before they even exist in their own space-time, leaving them powerless and neglected.

Finally, authenticity has become a delicate subject. Blood quantum laws are still being implemented to determine membership or citizenship eligibility. Whether it is 1/2 or 1/32-degree blood quantum, American Indian communities are still concerned about proving that they have outlived the apocalypse. However, as has been mentioned, reality stopped being real in 1492. The dimensional change brought by colonization has reconfigured the perceptions of those involved, regardless of their statuses as victims or perpetrators. It might be argued that being an American Indian and a two-spirit are culturally separate

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things, although the latter is intrinsic to the former. Maia's and Lara's poems have shown the consequences of living in the present: *Indianness* has been destroyed and is under reconstruction. Despite their feelings toward how real they feel they are, the only constant in their reality is [cultural] trauma. Kidron has said that trauma is permanent, though surviving and coping with it requires narration and commitment to memory. On these terms, Qwo-Li Driskill's "(Auto)biography of Mad" has recovered this constant to evidence the ever-lasting presence of the superstructure's agency, using memory as a literary banner to construct a complex discourse on traumatized identity.

6.1.8 "(Auto)biography of Mad" by Qwo-Li Driskill

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary's definition of 'subject' includes: (1) one that is placed under authority or control; (2) the mind, ego, or agent of whatever sort that sustains or assumes the form of thought or consciousness; and (3) a department of knowledge or learning (*Merriam-Webster,* 20 Mar. 2017). Driskill's innovative, yet condensed poem presents itself to the reader as the *subject* index of a book. There is no structured narration, except for theme divisions, page numbers, and imperatives. This index, however, is an autobiographical tour of Driskill's mind; thus, the 'subject' is a reference to him/herself as an individual who has assumed consciousness under control of the superstructure, and to all the possible 'departments of knowledge' that we can find in it.

The ambiguity of 'mad' in the title suggests that Driskill is playing with emotions. Whether it refers to anger like Maia's narrator, or to irrationality—the mind is affected by an external influence—, s/he has reacted to white agency. As has been mentioned, s/he utilizes a complex 'code' that condensates the prevalence of trauma in a few 'verses.' By referring to it as a 'code,' it is implied that the text must be deciphered, which is neither true

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nor false. His/her way to divide his mind into *subjects* facilitates the understanding of that code as reader-friendly. This shows that the English language has a limited offer to show his/her emotions, or more, that the subject is unable to go beyond the limitations of his/her own wounded memory.

The index covers: Abuse, Bipolar Disorder, Cemeteries, Colonization, Canton, Craziness, Depression, Disability, Drapetomia, Eugenics, Fear, Forced Sterilization, Golf Courses, Hiawatha Asylum, Insanity, Madness, Manic Depression, Middle Passage, Memory, Night Terrors, Nightmares, Panic Attacks, Psychological Disorders, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Rape, "Shell Shock," Slavery, Trail of Tears, Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and Trauma (107-109). This 'clinical picture' accounts for Driskill's post-apocalyptic reimagining of the world. This design is based on the premises of traumatic memory and traumatic experiences (Kidron 514). S/he triggers the process of memory through the resurrection of the past, activating mechanisms that were never gone but rather went into a period of lethargy. Further, s/he does so by alternating what seems to be a random selection of numbers with significant dates to enhance the veracity of his/her autobiography:

> Trauma
>
> Historical, 1492, 1540-1839;
>
> Physical, 1492;
>
> Psychic, 1492;
>
> Sexual, 4, 14, 28-29, 53,
>
> 1492; 1540-1839. (109)

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Driskill's index reveals the problematic behind the self-reflexive process of identity reconstruction of a 'wounded' subject. Although s/he is not a direct victim of the apocalypse—which are mainly those who were victims of colonization between 1492 and 1930—, Driskill has internalized the suffering of his/her ancestors. Moreover, s/he has transformed suffering into anger due to his/her impossibility to negotiate the recollection of events. This means that the index shows the implications of a culturally traumatized community as an emotional whole, rather than as a selective set of memories to trigger their collective memory. By reading his/her text as a contemporary approach to American Indians, it is easy to assume stereotypical falsehoods for the sake of power. However, this does not mean the text is not a truthful representation of its own reality. Driskill's autobiography thus stands as a dynamic coping mechanism, and as a wide-ranging experience.

Driskill's text is an example of Mohamed's conception of 'mass atrocity.' She has argued that "in genocide and other mass crimes, victims are individuals not only who have suffered unjustifiably, but also who have been silenced by history" (1177). Every subdivision of the index has a moral subtext that creates an inner pseudo-narrative ballad of good versus evil. Abuse has become "the most direct [element] of oppression" (Gerschick in Andersen and Collins 187), and, as explained by *The Huffington Post* Contributor C. J. Grace, "unless the perpetrators or victims are celebrities or politicians, [abuse] continues to be a silent epidemic, out of the media spotlight" (*Huffingtonpost.com* 20 Mar. 2017). The code of silence has had two faces in history, depending on who chose to obey it. American Indians remained silent for many years as a product of fear toward the superstructure's escalating violence; on the other hand, the superstructure used history to silence American Indians

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and place them under authority and control: "Fear /of being watched 4, 14, 26, 28 / [...] of body, 109 / [...] of men, 4, 14, 46, 28 / [...] of police, 52, 98 / [...] of sudden movements, 19-28" (108).

