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A Divided Self but with a Double Vision: Zitkala-Ša's and Mourning Dove's Authorial Experiences

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Introduction

The inspiration for this dissertation was sparked by a seminar held by Professor Tadeusz Lewandowski on the 13th of April 2022 at the University of Padua. This seminar, called "Zitkala-Ša and the Beginnings of American Indian Boarding School Literature", revolved around the life and work of Zitkala-Ša and also included a brief, yet clear and compelling delineation of the historical context in which this author and activist fought for the Native cause. On this occasion, I could realize how ignorant I had been about Native history, culture and literary production. Fortunately, I was given the opportunity to try to make up for this shortcoming of mine by writing my MA dissertation precisely on such topics. What is more, not only could I devote my attention to Zitkala-Ša, whose political and literary engagement had already elicited my sincere admiration during Professor Lewandowski's seminar, but I could also try to investigate the contribution of Mourning Dove, another Native writer who greatly piqued my interest.

My choice to deal with both Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove was chiefly dictated by the fact that their lives and works are almost coeval, since both of them lived and wrote in the United States of America at the turn of the 20th century. This might actually be regarded as a "transitional era" for the Native community, because at the time the US federal government was trying to implement various strategies meant to induce Native peoples to renounce their own sociocultural roots in favour of a thorough assimilation into the mainstream Euro-American society. Among these strategies, the creation of boarding schools was supposed to play a role of paramount importance. Indeed, these educational institutions were meant to physically and psychologically eradicate tens of thousands of young Natives from their own families, communities and traditional ways of living by forcing them to spend their childhood and/or adolescence secluded into a regimented and abusive Euro-American environment. These Native pupils were therefore compelled to repudiate their own indigenous sense of identity and cultural heritage in favour of such markers of Euro-American "civilization" as the English language, Christian religion and private ownership of the land for agricultural purposes.

All in all, this project of deculturation, acculturation and consequent assimilation was meant to substitute the genocidal practices employed up until then by European colonizers and US neo-colonizers against Native peoples with a less overtly violent process of

ethnocide. However, the ultimate aim of both strategies, be it genocide or ethnocide, was essentially the same, namely that of removing a rather uncomfortable Native presence from the geographical and, most importantly, ideological landscape of the United States, a nation whose self-declared founding principles of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness", to quote the Declaration of Independence, did not seem to apply to the original inhabitants, and rightful owners, of North American lands and resources.

Both Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove directly experienced this federal attempt at Native assimilation. Indeed, they both attended the afore-mentioned boarding schools and in general had to face the undue interference exercised by the Euro-American hegemony on the daily lives of Native people. And yet, though Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove were expected to cast aside their Native pride and cultural heritage, their literary contributions try, on the contrary, to cherish and diffuse indigenous values and traditions. What is more, not only have these two authors clearly refused to comply with the demand that they obliterate the Native component of their identities, but they have also managed to integrate their indigenous heritage with the sociocultural resources they have been endowed with by their Euro-American education and surroundings.

Indeed, through their boarding school experience, these women were able to learn to speak and write in English, and therefore acquire the perfect instrument to understand, appropriate and eventually subvert some of the main tenets of Euro-American hegemonic discourses about Native history, culture and identity. Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove could thus gain access to the realm of the hegemonic strategies of (mis)representation circulating in the United States, so as to advance their own perspectives and thus undermine the hegemony's claim for absoluteness and transparency. All this became possible thanks to their hybrid identities and cultural heritages. Indeed, by virtue of their access to both Euro-American and Native cultural resources, Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove were able to transcend the typically (neo-)colonial binary and hierarchical epistemology. What they tried to demonstrate to their intended, mainly Euro-American audiences, was that all ethnic barriers set throughout US history had no real foundation, except for the need to find a justification for the crimes against humanity committed by the European and Euro-American hegemony against Native communities.

Both Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove knew, however, that were they to directly denounce these crimes, the vast majority of their Euro-American audience would probably abandon their reading after the very first pages. This is why both authors opted for the strategic adoption and adaptation of literary genres, themes and rhetorical conventions which would appear familiar, and therefore reassuring, to their targeted readership. This is effectively the case with the literary works this dissertation revolves around, namely Zitkala-Ša's series of semi-autobiographical essays "Impressions of an Indian Childhood", "The School Days of an Indian Girl" and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians", first published in 1900 on the prestigious US magazine *The Atlantic Monthly*, and Mourning Dove's Western novel *Cogewea, The Half-Blood: A Depiction of the Great Montana Cattle Range* (1927). Both literary contributions represent a clever, fruitful and pioneering integration and maximisation of the authors' hybrid identities and cultural heritages in favour of the Native cause they were both fighting for. Indeed, by resorting to both Euro-American and Native sets of cultural resources, Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove arguably managed to demonstrate that Native survival may be striven for not through the total rejection of the process of assimilation they were forcibly involved into, but rather through the adaptive and inclusive evolution of their own communities, traditions and identities, which could be granted by strategic hybridization.

Indeed, as famously argued by the eminent scholar Homi Bhabha, hybridity may prove a great resource for any given sociocultural community, especially under conditions of imposed subalternity. In fact, by adopting and adapting the very means of oppression and (mis)representation employed by a given hegemony, the subalterns may try to cross the discursive barriers erected around them to grant their political, social and epistemological containment, and therefore undermine the hegemony's claim for absolute, undisputable superiority. Hybridity has effectively been embraced by both Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove precisely with the aim of overcoming the (mis)representational barriers set around their identities, communities and voices, as this dissertation is at pains to demonstrate.

This dissertation consists of four chapters. The first chapter revolves around the history of the interactions between the Native communities inhabiting the North American continent and the European colonizers, then US neo-colonizers, trying to despoil them of their rightfully-owned lands and resources. In order for this encroachment to be ideologically justified, a discourse was strategically formulated by (neo-)colonizers,

whereby Native people were declared ontologically inferior, and therefore deserving to be substituted by the representatives of European civilization, who came to be posited as if they were on a higher rank in the evolutionary ladder. In order for this claim to be further substantiated, a whole series of interrelated binaries was advanced, such as European-Native, superior-inferior, civilized-savage, Christian-pagan and so forth. These dualisms were not based on an accurate depiction of reality, yet they were believed to be objective representations. Indeed, what is actually needed by a given discourse in order to be powerful is inner coherence rather than accuracy.

As a matter of fact, not only did the colonial discourse obliterate pre-contact Native communities' successful management of their landscapes and societies, but it also attempted to erase any evidence of the mutual influencing occurring between European and Native societies. Indeed, not only were many Europeans attracted by the Native way of living, but Native communities proved admirably able to adapt to the new, extreme conditions imposed on them by the invaders. However, such potential for Native adaptation, evolution and consequent survival was expunged from the hegemonic discourses by equating Native people with the stereotypical status of "Vanishing Indians". This biased effigy aptly served the purposes of the European, then Euro-American societies, because it condemned Native communities to an inexorable, "natural" extinction, which could assuage any sense of guilt related to the attempted genocide of Native peoples carried out by both European and Euro-American encroachers.

Indeed, though the United States tried to pose as the anti-colonial nation par excellence, it actually perpetuated the previous colonial genocidal practices towards Natives, up until the latter were eventually secluded on reservations, that is to say, cramped portions of land whose constantly shrinking boundaries made it virtually impossible for indigenous people to preserve their traditional self-sufficiency. As a consequence, the biased concept of Native wardship was advanced, whereby the centuries-old misrepresentation of Native peoples as inferior and in need for European and/or Euro-American guidance was further corroborated. This misconception eventually led to the afore-mentioned assimilationist project, which included various strategies carried out on a federal level, such as the General Allotment Act of 1887 and the foundation of various boarding schools across the continent.

What is more, because of the multifarious threats Native peoples and cultures were subjected to while under the yoke of (neo-)colonialism, the myth of the "Vanishing Indian" gained renewed momentum. This led the US mainstream to regard Native people as innocuous enough to be a source of entertainment because of their perceived exoticism. This misperception was the result of centuries of accumulated colonial and neo-colonial discourses. These constitute the core of the second chapter of this dissertation, which is further divided into three different sections. The first section deals with the Euro-American insistence on the trope of alleged Native authenticity, mainly based on the often-debatable contributions offered by anthropologists. This trope has proven peculiarly harmful for Native communities, because it further contributed to relegating their existence into the past, thus denying the opportunity for Native people to actually survive with integrity into the present and future.

Fortunately, however, a number of Native authors and/or activists have refused to conform to these debasing expectations. Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove count among these fighters for Native survival. Their deeply subversive voices, however, were often stifled by their mainly Euro-American audiences, critics, and even collaborators. The misinterpretation and consequent misrepresentation of these two authors' contributions constitute the main topic of the second and third sections of the second chapter, which are devoted to Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove, respectively. Indeed, after an overview of her life, the second section tackles the issue of Zitkala-Ša's perceived exoticism. While Zitkala-Ša herself often tried to rely on this misperception in the attempt to garner her audiences' attention, this strategy may at times have been rather counterproductive, in that Zitkala-Ša risked being belittled as an exotic specimen who may be safely entertaining, but not as politically and culturally relevant as she wished to be.

Quite on the contrary, Mourning Dove, to whom the third section is devoted, repeatedly tried to avoid being perceived as an exotic, essentialized and allegedly authentic Native specimen. This, however, was precisely the role she held in the eyes of her collaborator, the Euro-American amateur anthropologist and activist for Native rights, Lucullus Virgil McWhorter. While his help proved pivotal to grant *Cogewea*'s actual publication, McWhorter's conception of the novel's ultimate purpose greatly differed from Mourning Dove's. Indeed, while hers is a call for Native survival into the future through an attempt at evolution based on strategic hybridization, McWhorter was instead convinced of

Natives' impending extinction, and therefore visualized *Cogewea* as the perfect occasion for an allegedly authentic Native past to be fixed and preserved. The two collaborators' divergent perspectives are also reflected in the two, seemingly irreconcilable genres they would have opted for, namely, Mourning Dove's intention of writing her own version of the popular Westerns of the era and McWhorter's predilection for ethnographic reports. This anthropological bias of his may be inferred from his direct interventions within Mourning Dove's own novel. And yet, it may be argued that, notwithstanding McWhorter's interference, Mourning Dove's own voice still manages to emerge within her own novel. This especially concerns *Cogewea*'s ending, which McWhorter would have preferred to be tragic, but instead offers a glint of hope for Natives' future which is typically Mourning Dove's. Her own perspective, rather than McWhorter's, therefore constitutes the novel's last message.

As a matter of fact, in an analogous fashion, the overall structure of this dissertation is meant to let Zitkala-Ša's and Mourning Dove's own literary accomplishments have the last word. Indeed, while initially I had planned to close this dissertation by addressing the topics now featured in the second and third sections of the second chapter, upon second thought I decided to deal with the reception and/or alteration of Zitkala-Ša's and Mourning Dove's contributions before actually starting the analysis of their literary works. This choice of mine was made in the attempt to avoid surrounding, as it were, Zitkala-Ša's and Mourning Dove's own literary achievements with those same (neo-)colonial discourses which have already been stifling and/or deforming Native voices for way too long. Hence, the two concluding chapters of this dissertation provide an analysis of, respectively, Zitkala-Ša's three semi-autobiographical essays "Impressions of an Indian Childhood", "The School Days of an Indian Girl" and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians" and Mourning Dove's novel *Cogewea*.

Both analyses have been conducted by trying to focus on the gradual discovery, on the part of the two young female protagonists, of the value and resourcefulness of their hybrid identities and cultural heritages. This discovery is indeed gradual, since it is depicted by both Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove as the result of a deeply-felt process of personal growth. Indeed, both protagonists, namely Zitkala-Ša's young semi-autobiographical self and Mourning Dove's mixed-blood heroine Cogewea, effectively have to undergo a quite similar inner evolution from a twofold alienation from both the Native and

Euro-American dimensions to an eventual acceptance and advantageous exploitation of their own hybrid identities and cultural heritages.

Young Zitkala-Ša's evolving attitude towards her own hybridity is the main focus of the third chapter. Brought up by her devoted mother on Yankton Reservation, young Zitkala-Ša is then lured into the assimilationist system represented by the three educational institutions in which she is to play the roles of student and then teacher and recruiter: White's, Earlham and Carlisle. Zitkala-Ša's separation from the Native dimension of her childhood is depicted through the adoption and adaptation of the Biblical trope of the fall from grace. Just like in the Bible, the original Eden cannot be regained, and Zitkala-Ša does effectively feel as if she were irremediably alienated from her own Native mother, community and natural landscape (especially the wind). And yet, the reader is to gradually discover that the Native Eden Zitkala-Ša feels barred from was already postlapsarian because of Euro-American intervention.

Hence, the Euro-American myth of alleged Native authenticity is subtly proven to be inaccurate and misleading by Zitkala-Ša's adoption and subsequent denial of this trope. An analogous strategy may be observed with respect to the reversal she operates of the typically (neo-)colonial binary opposing Euro-Americans-as-civilized to Natives-as-savages, a binary she cleverly manages to invert by contrasting the Native and Euro-American educational systems. Indeed, contrarily to what was usually claimed by the US hegemony, the Native educational system proves to be the most efficient at nurturing children's individuality and agency, whereas Euro-American assimilationist education is described as a dehumanizing process converting Native pupils into walking stereotypes. By vividly depicting the physical and mental abuses young Zitkala-Ša was to experience and/or witness while involved in the assimilationist system, the author may elicit her readers' empathy in front of the underserved suffering of a young girl whose thoughts, feelings and doubts have been highlighted throughout the narrative. Thanks to this empathy, Zitkala-Ša's readers may thus access an alternative perspective which may help them change their way of thinking, feeling and acting towards Native communities.

Young Zitkala-Ša is to experience a major change in perspective in her own turn. Indeed, in the midst of her existential crisis due to her twofold alienation, she discovers that her own mother, whom she had always considered the ultimate incarnation of Nativeness, is

actually resorting to strategic hybridity. This realization makes Zitkala-Ša finally become ready to turn her much suffered hybrid identity and cultural heritage into a resource to be cherished. Indeed, now that she has finally understood the value and potential of her own hybridity, Zitkala-Ša can claim both her identification as a Native person and her Euro-American education, in the awareness that it may help her advance the Native cause. And so, once her inner fire has been reignited, she can finally take a direct look at the world around her after having spent long years by constantly averting her eyes so as not to be noticed. Now, rather than hiding as she did during her childhood and adolescence, she is finally ready to make herself seen and heard. Just like the telegraph pole, a potent symbol in Zitkala-Ša's narrative, is reconceptualized as a powerful means of communication rather than a mere suffering entity, so does Zitkala-Ša's hybridity get converted from a perceived obstacle to a precious resource through which she might try to accomplish her life-long mission in favour of Native people and culture.

The fourth and last chapter of this dissertation, centered around Mourning Dove's *Cogewea*, describes an analogous evolution. Indeed, just like young Zitkala-Ša, Cogewea can benefit from a traditional Native education imparted by her Native grandmother, the Stemteemä, the ultimate spiritual and moral guide within the novel. While during her childhood Cogewea is depicted as free to test the limits of her identity and social standing, after her return from nine years of white schooling, she seems no longer so self-assured. Indeed, just like young Zitkala-Ša, Cogewea feels deeply alienated from both the Native and Euro-American dimensions because of her ambivalent biological and cultural heritage. Unlike Zitkala-Ša, however, Cogewea's inner conflict is reflected by her divided allegiance to two, very different suitors, namely the plotting Densmore, a Euro-American man who wants to deceive Cogewea so as to deprive her of her alleged wealth, and the worthy Jim, a mixed-blood man who sincerely loves her.

Initially, Cogewea is blinded by the hollow promises of Densmore and, by implication, of the Euro-American dimension she has been educated in. She thus tries to follow the path of total assimilation by deciding to begin a love affair with Densmore. This choice, however, is staunchly opposed by the Native component of her life, namely by the Stemteemä, the Native spiritual dimension and the natural realm. By disregarding all warnings issued by the Native world, Cogewea almost loses her life. This course of events therefore suggests that blind assimilation is not the right solution for Native survival.

Indeed, all manifestations of Native worldly wisdom prove capable of responding to the challenges of an increasingly Euro-American world. This also demonstrates that Native ways of thinking and acting have been adapting to the major impact exercised by (neo)colonialism. Hence, the stubborn preservation of a static, immutable, "authentic" Native past (the modus operandi advocated by McWhorter) is proven to be as unviable a path as that of blind assimilation.

Hence, after having suggested the impracticability of the two alternatives offered to Native people by the Euro-American hegemony, namely assimilation or soon-to-be-extinguished Native authenticity, Mourning Dove advances a third, much more hopeful solution for Native survival into the future: adaptation, which implies the acceptance and favourable exploitation of one's own hybridity. This path is chosen by Cogewea herself, who eventually marries Jim, a mixed-blood man who, just like her, lives in the Euro-American way, but has retained his Native cultural resources. Cogewea and Jim are therefore granted their happy ending by going beyond US hegemonic discourses. Some Euro-American characters within the novel actually manage to do the same by approaching people on the basis of their values and actions rather than ethnic background. Both Cogewea and Jim's acceptance of their hybridity and these Euro-American characters' open-mindedness and integrity may therefore act as a good example for Mourning Dove's readers to follow.

All in all, both Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove attempted to help their readers develop a new, more empathetic and informed understanding of Native history, stories, peoples, cultures and perspectives. In order for this precious bridge-work to be accomplished, both authors could resort to their own hybridity. Actually, this personal and cultural condition is also addressed and implicitly celebrated by their literary contributions. This is why this dissertation revolves around the pivotal role played by hybridity in Zitkala-Ša's and Mourning Dove's lives and writings.

Chapter I: The Historical Context

As aptly remarked by Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, "immigrant success narratives so dominate the mythology of the U.S. as a nation that those who were native-born to the territories the U.S. claimed […] were either to die off, become immigrants in their own land, or become a separate, colonized, cultural space within the 'American' national body" (2000b, p. 6). The colonial and neo-colonial (but, sadly, not yet de-colonial) conditions Native peoples have had to endure throughout the centuries have long been concealed under strategic misrepresentations of European, then Euro-American, colonizers and of colonized Natives themselves. Though no historiography, not even one trying to side with the subalterns, can be truly objective and totally adherent to actual history[1], an effort could and should nevertheless be made in order to draw attention to the multiple incongruences and silences which may be detected within the official, "sanitized" hegemonic archive. A revision of this kind might be worth attempting precisely because, as Gayatri Spivak has already tried to demonstrate, these very silences may prove very telling by themselves.

I.1: The Precolonial and Colonial Period

There is no clear consensus on the amount of Native people inhabiting the North American continent during the first decades of the 17th century, at the time of the first European settlements[2]. In fact, "[e]stimates for the population of North America at contact range from as low as 3,000,000 (Kroeber, 1939) to as high as 18,000,000 to 30,000,000 (Dobyns, 1983)" (Ames, 2004, p. 12). Whatever the actual numbers might have been, it is nevertheless undisputed that the area which would later become the United States of America was already inhabited before the first European colonizers started to cross the Atlantic Ocean, "driven by the hope for profit and the arrogance of conquest" (Hunn, 2004, p. 148). Hence, when considering that the North American continent was already inhabited by Native populations, it should become self-evident that "the European assertion of authority [over the American continent] [was] an extravagant pretence because settlers clearly understood that North America was inhabited by politically

[1] The irreconcilable difference between history and historiography was brilliantly pointed out by Hayden White in his masterpiece *Metahistory* (1973), as well as in other writings of his.
[2] The first permanent English settlement in North America, Jamestown, was founded in 1607.

autonomous groups of Indians who defended their territory and their governmental authority" (Konkle, 2000, p. 155).