This nearly irrational fear has been empowered by the role of institutional control. There is no way to create sanctuary and develop emotional intelligence to reconstruct a healthier identity if the superstructure still intervenes. Driskill's text shows that despite the time passed, American Indians still feel subject to modern strains of colonialism. The past fabricated the image of the savage, blood-thirsty Indian, whereas the present projects Indians as mentally unstable, prone to alcoholism and substance abuse, and victims of psychopathological disorders. This labelling obeys neo-colonial codes of ownership, through which the dominant culture categorizes individuals as 'unfit,' and ultimately exerting biopower as the greatest resource. The result is a panicked community that has been incapable of working through trauma due to the heavy impact of acculturation: "Panic Attacks. *See* / Madness, Post- / Traumatic Stress / Disorder (PTSD)" (109).

Colonization, forced sterilization, disability, and trauma became cause and effects alike. This complex framework developed into acculturation and social orders were reconfigured. Lang has defined this structure as external influences of change and continuity (115), and has provided three main causes for the suppression of social orders: (1) The tribe has been acculturated and newer generations tend to reject the traditional past; (2) Indian agents and other non-Indian citizens have pressured American Indian communities; and (3) There has been a policy of forced conversion in the case of women-men into "real men" (115). As a "non-citizen Cherokee Asegi/Two-Spirit/Queer activist" (*Sovereign Erotics*, Driskill et al. 216), Driskill speaks from his/her perspective as an Indian

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but also as a two-spirit. His/her identity as two-spirit is also 'mad' since it has undergone similar suffering by being targeted by the superstructure. Mohamed has suggested that there should be a 'reconciliation' between victims and perpetrators in order to coexist without violence, but how can [gay] American Indians make peace with their past while being haunted by it?

Whether heterosexual or homosexual, American Indians' routine was disrupted. Despite the cultural heterogeneity and the differences among all communities, they all managed to live within their own social systems without dealing with shock, panic attacks, fear, and acculturation as constants in their lives. Driskill's text is a reminder of the dimensional twist the American Indian community has suffered—and still does. On a more positive note, his text speaks from both the heart and the mind, which makes it beneficial for his/her emotional health. The permanent presence of trauma and its verbalization "enables it to be incorporated into the traumatised individual's life story" (Shick 1849), hence the text is the evidence of internalized trauma instead of an addiction to it.

According to Forbes, "*many authors of non-European ancestry find themselves writing for those who can pay,* in languages or using formats which their own people cannot, by and large, read" (21) because of colonialism. Similarly, many authors will market the apocalypse and will benefit from trauma, whether it is real or fabricated. Others will be addicted to all forms of expression surrounding trauma, thus making it difficult to differentiate between those who have internalized it and are working through it like Driskill, and those who live constantly reenacting trauma for the sake of entertainment and attention.

While Lara's and Maia's texts are more personal rather than political, Driskill's text "poses political dangers" (Shick 1837) because it operates in the aftermath of trauma but it

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will also do so "decades and generations later" (1837). This expansion of trauma is, as has been previously explained, diachronic because it expands through time rather than space. The text is a personal and collective experience of/by an Indian writer—despite not having Cherokee citizenship—and is also an example of Keatsian negative capability, because albeit having a beginning and an end, the text has an unresolved ending because cultural trauma is on-going. Although it is not a text of post-apocalyptic resistance, it is a post-apocalyptic text because of its temporal projection of past, present, and somehow future. The romanticizing question of what lies beyond trauma is what contemporary theoretical models have been trying to analyze. While some authors are trapped between the inevitability of the future and the fear of forgetfulness if they let the past go, others, like Driskill, are "worried about how to not get caught in /this world we've written" (183).

6.1.9 *"Pedagogy" by Qwo-Li Driskill*

Driskill's transition from 'subject index' to professor comes together with an apocalyptic critique of the word, "a critique that annuls any chance of reform" (Berger 34). The narrator has been absorbed by the superstructure and has observed it from the inside, for which s/he can see beyond the end. His/her statements about the failure of the [education] system are prophetic and assertive at the same time: "This class will not save you /This class will not save any of us" (184). The novelty behind these verses lies in that the narrator has included him/herself in the debacle instead of distancing him/herself from it. However, it is not a 'if I fall, you fall with me' kind of situation, but both the narrator as a professor and the students have become objects dragged by the gravitational pull of the superstructure's black hole. And yet, s/he hopes to find solace in teaching survival skills: "I pray I can teach you /to saw through /the iron bars /of this country" (184).

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Through Driskill, the apocalypse has become readable. His/her contemptuous reference to *this country* presents it as a dimension after the end, making it circular, and thus, never-ending. The superstructure has shaped the past, the present, the future, and whatever comes after that. The inevitability of its presence has left individuals [un]prepared, hence they must learn not to fight, but to live through it. In this context, the figure of the teacher has become a shamanistic reference, a retrospective figure "through which an [apocalyptic] event is remembered" (Berger 26). The power of academic memory triggers dormant emotions and self-realizations. The moment of realization is the 'point of no return' in the metaphor of the black hole. Once the object has crossed the event horizon, it cannot escape from the gravitational pull. The professor is pulled into the superstructure "because [he] was tired of eating from garbage cans, /playing [his] flute, always one foot on the wet Seattle street" (184), followed by the student: "You are here because Dad said /or to finally get out of that damn town /or to survive a country /whose tongue yearns /for your blood" (184).