This fact notwithstanding, European settlers insisted on "treating the landscape as if it were uninhabited by the living, the unborn, and the animate deceased" (Nixon, 2011, p. 17) of Native communities. Colonizers were thus claiming an "imaginary vacancy" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 6) of the land which would have granted them the right of "possession by exploration" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 90). And yet, Native people were indeed present and, "[w]ill it or not, [European settlers] could not develop the region's resources without directly confronting the original inhabitants of the land" (Nash, 1992, p. 52). How was it possible, then, for Europeans to proceed with their "acquisition of land in a way that may be construed as legitimate" (Konkle, 2000, p. 161), so as for their conquest not to be perceived as the unrighteous encroachment it actually was?

I.1.1: The Colonial Discourse

Europeans managed to strategically deny Natives' rights to their own land by "translating the fact of colonial oppression into a justifying theory" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 181) which came to be known as the colonial discourse. Generally speaking, the notion of discourse (as theorized by Michel Foucault during the 20th century) refers to "the system by which dominant groups in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledges, disciplines and values" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 37). In order to be influent, a discourse does not necessarily need to adhere to reality, but rather to advance an inherently coherent representational system meant to "concea[l] political motives in a narrative of legitimacy and fairness" (Konkle, 2000, p. 161). The colonial discourse applied in North America achieved its inner coherence by interrelating various binaries.

Indeed, "[c]olonialism could only exist at all by postulating that there existed a binary opposition into which the world was divided. The gradual establishment of an empire depended upon a stable hierarchical relationship in which the colonized existed as the other of the colonizing culture" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 32). Colonized Native peoples were therefore consistently posited as the negative, inferior and deviant counterpart of European colonizers, a counterpart to be eliminated. In order to "establis[h] th[is] binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asser[t] the naturalness and

primacy of the colonizing culture" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 155), "an ideological image of Indianness" (Krupat, 2000, p. 81) was to be advanced. By so doing, Europeans managed to conveniently "regard Indians as objects to be removed" (Nash, 1992, p. 78) rather than as the politically autonomous subjects they actually were. This "objectifying and homogenizing mode of representation" (Strong, 2004, p. 345) ultimately denied humanness and dignity to Native people, now dismissively deemed "members of a group who shar[ed] inborn characteristics that mark[ed] them as inferior to Europeans and deserving of subjection" (Konkle, 2000, p. 152). Hence, in this manner, the colonial discourse could justify the many crimes against humanity European colonizers, "intoxicated by the violence of dualities" (Moore, 2001, p. 56), were actually committing in the New World so as to appease their "[h]unger for Indian land and other resources" (Haas, 1957, p. 12).

Indeed, under the cloak of the colonial discourse, "'Virgin territories' (never virgin, but the inhabitants were considered to be uncivilized and thus having no legal rights of ownership) were opened up by exploration to trade and settlement, their original inhabitants killed, displaced or marginalized within European settler communities" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 90). As a matter of fact, from the very first decades of the 17th century, when the first permanent European settlements in North America were beginning to take place, "needy, but arrogant" (Nash, 1992, p. 76) colonizers had already begun to "raid Indian villages for provisions and slaughter native people of both sexes and all ages" (Nash, 1992, p. 56), thus "inspiring fear and submission rather than mutual respect and harmonious relations" (Nash, 1992, p. 77) between the two cultures. Such a "predatory approach" (Nash, 1992, p. 75) might have been so prevalent among European colonizers also because "ideas about Indians have always been a subset of the more general prevailing thought about the 'other'" (Castile, 2004, p. 268).

This previous, dualistic and strongly biased system of knowledge "had developed primarily in the opposition between Christendom and non-Christians – Jews and Muslims" (Castile, 2004, p. 268). Therefore, "early travellers' experience was [already] coloured by expectations formed over centuries of superstitious imagining" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 90). This previously developed discourse heavily relied on the strategic conception of Christianity as a marker of alleged superiority and a justification for the ill-treatment of non-Christians. European colonizers in North

America could thus rely on these preconceptions in order to "use Christianity to authorize the[ir] theft of land" (Konkle, 2000, p. 162). Their unrighteous encroachment of Native lands and resources was therefore justified by "claim[ing] the land they were invading by right of discovery" (Nash, 1992, p. 78), which was a "theory derived from the ancient claim that Christians were everywhere entitled to dispossess non-Christians of their land" (Nash, 1992, p. 78). Religion was thus used as a convenient ideological foundation for the colonial dualism set between Christians and so-called "Heathens".

Another pivotal binary the colonial discourse revolved around was based upon the notion of modernity, to be understood "as a discourse rather than an epoch" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 131). Through the "imposition of European models of historical change" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 131), an evolutionary paradigm was devised, whereby "[t]he English middle-class male was placed at the pinnacle of evolutionary hierarchy" (Lugones, 2016, p. 15), whereas colonized populations were posited as "pre-modern societies and cultures that were 'locked' in the past – primitive and uncivilized peoples whose subjugation and 'introduction' into modernity became the right and obligation of European powers" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 131). In this manner, Europeans came to conceive "other human inhabitants of the planet not as dominated through conquest, nor as inferior in terms of wealth or political power, but as an anterior stage in the history of the species" (Lugones, 2016, p. 4).

And so, "[i]n cases where the 'native' cultures […] did not share the signifiers of the European model of civilization such as writing, stone-buildings or industrial technology, the idea of the 'native' became part of a Darwinian characterization of the culture as 'primitive'" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 142). Once interpreted as such, "these societies were denied any internal dynamic or capacity for development" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 131), attributes which were set as European prerogatives. By depicting them as primitive, these societies were therefore relegated within the past only, so as to let the future become exclusively European. In this manner, European colonialism could be strategically portrayed as an unavoidable, even desirable process of evolution of the species. Europeans were therefore depicted as the glorious bearers of modernity.

Within the colonial discourse, "[m]odernity became synonymous with 'civilized' behaviour" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 132), strategically conceptualized as yet another European perquisite. Colonizers were therefore characterized as those who could set a prime example of civilization in the rest of the world, whereas Natives "quickly became associated with such pejorative concepts as savage, uncivilized or child-like" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 142). In fact, "[w]oodcuts, paintings, explorers' journals, and missionary accounts provid[ing] early images to Europeans" (Bataille, 2001, p. 4) already "depicted the Native American as a fierce, cannibalistic creature, […] less than human – naked, violent, warlike, and, frequently, more animalistic than human" (Bataille, 2001, p. 2). This consistently negative characterization proves that "Native Americans have always been viewed as wild animals, providing justification for their extinction" (Bataille, 2001, p. 5) in the eyes of Europeans.

In particular, the colonial notion of civilization soon came to be closely connected with the practice of agriculture, which was erroneously thought to be absent among Natives. Hence, "the notion that the Indians were hunters to the exclusion of all other occupations […] gave comfort to those settlers who regarded agriculture as a higher use of land and so justified themselves when they encroached upon Indian lands" (McNickle, 1957, p. 3). This further justification for the European theft of Native lands and resources could rely on a "European legal theory, called *vacuum domicilium*" (Nash, 1992, p. 78). This theory claimed that "land not 'occupied' or 'settled' went by forfeit to those who attached themselves to it in a 'civilized' manner" (Nash, 1992, pp. 78-79), thus substantiating "the assertion that because their way of life did not conform to European norms, the Indians had forfeited all the land which they 'roamed' rather than 'settled'" (Nash, 1992, p. 79).

As a matter of fact, all these interrelated excuses provided by the colonial discourse were meant to hide the fact that Native peoples' "home [was] usurped and colonized by strangers who, from the very beginning, laid claim not merely to the land and resources but to the very definition of the Natives" (Owens, 2001, p. 15). The colonial discourse truly has been an attempt to chase away "the ghost of the Indian as the object of genocidal violence" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 3). Overall, it might be argued that "the people indigenous to the Americas entered European consciousness only by means of a variety of complex acts of translation" (Krupat, 2000, p. 174). This should make clear how "the 'Indian' is a colonial invention, a hyperreal construction" (Owens, 2001, p. 15), whereby European

settlers tried to "produce knowledge about Indians' inherent difference and inferiority for the purpose of taking Indian land" (Konkle, 2000, p. 163).

As previously mentioned, alleged inferiority was imposed on Native peoples through the creation of a colonial discourse based on various, interrelated dualisms to be read in a hierarchical fashion. Indeed, European Christianity, modernity, civilization and anthropogenic treatment of the landscape were posed as hegemonic, whereas Native alleged heathenism, backwardness, savagery and inability to use the landscape for human profit as a subaltern counterpart to be eliminated. All these issues have been masterfully interwoven by George Pierre Castile (2004, pp. 268-269) in the following excerpt:

> The discourse of conquest, the justification of displacing the Indians, recognized that the Indian lands were occupied but asserted they were 'empty' in several senses – empty of Christians, empty of civilized states, and empty of productive users of the land […]. The filling of these voids was the basic justification of conquest, since […] heathens would become Christians, European states would incorporate and civilize the uncivilized, and the colonized wastelands would produce a bounty for all.

I.1.2: The Actual Pre-Colonial Native Conditions: A Successful Management of their Environment, Gender System and Politics

As stated above, in order to be powerful, a given discourse does not need to actually reflect reality. In point of fact, the very tenets of the European colonial discourse betrayed "either total lack of knowledge or erroneous understanding of Indian custom" (McNickle, 1957, p. 3); in other words, "[t]he inability to understand one another's language, much less one another's culture and religion" (Ruoff LaVonne Brown, 2001, p. 205). A case in point is the already mentioned European assumption that Native people led their lives by "passively collecting what bounty nature provided" (Ames, 2004, p. 16), without any effort to develop "environmental practices and concerns of their own" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). In time, this European false belief came to be known as the "Pristine Myth" (Ames, 2004, p. 14), since it was argued that "despite millennia of human occupation, North America was essentially a pristine wilderness" (Ames, 2004, p. 14). This was allegedly a consequence of how "Native Americans had little or no impact on the environment" (Ames, 2004, p. 14). However, the Pristine Myth was in reality a self-serving strategy devised by Europeans in order to portray the North American continent as wild and

untamed, and therefore a "challenging space of implicitly white achievement" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 9).

The colonial representation of Native lands as a pristine wilderness did not correspond to reality. Quite on the contrary, Native peoples actually "used the land in rational and systematic ways, thus directly challenging the random use of land supposed in the legal concept of *vacuum domicilium*" (Nash, 1992, p. 80). As a matter of fact, "most of the North American environment was anthropogenic" (Ames, 2004, p. 9) and Native Americans could boast "a successful management system [of their environment] developed through the experiential 'wisdom' of socially sanctioned traditional practice" (Hunn, 2004, p. 148). For example, Natives "skilfully employed fire as a tool of habitat management, primarily in order to facilitate the growth and harvest of key plant resources for food and technology" (Hunn, 2004, p. 146). Moreover, throughout the millennia, these allegedly "'illiterate primitives' routinely devised sophisticated analyses of their floral and faunal environments […] on a par with those of modern professional systematic biologists" (Hunn, 2004, p. 135). Indeed, as noted by Eugene S. Hunn (2004, p. 48):

> the fact that Native Americans have occupied every cranny of the continent for at least 10,000 years, and have maintained the rich diversity and high productivity of American landscapes throughout the millennia, must be understood as a consequence of the sophisticated systems of Traditional Environmental Knowledge developed and passed down the generations by all Native American tribes.

Unfortunately, though, "[o]ne of the great ironies of Indian ecological history is that their subsistence practices were central in creating the landscapes that attracted Euro-American settlement and colonization" (Ames, 2004, p. 20). What is worse, these very practices were not even acknowledged by European colonizers. They thus accused populations indigenous to North America to be uncivilized, because allegedly unable to manage the environment to their own advantage. Though European settlers might have wilfully ignored Native subsistence practices for their own benefit, it is also true that they might have had some actual difficulties in noticing them. This may have been the case because Natives and Europeans did make reference to two entirely different epistemological renderings of the relationship between human beings and their non-human surroundings.

On the one hand, "Europeans regarded the land as a resource to be exploited for man's gain […] a commodity to be privately held" (Nash, 1992, p. 26). Their epistemology thus

"assume[d] that the basis of human civilization consist[ed] in a progressive detachment from 'nature'" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 68). On the other hand, Natives' relationship with their environment was deeply influenced by "an understanding that the human is a part of a larger web of spiritual and kinship ties" (Frey, 2004, p. 165) also including non-human beings. This profound "understanding of a delicate kinship relation between animal, human, and spirit, and the essential reciprocal exchanges that must transpire if kinship is to continue" (Frey, 2004, p. 165) led to the development of a Native "environmental law" (Miller, 2004, p. 98) which prompted a respectful, harmonious, sustainable "engagement with the animated landscape" (Miller, 2004, p. 100).

Indeed, "Native American religious and subsistence practices […] were founded on very strong ethics about the use and conservation of resources" (Ames, 2004, p. 9). This constant search for balance has been accurately described by Gary B. Nash (1992, p. 26):

> if one offended the land by stripping it of its cover, the spiritual power in the land […] would strike back. If one overfished or destroyed game beyond one's needs, the spiritual power inherent in fish and animals would take revenge because humans had broken the mutual trust and reciprocity that governed relations between all beings – human and nonhuman. To exploit the land or to treat with disrespect any part of the natural world was to cut oneself off from the spiritual power dwelling in all things.

Therefore, balance was striven for between Native populations and their surrounding natural realm, since the latter's agency was duly taken into account. An analogous condition of harmony could also be observed in the "systematic and carefully constructed cultural balance between gender groups" (Knack, 2004, p. 62) typical of many Native communities. Indeed, though Europeans had been trying to posit their own "historically and philosophically contingent bases of the subjugation of women" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 68) as if they were a universal principle, this claim was unequivocally denied by the different kind of gender system Native communities had come up with before meeting European settlers.

In point of fact, "[t]he ways Indian peoples used femaleness and maleness within their cultures differed from the ways Europeans employed those same biological facts" (Knack, 2004, p. 51). Indeed, unlike European middle-class women, "native women had never been just wives and mothers" (Knack, 2004, p. 66). Quite on the contrary, in a vast majority of Native communities "the woman who birthed a child was rarely expected to

be the sole caretaker of it" (Knack, 2004, p. 52). As a result, these "social arrangements intervened between the universality of biological childbirth and the presumed consequence, that mothers, or even women collectively, were burdened by childcare and therefore could not take part in larger social life" (Knack, 2004, p. 52). The typically European seclusion of women within the sole domestic sphere was further prevented by the fact that in Native America "[t]he domestic family unit was not a social isolate, separate from the public, and was hence incapable of isolating women within itself" (Knack, 2004, p. 53). This therefore proved that "the hierarchical evaluation of the public over the domestic [was] a theoretical bias rooted in European political traditions" (Knack, 2004, p. 53) rather than an absolute dogma.

In such an egalitarian social context, Native women were "everywhere visible and culturally valued" (Knack, 2004, p. 65). They could indeed benefit from various social arrangements which were instead categorically precluded to contemporaneous white women, crushed by European patriarchy. Native social patterns related to gender were more equitable. Among other things, Native women could benefit from "[the] possibility for divorce and remarriage, […] [the] organization of labor teams and their leadership, [the] existence of a public value and market for their goods, and [the] ability to control the distribution of the products of their labor" (Knack, 2004, p. 64). What is more, Native "women were fully acknowledged by and did participate significantly in religious life" (Knack, 2004, p. 64) and descent tended to be traced matrilineally (Knack, 2004, p. 55).

The fact that "[t]hroughout Native North America women made necessary and valued contributions to the subsistence economy" (Knack, 2004, p. 58) was, to say the very least, disconcerting for colonizers used to European patriarchy. In fact, "[i]nitial European observers almost always commented on the [Native] division of labor, so dramatically different from their own" (Knack, 2004, p. 57). Even so, "many native cultures had a division of labor that involved far more overlap and many more tasks performed by cooperative family teams than [were] mentioned" (Knack, 2004, p. 58) by European witnesses. These were probably not disposed to accept that in Native communities "[p]roductive and social tasks [were] not strongly gendered" (Knack, 2004, p. 58). Even more puzzling for colonizers was the discovery that Native women could occupy leadership positions.

As a matter of fact, "[i]n all [Native] cultures there was […] a number of situation-specific leaders" (Knack, 2004, p. 61), among whom women could figure. Since "it was unthinkable [for European colonizers] to recognize female leaders among the peoples they colonized" (Lugones, 2016, p. 8), they decided to opt for historiographical silence. This is signalled by how "[h]istorical records most often mention 'headmen' and (presumably male) 'chiefs'" (Knack, 2004, p. 61) rather than also including female leaders. What is more, "even the role of women leading the activities of women is rarely noted" (Knack, 2004, p. 61). European colonizers were thus clearly not inclined to relinquish the patriarchal system of oppression they were used to. Hence, they tried instead to erase whatever phenomenon might have denied the alleged universality of their patriarchal social organization.

A similar kind of strategic erasure of an inconvenient historical fact also applied to Native political life in general. Indeed, it was not by chance that "[s]ystematic observations of functioning Native political systems were very rare, and historical records spotty" (Knack, 2004, p. 61) even though virtually all "native peoples of North America had political organizations that maintained order" (Fowler, 2004, p. 70). What European settlers were really trying to do by denying Natives' capacity for autonomous and satisfying self-government was to cast them as "ahistorical and depoliticized" (Konkle, 2000, p. 152) entities whose land and resources could thus be legitimately encroached by European settlers. This, then, was the strategy hidden behind "the absence, in the older anglophone repertoire, of models of representation that construct[ed] the Indian as being inside history" (Isernhagen, 2001, p. 170). As Maureen Konkle righteously argued: "[t]he most effective means of denying [Native] dangerous autonomy [was] the production of knowledge that reduce[d] resistant Indian political entities to an assemblage of inferior, soon-to-be-extinct individuals who, because of their inherent characteristics, [could not] claim to form real governments" (2000, p. 153). In other words, "[i]f Indians [were] uncivilized savages and ha[d] no real governments" (Konkle, 2000, p. 162), as claimed by the colonizers, then "their land may be taken justifiably" (Konkle, 2000, p. 162).

I.1.3: European Influence on Native Peoples

Not only did European settlers unfairly discredit Natives' political practices, but they also operated a "wilful destruction of Native political organization" (Konkle, 2000, p. 162). They managed to do so by forcefully "upset[ting] traditional lines of political authority

and customs for recruiting headmen" (Nash, 1992, p. 244) among Natives. Over time, "[t]his European attempt to intrude on the internal politics of Indian societies" (Nash, 1992, p. 244) really came to disrupt traditional leadership patterns. In particular, the colonial "practice of picking particular headmen with whom to negotiate conferred power on those who had not earned their authority in the traditional way, according to matrilineage and honor, but simply through the intervention of an external authority" (Nash, 1992, p. 244) whose ultimate objective was to take advantage of Native communities. This situation obviously fuelled tension within the tribes, which clearly worked in the colonizers' favour.

What is more, European settlers could draw advantage not only from this intratribal tension, but also from the intertribal conflicts they soon became adept at instigating. Indeed, "war among Indians was often artfully encouraged" (Nash, 1992, p. 301) by European colonizers. This strategy proved particularly successful because it "was not only the most effective deterrent to pan-Indian uprisings against the Europeans but also contributed to the general population decline of Indians" (Nash, 1992, p. 301). Armed conflicts among Native tribes had indeed become connected to an unprecedently high mortality rate. The number of deaths related to intertribal warfare had increased so significantly also because of "the effect of European weaponry, which Indians mastered quickly" (Nash, 1992, p. 242). This newly-introduced type and scale of warfare[3] was defined by Gary B. Nash as "the third killer" (1992, p. 301) of Native populations of the era, the other two leading causes of death being European diseases and traded alcohol.

In point of fact, the contact with European colonizers brought Native communities to "an actual demographic collapse" (Thornton, 2004, p. 25). This phenomenon was interpreted by European settlers as a sign of divine providence, as well as an auspicious "decrease in 'land-cluttering' Indians" (Nash, 1992, p. 298). The primary cause of such a precipitous population decline was to be found in the many European "introduced diseases such as smallpox, measles, chickenpox, malaria, and others" (Ames, 2004, p. 12). In a very short

[3] Traditional Native warfare was of a different nature and scope with respect to intertribal armed conflict during the colonial period. Pre-contact war practices were described by Gary B. Nash as follows: "[u]nlike the Europeans, Native Americans could not conceive of total war that was fought for months or even years, that did not spare non-combatants, and that involved the systematic destruction of towns and food supplies. Wars among Indians were conducted more in the manner of short forays, with small numbers of warriors engaging the enemy and one or the other side withdrawing after a few casualties had been inflicted. […] Warfare was a ritualistic encounter with the object not of shedding as much of the enemy's blood as possible or devastating his villages and crops but making a show of force that would convince him of one's strength" (1992, p. 242).

time, these diseases "culminated in epidemics and pandemics, devastating Native American populations" (Thornton, 2004, p. 26), since the latter had no adequate immunological defence for these new maladies. However, it should not be forgotten that "Native American population decline resulted not only from the introduction of […] diseases but also from the many other effects of colonialism" (Thornton, 2004, p. 28). As hinted above, "[s]till another cause of depopulation was alcohol, which, though it killed slowly in contrast to smallpox and other epidemic diseases, also counted many victims" (Nash, 1992, p. 300). Fully aware of its detrimental effects, European traders cynically "distributed alcohol among Indian tribes in order to create […] addiction" (Nash, 1992, p. 301) and thus further accelerate their decline. Alcohol truly became "a liquid form of control for white colonists" (Nash, 1992, p. 301), who were able to disguise it as just one among the many trade goods which soon came to be exchanged between European settlers and Native communities.

The two cultures meeting in North America had effectively become engaged in an increasingly intense commercial relationship. Unfortunately, in the long run, "the involvement of Indian societies in the European trade network brought many changes that were to the Native Americans' disadvantage" (Nash, 1992, p. 250), though Native people could not see this at first. As a result, Europeans ended up being "a trading partner who, through the side effects of the trade, became a trading master" (Nash, 1992, p. 250); whereas Native communities were reduced to the role of mere "clients of white society" (Nash, 1992, p. 247). This progressive alteration of the power balance between the two civilizations could happen especially because of a widespread commercial practice known as fur trade.

Increasingly tempted by European artifacts such as rifles, fishhooks and iron pots, Native people started to sell pelts to colonizers in order for them to be exchanged with the afore-mentioned artifacts. However advantageous it might have seemed at first, the fur trade ultimately rendered Native people "[u]nable to maintain their traditional ways of life after becoming dependent on the material items of European culture" (Nash, 1992, p. 246). This alteration was due to two fundamental reasons. Firstly, the "incorporation of [European] material objects robbed the Indians of their native skills" (Nash, 1992, p. 239). Secondly, and most importantly, the induced "change from a subsistence to a commercial

type of hunting" (McNickle, 1957, p. 3) severely disrupted the previous, precious balance between human beings and their natural surroundings as well as between genders.

Indeed, "[u]nlike production for subsistence […] which has an end when the needs of the household and kin are fulfilled, production for the market is unending. It could and did lead to native exploitation of their environment" (Knack, 2004, p. 60). In fact, once provided "with the greater killing power of the weapons they obtained from European traders" (McNickle, 1957, p. 3), Native people directly "threatened their own basis of livelihood" (McNickle, 1957, p. 3) by "declar[ing] all-out war on […] fur-bearing animals" (Nash, 1992, p. 241). This unprecedented and "tremendous destruction of animal life triggered by the advent of trade with Europeans altered the spiritual framework within which hunting had traditionally been carried out" (Nash, 1992, p. 241). Before the fur trade, the traditional Native acknowledgement of an inestimable "spiritual symbiosis between human and animal life imposed obligations on hunters [whereby they] knew that [they] must never take more animals than […] needed and must treat their bodies with respect" (Nash, 1992, p. 241). However, this sustainable pre-contact axiology was then dismissed in favour of an "externalizing, instrumental logic" (Nixon, 2011, p. 19) meant for short-term gain rather than a long-term preservation of environmental resources. As a consequence, by deciding to privilege the increasing demands of this newly-introduced bartering system, Native people truly opted for a "repudiation of man's traditional role within the cosmos" (Nash, 1992, p. 241).

Women also lost their traditional, socially valued role as a consequence of the fur trade. Indeed, "the fur trade often shifted the native division of labor between the genders and perhaps their interrelations as well" (Knack, 2004, p. 60). This happened because "the intensified hunting, trading, and warring" (Nash, 1992, p. 244) related to the fur trade "generally elevated the importance of male roles in Indian society" (Nash, 1992, p. 244), therefore "transforming Indian tribes from egalitarian and gynecratic to hierarchical and patriarchal" (Lugones, 2016, p. 10) social entities. What is more, because of the fur trade, "Indian males spent far more time away from the villages trapping and hunting" (Nash, 1992, p. 240). Native men effectively had to opt for a more nomadic lifestyle in order to broaden their hunting grounds. As a consequence, "the reorientation of tribal economies toward the fur trade dispersed villages and weakened the localized basis of clans and lineages" (Nash, 1992, p. 240). Ironically, by "[b]reaking up in order to be nearer to the

widely spread trapping grounds, Indian villagers moved closer to the nomadic woodland existence that Europeans had charged them with at the beginning of contact" (Nash, 1992, pp. 240-241) through the application of the legal notion of *vacuum domicilium*.

I.1.4: Native Influence on European Settlers

Clearly, "[w]herever Europeans settled in the Indian world changes occurred, in living habits, in the use of tools and weapons, and in some nonmaterial practices" (McNickle, 1957, p. 3). However, it should be noted that, during the colonial period, "the pathways of power did not strictly dictate the history of cultural interchange – a point that is obscured if we mistakenly assume that under conditions of oppression and exploitation acculturation occurs in only one direction" (Nash, 1992, p. 304). Even though "Imperial binarisms always assume a movement in one direction – […] from the colonizer to the colonized" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 21), as a matter of fact, "the dynamic of change is not all in one direction; it is in fact transcultural, with a significant circulation of effects back and forth" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 21) between the involved cultures. This was precisely the case in colonial North America.

However, the various "interactive and dialectical effects of the colonial encounter" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 21) in the North American continent were strategically denied by the colonial discourse, which was based on "a desire to maintain the separation between civilized and savage" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 127) as clear and undisputed as possible. This separation actually had a twofold purpose. First of all, it was meant to justify the crimes against humanity committed by Europeans in the New World. Secondly, it could serve an admonitory function by setting "the Indian as a figure who 'became important for the [colonial] mind, not for what he was in and of himself, but for what he showed civilized men they were not and must not be'" (quoted in Strong, 2004, p. 342). As a result, "[t]he self-identity of the colonizing subject, indeed the identity of imperial culture, [became] inextricable from the alterity of colonized others" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 10). The strategic misrepresentation of colonized others as invariably subaltern was therefore necessary for Europeans to shape their own sense of identity, precisely by making reference to their alleged superiority as colonizers.

Such a neat dyad, however, was peculiarly difficult for Europeans to preserve, especially when actually interacting with Natives. This was because "for several hundred years Anglo-Americans confronted Indians as formidable adversaries" (Nash, 1992, p. 298) or "half-trusted allies" (Nash, 1992, p. 298), that is, as social entities whom had to be dealt with on practically equal terms. Indeed, throughout the colonial period, "[t]he Indian maintained the freedom to come and go, to attack and kill, to give and withhold support, and to retain political sovereignty. Though he was hated for many of these things, they earned him a grudging respect" (Nash, 1992, p. 298). And so "the Indian, though hated, was respected for his fighting ability, his dignity, and even his oratorical skill" (Nash, 1992, p. 299). Moreover, "European observers stood in admiration of the Indian traits of morality, generosity, bravery, and the spirit of mutual caring" (Nash, 1992, p. 303).

These last qualities in particular made Europeans perceive "the American native as a 'noble savage,' the archetype of natural beauty and virtue, uncorrupted by materialistic Western civilization" (Nash, 1992, p. 299). In other words, in the European mind "the Indian" became the veritable incarnation of "some of the virtues around which Europeans had hoped to reorganize their cultural system, but could not" (Nash, 1992, p. 303). Indeed, as brilliantly pointed out by Gary B. Nash (1992, p. 302):

> Indian societies treasured many of the values that English settlers and other Europeans had braved the Atlantic to re-establish in the New World. Idealistic Europeans saw the 'wilderness' of North America as a place where tired, corrupt, materialistic, self-seeking Europeans might begin a new life centered around the frayed but vital values of reciprocity, spirituality, and community. […] Yet as time passed and Europeans became more numerous, it became evident that the people in North America who best upheld these values were the people who were being driven from the land. Even hard-bitten, unsentimental colonists often recognized that Indian society […] put white society to shame.

This unsettling awareness does transpire, for instance, from these lines written by a colonizer of English descent in 1708: "They [the Natives] are really better to us […] than we are to them […]. We look upon them with Scorn and Disdain, and think them little better than Beasts in Human Shape, though if well examined, we shall find that, for all our Religion and Education, we possess more Moral Deformities, and Evils than these Savages do" (quoted in Nash, 1992, p. 249). Hence, Native Americans became "the repository – and thus uneasy reminder – of those repressed alternatives" (Kaplan, 1993,

p. 4) European colonizers would have wished to realize in the New World, but did not. Indeed, what their colonization had actually brought as a result in North America was an "on-going destruction of plants, animals and other subject peoples in the name of capitalist 'progress'" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 68). Europeans had thus ended up replicating the very social dynamics they had tried to leave behind them. Ideally, they would have preferred to give rise to a different kind of society, which would have actually been more in line with Native rather than European ontology, but they ultimately did not. Hence, European colonizers had "chosen productivity and acquisitiveness, but these had been pursued at the cost of principles earlier regarded as central to the colonizers' dreams for life in the New World" (Nash, 1992, p. 303); principles which were actually upheld by Native communities instead.

In order for their original dreams to be realized, a number of European settlers therefore decided to go live among the Native tribes. Their decision made one of the worst colonial fears, that of "going Native", come true. It has indeed been reported that "[t]hroughout the colonial period, much to the horror of the leaders of white society, small numbers of colonists ran away to Indian settlements, or, when they were captured in war and had lived with a tribe for a few years, often refused to return to white society" (Nash, 1992, p. 285). These events seriously undermined the European claim for superiority, and thus constituted a major epistemological threat. Because of these escapes into the Native world, "colonizers were obliged to live with the notion that some of their own kind found life in Indian communities preferable to life in Anglo-American culture. To make matters worse, virtually no Indians took the reverse route, choosing to remain in white society after exposure to it" (Nash, 1992, p. 285).

Indeed, "Native Americans carefully observed European customs but saw little[4] that they regarded as worthy of emulation" (Nash, 1992, p. 247). In a similar fashion, "the real cause of infrequent sexual contact with Indian women [by Europeans] is to be found in Indian rather than European desires" (Nash, 1992, p. 281). As a matter of fact, Native women probably "had little reason to admire white men […] who launched attacks on

[4] As previously mentioned, a major exception to this tendency was represented by the adoption of traded European tools. In any case, the "lack of cultural borrowing outside the realm of material objects" (Nash, 1992, p. 249) by Natives is nevertheless remarkable.

Indian villages" (Nash, 1992, p. 281). Quite on the contrary, "womanless [European] men were not reluctant to avail themselves of Indian women" (Nash, 1992, p. 283). This tendency is hinted at by the extent to which the colonial discourse was "pervaded by images of transgressive sexuality, of an obsession with the idea of the hybrid and miscegenated, and with persistent fantasies of inter-racial sex" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 36). These sexual fantasies were occasionally realized, and could lead to the birth of a category of miscegenated people who came to be known as "half-bloods". These individuals, "whom white colonists recognized only as Indians, were the most alienated of all people from white society" (Nash, 1992, p. 283); arguably because their very existence was an unsettling reminder of "the simultaneous lure and threat of the other" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 36). In any case, all Native people usually were not granted admission within white society. Gary B. Nash (1992, p. 283) commented on this lack of opportunities for contact as follows:

> The amalgamation of Indians and whites never proceeded very far in eighteenth-century North America because Indians were seldom eager to trade their culture for one which they found inferior and because the colonists found the Indians useful only as trappers of furs, consumers of European trade goods, and military allies. All these functions were best performed outside the white communities.

Significantly, it could be argued that this European "inability to develop the mentality or social mechanisms for incorporating Indians into their midst betrayed a certain insecurity among a people who proclaimed the superiority of their way of life" (Nash, 1992, pp. 285-286). In fact, during the colonial period, European settlers and Native people were still "involved in a set of power relationships in which each side, with something to offer the other, maneuvered for the superior position" (Nash, 1992, p. 298). This implied that colonizers still could not claim absolute predominance in North America, because they still had to negotiate their presence and claims with Natives.

Consequently, "stereotypical images of the Other were needed" (Purdy, 2001, p. 106) more than ever "to provide comfort in a time of potential chaos, for they provided simple binary structures and a sanitized social validation" (Purdy, 2001, p. 106). This is indeed the ultimate function of the various interrelated binaries constituting the colonial discourse: that of suppressing all "ambiguous or interstitial spaces between the opposed categories, so that any overlapping region that may appear […] becomes impossible according to binary logic, and a region of taboo in social experience" (Ashcroft, Griffiths

and Tiffin, 2007, p. 18). In order for these colonial dualisms to be actually kept, a vast majority[5] of European settlers deemed it preferable to "follow a nonassimilationist policy" (Nash, 1992, p. 297) with respect to Native people. Their objective was to "deny alikeness and to oppose any measures that would increase the similarity of peoples in colonial society" (Nash, 1992, p. 298), since a similarity of this sort would have been counterproductive at the time. Indeed, "when […] 'rational European' and 'unreasoning savage' were admitted to be alike, either in outward manners or inner capacity, then the entire rationale of domination and exploitation would crumble" (Nash, 1992, p. 298). Assimilation was thus largely avoided throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. However, this policy was to change significantly once the newly-founded United States of America became powerful enough as a world power to try to integrate Native peoples within their midst through attempted assimilation.

I.2: The Federal Period

The progressive consolidation of the United States as a unified nation and credible international power went hand in hand with an attempted annihilation of the political autonomy and sociocultural practices of Native peoples, better defined as "those on whom America descended, making them wanderers in their own homeland" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000b, p. 7). Indeed, the situation for Natives rapidly worsened after the United States gained its independence towards the end of the 18th century. Beforehand, during the colonial period, both "European and Indian retained a considerable degree of autonomy"[6] (Nash, 1992, p. 297). This surely did not imply that Native life had not already been affected by European colonialism, but "so long as the European population was small, so long as it was divided among Spanish, French, and English contenders for continental supremacy, and so long as the fur and skin trade was a major factor in the colonial economy, Indians had been indispensable to the colonizers" (Nash, 1992, p. 302).

To the Natives' misfortune, however, "[a]s the colonial period closed, the mood changed" (McNickle, 1957, p. 8). This was because colonizers of English descent had finally managed to impose their supremacy through the foundation of the United States. In fact,

[5] Though "[a] handful of reformers and churchmen" (Nash, 1992, p. 297) attempted to Christianise, and thus assimilate, Native people, "most colonists regarded […] cultural minorities in their midst as unassimilable" (Nash, 1992, p. 297).
[6] Natives' autonomy was also legally recognized in King George III's *Royal Proclamation* of 1763, which "designated the territory beyond the eastern mountains to be off limits to the King's English subjects and reserved to the tribes" (Nesper, 2004, p. 305), thus "recognizing aboriginal title" (Nesper, 2004, p. 305).

behind its idealization, the American Revolution was in reality a sort of "family squabble among the colonizers to determine who would be in charge of the colonization of North America, who would control the land and the lives of the indigenous inhabitants" (Owens, 2001, p. 14). Indeed, "[w]hile the U.S. defined itself as the world's first […] anti-colonial nation-state, it simultaneously incorporated many of the defining features of European colonial networks" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000b, p. 5), especially as far as the treatment of the original inhabitants of North America was concerned. As a matter of fact, the "unlicensed violence and outright genocide, as well as the destruction of […] traditional patterns of subsistence" (Thornton, 2004, p. 28) Native peoples had to undergo because of the US government and population should make us consider the United States "the world's first postcolonial and neocolonial country" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000b, p. 5). This sadly means that "there is not yet a 'post-' to the colonial status of Native Americans" (Krupat, 2000, p. 73), not even nowadays.

I.2.1: Justifications for the United States' Mistreatment of Native Peoples: The Vanishing Savage and the Myth of the Frontier

Indeed, once defined as an independent nation, the United States of America did not lose the colonial habit of "covet[ing] Indian land but not land with Indians on it" (Nash, 1992, p. 297). Initially, however, this newly-formed, still precarious nation could not manage to completely deny Native autonomy, and so had to deal with tribal entities "in the same culturally syncretistic manner characteristic of all international interactions" (Nesper, 2004, p. 306). This compromising policy was thus "a political necessity for the United States both by virtue of its precarious international standing at the time as well as the economic and military viability of the tribes on their own account" (Nesper, 2004, pp. 305-306). The power balance between the United States and Native peoples, however, was soon to change and turn to the United States' advantage. As a consequence, the federal government felt increasingly legitimized to dismiss its own previous policy with respect to Native peoples, just as if the latter's political autonomy had never actually existed and been recognized by the United States itself.

Still, a documentary trace was left of the United States' previous acknowledgement of Native peoples' political autonomy and entitlement to land. This trace consisted in the

many[7] treaties the newly-independent nation had been stipulating with various Native communities. Indeed, for some time "[a]fter the Revolutionary War, the United States maintained the British policy of treaty-making with the Native American tribes. In general, the treaties were to define the boundaries of Native American lands and to compensate for the taking of lands" (National Geographic, 2022). Crucially, "the very fact of negotiating a treaty with a native polity [was] an indication that the United States recognized the polity as a nation" (Biolsi, 2004, p, 231); that is to say, as an autonomous organization of individuals whose rights should have been granted. For the United States, treaties therefore constituted a written proof of "the deep ambivalence of a nation founded on the conceptual assertion of natural right and the actual denial of Indians' natural rights" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 14). A justification was therefore to be found as quickly as possible "for the fact that the nation was built on the graves of Indians" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 5). This justification, in particular, needed to "displace the fact that the Indian treaty […] concede[d] the political autonomy of Indians" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000a, p. xiv).