This dramatic representation exists through cultural and personal traumas, although the discourse behind the cultural trauma seems to lose momentum:

> You will arrive in class this morning
> to a conversation about
> ethos
> pathos
> logos
> Use words like
> power privilege oppression binary
> What does this classroom have to do with you anyway?
> What does it have to do with any of us? (183)

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As opposed to previous references, Driskill presents cultural trauma from an academic perspective, which shows that trauma is not only a clinical condition, but also a verbalized struggle for visibility. The discourse is elevated to universal concerns and equated with post-colonial terminology to justify its existence and make it a "process of meaning making an attribution" (Eyerman 43). But despite his/her efforts of bringing the academy to the students and vice versa, inevitability, as a constant, strikes back and the individual remains powerless, underprivileged, oppressed, and binary. By establishing that there is no reason to be connected to the classroom—and eventually, the superstructure—the narrator undermines the separation between victim and perpetrator, and eventually gives in to a country "waiting for us /teeth /just sharpened /this morning" (184).

The poetic voice is worried about different situations, yet the most important is that of not falling victim of his/her own writing: "I am worrying about how to not get caught in /this world we've written /and if we should talk about Invention or /proofreading this morning" (183). S/he is still a teacher and must follow his/her pedagogical principles, while recognizing him/herself together with other members of the community as creators of a new [literary] world. The inclusive 'we' is another step closer to the narrator's consciousness of cultural trauma, because the world they have written "has achieved some degree of cohesion" (Eyerman in Hughson an Spaaij 285). This world is under construction, at least from a therapeutic and literary perspective. It is fairly young, and as its birth is traced back to the 1970s, it still is developing. Contemporary writers are starting to understand that events "experienced as shattering may actually produce [their] full impact only years later" (Berger 26). Therefore, the professor's discourse is his/her piece of understanding and, at

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the same time, his/her greatest lecture: a self-reflexive narration of [collective] identity that communicates beyond the reconstruction of *Indianness*.

Driskill's undeniable talent presents him/her as a loyal warrior for the poetics of memory. S/he does not want to let go of the past, which is ironically binary. And s/he cannot do so because of the temporal diachronic extension of the past, to the point of being unable to distinguish between the temporality of traumatic events and their aftermath. By triggering the constants of the past, the professor either has internalized trauma and/or has become addicted to it, or on the other hand, s/he is stuck in a moment and cannot escape it. That moment, however, is politically counterproductive because trauma is represented as a political aggression (Shuman and Bohmer 396). To conclude, given his repetition—and similarities with other writers—his/her credibility is negatively affected, yet not his/her experience. The apocalypse is unquestionable, but its repercussion has ignited the writing of a recurrent discourse that some writers have no intention of abandoning.

The fourth and final section of the anthology, "Wild/Flowers," is distinguished from the previous three, and argues for representations of American Indians in the transition from the post-apocalypse hereafter and, more poetically, "calls out to the wild, fierce beauty that thrives beyond the stifling confines of narrow-minded cultivation" (Driskill et al. 9). The references to the traumatic past seem far away, yet the consequences of it are still present. Mostly poetic, the discourse of this section demonstrates that some authors *can* distance themselves from the past and play with sexuality, sensuality, and identity, although Forbes has affirmed that American Indian literature will "continue to remain in bondage" (23).

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From Cheryl Savageau to Deborah Miranda, there is an emotional journey undeniably shaped by personal and collective efforts to subvert the patterns established by Euromerican standards. Yet, similar in length to the first section, it also shows that both the past and the future are out of their reach due to inaccessibility and inevitability. The past has been made inaccessible because new generations are deculturalized, and they [tend to] rely on the discourse of the superstructure. At the same time, the future is consistently inaccessible and inevitable, thus any literary and artistic representations are nothing but open endings that allow the mind to remember and to be reborn. Any future projections depend on the present, and the present is only accessible through experience, interpretation, and understanding. Further, any representation of the present requires the individual to introspect and differentiate reality from fiction. This process involves some serious thought, like the one demanded by M. Carmen Lane in "Remember: She Bought Those Panties for You."

6.1.10 "*Remember: She Bought Those Panties for You" by M. Carmen Lane*

In order to understand someone's behavior, a set of implications ranging from upbringing to individual circumstances must be taken into account. Identity formation is subject to these implications because the individual goes through several stages, and each stage is conditioned by [uncontrolled] internal and external variables. Lane's text is an ode to honesty and a call to self-reflection, in which these variables have conditioned the current state of affairs. The emphatic tone of her narrator, "*if you told your self the truth*" (194-195), is the driving force that channels the frustration of being unable to understand the tribulations of what it means to be "a butch Black lesbian and a Two-Spirit Indian Man" (195). Further, this frustration is the result of internalized anger born of the impossibility of

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understanding, thus resulting in an abusive discourse: "Muthafucka you froze," "... she knew just what kind of pussy you were. What kind of pussy you are" (194).

This realization is achieved by the inability of the narrator's object of criticism to wear "the red lace bra and panties" (194). The narrator is criticizing B for being unable "to be the husband [A] had ached for all her life" (194). However, the concept of 'husband' poses an ontological problem because of its abstract and ambiguous nature. There is no actual husband, but the idealization of a supportive figure of a husband embodied in a woman. This figure is in the middle of an identity clash, and what is inferred from the narrator's claims is that she failed to transcend her limits and became "a Man Spirit with big Black Woman titties and a flat Indian ass" (195). The apparent downgrading of 'man' is open to interpretation, yet it embodies the male incapacity to fully understand the female mindset. By becoming a man at heart, she has lost the power of femininity and pushed away her lover. Therefore, the panties have become a concrete object existing in the abstract space-time continuum of the narrator and a reminder of B's failure.

Through the symbol of the panties, Lane is deconstructing the concept of 'two-spirit.' The ontological reality of the text has pushed its author to separate *nadleeh* and *winkte* from two-spirit and Man Spirit. There are no concrete objects anymore, thus the individual flows between the 'conformity stage' and the 'dissonance stage' of Barrett's Minority Identity Development Model. To think of *nadleeh*/*winkte* is to acknowledge the sense of belonging to a tradition—berdachism—subject to devaluating judgments of the superstructure. On the other hand, being a two-spirit is to express membership in the community "but [s/he] is still restricted by discomfort with it" (Wilson 309). Yet, being a Man Spirit is to strip down the image of berdache/two-spirit to the core, depriving the

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individual of the roles s/he could perform in his/her community. The panties are also a symbol of female impotence. B's attributed masculinity is deemed unfit to wear them, and she is discarded as a potential individual for reproductive and nonreproductive sex. Thus, the narrator summons the power of memory to make B aware of how her "man heart" (195) reshaped her past: "Remember now, when she would say 'You're a man'" (195).

'If you told your self the truth' becomes a mantra of disassociation. According to the narrator, B had told A she was afraid and that she did not know how to be an Indian Man. What truth does the narrator refer to? Like the concept of 'husband,' and also 'trauma,' truth is an ontological abstract subject to interpretation. From any logical perspective, B 'came out' to A and revealed what was true to her perception of the real, but resulted in being unsatisfactory for A's reality. The narrator is demanding an act of egoism by neglecting B's truth and not considering it real enough for A. In fact, B could have never been an Indian Man, because nobody can *be* an Indian if you are not born one, and even in that case, deculturalization is still part of the superstructure's strategy to recognize it. She could have pretended to be one, she could have worn the panties, and she could have "[loved] her right" (195), but B chose to stay truthful to her roots, and moreover, to her empirical knowledge of her incapacity to be an Indian. Thus, by telling A about her tribulations, B was indeed telling her *her* truth, regardless of what the narrator thinks.

On the other hand, the narrator, assuming s/he is two-spirit, attributes to him/herself the virtue of talking with the ancestors: "Funny what you learn when you begin to listen and talk with the Ancestors" (195). It is his/her way of elevating his/her status and A's because they *know* how to be Indian. Further, it is the only way to stretch fragmented *Indianness* through time: by building a diachronic bridge with the past to heal the present. The

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breakup has become the [traumatic] event that ignite his/her rage. Moreover, for Lane, "a two-spirit black lesbian of Mohawk/Tuscarora descent" (218), it has become a personal apocalypse with which both herself and the narrator are not willing to cope. The last lines reveal a sense of hurt hope for change, not yet damaged but in pain: "When you gon' learn not just to listen but to walk this Red Road? Shit, *if you told your self the truth*... what kind of man could you become? Didn't she buy those panties for you?" (195).

Assuming that the narrator is indeed Lane and she is channeling her internalized rage through narration supposes a change of perspective in the analysis. It becomes a deliberate act of introspection in which Lane uses the narrator to punish herself for her own insecurities. Furthermore, the mantra becomes a tool of emotional self-flagellation that uses the power of memory as fuel for regret. She cannot be an Indian because of her cultural hybridity, which counts for two great implications: first, her process of identity reconstruction has depended on her double narrative self-reflexivity, and it is difficult to be captured in the middle of two cultures which are similarly trapped between the trauma of the past and the uncertainty of the future; and secondly, she has had to reinvent herself as a lesbian descendant from two groups brutalized by the superstructure. For this reason, the potential of the text lies in its power to make the individual—and Lane—*remember* and differentiate between reality (the current state of affairs regarding identity hybridity) and fiction (the fabricated memory of something that could have been but never came to be).

The final assumption concerning jealousy is the open ending that allows the reader to question Lane's future: "Other spirits begin to show up too. They're jealous that you can walk between worlds and they cannot" (195). This image is nearly spectral, as the narrator depicts B almost as a ghostly figure lurking in the line that separates her cultural

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dimensions. Cultural hybrids will always count on multiple backgrounds to draw from, regardless of the agency or the victimhood they exhibit as scars from the past. This is why the narrator asks B—and herself—when she will learn to walk along the Red Road of her ancestors. As a black woman, it is 'simpler' to identify with the black community, but claiming membership in American Indian/First Nation communities, as a non-typically-looking Indian must produce cultural fear. Where could she go from there?

The text shows evidence that American Indian literature can deal with other subjects that transcend colonization. As explained by Forbes, American Indians can also write "stories about adventures, sex, greed, and the whole range of human activity" (21). However, it is possible that Lane's text is different from the others because of her upbringing, and her development as a black woman before identifying herself also as an Indian. It would be extreme to categorize it as a culturally biased text, but it shows no signs of commonality with her peers in terms of theme. This text was selected because it supposes a break in the habit of trauma literature, yet that discontinuity is justified. The main reason is the lack of identification with a situation learned but never experienced. Although the African-American experience is as apocalyptic as the American Indian, writers from both communities can do nothing but imagine what the other feels, only understanding that the authors' emotional experiences and their ability to interpret them is what makes their literature almost inimitable. To conclude, Lane's text is provocative and original because of its hybridity. It is a text of resistance that outlives the undermining of two minorities set aside by the superstructure. However, although the text's discourse fails to connect with the conducting thread of its predecessors, it distances itself from them

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because its ending is open: there is hope for creating sanctuary; thus, there is space for healing.

6.1.11 *"Rebirth" by Sarah Tsigeyu Sharp*

The immediate panorama after the apocalypse produced a new social order that consisted of survivors and casualties. Those who survived were subsequently exposed to experiences of shock and, later on, spiritual rebirth. Sharp's poem has been intentionally selected to be the final text of the literary corpus analyzed in the present dissertation. Together with Lane's "Remember," constructs a literary circularity that is reminiscent of pre-apocalypse American Indian oral traditions. To be born again is to have a new opportunity to shape the present in order to 'change' the future, as the past remains unchanged. Whether rebirth is physical or spiritual, it is a step forward beyond Bloom's concept of emotional intelligence. Further, to have "a dialogue /of rebirth" (199) is to engage in a dynamic conversation between the echoes of the past and the present reality to buy more time to heal.