The perfect absolution for the United States' hypocrisy with respect to Natives was found in the misrepresentation of the latter through the trope of the "Vanishing Indian". In this manner, "[t]he treaty's legal significance [could] disappear along with the vanishing savage" (Konkle, 2000, p. 156). As a matter of fact, "[t]he problem of Indians' conceded autonomy could only be resolved by their disappearance, which was effected in the production of knowledge about their inferiority and imminent extinction" (Konkle, 2000, p. 154). This biased misrepresentation of Native communities as a sort of relic of the past closely resembled the dichotomy, already advanced during the colonial period, between European modernity and alleged Native primitiveness. Once again, then, the unwarranted encroachment of Native lands and resources by invaders of European descent, now US citizens, was conveniently justified by relegating Native people to the past only, so that "their demands, once defined as part of the past, would appear only as a spectral presence" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 33) rather than as the political revendications they actually were. In other words, the act of "[d]escribing the dispossession of Indians in terms of generational change eliminated both violence and responsibility from the process. According to this model, removal became something 'natural' and inevitable; the Americans who inherited

[7] It has been estimated that "at least 367" (Biolsi, 2004, p. 232) treaties were officially ratified by the US Senate.

the Indians' land need not resist but only mourn the passing of the generation whose 'extinction' made room for their expansion" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 33).

However, "[m]uch as Americans might couch their accounts of Indian extinction in reassuring metaphors of natural processes, there was no denying that the 'wave' that drove Indians from their lands was one of Euro-American westward expansion" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 5). Though the US government and population tried to advance their own justifications, these could not completely hide the fact that "Native American societies were removed and relocated, warred upon and massacred, and undermined ecologically and economically" (Thornton, 2004, p. 28) by the newly-formed nation. What was even more compromising was the fact that this genocide was a total negation of the "unalienable rights" featured in the very first page of the *United States Declaration of Independence*, namely "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness". As the Native civilization was progressively undermined so as to let the United States increase its land-base and power, "so the nature of the threat [Native people] posed to the United States changed from a military to a moral one" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 5). In order for this moral burden to be efficiently discharged, the "impending Indian extinction" (Konkle, 2000, p. 157) paradigm mentioned above was strategically coupled with another, widespread and long-lasting trope: that of the frontier "imagined as a place where [white] men (the pronoun is deliberate) [could] test themselves" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 100) in what came to be known as the Old Wild[8] West.

Indeed, as time passed, the disputed border between the two main civilizations struggling for predominance in North America came to be depicted as the perfect location for US, white and male "progress, growth, greatness" (McNickle, 1957, p. 8) rather than as the "bloody battlefield of conflict and conquest" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 16) it actually was. And so, the main "narrative of nation-building downplayed the violence of the frontier in favor of defining it as a space of freedom" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000b, p. 12), and especially as the ideal site for "the rejuvenation of the lone white male in the wilderness" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 9). By so doing, "[n]ationhood and manhood [were] intimately related […]

[8] The two adjectives related to the Western boundary of the United States, "Old" and "Wild", may be read as yet another reformulation of the colonial dualism opposing European progress and alleged Native backwardness. This preservation of a typically colonial vocabulary implicitly proves how, though "the U.S. […] sought to contrast its destiny with that of other colonial empires" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000b, p. 5), it actually went on using the very epistemological premises characterizing European colonialism as well.

through the dynamic of territorial expansion" (Kaplan, 2000, p. 222). Ultimately, "[t]he frontier […] became […] the site of conflict with Native Americans which forged the ideology of white masculinity" (Kaplan, 2000, p. 222) in the United States. This strategic conceptualization of the frontier as an opportunity for white, male freedom and progress was yet another reformulation of the "neat dyad of the errand into the wilderness" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 7) already advanced during the colonial period. This time, however, this notion was to be applied to the increasing "waves of population that rolled westward after independence had been won" (McNickle, 1957, p. 8).

I.2.2: The United States' Encroachment of Native Lands and the Reservation System

While this rapid westward expansion was paraded as an unprecedented opportunity for profit as far as the US citizens and government were concerned, it was on the contrary an utter disgrace for all the Native populations who were obliged to leave the lands they had been traditionally inhabiting. Not only was this loss of land and resources disastrous for Natives' material survival, but it also had a major impact on their precious cultural roots. This was because Native "cultural identity [was] sustained by the territorial features of the homeplace" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 288). Indeed, Native populations had been developing an extremely close relationship with their specific natural surroundings. Jana Sequoya Magdaleno (2000, pp. 287-288) has described this strong bond as follows:

> an Indian cultural identity is centered in the interdependent system of relationships between the sacred beings manifest in the surroundings, including the elements and the other life forms of the region. Rather than defining culture against the nonhuman realm as do Judeo-Christian and secular-humanist traditions, those raised in (or more influenced by) American Indian traditions are thus more likely to point to familiar geographical features – the hill or river, for instance, and say, 'That is our culture.'

What is more, Native religions "sanctif[ied] geographical places such as burial sites, sites of sacred encounters, locations of origin, mountains, forests, and sites of historic triumph and tragedy" (Bucko, 2004, p. 186). Over time, all these locations had thus been turned into precious "geographical embodiments of culture" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 288). This is why these specific geographical features, each endowed with high cultural and emotional value, would have been greatly needed for Native peoples to preserve their own "geocentric sense of identity" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 288), time and adversities notwithstanding. In other words, "[i]f the Indians were to maintain their

cultural integrity, […] it was essential that a boundary line be maintained" (McNickle, 1957, p. 7) between them and the United States. This was not the case, and as a consequence, "Native Americans [were] deprived of land and of the dignity that derives from the profound and enduring relationship with homeland" (Owens, 2001, p. 18).

This rampant theft of Native lands perpetrated by the United States "was made sweeping and complete in the Indian Removal Act of 1830" (Castile, 2004, p. 269), signed by US president Andrew Jackson[9]. This legislation "placed in the hands of the [US] President authority to remove all Indians west of the Mississippi River" (McNickle, 1957, p. 6) from their own land-base, which had already been greatly altered throughout the colonial period and the first years of US independence. Though this "removal and resettlement was supposed to be voluntary" (National Geographic, 2022a), when some Native tribes actually "attempted to exercise the choice of remaining, they were answered with the United States Army" (McNickle, 1957, p. 10) and therefore forcibly removed. For a long time after 1830, "Indian tribes continued to be moved, some of them three or four times, like inanimate pieces on the checkerboard of the nation's destiny" (McNickle, 1957, p. 10), just as if they were no longer human beings whose rights should have been respected. Native Americans thus truly became "those about whom America had 'reservations' regarding whether they could be or should be American – or even human" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000b, p. 7).

In the previous quotation, Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt's choice to put the term *reservations* between inverted commas may not have been made by chance. As a matter of fact, it might recall the reservation system which came to be established in the United States so as to facilitate Natives' forcible removal and resettlement. At first, "the federal policy had been to remove tribal communities to completely different lands to the west, such as Indian Territory, which eventually became part of the state of Oklahoma" (Pickering, 2004, 113). This initial "removal policy was justified on the grounds that segregation would end the conflict between the races and that land would be provided for white settlement in the East. In exchange the Indians would be provided with land in the western territory where they would not be disturbed" (Haas, 1957, p. 12).

[9] Andrew Jackson was a "former Army office[r] [who] used [his] experienc[e] as Indian fighte[r] to gain political popularity and get elected to office" (National Geographic, 2022b).

This promise, however, did not last for long. In fact, the US population and government's "land hunger [had been] appeased but not satiated" (Haas, 1957, p. 12) by this original deal. Consequently, "as the westward movement of the population proceeded, the demand for the Indians' land increased" (Haas, 1957, p. 12). US citizens and government effectively became more and more interested in the lands of that Indian Territory Native peoples had already been secluded into. As a result, "the federal government implemented a new policy of 'reserving' lands within aboriginal territory" (Pickering, 2004, p. 113). In this manner, Native communities could be deprived of yet another portion of their constantly shrinking land-base. This time, too, "[m]ilitary actions were important in enforcing land cessions and restricting Indian groups to their new reservations" (Pickering, 2004, p. 113). Native communities thereby ended up "surrounded on reservations with nowhere to remove them further" (Castile, 2004, p. 269).

I.2.3: The Exploitation of the Notion of Native Wardship

And so began one of the (many) darkest chapters of US history, the one related to "the social ills created by the reservation system" (Bucko, 2004, p. 186). Indeed, through the implementation of this federal policy, Native communities ended up stranded in restricted areas completely alien to them. Consequently, they had major problems in adjusting to this new, imposed existence. As described by Kathleen Pickering (2004, pp. 113-114):

> most tribes experienced difficult economic circumstances in making the transition from independent status to reservation status. Whether through land-base reduction or relocation, the horticultural base was decimated, wild and domestic animal resources were reduced or destroyed, traditional trade links were severed, raiding was no longer viable, and the use of former lands was severely restricted or prohibited.

Suffering from this utter "deprivation of the means to livelihood" (Isernhagen, 2001, p. 177), Native communities no longer had any opportunity for autonomous survival. As a result, "government-issued rations became the source of subsistence" (Thornton, 2004, p. 28) for the majority of them. This induced dependence on federal aid rendered Native peoples more vulnerable than ever. Crucially, it also enabled the US government to adopt a paternalistic attitude towards reservation communities. Indeed, the US federal apparatus even began to portray itself as if it were Native people's saviour, despite having been one of the actual reasons why Native people were reduced to such poor conditions in the very first place. The sheer hypocrisy of this situation was conveniently disguised under the

biased notion of "wardship", whereby Native communities living on reservations and relying on federal rations were depicted as mere "wards of the state" incapable of taking proper care of themselves. These conditions of "politically sustained subalternity" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000a, p. xii) were thus instrumental in denying Natives' previous autonomy as political entities and self-serving communities. As a consequence, "[t]he term 'nation' disappeared from discourse in Indian affairs" (Biolsi, 2004, p. 235) and was instead replaced by "the inherently contradictory idea of 'domestic dependent sovereignty'" (Biolsi, 2004, p. 234).

A corollary of the wardship ideology was the interruption of treaty-making, as well as the retraction of previously ratified treaties. Hence, not only did "[t]reaty-making as a whole en[d] in 1871" (National Geographic, 2022a), but "Congress would [also] interpret its trust responsibility to the tribal 'domestic dependent nations' as the right to repeatedly abrogate [previous] treaty stipulations" (Nesper, 2004, p. 310). This unilateral annihilation of legally set conditions was a clear proof of how Native "rights as tribes (and as individual Indian wards) were completely dependent upon the whims of Congress" (Biolsi, 2004, 235). This meant that Native people could no longer maintain control over their own, precarious existence.

This was also because Native communities could not even profit from the very few resources they had been left with while living on reservations, because of "the ever-present hand of the federal government seeking out reservation resources for […] non-Indian interests" (Pickering, 2004, p. 117). In fact, various "profitable non-Indian enterprises generated their capital in part from the natural resources extracted from Indian lands" (Pickering, 2004, p. 125). Additionally, Native communities "often found land and resources diverted to the pursuit of commodity agriculture, further increasing their poverty and need for supplementation through rations and other government transfer programs" (Pickering, 2004, p. 119). Native communities were therefore actively prevented by the US government from developing their own self-sufficient economies while confined on reservations. In this manner, Native tribes could better be kept dependent on federal rations, and therefore in a necessary condition of submission rather than explicit opposition. Native communities were thus strategically impoverished so as for them to be better "manageable by the federal government and the economic interests it represented" (Pickering, 2004, p. 120).

In order for this condition of Native subservience and US paternalism to be further entrenched, however, it was not sufficient for the US federal government to erode Native economies; instead, their whole traditional politics and cultures were to be similarly subverted. This may explain "the federal government's efforts to undermine native institutions" (Fowler, 2004, p. 72) by means of a further exploitation of the subaltern conditions Native peoples had been reduced to. In fact, Natives' induced dependence on federal rations made it possible for "the authority of federal administrators over Indians [to be] greatly expanded" (Haas, 1957, p. 16). As a consequence, previous Native leadership patterns and social administration practices were seriously disrupted. This federal attempt to "remove indigenous people's authority over their own systems of justice and legal regulation" (Miller, 2004, p. 95) reached its apex when "[i]n 1886 the Supreme Court announced […] that Congress had the authority unilaterally to intervene in what had previously been the internal affairs of Indian tribes because it was the guardian of Indian tribes" (Biolsi, 2004, p. 235). This decision was a major signal of how, "[b]ecause of the paternalistic United States position, native communities were not integrated into the national society but, rather, their polities were disrupted and their communities destabilized" (Fowler, 2004, p. 73).

I.2.4: Acculturation and the General Allotment Act

While facing US federal "forces that disproportionately jeopardize[d] the[ir] livelihoods, prospects, and memory banks" (Nixon, 2011, p. 5), Native communities eventually "lost their land, their autonomy, and their confidence in their traditional belief system" (Nash, 1992, p. 247). The compounding effects of "alienation of tribal control over justice, the domination which is characteristic of colonialism, and the poverty experienced in many communities […] made many tribal members cynical about the application of political power, even by their own members" (Miller, 2004, p. 106). Life on the reservation thus seemed to preclude any hope for a brighter, more prosperous and autonomous future, as well as for a return to untouched Native traditions. Deprived of any previous point of reference, Natives were thus led to feel "a socially produced emotional state, the *feeling* of *being* a problem" (Mostern, 2000, p. 261).

Hence, the US federal government truly managed to "seve[r] webs of accumulated cultural meaning" (Nixon, 2011, p. 17) within Native communities. This paved the way for a new federal policy: acculturation. As previously mentioned, during the colonial

period and the first years of the United States' newly-acquired independence, Native peoples had been declared too inherently different to be assimilated. However, once reservation communities had become vulnerable enough from a political, economic, cultural and psychological perspective, Natives "were now discovered to be capable of civilization after all" (Castile, 2004, p. 269). As a consequence, "the inflexible habit of expecting Indians to act like Europeans" (McNickle, 1957, p. 6) was implemented. As a consequence, Native peoples were now supposed to become "civilized, Christian, and agricultural as promised in the original discourse of conquest" (Castile, 2004, p. 269). Just like during colonial times, then, the notion of civilization was equated "with property and technology against 'the wilderness'" (Moore, 2001, p. 56). This further implied that an "industrial capitalist work ethic, a sedentary agricultural lifestyle on dispersed family farms, and individualized wealth were among the messages" (Pickering, 2004, p. 114) the US federal government was trying to convey by turning reservations into "assimilation centres" (Pickering, 2004, p. 114).

Agriculture practiced on individually-held portions of land became the main tenet of this newly-implemented acculturation process. However, such an imposition was highly problematic because of (at least) three main reasons. The first one was connected to the very practice of agriculture, which could not possibly enable Native people to go beyond the lower strata of US general society. Indeed, "[r]ather than helping tribal communities to modify their aboriginal modes of subsistence to meet potentially lucrative markets in the national economy, the federal government uniformly promoted a complete transformation to Euro-American agricultural production" (Pickering, 2004, p. 114), therefore undercutting from the start any opportunity for reservation economies to develop in a harmonious and self-sufficient manner.

The second reason why this federal imposition was potentially ruinous for Native communities was related to a further disruption of their traditionally balanced gender system. In fact, since the US federal government intentionally "channelled tools and agricultural education at men" (Knack, 2004, p. 65) only, women soon lost one of their main traditional occupations. Furthermore, "[g]overnment policies pushed for nuclear families with male household heads, reproducing the European cultural mode" (Knack, 2004, p. 65) and therefore causing women to become "dependent on individual husbands" (Knack, 2004, p. 65). This condition of female subalternity did not exist among traditional

Native societies, but was ultimately introduced through the imposition of European patriarchy, a sociocultural pattern included within the general acculturation process.

Finally, the third main reason why this federal assimilation policy negatively impacted its targeted Native communities had to do with the very conceptualization of land as a private property. Traditionally, "[i]n the Indian world this view of land as a privately held asset was incomprehensible. Tribes recognized territorial boundaries, but within these limits the land was held in common" (Nash, 1992, p. 26). This communal administration of land and resources, however, was rendered no longer viable upon the intervention of the federal government, and this further detached Native peoples from their previous lifestyles and belief systems.

While formulating these federal policies for the assimilation of Natives, "it would not have occurred to any of the [US governmental] debaters to inquire of the Indians what ideas they had of home, of family, and of property. It would have been assumed, in any case, that the ideas, whatever they were, were without merit since they were Indian" (McNickle, 1957, p. 11). And so, instead of letting Native people venture into the US general society endowed with their own, eventually adapted cultural resources and traditional practices, "'Americanized' Indians would be transformed from hunters and fishermen to farmers and cattlemen" (Haas, 1957, p. 12), just as "communal ownership would yield to individual ownership" (Haas, 1957, p. 12). As noted by Haas, "[t]he culmination of this policy was the General Allotment Act of 1887" (1957, p. 12). This law, "also known as the Dawes Act, was used to break down communalism and provide each individual Indian household with ownership of a specific number[10] of acres upon which it could engage in agricultural pursuits" (Pickering, 2004, p. 115).

Though the Dawes Act was paraded as a perfect occasion for Natives' assimilation, the true reason why this law was so eagerly implemented was much more related to US rather than Native needs, as proven by how it "was passed over the strenuous objections of most Indians" (Haas, 1957, p. 15). Indeed, what truly mattered to the United States was that the Dawes Act "opened reservation lands for white settlement, since any lands remaining after individual Indian allotments were made were declared 'surplus,' unnecessary for the

[10] According to the General Allotment Act, "[t]he head of a [Native] family was to be allotted 80 acres of agricultural land or 160 acres of grazing land; and a single person over eighteen or an orphan child under eighteen, one half of this amount" (Haas, 1957, p. 13).

tribe" (Pickering, 2004, p. 115). And so, these allegedly "surplus" Native lands were conveniently "opened for homesteading and paid for at $2.50 per acre" (McNickle, 1957, p. 10), a trifling sum which could easily provide "white ranchers and businessmen with new resources" (Pickering, 2004, p. 115) at the expense of Natives.

The latter's land-base had already been drastically reduced the very moment the Dawes act was implemented, but what was even worse was that "[m]ore than half of the 40 million acres originally allotted to individual Indians was lost to non-Indian owners through fraud, poverty, and manipulation" (Pickering, 2004, p. 116). Through the compounding effects of the General Allotment Act and the further exploitation of the desperate conditions Natives had been reduced to, "[b]y 1933, 91,000,000 acres or two-thirds of the Indian land base of 1887, and generally the most productive, was lost and some 90,000 Indians were landless" (Haas, 1957, p. 15). These staggering figures emphasize how disastrous the impact of the Dawes Act has been on Native peoples.

I.2.5: Federal Education

Another major means of oppression of Native communities was federal education. This, too, was paraded as part of the general assimilation project the Dawes Act was also meant to favour. Once assimilation was set as a goal, "it became a question of how soon, and by what devices, the extinguishment of the Indian past would be effected" (McNickle, 1957, p. 9). Before European colonialism and US neo-colonialism came to subvert the Native world, "there [had been] 500 different Indian languages in North America and more than that number of tribes, each with its own particular culture which it taught to its children" (Havighurst, 1957, p. 106). The US government came to realize that in order for Native people to cease the transmission of these traditional epistemologies and axiologies across the generations, "a rival or a replacement for the tribal education" (Havighurst, 1957, p. 107) had to be found. The aim of the federal government therefore became "an intense indoctrination into non-Indian culture" (Pickering, 2004, p. 114) which could be attained through the implementation of the so-called boarding schools.

These institutions were considered "key in the cultural and social war against tribalism" (Pickering, 2004, p. 114), because they were meant to severely "disrupt the transmission of language and life-ways from Indian parents to their children, thereby more easily instilling the ways of the dominant society" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 327). This educational

system began “with the founding of the Carlisle Indian School in 1879, and eventually expand[ed] to include dozens of other off-reservation schools” (Littlefield, 2004, p. 326). Their main characteristic was the removal of Native children from their own communities and families. This practice was meant for young Natives to live immerged in “the regimentation and confinement of boarding school life” (Littlefield, 2004, p. 330), away from any potential Native influence. In order for a sufficient number of Native students to be actually enrolled, “soldiers were sometimes sent out to round up Indian children and bring them into boarding schools” (Havighurst, 1957, p. 106). However, “in many cases Indian families had encouraged their children to attend boarding schools. Some did so because of severe poverty or the death of a parent; other families hoped their children would learn skills useful in the white-dominated economy” (Littlefield, 2004, p. 328).