Sharp's poem recovers the leitmotivs of American Indian literature and constructs a discourse of memory, identity, and survival. It details the transition of the poetic voice from the physical realm, "[we] etch home into the palms of our hands" (198) to a spiritual rebirth: "the end of me /But you and the Taíno sun are inside me now, /for good" (199). Within this transition, there is a story of love and empowerment framed by the memory of tradition in which colonization makes an appearance as a poignant reminder. The poetic voice has internalized the process and acknowledges as an inevitable part of his/her being: "You grated me my own heart, bottled tight inside /my frigid, North American heart, /a product of the colonization of my people" (199). These verses showcase "the relations of power in

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which the writer and speaker are enmeshed" (Staub 451) as the intervention of the superstructure is still strong. The frigidity of his/her heart constitutes the poetic voice as a descendant and wounded survivor of a distant past (Kidron 514), in which the world used to be collectively shaped: "We were once as wild as you/ some of us still are" (199).

This brief clarification shows traces of a collective identity in reconstruction. By presenting themselves as wild, they recognize that there is a part of the individual that cannot be tamed because it is ruled by nature. The body thus stops being a concrete object and adopts an abstract sense of being, attributing itself the power[s] to live and learn. It becomes a receptacle of knowledge triggered by memories of an intimate, beautiful past that ceased to exist:

> Remember past tanglings of spit
> and weavings of skin that brought us here,
> birthed us, brought us honey to our trembling lips,
> food and sweetness for the fight ahead.
> Today is a good day to cry. (198)

The dual symbolism behind 'the fight ahead' presents the reader with a euphemism for life as a constant fight for validation and self-promotion, or as a concrete idea of struggling to live. The realization of today as a sad time thus reveals that fighting time itself is unfair because ever since the moment of birth, humans engage in a race against the clock to make the most of it, knowing that they will lose. Further, 'today' is a reminder of the American Indian powerlessness before the superstructure. The post-apocalypse is as bleak as the apocalypse, only less gory in term of casualties. Cultural trauma, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, alcoholism, domestic violence, and symptoms of cultural dislocation are the genetic markers of 'today.' The question arises here: why would they *not* want to cry? In surviving

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the apocalypse, they have been forced to trade their experience for some recognition, allowing history to annihilate their traumatic memory or, at least, to soften the perception of it. Subsequent generations have inherited the impact of dispossession and exploitation (Degloma 111) while fighting cultural amnesia. Some American Indians have moved on, whereas others still "need a little help from [their] liberated kin" (199).

The binary 'you and I' is both personal and collective. By calling his/her ambiguous partner "Kin, Sibling in Struggle" (199), the poetic voice engages in a 'brothers in arms' kind of policy, bonding with him/her in an identity-making practice not to perceive themselves as "wounded survivors of the past" (Kidron 514), but as warriors for the future ahead. The sense of comradeship in a common fight is the ultimate catalyst to empower collective identity formation which, according to Eyerman, "is grounded in loss and crisis, as well as in triumph" (161). Moreover, the voices of these warriors express and reinforce the impulse of resistance to the superstructure (Brandt 33). At this point, the circularity of this chapter connects this final text with the first one analyzed, Shuck's "Warrior." The dialogue of rebirth suggested by Sharp is nothing more than the learning process proposed by Shuck: "Learn my language /I'll learn your history" (26). Therefore, to be born again is to have the opportunity to learn from traumatic experiences, historical negligence, and cultural annihilation, so that individuals are able to heal and find sanctuary through their self-reflexive narratives.

The final act of recognition is self-awareness. The poetic voice has identified him/herself as a 'product of colonization,' the same way s/he uses it to sketch his/her companion: "you, all eyes and hands and tongue /You are acts of gods exiled long ago /from this, our fertile earth" (199). They are both Indians, "indigenous lifts /indigenous closer to

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the sun" (199), and they have been culturally crafted in the ways of the superstructure. The *dialogue* needs to be an exchange of experiences and an uplifting act of vindication. It cannot be carried out by a single person because this dialogue is not a Christian narrative of resurrection. It follows more in the line of a Phoenix-like return to life after being socioculturally dead to the world.

To conclude, through the regenerational tone of the poem it can be argued that the poetic voice has achieved emotional intelligence. Moreover, through 'you and I' s/he has created a safe space to provide a new frame to tell his/her story. Despite the references to colonization, the poetic voice does not engage in a 'good versus evil' meaning-making narrative. The feeling obtained from such references is that of resignation, and that both pain and loss have already been incorporated into his/her life story (Shick 1849). The poem acts as the link between the current state of affairs and the myriad possibilities the future can bring. Sharp's poem *remembers* the past without holding on to it, allowing its poetic voice to find peace in a new era of spiritual growth. The dialogue and the poem itself thus turn into the storytelling needed to work through traumatic experiences, allowing the poetic persona to appeal to the collective unconscious of American Indians to endure and outlive the post-apocalypse.

In the Jungian dream structure, *Sovereign Erotics* is the lysis of the post-apocalyptic dream which has stopped being "a meaningful product of psychic activity" (Jung 3), and has become a reality. This anthology is the conclusion of the awakening to the nightmare of colonization, yet there are still many effects that have evolved into night terrors. The emotional burden of the apocalypse has been dragged for centuries, and in the awakening of a new era, the writers of the twenty-first century managed to compile a rich, evocative,

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and provocative work that stands out as an achievement in the field of Two-Spirits American Indian Literature. In words of Driskill et al., "*Sovereign Erotics* reflects our continuance as two-spirit/queer people" (3), yet such continuity has adopted new forms though not new meanings. For this reason, I agree with Forbes when he says that in American Indian literature "the forms have changed, in some cases, but perhaps there is more continuity than radical change" (21). Thus, what the future may hold for American Indian literature and *Indianness* in the post-apocalypse will be discussed in the conclusions.

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Conclusions

The future is past.

Stephen Brown and Pauline Maclaran, *Marketing Apocalypse*.

The objective of this research has been to explore how the reconstruction of *Indianness* and the gay American Indian identity are virtually and empirically connected through literary, trauma, and [post]apocalyptic discourses. American Indian tradition has always been literary and symbolic, although not in Euromerican terms. Storytelling and orality eventually became speeches that had to be written so tradition would not be lost, regardless of the difficulty of the task: "speech *cannot* be fully represented in a written text. Therefore "failure" becomes an effective and *necessary* narrative strategy that redirects authority from writing to speech" (Staub 432). Until the *creatio ex-nihilo* of written American Indian literature, there was usually a white mediator, thus the text could have been culturally biased. As a result, posthumous debates on the authenticity of such texts have been opened. Further, minorities decolonizing their bodies and their history are questioning the validity of previous representations of their communities. The question arises again: who is authorized to *tell* a story?

Determining who is able to write about what has become a complex matter. Larson's Post-Apocalypse theoretical model suggests that for a text to comply with the third principle of his model, it must reflect an Indian experience written by an Indian him/herself. Following this postulate, all literature produced by non-Indians does not count as American Indian literature because the experiences are not perceived as true. They are simulations of representations of the real, a-truths, which do not have an 'original genome' anymore.

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Contemporary Indians are copies with no originals. Thus, are non-Indians eligible to write about Indian experiences? As long as they do not fall into cultural appropriation and they are as objective as historical revisionism allows them to be so, they can. In fact, having a non-Indian perspective—without that being the one from the superstructure—enriches the [gay] American Indian identity panorama. Some objects are subjected to reality while others are determined by perception, and the latter is open to interpretation. Individuals understand reality as an abstract entity that demands them to act accordingly, or as a life-changing event that reconfigures the dimension in which they live. Hence the apocalypse is contextualized as an analogy of trauma because it has provoked both effects on its survivors. Literature has helped to restructure this post-apocalyptic dimension by verbalizing a problem which had been overlooked by history, and neglected by politics.

7.1 *A Homogeneous [Id]Entity: Answers*

The North American berdache was ridiculed, forced to change, and eventually annihilated. Together with the numerous failed land policies, they constitute the greatest cultural robbery ever committed. Four centuries later, contemporary LGBTQQ American Indians are going through similar ordeals on and off their reservations due to the long-term exposure to conservative Euromerican religious and philosophical standards. The presence of homophobia on top of racism is a denial of the multiple-gender [Indian] reality and a projection into the future of this community. If the superstructure allows racism and homophobia to be exerted among its citizens, gay American Indians will not be able to provide closure to their trauma. As was argued by Hughson and Spaaij, "the inability to overcome trauma will remain as long as the perception of the failure of justice remains" (292). Unless there is change in the sociopolitical dynamics, the gay American Indian

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discourse will always be conditioned by the fear of being abandoned, by the fear of being rejected in Indian Country, and by the fear of being denied their human rights.

Allen's verse in which dykes and Indians "are supposed to die out" (24), is the painful reminder and remainder of the superstructure's agency. Cultural trauma is a fact, as was explained by Alexander, Eyerman, and Stamm et al. In order to heal, survivors of traumatic events should either integrate them in the future or let go of them. However, the findings of this research imply that those individuals who perceive themselves "as wounded survivors of a distant past" (Kidron 514), construct a melancholic discourse because they are captured in the middle of two dimensions. Two-spirit writers are locked in by the American mainstream and locked out by their own past. This no-man's land acts as a symbolic limbo where writers must find themselves among the ruins of their culture. Their *Indianness* was scattered, and reconstructing it demands practices for bridging temporal dimensions.

The dangers behind such action are deemed potentially negative for individuals who have failed at working through trauma. The superstructure is trying to make amends by attempting to wash off the past and humanize the perpetrators. Mohamed has asked, however, if an ordinary person who commits a crime is still ordinary once the crime is committed (1213). No ordinary person remains ordinary after partaking in the genocide of a culture, and not because people raise judgment against him/her with or without evidence, but because of the personal trauma it supposes for that person. Perhaps contemporary disciplines are interested in the study of 'the other side of the story' to provide new insights on the matter. The best example of this is Clint Eastwood's *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006), in which he tells the story of the Battle of Iwo Jima from the Japanese perspective. The

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overexploitation of trauma has empowered the marketing of the apocalypse, and with it, new trends to view perpetrators on a par with victims through reconciliation and *mea culpa*.

Fighting for freedom of speech and strongly advocating for political correctness has backfired because [ultra] conservative organizations are threatening the current social order, which is not the best, yet is better than half a century ago. Two-spirit writers are still trapped, and the American Indian literary tradition is still 'in bondage,' as Forbes says (23). While there are no means to develop an independent literature, their platform is more susceptible to collapse much faster due to the constant representation of trauma. American Indian writers will not be able to escape collapse if their discourse keeps on focusing on political aggression. As Shuman and Bohmer say, this type of discourse becomes suspicious (397), and history has shown that great empires have collapsed, hence American Indians are no exception. They are culturally doomed to go extinct if they do not manage to break free from their traumatized past. Nevertheless, with the threat of a nuclear apocalypse in sight, the future seems unwelcoming for everybody.