Whatever the reasons why Native children might have ended up in these institutions, the educational patterns they were to be subjected to greatly differed from those they would have experienced while living within their own tribal communities. As far as traditional Native education was concerned, a number of widespread stereotypes claimed that indigenous tribes had no specific educational system, but rather let young Natives learn through spontaneous observation only. In reality, “American Indian children learned not by freely imitating what they wished, but through highly structured systems of encouragement, reward, and ridicule designed to socialize them successfully into adult roles” (Littlefield, 2004, p. 322). Indeed, though the US government would have refused to recognize it, “[a]s long as they preserved their cultures, the Indian tribes educated their children successfully” (Havighurst, 1957, p. 105) thanks to their traditional systems. What is more, their educational patterns also featured a clear distinction between roles meant to provide the aforementioned encouragement and reward and roles which were instead responsible for the administration of ridicule and other eventual forms of punishment. As detailed out by Alice Littlefield (2004, p. 322):

> education in North America was a community project in which a variety of relatives and elders participated. Parental indulgence had the effect of creating strong bonds of affection and solidarity between parents and children, while punishment was often referred to other authorities, real or imaginary. […] Child frighteners, endurance tests, and other such customs had the effect of impressing the desired lessons on young minds, while allowing parents to maintain an encouraging and supportive role.

No such support was to be received by Native children and/or youngsters once enrolled in federal boarding schools. This was because "Carlisle, the flagship school in the system, was located on the premises of a former military base. Schooling there, and subsequently at all the other residential schools in the federal system, was modelled to some degree on military life, with uniforms, marching, regimentation, and rigid discipline" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 327). Carlisle was indeed a point of reference for all other boarding schools in the United States, and this also applied to "the approach to vocational instruction pioneered by Col. Pratt at Carlisle, with students […] spending half their time in academic instruction, and the other half in work activities designed to teach skills to be used in adult life" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 331).

It has to be noted that the selected work activities Native students had to master varied greatly on the basis of gender. This division was not featured in a vast majority of Native educational systems, whereby "gender task-learning was […] more flexible" (Knack, 2004, p. 58). On the contrary, within boarding schools a clear-cut distinction was made between "instruction in domestic skills for girls (cooking, cleaning, sewing, laundering), and in agricultural or industrial trades for boys. These work activities were intended to prepare students for adult roles as breadwinners (male) and housekeepers (female)" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 331). This choice clearly abided by the imposition of patriarchy the federal government was trying to carry out as one of the main objectives of the assimilationist project. As far as Native girls in particular were concerned, they were meant to demonstrate "conformity to Victorian ideals of womanhood" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 332) by going "beyond simple mastery of particular skills to include such details as the posture to be assumed when sewing" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 332). Such exacting precision proved that "policy-makers saw educating girls as equal in importance to educating boys, for it was girls who, as mothers, would domesticate and civilize the next generation" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 332). This was the main reason why "girls were more restricted and more closely monitored than boys, with less freedom of movement and stricter codes of dress and deportment" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 330).

Anyway, along with this "gendered shaping of young minds and bodies" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 331), all students were meant to acquire "the generalized habits and dispositions expected of workers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: punctuality, obedience, and ability to perform routinized tasks" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 331). The very concept of routine

was definitely brought to the extreme in these institutions, to the point that "[o]ften the work assigned [to Native students] was simple drudgery, pursued far beyond the point of mastery adequate for the job market of the day" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 331). As a result, in the vast majority of cases, the vocational training provided by boarding schools proved "obsolete and irrelevant" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 331). Ultimately, "[m]any, perhaps the majority of, boarding school graduates later worked in fields other than those in which they had been trained" (Littlefield, 2004, p, 331).

While this educational system proved essentially useless for Native students, the boarding schools, on the other hand, could actually benefit from it, because "student labor contributed significantly to the support and maintenance of the schools" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 331) themselves. This need for unpaid labor performed by their own students betrayed the very precarious conditions of boarding schools. Indeed, governmental funds for these institutions "were never enough, and they were always too late" (Thompson, 1957, p. 98). As a consequence, "[m]edical care and nutrition were often deficient, with high rates of disease and mortality among the students" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 327). Life was harsh, even brutal, for young Natives leaving their homes to be sent to these federal schools. These students had to suffer greatly, especially because of the "cultural discontinuities in child-rearing between home and school" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 325) they were confronted with. It should come as no surprise, then, that "running away was a frequent response" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 327) among Native children and youngsters, especially while still relatively new to this kind of scholastic environment.

However, despite and/or through the suffering endured by these Native young people in the federal scholastic system, "the seeds of future [Native] mobilization" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 329) against their neo-colonial oppressors were inadvertently sowed. Indeed, the boarding school system actually had various unintended consequences which eventually benefitted the Native population. First of all, these students had the "chance to be in an all-Indian environment" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 328) made up of an unprecedentedly high number of different tribal affiliations. Therefore, "[t]he boarding school provided a setting for the development of camaraderie across tribal boundaries, promoting pan-Indian sentiment" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 328). This would eventually prove pivotal when fighting against the common enemy: the unfair US policies targeting Native peoples of all tribes.

Secondly, and even more importantly, by "growing up to be people of two cultures" (Havighurst, 1957, p. 108), Native students had to "make their own combination or synthesis of the two cultures and the two kinds of education" (Havighurst, 1957, p. 108) they were brought up into. However hurtful this divided self might have felt at times, in the long term, this condition of hybridity proved immensely fruitful and precious, even strategic; because it enabled young Native peoples to find a new, efficient manner to cope with the US dominant society through their "reconfigured Indian identities" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 329). These hybridized selves could not be easily reduced to the hegemonic stereotypes relegating their essentialized notion of "Indianness" within the safe zone of a long distant past. Indeed, this "out of sight out of mind" (Nixon, 2011, p. 20) dimension could no longer imprison all those Native people who had been endowed with the means for visibility and audibility the hegemony had been trying to use against them. As a matter of fact, these very means were inadvertently passed down to those people who should have been kept subaltern, so that they could manage to step outside of their imposed subalternity by turning their oppressive education into an unexpected resource. Federal education therefore enabled many Native people to share the traditional indigenous heritage boarding schools would have been meant to crash down once and for all. This ability to subvert the power imbalance between the United States and Native communities through means of a winning combination of their respective cultural resources will also be observed, in the course of the following chapters, with reference to the Native authors Zitkala-Ša, or Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, and Mourning Dove, or Christine Quintasket.

Chapter II: The (Mis)Interpretations of Zitkala-Ša's and Mourning Dove's Identities and Literary Contributions

II.1: (Mis)Representations of Native History and Identity

The preceding chapter closed with an optimistic hint of hope related to the use of strategic hybridity by such Native writers as Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove. This, however, should not downplay the major negative impact that the "hegemonic forces of misrepresentation" (Shanley, 2001, p. 33) circulating in the United States (and beyond) have had on Native peoples' lives, cultural production and political revendications throughout the centuries. Indeed, the strategic, systematic "inscription of inherent Indian difference" (Konkle, 2000, p. 156) with respect to any individual of Native descent, regardless of their own unique identities, has played a pivotal role in "intensifying the distancing mechanisms" (Nixon, 2011, p. 41) whereby innumerable people could be reduced to their ethnic affiliation only.

This strategy proved especially useful at the turn of the 20th century to provide the United States with a self-serving set of discourses about its own origins and subsequent development. These discourses were meant to erase from the general conscience the awareness of the many crimes against humanity undergone by Native populations at the hands of the US government. A narrative of this kind could only be elaborated through many, unrelenting "attempts to define 'Indianness'" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000a, p. xvi) in an essentialized and therefore reductive manner. This strategy was primarily meant to obliterate Native people's individual and potentially powerful voices in favour of a conveniently one-dimensional, dehistoricized and depoliticized (hence innocuous) "Indian" stereotype. Importantly, such a deliberate "denial of Native political, historical, and material existence" (Konkle, 2000, p. 166) seems to "conceal a […] profound and unsettling intimacy" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 5) with what Native people actually have had to undergo since and because of the birth of the United States as a nation. Given the considerable effort which has been exerted in order to either rewrite or utterly silence virtually all portions of US history related to Native peoples, it could therefore be argued that "[i]n imagining the Indian, America imagines itself" (Owens, 2001, p. 15).

II.1.1: Imagining the United States as a Nation and Native People as an Exotic, Safely Distant Spectacle

But what could the United States wish to imagine about itself and its own history? US dominant discourses fostered an "expropriative Indian essentialism" (Murray, 2001, p. 91) so as for the troubling Native presence and sufferance in US history to be thoroughly expunged and substituted by a limited and limiting notion of "Indianness". The stereotypical figure of "the Indian" thus came to constitute "an autonomous level of hyper-reality that supersede[d] the merely existent" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 282), so as for the latter to become conveniently invisible and inaudible. What needed to be erased through the construction of such stereotypes was "the American nightmare rather than the American dream" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000b, p. 8) Native peoples had to endure because of European colonialism and US neo-colonialism. It is worth mentioning that this need to impose invisibility on real-life Natives actually living in the United States seems to betray that "for many people who [were] not themselves Native American, the stereotypes and misrepresentation [of Natives] remain[ed] safer than reality" (Bataille, 2001, p. 7).

As a matter of fact, in order to actually exist, the United States had performed "a stunningly deadly, self-determinedly innocent waltz across the bodies and cultures of Native inhabitants" (Owens, 2001, p. 16). The genocide and ethnocide committed by the Euro-American hegemony in order to take possession of what was to become the United States were quite obviously "in contradiction to American claims of democracy based on inalienable rights" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000b, p. 13) for everyone, which were paraded as the very raison d'être of the American revolution. As a consequence, a significant gap emerged between the guiding principles the United States claimed to uphold and its actual, ruthless policies with respect to Native peoples. As aptly remarked by Susan Scheckel, this very "gap […] became the imaginative space in which the nation emerged, not as a coherent idea or a realist narrative but as an ongoing performance" (1998, p. 14) aimed at crafting a national narrative US citizens could feel proud of, notwithstanding the actual hypocrisy of their own acting throughout the centuries.

The United States, however, is not the only nation which has felt the need to develop a justifying and ennobling historiography about itself. Quite on the contrary, since "nations are not 'natural' entities" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 135), as they tend to be

posited, but rather a relatively recent[11] social arrangement, they all need a tailored historical discourse meant for the past to be "reimagined as 'family' history – the history of the nation" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 3), though it actually was not. The very fact that it is possible for nations to craft their own past to their advantage is a clear sign that, generally speaking, "[h]istorical discourse does not follow reality, it only signifies it" (Oboe, 1994, p. 12) in favour of a specific political stance. In fact, actual past events can be continuously reshaped in order to accommodate current, biased representational needs, and yet be posited as if they were "innate and transhistorical" (Oboe, 1994, p. 18). In other words, the historiographical discourse a given nation may resort to is meant to "constitut[e] out of what was something new that never was yet now assuredly is, in the imaginary of the present, and in the memory of the future" (Flores, 2000, p. 338).

In the specific case of the United States, the past "that never was" but needed to be strategically crafted took the form of a national historiography purged of any overt reference to the imperial practices actually performed by the United States both beyond and within its geographical boundaries. This hegemonic historiography has arguably managed to produce the desired effect, since even nowadays, the general tendency is "to omit discussions of the United States as an imperial power" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 17). This general disavowal of the exquisitely imperial practices the United States has been resorting to for centuries is based on "an enduring assumption that the American struggle for independence from British colonialism makes US culture inherently anti-imperialist" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 12).

This claim, however, is seriously challenged by the perpetuation (if not even worsening) by the US federal government and population of the essentially colonial practices Native peoples had been the victim of starting from the first European settlements in the "New World". Indeed, the paradoxical exclusion of Native people from those natural rights the newly-formed nation had been using as a pretext for its own revolution clearly called into question "the extent to which nineteenth-century Americans were upholding the ideals that had justified the revolutionary break from England" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 17). In such

[11] As noted by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, "[t]he idea of the nation is now so firmly fixed in the general imagination, and the form of state it signifies so widely accepted, that it is hard to realize how recent its invention has been" (2007, p. 134). Indeed, the concept of nation people tend to be familiar with nowadays started to be embraced towards the end of the 18th century and possibly knew its heyday during the 19th century, also thanks to the concomitant cultural impetus provided by Romanticism.

a turbulent and highly controversial situation, US "[l]egitimacy depended upon the kind of story one told about the past" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 17). This is why "the new nation became self-consciously concerned with constructing an idea of 'America' that could reach beyond the founding act of revolution to offer post-Revolutionary generations a source of national identity and legitimacy" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 7).

One of the main strategies adopted in the course of this huge "apologetic enterprise" (Isernhagen, 2001, p. 169) was that of "invent[ing] an ethnic identity around the Indian presence in [US] history" (Shanley, 2001, p. 40). This was achieved especially by resorting to the long-established[12] trope of the Native as a vanishing "noble savage". This portrayal seemed to represent in a favourable, romanticizing light those very people the US government and hegemonic portion of the population were actually trying to get rid of. While at first glance this representational strategy might thus seem disadvantageous to the United States itself, the final result has instead been that of legitimating both the United States' revolution against British colonialism and its own, still colonial practices. This ambivalent standing was conveniently masked by a notion of "Indianness" which was just as ambivalent. Indeed, by insisting on the trope of the "noble savage", Native peoples ended up being "both a symbol of America, representing the original and natural, as opposed to Europe, and, under America's manifest destiny, a symbol of what had to be effaced and removed in order for America to exist as a historical, modern nation" (Murray, 2001, pp. 86-87).

As far as the notion of the Indian as "a symbol of America" is concerned, Susan Scheckel has brilliantly pointed out that, at the dawn of the United States, Native people were elected as the perfect subject matter for an eminently US culture which could foster the emancipation of this newly-formed nation from British rule and cultural influence (1998, p. 8). This choice was made because, on the one hand, Natives had nothing to do with those European origins US citizens of Anglo descent now had to dismiss and, on the other hand, because, once relegated to a mythical, long distant past, Natives could be showcased as a romantic, fascinating, exotic Other to be admired from a safe distance; nothing more

[12] This conceptualization of Native peoples as the living incarnation of such ideals as "natural innocence, freedom and equality" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 192) had already been widespread throughout the colonial period. This proves that "certain representations of American Indians dating to the earliest colonial encounters have been remarkably persistent" (Strong, 2004, p. 341) in the neo-colonial policies carried out by the self-declaredly anticolonial, and therefore highly hypocritical, United States.

and nothing other than a mere object of entertainment for the mainstream. In other words, Native people became "distant and exotic enough to be romanticized" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 45). As aptly remarked by Jana Sequoya Magdaleno, once American independence was gained and the need for uniquely US cultural signifiers consequently emerged, the "tribal remnants of westward expansion were befeathered, furred, and frozen in attitudes of sorrowful nobility" (2000, p. 285). Unfortunately, this national symbol of the "Vanishing Indian" ended up hiding real-life Natives behind a fixed and inaccurate effigy.

Native peoples thus came to be perceived as "exotic primitives" (Murray, 2001, p. 86) whose very difference from the hegemonic portion of the US population turned them into "something with which the [hegemonic] could be (safely) spiced" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 87) and entertained. This is proven, for instance, by the quite numerous sightseers and tourists (Pickering, 2004, p. 127) choosing Native reservations as points of interest, as well as by the diffused "historical tendency for Europeans and non-Indian Americans to 'play Indian' and to appropriate native identity and cultural knowledge for their own use" (Bucko, 2004, pp. 186-187). In fact, a mostly superficial fascination did spark for all alleged manifestations of "authentic Indianness" that US citizens managed (or thought they managed) to catch a glimpse of.

And so, throughout US history, a certain number of people from all walks of life has actually tried to appropriate, either for sincere interest or mere fun, what they believed to be "authentic" Native cultural practices and perspectives, therefore trying to "take on the spirit of the 'vanishing American'" (Murray, 2001, p. 87) through "illegitimate appropriation amounting to expropriation" (Murray, 2001, p. 94). Even nowadays, "pretending to be Indian or believing that it is possible to 'know' what it means to be 'Indian' is something Americans believe to be within their purview" (Shanley, 2001, p. 41). As a result of these long-lasting practices of exoticization and cultural appropriation, Native people were entrapped "in a system of […] commodification over which they had little control" (Peterson, 2000, p. 178). This system effectively came to distort in the hegemonic eyes and minds Native epistemologies and axiologies in favour of the inaccurate effigy crafted for them (Pickering, 2004, p. 127) under the false pretence of "authenticity". This is one of the main reasons why "[s]ome would even say that it would [have been] better for native knowledge to have been forgotten than to be preserved, and thus controlled, by outsiders" (Bucko, 2004, p. 172).

Unfortunately, anthropologists also figured among these non-Native outsiders trying to establish the tenets of "Indian authenticity" through their own, essentially colonial bias. With respect to this tendency, Rodney Frey has cleverly defined anthropologists as "those made powerful by colonial history […] presuming to speak for those marginalized by colonial history" (2004, p. 173). Natives' own voices were therefore once again silenced, as Gayatri Spivak would argue, by the anthropologic enterprise. Indeed, however well-intentioned they might have been, what anthropologists were actually and unfortunately spreading was yet another "misrepresentation, commodification, and distortion of indigenous identities" (Bataille, 2001, p. 1) betraying what anthropologists expected Native peoples to be like rather than representing their own beliefs and ways of living (Bataille, 2001, p. 4).

Sadly, anthropologists' "quest for authenticity" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 291) has further fixed Native peoples as exotic, irreducibly different entities (Castile, 2004, p. 279) confined within "the discipline's litany of Indian exotica and assorted trivia" (Strong, 2004, p. 344). Such a focus on Native peoples' alleged exotic authenticity truly has been damaging for indigenous communities. This could not but result in "strained relationships between the representer [anthropologists] and the represented [Natives] rather than any real communication" (Bataille, 2001, p. 4) between the two. This might be one of the reasons why, even nowadays, many Natives prefer not to provide non-Native scholars with information about their own traditions (Bucko, 2004, p. 175), lest their epistemology be "recirculated and denatured within white forms and systems" (Krupat, 2001, p. 84) of (mis)representation, including the scholarly domain.

What is more, the validity of some of the search results provided by anthropologists (Bucko, 2004, p. 173) might be thrown into question by the fact that "some information provided by native 'informants' was simply fabricated in order to please or deceive outside researchers" (Bucko, 2004, p. 173). In any case, even by setting aside this reliability issue, the results of anthropological enquiry often tend to be limited to "a sort of suggestive pastiche, not necessarily specific to place or time" (Miller, 2004, p. 97). This implies that a truly authentic Native past has nowadays become virtually irretrievable as well as irreproducible, also because since "many of the present-day elders have themselves read the available ethnographic materials about their own relatives, ancestors, and communities, there is a curious reverberation between oral and

ethnographic materials" (Miller, 2004, p. 97). Native peoples have thus been deprived of their own past by multifarious and interconnected acts of genocide, cultural assimilation and cultural appropriation and expropriation.

II.1.2: The Negation and Reappropriation of Native People's Present and Future

What is worse, not only were Native peoples deprived of their past ways of living and knowledge systems, but the US hegemony also tried to deny their existence in the present and future through a carefully constructed set of discourses based on the dogma "if Indian, then not contemporary; hence, if contemporary, then not Indian" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 284). As a matter of fact, the stereotypical Indian was to be read as "an icon of the past" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 283) whose very "aesthetic aura [was] produced by the idea of […] transience" (Murray, 2001, p. 87). This characterization has been precluding to Natives "the conditions of modern identity-formation" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 282), a process they would need to undertake if they are to survive and eventually prosper in the contemporary, white-governed United States. Modern identity-formation would imply "the possibility of creating and cultivating hybrid or syncretic […] identities" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000a, p. xvi), that is to say, new and unique Native identities drawing on both indigenous and hegemonic cultural resources (Singh and Schmidt, 2000b, p. 13), so as not to conform to the biased effigy of "the Vanishing American, a savage/noble, mystical, pitiable, romantic fabrication of the Euro-American psyche" (Owens, 2001, pp. 17-18).

Native peoples were relegated to the past by US hegemonic discourses because the acknowledgement that "native communities continue to endure into the present" (Bucko, 2004, p. 175) would not have been advantageous for the US federal government and dominant population. This is why Native cultures were strategically portrayed as "basically static" (Isernhagen, 2001, p. 171), and therefore unable to evolve and adapt. However, since "the only way for tradition to sustain itself is for it constantly to change" (Krupat, 2000, p. 81), this claim for Native immobility cannot possibly hold in real life. In point of fact, Native peoples all across the United States have actually been trying to come up with their own, fruitful integration of Native and hegemonic cultural resources. Indeed, as a result of all the "contacts, encounters, and collisions" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 16) between Euro-Americans and Native peoples throughout the centuries, nowadays, "the influences of global capitalism and its institutional expressions pervade most tribal

communities as fully as they do non-Indian social formations" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 289).

However, the existence of such a "modern and mixed nature of Indian identity" (Murray, 2001, p. 92) has long been obscured by "the overshadowing power of the figure of the authentic Indian" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 281). This effigy was strategically formulated in order to devalue all Native attempts to create a new, hybridized present and future for themselves and their communities. The hegemonic claim for Native authenticity was indeed based on "a privileging of what was being destroyed rather than the valuing of the new forms and adaptations being created within the changing societies" (Murray, 2001, p. 90) of Natives. In fact, the stereotype of "the imaginary authentic Indian" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 281) has been efficiently acting as "a static death mask […] to which the living person is expected to conform" (Owens, 2001, p. 17), just as if Natives could not possibly manage to live beyond the limits of this biased misrepresentation. This may be the reason why, even nowadays, Native individuals tend to come to mind to a vast majority of the US population as "beaded and buckskinned braves and squaws, fierce warriors, and […] practitioners of lost mysticism" (Purdy, 2001, p. 100), rather than as the "complex human beings negotiating their lives" (Purdy, 2001, p. 100) they actually have become. In other words, "the material conditions of being Indian have changed over time, while the images of Indianness have not" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 282).

Unfortunately, though the effigy of the authentic Indian is "a figment of the popular imagination, it nevertheless has real consequences for contemporary American Indian peoples" whose "lived histories are construed as invalid" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 284). Indeed, "America's regulative discourse of the 'vanishing Indian' offers no idiom for either the suffering or the survival of Indian communities and identities" (Moore, 2001, p. 61), therefore cutting them off from their own lived experience in the present and future. The main problem seems to reside in the fact that "Indians are […] always available to be judged in relation to the critics' imagined better Indian, a more complete Indian than the particular Indian at hand" (Konkle, 2000, 164). This unfair comparison between real-life Natives and their biased, allegedly authentic effigy has even led "many non-Indian scholars […] to 'expose' so-called invented Indians – none other than Indian leaders and activists – who do not conform to their ideals of Indianness" (Shanley, 2001,

p. 39), thus proving how inaccurate this authenticity discourse may be. The very inaccuracy of this discourse, however, has proven extremely convenient whenever Native political pressures were to be dismissed by the ruling classes. In fact, the "authentic Indian" trope truly has the power of ensuring that Natives be "discounted as political agents" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2) and thus silenced whenever they show signs of resistance.

And yet, notwithstanding the power of these hegemonic discourses, Native Americans have been adamantly "refusing to see their long-term livelihoods abstracted into oblivion" (Nixon, 2011, p. 41). This is why many of them have been valiantly fighting to call attention to the dignity they have been denied by their systematic misrepresentations (Shanley, 2001, p. 226). This Native fight for the revendication of their own self-representation is not "reducible to armed struggle but ha[s] a profound symbolic and narrative component as well" (Nixon, 2011, p. 7). As such, it has effectively been joined by multiple Native writers, including Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove, who have been trying to make their own contribution "through testimonial protest, rhetorical inventiveness, and counter histories" (Nixon, 2011, p. 6). In fact, since these writers "could not recognize themselves in the mirror image of the authentic Indian" (Sequoya Magdaleno, 2000, p. 290), they have subverted this very stereotype by trying to "[c]hang[e] the hearts and minds of readers habituated to see 'Indians' as exotic Others" (Shanley, 2001, p. 225). Such a challenge could only be met through "the development of strategic rhetorical common ground" (Nixon, 2011, p. 37) by means of a practice, that of writing, originally provided to Native peoples precisely by the hegemonic powers they have been responding to.

Unfortunately, however honourable these attempts might have been, the question remains open as to whether such Native "bridge-work" (Nixon, 2011, p. 26) truly has managed to convey the messages its authors had in mind. Indeed, Native literary contributions often have been (more or less consciously) misinterpreted and misrepresented as just fascinatingly exotic, as in the case of Zitkala-Ša's work, or even directly and greatly altered by "the heavy editorial hand of anthropologists" (Strong, 2004, p. 345) such as Lucullus Virgil McWhorter, who effected major changes to Morning Dove's novel *Cogewea*, often without her consent. These issues will be explored in the following pages.

II.2: Zitkala-Ša: A Powerful Political Message Going Well Beyond Her Perceived Exoticism

Zitkala-Ša (the adopted name of Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) was "a witness, survivor, and trenchant chronicler of major events in white-Indian relations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xi). As such, she belongs to the afore-mentioned category of Native writers (and activists) trying to operate a "reversal of the American narrative" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 162) by means of "their imaginative agility and worldly ardor" (Nixon, 2011, p. 5). Indeed, throughout her "dedicated and multifaceted life" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxix), Zitkala-Ša relentlessly tried to engage her oratorical[13] and writing skills so as to make US dominant society aware of "the humanity and value" (Susag, 1993b, p. iv) of Native people. Hers was an arduous challenge, and as such it required that Zitkala-Ša devote all her resources in favour of the Native cause, as she effectively did.

In fact, Zitkala-Ša had much energy to pit against US hypocrisy. In the 1916 edition of the *American Indian Magazine*, she was described as: "a fountain of energy […] She lives for one great deal, the complete liberty of her race and for this end she devotes every minute of her life" (quoted in Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxvi). Throughout her adulthood, Zitkala-Ša effectively "remained true to her strongest beliefs" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 52), notwithstanding the "numerous discouragements" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 154) she had to face "[a]s an indigenous woman in early twentieth-century America […] bound by political, racial, gender, ideological, and discursive restrictions" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 14) she largely managed to overcome.

II.2.1: Life Before her Renaming as Zitkala-Ša: A Difficult Negotiation of her Ambivalent Heritage

Zitkala-Ša had not always been as self-assured as she was during her adult life. Quite on the contrary, her childhood and youth were actually characterized by an "ambiguous and often uncomfortable status" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxiv) due to her ambivalent upbringing within both the Sioux tribal community she was born into and the white assimilationist educational system she was lured into. These two different cultural

[13] John Collier (1884 – 1968), a pivotal figure in the fight for Native rights, memorialized Zitkala-Ša during her funeral, held in 1938, as "the last of the great Indian Orators" (quoted in Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxix).

influences thus generated a "complex and harrowing limbo of disrupted identity" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 11), described by Zitkala-Ša herself in one of her many letters to her once-fiancé Carlos Montezuma as an "eternal tug of war between being wild and becoming civilized […] an endless evolution – that keeps me in a continual Purgatory" (quoted in Lewandowski, 2016, p. 98).

Zitkala-Ša was not to know this "conflict between [Native] tradition and acculturation" (Fisher, 1979, p. 231) for the first eight years of her life, which she spent on the Yankton Reservation in South Dakota, the place she was born into in 1876. Born under the Anglo name of Gertrude Simmons, Zitkala-Ša was "the third child of Tate I Yohin Win (Reaches for the Wind), a full-blood Dakota woman, and a white man who left the family before her birth" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 141). Her biological father's surname, Fechner or Felker[14], was never to become Gertrude's, since Tate I Yohin Win opted for the surname of her previous, white husband, Simmons. Tate I Yohin Win actually married three different white men, lived at times outside Yankton (Fisher, 1979, p. 231) and also adopted an Anglo name for herself, Ellen Simmons. However, notwithstanding these compromises with the US hegemonic culture, Tate I Yohin Win still regarded her Native heritage as the fundamental component of her identity and life-style. As a consequence, Zitkala-Ša "learned the ways of her tribe for her first eight years of life" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 141). Later on, she was to remember and characterize this period as joyful and nurturing. In her literary production, she referred to "her mother and her extended tribal community as teachers, caretakers, and models" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xv) who had been able to create "a web of mutual sustenance and respect" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xv) granting Zitkala-Ša and the other children on the reservation an effective, exhaustive and harmonious education.

The situation was to change radically in 1884, when some missionaries came to recruit Native children living on Yankton Reservation so as to send them off to "White's Manual Labor Institute, a Quaker-run boarding school in Wabash, Indiana" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 11). Letting her daughter join the project of "compulsory indoctrination into white culture" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 11) implemented by the US federal government was no easy choice for Zitkala-Ša's mother. Indeed, "[f]or obvious historical reasons Ellen

[14] There is no certainty about Zitkala-Ša's biological father's true surname.

generally abhorred and distrusted whites; yet her family's living situation offered few other options. […] Ellen Simmons, aware that the future looked increasingly dismal, decided to relinquish her daughter temporarily in the hope that it would enable the girl's survival" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 19). Survival, however, was not to be taken for granted within the boarding school system, characterized as it was by "an institutionalized brutality of physical and mental abuse through forced labor, malnourishment, beatings, and forced religious conversion" (Willard, 1985, p. 13). Zitkala-Ša therefore was to spend three very harsh years at White's, from 1884 to 1887[15], before coming back to her original home on Yankton Reservation aged eleven.

Unfortunately, "[t]he cultural clashes experienced at the school during the painful time she was learning English and trying to accommodate to American customs seemed insignificant in comparison to the alienation she felt upon returning to her mother's house" (Fisher, 1979, p. 232). Indeed, once back at Yankton, Zitkala-Ša started to feel strongly alienated from the community she had grown up within, and especially from her own mother, who was not able to offer any comfort to her daughter (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 21). Zitkala-Ša thus gradually came to realize that "the clash between white schooling and long-established Sioux ways had taken a toll" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 21). Her boarding school experience, however flawed, had nonetheless "succeed[ed] in holding Gertrude's interest in continuing her education" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 149), in the hope of finding a new place for herself now that she had lost all her previous points of reference (Lukens, 1997b, p. 150). This may be the reason why she decided to attend Santee Technical School in Nebraska for a brief period (1889 – 1890), before going back to White's Manual Labor Institute for five years, from 1890 until 1895.

After that, "[a] high school diploma enable[d] her to enter Earlham College" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 150) in Richmond, Indiana, yet another Quaker-run institution (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 11). Zitkala-Ša attended college for two years, from 1895 until 1897, when she had to leave because of some health-related issues. During her stay at Earlham, "on paper she was an extremely active and popular student" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 23) who managed to "distinguis[h] herself as an orator and poet, publishing essays and highly

[15] This bleak portion of her life will be better detailed in the following chapter of this dissertation, since Zitkala-Ša turned it into subject matter for her literary production.

formal poems in the school's newspaper and winning several debating honors" (Fisher, 1979, p. 232), notably the second place at the Indiana State Oratorical Contest of 1896[16]. However, all "these successes [did] not assuage Gertrude's feelings of belonging nowhere" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 150). Indeed, throughout her college experience, Zitkala-Ša suffered deeply because of the tension she felt between her Native heritage and "the inevitable pressure of acculturation" (Fisher, 1979, p. 232). This inner disruption of hers seriously compromised her college experience, which she was to remember as overall "lonely, trying, and marked with remorse" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 22).

Zitkala-Ša's inner conflict was to be exacerbated by her experience as a teacher and recruiter at Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 33), the first federal boarding school to be founded. At the time of Zitkala-Ša's arrival in July 1897, Carlisle was still run by its founder, General Henry Richard Pratt, whose favourite slogan was "Kill the Indian and Save the Man!". This motto spoke volumes about Carlisle's main aim, namely that of "killing the Native spirit" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 29) of its pupils through indoctrination and a most rigid discipline borrowed from Pratt's experience in the US army. Upon her arrival at Carlisle, Zitkala-Ša could pass for the ultimate incarnation of Pratt's educational purposes, since "she must have appeared the very paragon of cultured, submissive Victorian femininity, perfectly adapted to and 'tamed' in all manner of white ways" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 31).

However, "[t]hat impression would not last long" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 31). Indeed, once asked to play an active role within the very educational system which had deprived her of any inner peace and self-assurance, Zitkala-Ša soon developed an increasing "resistance to the principles of white education" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 33) she had been imbued with from 1884 onwards. She especially came to see "assimilationist boarding schools, with their stress on vocational training, as merely promoting Indian enslavement in the agricultural sector" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 54), therefore proving how "the white world [did] not want to grant space, power, or autonomy to Native Americans despite its

[16] In his *Red Bird, Red Power* (2016), Tadeusz Lewandowski has described in detail the dynamics of Zitkala-Ša's participation in this contest and the significance of her speech *Side by Side*, which was performed on that occasion and already prefigured some of the main tenets of her subsequent literary production and political militancy. Here is an excerpt from Lewandowski's volume: "[Zitkala-Ša] had witnessed the effects of American expansionism. Her life till then had been one of transition and cultural dislocation. She would now reveal in public the profound anger that she had suppressed within her for years, and defend her people against a society that had killed them and expropriated their land in the name of God and civilization" (p. 23).

efforts to 'civilize' and 'Americanize' them" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 151). Zitkala-Ša therefore found Pratt's promises to be essentially hollow (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 12) and so resigned her post at Carlisle in 1899, in search of a different future for herself.

II.2.2: Life After her Renaming as Zitkala-Ša: A Successful Negotiation of her Ambivalent Heritage

This major change in perspective also led to a change of name around 1898 (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 12). Indeed, Gertrude Simmons christened herself *Zitkala-Ša*, "meaning 'Red Bird' in the Lakota dialect of the Siouan language" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 12). The personal circumstances of this decision, namely "a falling out with her sister-in-law" (Fisher, 1979, p. 231), were related by Zitkala-Ša herself in a 1901 letter to Montezuma (quoted in Fisher, 1979, p. 231):

> I have a half-brother whose name is Simmons. […] as I grew I was called by my brother's name Simmons. I bore it a long time till my brother's wife – angry with me because I insisted upon getting an education – said I had deserted home and I might give up my brother's name 'Simmons' too. Well, you can guess how queer I felt – away from my own people – homeless – penniless – and even without a name! Then I chose to *make* a name for myself – and I guess I have made 'Zitkala-Ša' known[.]

It is clear, then, that Zitkala-Ša's need to find a new name for herself mainly resided in her estrangement from her own family and tribal community. At that point in her life, she had in fact "discovered that her loss of Sioux culture and habits was not compensated by anything she gained from the white culture. Rather, she was left angry and isolated, alienated from […] her own family, to the point of desiring to name herself anew" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 143). It is no coincidence that her new name reflected her Native heritage. Quite on the contrary, as sensitively observed by Rob Nixon, when people born into disadvantaged social categories are unexpectedly granted some privilege, as was the case with Zitkala-Ša while attending college and working as a teacher, they may tend to feel "an anxious sense of collective responsibility" (2011, p. 26) towards their original communities, from which they might also feel excluded. This is why these people tend to undertake "a quest to improvise community […] to help counter the isolation that comes from feeling economically, professionally, and psychologically unsheltered by precedent" (Nixon, 2011, p. 26). Zitkala-Ša thus tried to reappropriate her sense of belonging to a community and heritage she felt barred from because of her "liminal status

[as] a white-educated Indian" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 141). Her wistful nostalgia for this Native dimension can be inferred from a letter she wrote to Montezuma in April 1901, featuring such sentences as: "Oh! how I'd like to return to olden times!" and "[it was] a grander thing to live among the Indians" (both quoted in Lewandowski, 2016, p. 60).

Zitkala-Ša's objective in creating her own new name was therefore that of finding a new path for herself which could lead her to a reconciliation with her Sioux heritage, community and family, and especially with her own mother, whom she had greatly admired during her childhood. Unfortunately, "[t]his act of cultural preservation and filial appreciation […] failed to revive the once-strong relationship" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 56) with her mother. Indeed, "[t]hough she would spend her life working for the rights of Indians […] Zitkala-Ša was never reconciled with her mother" (Fisher, 1979, p. 233). However, though this personal objective of hers was not reached, Zitkala-Ša's strong commitment to ameliorate the living conditions of Native peoples was far from wasted. On the contrary, through her literary production and political activism, Zitkala-Ša "found the way to use her education and skills of expression to aid her people, not to be an object of suspicion to them" (Fisher, 1979, p. 236). She could consequently cease "[d]espairing at her half-transformed identity" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 105) and rather use her own hybridity as a valuable resource throughout adulthood.

One of her main contributions to the Native cause was her literary output. This was deeply inspired by "the traditional oral culture of the Sioux" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 154) but written in English, the language Zitkala-Ša had to learn while in the white educational system. In this manner, Zitkala-Ša could act as "the literary counterpart of the oral storytellers of her tribe" (Fisher, 1979, p. 229) and therefore try to reconcile the two cultural spheres of her upbringing by "using the language of one to translate the needs of [the] other" (Fisher, 1979, p. 233). She reached her apex of literary success from 1900 to 1902[17], when "[h]er work was published in both prestigious and popular magazines, was read widely and had critical success" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xii). At the time, she was also attending

[17] Zitkala-Ša's publications during this period feature the collection of traditional Sioux tales *Old Indian Legends* (1901) and various short texts meant for the press, including: the three semi-autobiographical essays "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, January 1900), "The School Days of an Indian Girl" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, February 1900) and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1900); the three short stories "The Trial Path" (*Harper's Magazine*, March 1901), "The Soft-Hearted Sioux" (*Harper's Magazine*, October 1901) and "A Warrior's Daughter" (*Everybody's Magazine*, 1902) and the essay "Why I Am a Pagan" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, December 1902).

the New England Conservatory in Boston, Massachusetts, to study violin, and had become "the darling of a small literary coterie" (Fisher, 1979, p. 229) in the same city.

Her situation was to change concomitantly with her marriage to Raymond Bonnin, "a childhood friend from the Yankton Reservation" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xix), on 10th May 1902. As a matter of fact, the newly-weds decided to move to the Uintah and Ouray Reservation in Utah, where they were to live for the next fourteen years. Soon after giving birth to her first and only child, Raymond Ohiya Bonnin, in 1903, Zitkala-Ša started to work tirelessly for the Reservation Community Center she had contributed to establish. Her occupations included, among others, "organizing community activities for the women such as sewing classes and lunch programs, teaching for a period, and even starting a band among the children" (Fisher, 1979, 234), as well as "a free arts and crafts space" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xx) for them.