The reconstruction of *Indianness* is still a work in progress. The massive discourse constructed around it as an abstract object is subject to alterations as time goes by. Moreover, living in a hyperreal world, to link 'reality' to *Indianness* does not seem inappropriate. The findings of this research suggest that *Indianness* is being reconstructed as an identity, as a collective discourse determined by authenticity. The literary scene of the century has allowed for the berdache construct to be adapted to the present moment. The earlier twentieth century was a temporal dimension that witnessed the deconstruction of the berdache, yet it saw it reappear at the turn of it. However, as of 2017, heteronormativity continues to deprive *Indianness* of its queer past, thus its reconstruction is being divided.

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Hence, there is a discourse on American Indians that overlooks the existence of the berdache and its evolution into two-spirit and gay, and a greater discourse that considers queer *Indianness* as a universal component in every member of the American Indian community. LGBTQQ American Indian writers are on the right path to continue building their future together (*Sovereign Erotics*, Driskill et al. 14), yet still have work to do if they want to resist and thrive in the post-apocalypse.

Another task that American Indians have for the future is to become visibly homogeneous. It has been stated that their cultural nature is multi-faceted, and even regarding the institution of berdachism, each community had—and still have—different views about it. As has been mentioned, narration is similar among victims of trauma (Shuman and Bohmer 397), and this becomes the number one factor for homogeneity. As a community, they cannot just simply unify cultures and write on behalf of the 'Indian Nation.' That project would decimate their cultural wealth and would eventually collapse. The current status of the European Union is the most vivid example of that proposal. However, if they choose to continue narrating trauma, they are likely to be overlooked by a growing dehumanized society. Thus, in order to become homogeneous, they need to focus on how they are coping with cultural trauma and develop a new literary tradition that encompasses the emotional intelligence needed to concentrate on the future and let go of the past.

Nevertheless, the analyzed texts generally showed a clear preference for the 'good versus evil' meaning-making narratives, and these narratives are determined by the agency of the superstructure. Thus, *Living the Spirit* and *Sovereign Erotics* have built a nearly three-decade-long bridge that allows writers to constantly travel back in time to justify the

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present. This proposal supports the hypotheses that: (1) American Indians, regardless of sexual identity, have developed a Stockholm syndrome with colonization as a coping mechanism and cannot exist without trauma, and (2) that their discourse has somehow stagnated. However, this does not imply that American Indians have developed positive feelings toward the superstructure or its goals, but rather a "defense mechanism of the ego under stress" (Adorjan et al. 458). Further, this mechanism is still active in the community and, since literature has become their platform of denunciation, their discourse still is conditioned by trauma.

7.2 *Post-Apocalyptic Future: Contribution and Further Research*

This dissertation contributes to the expansion of the post-apocalypse theoretical approach proposed by Larson. His work is the cornerstone of a more appropriate model that seeks to analyze the aftermath of the apocalypse in time and space, both synchronically and diachronically. Through the analysis of texts produced in different eras within the same post-apocalyptic framework, this dissertation has intended to study the construction of the multi-layered [gay] American Indian identity discourse from a circular perspective, which links together cultural trauma, identity, and the apocalypse. This perspective is broadly in line with American Indian literary tradition given its circularity. All elements are interconnected, and since the end is a new beginning, the future is also past. Further, this research provides new terminology to the model to comprehend more complex implications of the texts produced: (1) A-truths, the representation of a simulation of reality that is adopted as the absolute truth; and (2) the 'universality complex,' the association of unconscious collectivism and patterns of emotions and perceptions to create post-apocalyptic resistance through empathy.

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This dissertation's constructive criticism also offers an alternative to the post-colonial approach, not without acknowledging its influence. The terminology of this discipline has been helpful to maintain categories separated: hegemony and victims, colonizers and colonized, oppressor and oppressed. Furthermore, because of the literary corpus selected for this research and the way it has been studied and structured, this thesis offers an innovative, yet unfinished approach to the study of American Indian literature. As has been mentioned before, the world is constantly changing, and individuals must adapt to these changes in order to survive. Literature will always occupy its place as a platform of denunciation, but literary production will also change in form—and hopefully—in meaning. Thus, the analyses of future texts will contribute significantly to enlarge the scope of study of this work.

The proposal of a post-apocalyptic theory of trauma suggests that "events happen [...], 'things fall apart' and 'change utterly'—but that remainders and reminders, signs and symptoms survive" (Berger 26). The impact of trauma can be measured though not necessarily comprehended. We are limited by the experience or the lack thereof. Contemporary theoretical models and disciplines have been developed based on research and have tried to classify, organize, define, and apply their concepts according to data and research findings. The human component has been left aside, thus there has been a tendency to dehumanize traumatic events and analyze them objectively, rather than following a dual approach that draws from both the emotional subjective experience and the objective analysis.

The world lives in permanent cultural trauma: [post]colonialism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, loss due to natural and human disasters, wars, and terrorism are "only some in an

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expanding list of human suffering now categorized as traumatic experience" (Kidron 514). All individuals go through experiences of loss whether on a personal or cultural level, thus new theoretical approaches should include the human factor to stop regarding objects of study as simple objects that can be measured, counted, and labelled, and moreover, to provide a solution to the cultural trauma caused by the American Indian genocide and the rape of their culture.