At first glance, then, Zitkala-Ša's new life at the Uintah and Ouray Reservation was quite different from the "flurry of literary publicity and recognition" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xviii) she had experienced in Boston from 1900 to 1902. Her fundamental mission, however, had not changed: she still wanted to advocate "a fulfilment of the touted-but-unrealized American promises of liberty and justice for all" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 128). Zitkala-Ša could ascertain "the hollowness of American ideals" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 180) whenever she compared them with the system of "legalized robbery" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 169) perpetuated by the federal institutions acting within and against Native reservations. This "chasm between Washington's democratic pronouncements and the reality of reservation life" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 128) was to be fiercely denounced by Zitkala-Ša throughout her political militancy.

Her career as an activist took off in 1916, when she moved to Washington, D. C. with her husband and child in order to start working as secretary and treasurer for the Society of American Indians (SAI), as well as becoming the editor for the organization's publication, *The American Indian Magazine.* After the dissolution of the SAI in 1919 because of some internal disagreements, Zitkala-Ša started to champion the Native cause in the context of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), until she founded her own political organization, the National Council of American Indians (NCAI), in 1926. She went on working as the NCAI president until her death in 1938, caused by "cardiac dilatation and

kidney disease" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 154). Notwithstanding her limiting historical circumstances (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 14), Zitkala-Ša's militancy still had a significant impact, as proven by the "hundreds of pages of letters and articles written by and about [her] and her work on Indian rights" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 154).

What is more, Zitkala-Ša's activism did not preclude her from writing. Quite on the contrary, throughout her life she managed to "[bring] together poetics and politics" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxvii) in order to further advance the Native cause. Her prolonged engagement in the practice of writing, however, tends to be neglected by a number of scholars who would seem to agree with Dexter Fisher's opinion that "[t]he decline of [Zitkala-Ša's] 'literary' career coincided directly with her marriage" (Fisher, 1979, p. 234). And yet, a letter to Montezuma written by Zitkala-Ša herself as late as 1925 actually seems to discredit this claim by proving the importance she still attached to her writing, as demonstrated, for instance, by the following excerpt: "my giving up writing […] is out of the question" (quoted in Lewandowski, 2016, p. 59). Indeed, Zitkala-Ša "continued to write and publish a wide variety of works […] until the end of her life" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xx). In this respect, two honourable mentions are *The Sun Dance* opera she produced in collaboration with William Hanson, which premiered in 1913 to great critical and public success, and the publication, in 1921, of a collection of some of her major previous writings, entitled *American Indian Stories*.

Zitkala-Ša therefore spent her adult life doing all that she could in favour of Native self-pride and self-determination. Her ultimate mission was to "revive the greatness of the indigenous past in order to achieve a new future" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 107) in which "the potentially ameliorative aspects of white society [would] serve Native peoples in their quest for regeneration" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 161). Zitkala-Ša's ideal strategy was therefore implicitly based on the notion of hybridity, which could help her people profit from all available resources, both Native and Euro-American, in order for "indigenous participation in the white world [to] be on an equal footing, with Indian access to the highest realms, not merely the life of drudgery and cultural erasure promoted by the boarding school system" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 63). Zitkala-Ša's "ongoing and energetic concern for the necessity of Indian self-determination" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 141) is better described by the NCAI motto: "Help Indians Help Themselves in Protecting Their Rights and Properties" (quoted in Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxviii).

II.2.3: Exoticism as a Double-Edged Sword

Zitkala-Ša had therefore "come to several core conclusions" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 63) she was more than ready to fight for through her writing and activism. One major strategy she often adopted in order to gain the attention of the mainstream whose ideological tenets she was actually trying to subvert was that of "using her 'exotic' Indian identity" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 14) as a vehicle for her message. She tried to do so especially by taking advantage from the visual stereotypes associated with Native people, chiefly their traditional dress-code. As recounted by William Hanson (the man with whom Zitkala-Ša had collaborated for *The Sun Dance* opera), "[f]or her lectures[18], Zitkala-Ša always appeared in her gorgeous full dress of buckskin, beads, and feathers. Her two long braids of hair hung to her knees" (quoted in Lewandowski, 2016, p. 80).

This attire surely made Zitkala-Ša a "picture to be remembered" (quoted in Fisher, 1979, p. 230) in the eyes of her white audience. Indeed, her unstated objective when wearing what she herself termed her "Indian costume" (quoted in Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxiii) was precisely that of impressing "the powerful literary and political circles" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 142) as much as she could, in the hope that they would listen to her more attentively. She wrote of this intent of hers in a letter dated 2nd March 1917: "the use of Indian dress for a drawing card is for a good cause" (quoted in Lewandowski, 2016, p. 136). This statement proves that Zitkala-Ša's posing as an allegedly authentic Native individual was done "with political consciousness, understanding her identity as both deeply cultural and performative" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxiv).

This conscious decision to use her "perceived exoticism" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 34) as a resource effectively enabled Zitkala-Ša to obtain a certain amount of success. In fact, she did gain "acceptance by people in the first circle of white society" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 141) during her period of literary apex from 1900 to 1902, when she had become "the toast of literary society" in Boston (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xii), as testified in a letter of hers, stating: "Boston pats me with no little pride" (quoted in Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xix). She resorted to her ability to "us[e] her Native ancestry to generate interest" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 136) also during her years of political militancy, when she still had "little trouble charming her hosts and the journalists sent to cover her

[18] Zitkala-Ša's public speeches were a major component of her political activism.

appearances" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 151). At first glance, then, it might seem that "her literary efforts and public recitations were received with overwhelming public acclaim" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 153) also because of her conscious exploitation of the hegemony's "desire to exoticize and feminize the Other" (Singh and Schmidt, 2000b, p. 38).

However, this strategy posed the risk of shifting the focus of her audience from Zitkala-Ša's actual arguments to her engaging outward appearance (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 151). During her life-time, she effectively "faced objectification within white society as an exotic female specimen of a supposedly dying race" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 15). She was thus relegated as both a Native person and a woman[19] to "an eroticized vision that [was] fundamentally reductive" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 36). In his *Red Bird, Red Power* (2016), Tadeusz Lewandowski has reported that "despite their subversive content, [Zitkala-Ša's] writings won critical acclaim" (p. 43). The question is, however, whether this "subversive content" was actually grasped by Zitkala-Ša's white readership. The same goes for her public speeches. For instance, with reference to *Side by Side*[20], the *Journal*'s review "constantly returned to the subject of Simmons's physical attributes, labelling her 'the pretty young Indian woman' who appeared 'much better looking than the pictures of the average Indian' [while] Simmons's 'pleading for her people' was put down to 'excellent elocutionary training' – to be viewed as a performance rather than a legitimate call for Native rights" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 26).

Hence, as it often was the case with Native revendications, the deeply political nature of Zitkala-Ša's interventions was often deliberately ignored by the mainstream she was trying to reach in favour of "obtuse objectifications of [her] as an exotic curiosity" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 26) that could be aesthetically pleasing but not ideologically threatening. Her fierce and relentless fight for Native rights was therefore systematically downplayed, to the point that, "[i]n perhaps the greatest misrepresentation in a life often misrepresented, she was described in the hospital's postmortem report as 'Gertrude Bonnin from South Dakota – Housewife'" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxviii). Choosing "Housewife" as Zitkala-Ša's alleged occupation was an outright denial of "[h]er writings, her activism, her perspective, her pride, and her call for sovereignty"

[19] As observed by Singh and Schmidt, "[Native] women – more than their male counterparts – are exoticized and fetishized in the US, treated as prize possessions or viewed as living proof of desired diversity even as their voices are ignored or silenced" (2000b, p. 28).

[20] The speech which had enabled Zitkala-Ša to gain second place in the Indiana State Oratorical Contest of 1896.

(Lewandowski, 2016, p. 195). This choice therefore spoke volumes about the general tendency to "objectify rather than understand Zitkala-Ša as an indigenous woman" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 151).

II.2.4: Zitkala-Ša: A Precious Testimony Reaching Our Present

Whatever might have been stated on her postmortem report, Zitkala-Ša surely was not a housewife. First of all, this role was incompatible with her "belief in equality of the sexes" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 60). As a matter of fact, Zitkala-Ša greatly valued her personal independence, as proven by her life-long "refusal to submit to a secondary, dependent role as doting, obedient wife, what she termed as 'a fine horse to draw your wagon'" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 53). In this respect, Tadeusz Lewandowski (2016, p. 194) has cleverly observed that:

> as a young woman in Boston, [Zitkala-Ša] could very easily have made a socially advantageous marriage to any one of her long list of suitors […]. Miss Gertrude Simmons could have stayed in white 'civilization,' written, played her violin, and performed her orations, or merely stayed comfortably at home, fulfilling the expectations of the Victorian Cult of True Womanhood. But for someone with her sense of justice and racial, cultural, and historical consciousness, this route to assimilation was as impossible as the task that she ultimately set for herself.

Zitkala-Ša's "task", fighting for Native self-determination in the white-dominated United States, surely was arduous and seemed against all odds. Not only had she to face "the cultural, social, and literary barriers for all native writers throughout Euro-American history" (Susag, 1993b, p. iii), but she also had to do so during a troublesome transition era which caused her to spend "her life in balance between two worlds" (Fisher, 1979, p. 233). This feeling of being "caught between two cultures" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 148) could be difficult to handle at times. However, Zitkala-Ša still decided not to let her occasional discouragement prevail, as it may be observed in a letter of hers, where she wrote: "I feel sick way in my heart. […] Shall I continue in my work or shall I keep still? […] I am ill at this moment. Ah – I rise. I lift my head! I laugh at the babble! I dare – I do! I guess I am not so sick after all" (quoted in Lewandowski, 2016, p. 52).

The previous excerpt is a stirring testimony of Zitkala-Ša's interior struggle and ultimate recovery of the determination and unflagging energy (Lukens, 1997b, p. 154) she needed in order to go beyond and deny the role of passive victim the dominant discourses found

so convenient to attach to Native people. All this can be observed in yet another letter of hers, in which she stated: "[e]very Indian who has attempted to do real uplift work for the tribes gets stung. No wonder that he quits trying, goes back to the blanket, and sits in the tepee like a boiled owl. I have not sense enough to stop. Wouldn't know until I was killed; and the chances are I wouldn't know then, being dead" (quoted in Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxiv). At first glance, Zitkala-Ša's direct reference to death might seem a bit hyperbolic. However, it has to be taken into account that the hegemonic discourses circulating at the time in the United States, especially the trope of the "Vanishing Indian", truly were acting as "premature gravestones" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 40) for Native people, who were relegated into the past with no opportunity to create a better present and/or future for themselves. Zitkala-Ša surely could not accept this, and was to be found among "the Indians who [would] not remain buried because they [were] not dead" (Scheckel, 1998, p. 40). As she wrote in a letter: "I prefer to be stone-dead than living-dead" (quoted in Lewandowski, 2016, p. 59).

What is more, even after her actual death, Zitkala-Ša's legacy has lived on both in her writings and in the subsequent generations of fighters for Native rights still upholding some of the main tenets of her own commitment. Indeed, "[t]hrough writing, rhetoric, organization, lobbying, and activism, [Zitkala-Ša] ably formulated a response to white rule very similar to that of subsequent generations" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 16), proving how pioneering her approach was. Indeed, the following generations of Native fighters could find in her figure "an exemplum of the long story of Native American survival despite all the powerful attempts of white people to accomplish the genocide of Native people and cultures" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 151). However challenging her task might have been, Zitkala-Ša "had found her calling" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 44) and stayed true to a declaration of intent to be found in a letter to Montezuma she had written as far back in her life as 1901: "I must *live* my life […] I must think in my own way (since I cannot help it). I must write the lessons I see. […] I have a place in the Universe, and no one can cheat or crowd me by a single hair's breadth" (quoted in Lewandowski, 2016, p. 52).

II.3: Mourning Dove: A New Proposal of Native Survival Surviving Lucullus Virgil McWhorter's Intervention

II.3.1: Mourning Dove's Life: Writing Against All Odds

Reconstructing Mourning Dove's biography can be challenging because "[t]here have been several versions of the main facts assigned to [her] life" (Bowering, 1995, p. 30). This has been the case with her name, which was to change throughout the years and on the basis of different occasions. First of all, she had been assigned two names at birth, the Native Hum-ishu-ma (meaning "Mourning Dove") and the English Christine Quintasket. This double naming was in itself "[i]ndicative of the pressures on native peoples to assimilate" (Brown, 1989, p. 51). What is more, as noted by George Bowering (1995, p. 32), during her life-time, Mourning Dove was to be identified through a whole plethora of different names, chosen either for or by her:

> [a]t the convent school she was enrolled as Christine Joseph, because her father's name was Joseph. When she was first married she signed her letters Cristal MacLeod. During her second marriage she was Christine or Catherine Galler. But Christine Quintasket wanted to be a writer, and she wanted to be an Indian writer who would be read by white readers. She decided that as a story-teller she would take the name Hum-ishu-ma. Then she decided that the English version of her writer's name would be […] Mourning Dove.

Another source of confusion with respect to Mourning Dove's life is the unclear identity of her paternal grandfather. As a matter of fact, Mourning Dove's two major biographers, Dexter Fisher and Jay Miller, do not agree on this subject. This is because they have relied on two different types of sources for their enquiry, namely Mourning Dove's own account of her familial origins as opposed to what is reported in historical archives and by her own community. As a consequence, "Fisher reports from research into Mourning Dove's correspondence that her paternal grandfather was an Irishman named Haynes [whereas] Miller's research in census records and among other members of Mourning Dove's family indicates that her claim of a European paternal grandfather was a fiction" (Lukens, 1997a, pp. 411-412).

Mourning Dove therefore claimed to be a mixed-blood, the same kind of identity she was to choose for the heroine of her novel *Cogewea, The Half-Blood* (1927). But "[w]hy would a (possibly) full-blooded Salishan woman center her first novel around the struggles of mixed-blood characters? And what might have induced her to create a family

tree for herself incorporating European and Native ancestry" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 409), notwithstanding the disadvantageous social conditions associated with one's status as a mixed-blood? This choice might have been made for specific "literary and political reasons" (Bowering, 1995, p. 30), as it will be observed later on in this chapter.

Going back to Mourning Dove's own biography, even the year of her birth is uncertain, with reports spanning from 1882 up until 1888[21]. What is instead generally accepted is that her birth took place "in a canoe crossing the Kootenai River near Bonner's Ferry, Idaho" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 411). This "birth upon water was a remarkable baptism into the literal changing currents of the world" (Brown, 1989, p. 51). Indeed, Mourning Dove's family "usually lived on or near the Colville Reservation, among people […] who had been reduced to poverty and the meanest of jobs in agriculture by the policies of the powerful whites in the eastern States" (Bowering, 1995, p. 31). Among these people, however, there were still a number of tribesmen who had actually fought against the white encroachment of the West[22] of the United States (Brown, 1989, p. 52). These people could therefore still remember and pass on the traditional Native ways of living Mourning Dove was also brought up into, since her parents, Lucy Stukin and Joseph Quintasket, "had been raised traditionally […] and grounded Mourning Dove in a traditional Salishan cultural background" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 412). [23]

Mourning Dove, however, also received a white education: "[f]irst she went to a boarding school, and was introduced to the English language by French-Canadian nuns. Later she went to the Colville Mission school in Fort Spokane. [She also] went to Montana, to trade menial work for a chance to go to an Indian school there" (Bowering, 1995, p. 31). The fact that she had to work in order to gain access into white schooling, as she also did at twenty-four during the year she spent at a Calgary business college in order to learn typing (Brown, 1989, p. 53), proves that Mourning Dove's family had a very hard time at making ends meet. As a consequence, young Mourning Dove "spent more time at home than she did at schools" (Bowering, 1995, p. 31).

[21] For instance, as underlined by Alanna Brown, "even the government allotment records contain discrepancies […] the records date Christine Quintasket's birth in both 1882 and 1887" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 412).
[22] The Colville Reservation is located in Washington state, more specifically "in the county bounded by the Columbia and Okanogan rivers and the Canadian border" (Fisher, 1981, p. x).
[23] Mourning Dove was an Okanogan, and the "Okanogans belong to the Salishan language family of north-central Washington and British Columbia" (Fisher, 1981, p. x). Generally speaking, all Native tribes "inhabiting the highlands and river valleys in central and northeastern Washington are referred to as Plateau Indians" (Fisher, 1981, p. x).

Her home, however, was an incredibly nurturing environment for Mourning Dove's inclination to become a writer. As a matter of fact, her future attempt to write in English so as to make Native issues and values known to the US mainstream, closely reflected her "intercultural childhood epitomized by the instruction she received from two adopted members of her family: Teequalt, a grandmother from whom she learned Okanogan spiritual training; and Jimmy Ryan, a white orphan who used dime novels to teach her to read English" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 490). Even though these two people, an old Native adopted grandmother and a young white adopted brother, could seem the opposite of each other, they were nevertheless "her two most important teachers" (Bowering, 1995, p. 31) and they both "instilled in [young Mourning Dove] a desire to be a story-teller and a writer" (Bowering, 1995, p. 31).

This desire of hers actually was "an extraordinary act of faith" (Brown, 1989, p. 53), considering her life circumstances. Indeed, as noted by Susan Bernardin (1995, p. 490), unlike other Native writers, such as Zitkala-Ša, who

> had received extensive Anglo education and gained widespread recognition as 'Native' intellectuals, Mourning Dove, who worked throughout much of her life as a seasonal laborer, had little formal education and an imperfect command of standard English. Her letters tell of repeated illness, extreme financial hardships, and family obligations – all of which, as she would often note, prevented her from writing.

Writing therefore required a huge amount of sacrifice by Mourning Dove. In fact, she and her second husband, Fred Galler, "worked as migrant laborers, travelling with the seasons [and] everywhere they travelled, Mourning Dove took her battered old typewriter and tried to work after long hours in the field or orchards" (Fisher, 1981, p. vi). She thus had to lead a "relentless and draining" (Karell, 1995, p. 453) life spent "on ladders in orchards, at laundry sinks in rooming houses and at her ill-lit typewriter" (Bowering, 1995, p. 34), to the point that she literally "worked herself to death" (Bowering, 1995, p. 31), dying in 1936, not even reaching 55 years of age.

However, the boundless energy she put in order to find the actual time and resources for her own writing suggests that she truly believed in "[h]er vision of herself as literary intermediary" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 490) between the hegemonic and Native sociocultural dimensions. Her ultimate aim was "to prove to her white audience that Indian people were not the savage stoics that had been created in the white romances" (Bowering, 1995,

p. 35), but rather people endowed with their own, treasured emotions and values. She claimed this also during a 1916 newspaper interview, in which she stated: "[i]t is all wrong, this saying that Indians do not feel as deeply as whites. We do feel, and by and by some of us are going to be able to make our feelings appreciated, and then will the true Indian character be revealed" (quoted in Bernardin, 1995, p. 490).

Her literary effort was therefore animated by the intention to go beyond hegemonic stereotypes about Natives. The specific historic event which impelled Mourning Dove to actually start writing her first novel was the buffalo roundup she witnessed in 1912 in Flathead, Montana, where the last remnants of the great buffalo herds which had been pivotal for Native survival were sold to the Canadian government. On that occasion, "[t]he drama and pathos of the buffalo roundup affected Mourning Dove profoundly, symbolizing for her and for many others the violent circumscription of the lives of Native and mixed-blood people by encroaching white settlement" (Lukens, 1997a, 415). In other words, "[a]t that event she witnessed the definitive end of a way of life. That event was so powerful that it triggered the writing of a novel" (Brown, 1988, p. 7), a novel meant "for her people, for herself, and for the Euro-Americans who understood so little about those they had conquered" (Brown, 1989, p. 53).