On the other hand, further research is needed in the fields of Queer Theory and Two-Spirit Identity Theory if they are studied in the field of Trauma Studies. In order to consolidate its position as a cutting-edge theoretical approach, both models should be theoretical allies. It must be understood that the world is still defined by the superstructure, hence it is conceived and constructed in binaries. These structures empower and disempower different behaviors and situations ruled by heteronormativity. The works of Butler and Foucault have contributed to elaborate a contemporary discourse of Queer Theory. Along with the works of other theorists and writers, they have laid the foundations for the hybridity of a branch of critical thought which has taken notions that influence epistemological perspectives. Furthermore, the work of Wilson in developing a Two-Spirit Identity model could be expanded by including the role of spirituality and tradition in the individuals' process of identity negotiation and reconstruction. Essentially, this model aims at the assumption of roles in society in spite of the superstructure's presence. However, it is its agency that limits the expansion of this model because of the involution of a society that constructs its façade by deconstructing its core. Contemporary conceptions of progress are determined by the myth of freedom, hence the more progressive individuals are, the more obstacles they find in their way. The world today is an illusion of the end.

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Berger says that "to see a world as post-apocalyptic is to recognize its formative catastrophes and their symptoms, and to identify the ideological sutures that hide the damages and repetitions" (219). Such a conception is a healthy reminder of the human capacity to achieve emotional intelligence. From the Genesis flood narrative until the latest terrorist incident, the world has been constructed on the premise of its end. Without thinking of the end and its aftermath—despite how oxymoronic it sounds—there would be a cultural impasse and the meaning-making narratives would cease to exist. American Indians, and survivors of trauma in general, have managed to become the aftermath of their own apocalypse. They represent themselves as the scarred bodies of cultural memory, and the first step of recovering from cultural amnesia. While literature allows the creation of narratives to work through trauma, regardless of their meaning, there will always exist therapeutic hope to go on. In the meantime, survivors are constructing a more truthful and fortified imaginarium, preparing themselves for a new apocalypse yet to come.

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Appendix

Fig. 1. Frank Hamilton Cushing posing as a Plains Indian warrior.

National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

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Fig. 2 *Red Man Watching White Man Trying to Fix Hole in Sky*, 1990. Courtesy of Collection National Gallery of Canada.

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Fig. 3 *Buffalo Chase by a Female*, 1858-60. Courtesy of The Walters Art Museum.

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Fig. 4 *Dance to the Berdashe*, 1861-1869. Courtesy of the Paul Mellon Collection. National Gallery of Art.

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Fig. 5 *Finds Them and Kills Them (Osh-Tisch)*, Crow. Circa 1928. Photographer unknown.

Courtesy of *Willsworld.org.*

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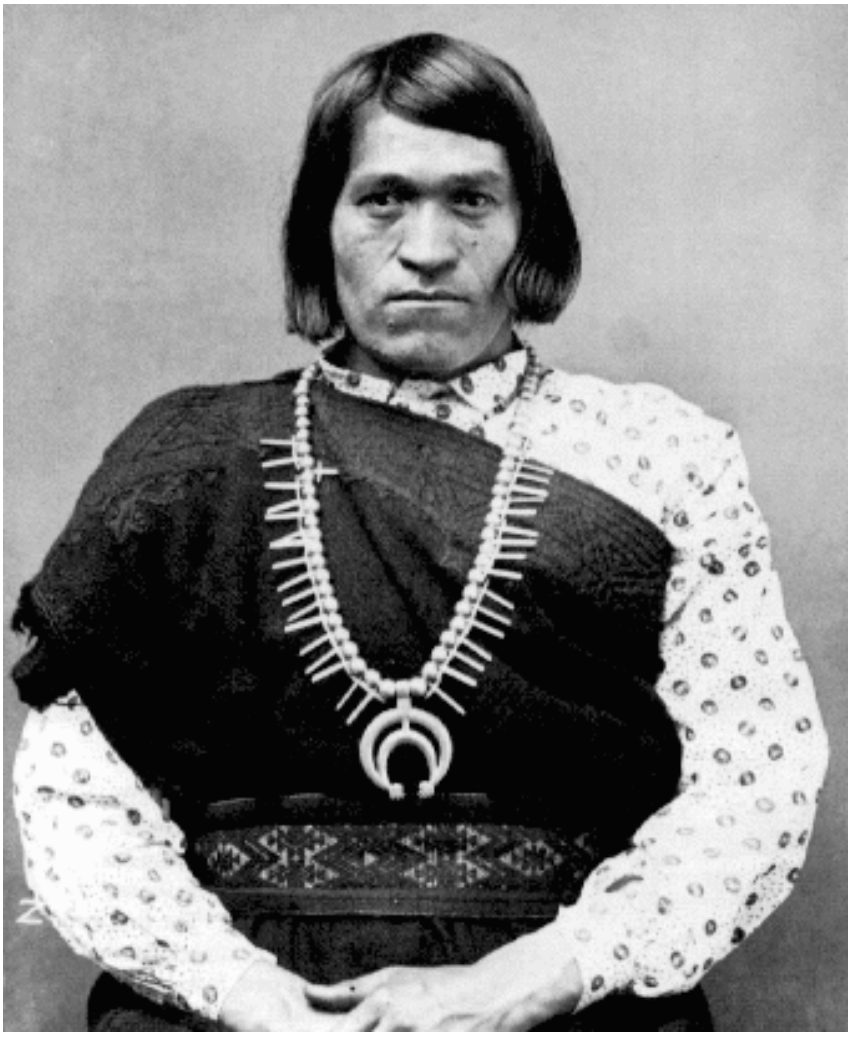

Fig. 6 *We'Wha*. Circa 1886. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Department of History,

College of Staten Island of the City University of New York.

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Fig. 7. *Slave Woman* by Franklin Arbuckle. 1952-1953. Courtesy of Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba.

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