II.3.2: Mourning Dove's Collaboration with Lucullus Virgil McWhorter: a Blessing and a Curse

By 1912, Mourning Dove had already finished writing a first draft[24] of her novel. Its publication, however, was far from immediate. Indeed, *Cogewea, The Half-Blood: A Depiction of the Great Montana Cattle Range* was not to get into print until 1927, "after more than fourteen years of rejection, delay, and uncertainty" (Karell, 1995, p. 451). During this long and gruelling negotiation with various publishing houses, Mourning Dove could count on a staunch and loyal ally: Lucullus Virgil McWhorter (1860 – 1944), "a white amateur ethnographer and activist for Native American rights" (Karell, 1995, p. 451) who truly valued indigenous cultural heritage and could not bear the genocide and ethnocide the US hegemony was perpetrating to the detriment of Native peoples. Mourning Dove had "the fortune or misfortune" (Lukens, 18997b, p. 41) to meet McWhorter in 1914, and from that moment on, the two were bound together by "a deep

[24] Unfortunately, this manuscript did not reach us (Brown, 1989, p. 53).

and abiding friendship" (Brown, 1989, p. 55). McWhorter was "undoubtedly good-hearted" (Bowering, 1995, p. 33) and, as a matter of fact, without his "persistent efforts, the novel would probably never have found a publisher" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 492). Indeed, even its 1927 publication by the Four Seas Company finally occurred "because McWhorter threatened to sue the press for fraudulent use of the federal mail service" (Brown, 1988, p. 2) unless *Cogewea* was published as promised.

The need to resort to menace in order for a publishing house to actually print *Cogewea* proves how difficult it could be at the time for Native voices to emerge in the hegemonic literary realm (Bernardin, 1995, p. 492). Actually, the publication of *Cogewea* had been hindered not only because of sociocultural reasons, but also on account of material issues. In fact, after having edited[25] Mourning Dove's first draft in 1916, McWhorter tried to submit this second version of the book to various publishing houses. Two presses actually expressed interest in the novel, and might have published it "as early as 1917 or 1918" (Brown, 1988, p. 2) were it not for "the burgeoning cost of supplies during World War I and the years immediately following" (Brown, 1988, p. 2). After those rejections, it seemed that all the efforts for the novel's publication had come to a dead end.

This was the reason why in 1922 "a frustrated McWhorter decided to rework the narrative" (Brown, 1988, p. 2) on the basis of the hegemonic trope of claimed Native authenticity, the main tenets of which had been established by "anthropology's contributions to stereotypes such as the 'primitive,' 'exotic,' 'disappearing Native'" (Strong, 2004, pp. 344-345). McWhorter's intention was therefore that of authenticating *Cogewea* in the eyes of the white mainstream (Bernardin, 1995, p. 488), since "authenticity served as the prerequisite for initial literary publications in dominant culture" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 493) by Native authors. McWhorter tried to accomplish his self-assigned authenticating mission by "inserting his own research into the novel" (Fisher, 1981, p. xv) in the form of many ethnographic notes which, in McWhorter's vision, should have acted as "culturally authoritative indices of Indian authenticity" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 488).

[25] During this first editing process, "McWhorter helped Mourning Dove with sentence construction, spelling and word choices" (Brown, 1989, p. 53), therefore trying to resolve her difficulties with the English language, which was indeed a "constant challenge" (Fisher, 1981, p. xvi) for her. However, McWhorter went beyond this purely linguistic sphere by including footnotes and poetic inserts of his own choice (Brown, 1989, p. 53), already prefiguring his subsequent, heavy editorial intervention in the novel.

McWhorter's intervention, however, was far from limited to this note apparatus. In fact, he also inserted chapter headings which "focused on the tragedy of Indian life and often were out of sync with Mourning Dove's treatment of the subject matter" (Brown, 1989, p. 53), as well as "innumerable didactic passages about the injustices suffered by Indians at the hands of government agencies" (Fisher, 1981, p. 14) which he directly weaved into the text itself. Unfortunately, his "righteous and often angry diatribes against white institutions" (Karell, 1995, p. 461), however well-intentioned, often ended up making the narrative sound unnatural and disrupted (Brown, 1989, p. 54), especially because of the "formalized" (Karell, 1995, p. 461), "stentorian" (Bowering, 1995, p. 35) and "frenzied" (Karell, 1995, p. 461) rhetoric often employed by McWhorter on such occasions.

The grandiloquent tone to be found in such passages as "selfishly indifferent to the Macedonian cry of its victims writhing under the leash wielded by the hand of Mammon!" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 145) was vividly described by George Bowering as "the language one expects from a school teacher who once had to read Cato" (1995, p. 33), and McWhorter himself has been characterized as "the teacher, the preacher, and the judge, when he inserted himself into the novel" (Brown, 1988, p. 10). This is what has led Alanna Kathleen Brown to define him as "a constant interruptive voice" (1989, p. 53), and what has made Dexter Fisher state that *Cogewea*'s "narrative […] sags at times under the weight of vituperation" (1981, p. xiii). The worst thing was that during this process of alteration of her novel, Mourning Dove "was not shown the revisions nor did she have any idea of their length" (Brown, 1988, p. 2). This is proven by what she wrote after the publication of *Cogewea* actually occurred: "I have just got through going over the book *Cogewea*, and am surprised at the changes that you made. […] I felt like it was someone else's book and not mine at all. In fact, the finishing touches are put there by you, and I have never seen it" (quoted in Brown, 1989, p. 54). All this suggests that McWhorter "had ultimate editorial authority over the direction of Mourning Dove's narrative" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 492) and could thus act as he pleased with respect to the novel.

A prime example of this tendency of his is the photograph of Mourning Dove placed next to the title page. In fact, Mourning Dove was against the inclusion of this photo, but then had to surrender[26] to McWhorter's insistence. A trace of this debate can be found in a

[26] This concession by Mourning Dove is a consequence of the need for Native authors of the time to undertake a complex and delicate "negotiation of necessary compromises with white sponsorship" (Peterson, 2000, p. 181).

letter by McWhorter stating that: “Mourning Dove is averse to having her picture […] go in the book. She says that this would be alright for an historical work, but for fiction, she thinks it out of place. I have explained to her, that hers is NOT fiction in the full sense of the word” (quoted in Bernardin, 1995, pp. 492-493). This excerpt proves that Mourning Dove and McWhorter had come to develop two very different conceptions of Mourning Dove’s identity, authority and authorship. Indeed, while Mourning Dove wanted to “trust and test her own literary abilities” (Brown, 1989, p. 54) as a full-fledged author, McWhorter was instead “more interested in her as a representative of her people than as a novelist” (Bowering, 1995, p. 34). It was not by chance that the afore-mentioned photo was “[d]esigned to comply with embedded cultural assumptions about Indians” (Bernardin, 1995, p. 493) and thus portrayed Mourning Dove in the most stereotypical of attires: “headband, braids, beads, and buckskin” (Bernardin, 1995, p. 493).

Besides this photo, McWhorter also insisted on inserting a biographical sketch about Mourning Dove which could “verif[y] her credentials as native informant” (Bernardin, 1995, p. 493). This, then, is what Mourning Dove had become in McWhorter’s eyes: an almost “abstract cultural symbol” (Bernardin, 1995, p. 491), “both ethnographer and the object of ethnographic study” (Karell, 1995, p. 456). The fact that McWhorter regarded Mourning Dove’s ethnicity rather than her literary merits as her main asset, therefore privileging “the race of the historian, rather than the method of recording” (Karell, 1995, p. 457), signals a form of inadvertent, “very subtle racism” (Bowering, 1995, p. 33). Indeed, McWhorter was not able to “transcend race” (Karell, 1995, p. 457) while dealing with Mourning Dove and her novel, and was instead unconsciously guided by some of the main tenets of the discourse about Native authenticity advanced by that same hegemony he was so vehemently accusing in his intra-textual interventions. In point of fact, his conception of Mourning Dove as an authentic Native informant “both reveal[ed] and respond[ed] to the Euro-American desire for native ‘authenticity’” (Bernardin, 1995, p. 493) McWhorter often manifested in his own turn.

This desire of his was related to his personal conviction that Native people were destined to face inevitable extinction (Karell, 1995, p. 457), an assumption clearly “infused with the prevailing cultural belief in the ‘Vanishing American’” (Bernardin, 1995, p. 490). Hence, animated by “his own need to preserve Indian culture” (Brown, 1989, p. 53) from what he perceived to be the risks of intermarriage, miscegenation and acculturation

(Fisher, 1981, p. viii), McWhorter actually reconceptualized *Cogewea*. Indeed, while Mourning Dove wanted her novel to be interpreted as fiction, McWhorter decided instead to recast it as an operation of "ethnographic salvage" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 491) of what he thought to be Native authenticity. By so doing, he was unconsciously emulating the hegemonic tendency to "police and license the determining boundaries of [Native] culture" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2007, p. 18). These very boundaries were precisely the hegemonic discursive limits Mourning Dove wanted to overcome.

II.3.3: Mourning Dove's Voice: A Call for Native Survival

While McWhorter was striving for the preservation and diffusion of what he believed to be Native authenticity, Mourning Dove had in mind "a different and competing form of cultural mediation" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 490) between Native peoples and the US hegemony. In fact, what she intended to create was a "transcultural western romance" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 498) meant to include Native culture, oral literature and social struggles in a novel (Brown, 1989, p. 51) whose genre, the western, could appeal to a white readership used to deal with Native issues precisely through this literary form. Indeed, "Mourning Dove's choice of western romance was hardly anomalous within the context of American literary representations of race relations" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 488) occurring on the frontier.

What was so innovative about her western narrative, though, was the fact that it finally allowed readers to interact with an unprecedented perspective, that of Natives, the very people whose "exclusion or removal […] from an imagined future national community" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 488) tended to be among the main topics of traditional westerns. In other words, "Mourning Dove's variant of the western romance borrow[ed] distinctive generic and thematic features of the form […] and interweave[d] them with Okanogan cultural materials in order to reformulate the role assigned to Native Americans" (Bernardin, 1995, pp. 488-489) within the US geographic and discursive areas.

Mourning Dove was therefore "breaking new ground in bringing together two disparate traditions: the oral culture of the Okanogans with the literary form of the western romance" (Fisher, 1981, p. xxvi). Her brave choice to incorporate Native culture within a western obviously was "a radical departure from the conventional reliance on autobiographical and ethnographic narrative forms to present 'Indian' experience to

mainstream audiences" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 488). This choice did not please McWhorter, who wished to "distance Mourning Dove's work from what he called 'blood and thunder' westerners" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 488) in favour of more traditional, typically ethnographical patterns of representation. What McWhorter truly could not comprehend about Mourning Dove's decision was the innovative "attitude of relationship" (quoted in Lukens, 1997a, p. 410) that lay behind it.

Mourning Dove's ultimate objective was indeed that of "draw[ing] in readers otherwise indifferent to Native American perspectives" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 492) precisely by adopting and adapting some of their most popular literary forms. This led to the creation of a "a hybrid literary form reflecting Mourning Dove's effort to carve out a conciliatory as well as contestatory space within dominant print culture" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 502). The "contestatory" component of her novel mainly resided in the inscription of mixed-blood heroic characters in a traditional western scenery (Bernardin, 1995, p. 498). As a matter of fact, Mourning Dove's choice of a half-blood heroine, Cogewea, as well as her own identification as a mixed-blood[27], both prove that for her the mixed-blood status had a profound significance. In this respect, Margaret Lukens interprets the figure of the mixed-blood in Mourning Dove's *Cogewea* as "a metaphor for survival" (1997a, p. 410).

It is important to notice, though, that Mourning Dove's notion of Native survival greatly differs from McWhorter's. Indeed, while the latter would have wished for the transmission of an unaltered, "authentic" Native heritage, an aim which he himself regarded as unattainable, the former wanted to go beyond the hegemonic trope of the "Vanishing Indian" by finding a new, hybridized manner for her own people to "bridge the currents of change with integrity" (Brown, 1988, p. 12). This could be performed by finding within their own Native heritage "the seeds of adaptive and incorporative survival" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 419).

In other words, both Mourning Dove and McWhorter wanted Native heritage to be shared with "the surviving generations of Native Americans and [with] a Euro-American culture that did not even grasp the richness of the gift" (Brown, 1988, p. 12). While they did agree on the need to preserve Native ontology, they were not of the same opinion as far as the actual future of Native peoples was concerned. Indeed, as pointed out by Alanna Kathleen

[27] As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Mourning Dove claimed to have a paternal grandfather of European descent.

Brown, "McWhorter believed native peoples could not survive […] given the corruption, abuse and genocide directed towards them. Mourning Dove [on the other hand] was a fighter and a survivor. She wrote her stories to create a space for Indian consciousness in the midst of a suffocating dominant cultural obtuseness" (1989, p. 55), therefore proving that Native peoples could determine "their own cultures and futures" (Purdy, 2001, p. 101) in a different manner than what was expected from them as "Vanishing Indians".

Mourning Dove's and McWhorter's "competing ideological frameworks" (Karell, 1995, p. 456) were thus respectively based on the hope for a hybrid Native future and on the nostalgia for a soon-to-be-lost, allegedly "authentic" Native past. Their different approaches were clearly reflected in the diametrically opposite endings the two collaborators had envisioned for *Cogewea*, namely McWhorter's tragic ending and Mourning Dove's happy one. On the one hand, McWhorter's tragic ending, for whose choice he adamantly insisted (Brown, 1988, p. 12), "would have recapitulated generations of white representations of half-bloods as unfit to survive" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 418). This demonstrated, once again, that McWhorter was still unable to go beyond the "national romance of the Vanishing American" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 493). On the other hand, Mourning Dove's decision to let her half-blood heroine triumph against all odds enabled her to carve out an unprecedented imaginative "space for mixed-blood people in a genre and during a period in history when white encroachment left little physical or literary space even for the people who defined themselves as fully Indian" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 410), let alone for the even more stigmatized mixed-bloods. By opting for this hopeful finale, Mourning Dove "chose, however unconsciously, not to die, not to focus on an ending but to believe in a beginning" (Brown, 1988, p. 13) for her protagonist, for herself and for her people. In the end, Mourning Dove's happy ending was the one to be chosen. The vision closing the novel is therefore Mourning Dove's rather than McWhorter's.

This proves that Mourning Dove's voice and perspective somehow managed to emerge in the course of the novel and finally triumph, notwithstanding McWhorter's many interventions. In this respect, as aptly remarked by Margaret Lukens (1997a, p. 419),

> [i]f Mourning Dove's book is a type of the half-blood zone she was working to develop, then the literary, anthropological, and political intrusions of […] McWhorter are images of trespass on that zone. But the lesson of the novel's plot and of the meta-plot of its creation is that the half-blood is a survivor. Despite McWhorter's arguments in favor of

> a tragic ending for the book, Mourning Dove had the last word in creating a happy half-blood future [for her protagonists].

Mourning Dove and McWhorter's collaboration may indeed be termed a "meta-plot", since its very dynamic closely reflected Mourning Dove's attempt to subvert "a range of dominant cultural constructions of 'Indianness'" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 498) McWhorter unconsciously believed in. Indeed, "[u]ndermining McWhorter's conception of *Cogewea* as an ethnographic, historical document is a trickster subtext that contests all master narratives about Indians" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 495) by means of exploiting the thematic and formal resources of traditional westerns. It is clear, then, that the two collaborators had "separate purposes" (Brown, 1989, p. 54) they wished to fulfil through very different genres. As a result, *Cogewea* is to be found "at the crossroads of fictional romance, ethnographic autobiography, and anthropological record" (Karell, 1995, p. 451). At first glance, this "uneasy array of narrative modes" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 487) might seem discouraging for readers and critics alike. Indeed, "[i]f *Cogewea*'s readers desire tidiness […], those desires are immediately frustrated" (Karell, 1995, p. 451). But the true question here is, why should readers search for harmony in a novel focusing on interracial relationships which are far from harmonious? May this very search for "a simpler story" (Karell, 1995, p. 464) be somewhat contradictory? May it suggest a hidden desire for reassurance by the hegemony?

Fortunately, Mourning Dove and McWhorter's "collaborative effort reveals a more complex story – and one ultimately more spiritually challenging and historically informative – than reading it for harmony would generate" (Karell, 1995, p. 459). As a matter of fact, Mourning Dove's own literary voice manages to emerge within the novel notwithstanding McWhorter's "ethnographic input and cries of outrage" (Brown, 1988, p. 12), just as she would have wished for real-life Native voices to finally emerge, notwithstanding the hegemonic discourses fixing them into the past only. Mourning Dove's perspective therefore managed to overcome the unfortunately common "predicament of early marginalized writers who attempted to translate and legitimate their culture to a predominantly Euro-American audience" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 495). Indeed, "[h]owever much McWhorter edited […] the text, the story is hers" (Brown, 1988, p. 11), and as such is a prime example of reappropriation of one's own Native voice by means of "complex processes of compromise and resistance" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 495).

On a final note, it should be remarked that collaborative enterprises are not necessarily negative. Quite on the contrary, the very indigenous orature Mourning Dove made reference to in her novel had always been deeply collaborative in nature. Indeed, Native oral tradition "grew out of the tribal relationship" (Karell, 1995, p. 455) by passing down one's own tribal stories "across seasons and generations" (Karell, 1995, p. 459). Mourning Dove's and McWhorter's collaboration obviously was a different kind of relationship (Karell, 1995, p. 459), namely "a literary relationship both troubling and generative" (Karell, 1995, p. 452), or rather, generative precisely because it was troubling. Indeed, it is through this unique struggle of voices that *Cogewea* can better "help us to comprehend a truly chaotic and transitional period on the Northwest frontier" (Brown, 1989, p. 55). *Cogewea* therefore managed, by virtue of the unexpected results of the collaboration from which it sprang, to "exceed the bounds intended by either Mourning Dove or McWhorter" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 495).

Chapter III: Zitkala-Ša's Painful yet Resourceful Biculturalism

As already mentioned during the previous chapter, Zitkala-Ša tried to fight for the Native cause throughout her adult life. She did so especially through her tireless political activism, but her literary production also played a pivotal role. During her lifetime, Zitkala-Ša could witness the publication of two books of hers: *Old Indian Legends* (1901), a collection of traditional Sioux tales, and *American Indian Stories* (1921), a combination of ten multifarious pieces of writing, including the three "semiautobiographical instalments" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 37) the present chapter revolves around, namely "Impressions of an Indian Childhood", "The School Days of an Indian Girl" and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians". These three essays had already been published in the prestigious US magazine *Atlantic Monthly* in its January, February and March 1900 issues, respectively. Nowadays, they are still Zitkala-Ša's most famous and studied literary contributions. They trace Zitkala-Ša's early life, starting from her semitraditional[28] Native infancy led on Yankton Reservation ("Impressions of an Indian Childhood") and then following the young protagonist through her experience in the white educational system, both as a student at White's Manual Labor Institute and then Earlham College ("The School Days of an Indian Girl") and as a teacher and recruiter for Carlisle Indian Industrial School ("An Indian Teacher Among Indians").

At first glance, these writings may thus seem to deal with a strictly personal experience. However, "Zitkala-Ša's story is not just her own" (Kunce, 2006, p. 80), but is instead meant to convey "the collective experience of [her Native] community" (Susag, 1993a, p. 20). Indeed, while writing about "her (and others') journey into the white world" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 40), Zitkala-Ša actually "blur[red] the distinction between fact and fiction" (Spack, 1997, p. 29) by "tak[ing] some basic autobiographical material, meld[ing] it with stories of other Native Americans […], then shap[ing] it into a narrative" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxix). The resulting series of essays could therefore account for a common Native experience by depicting "the personal sensibilities of one of [the] members" (Fisher, 1979, p. 237) of the US Native community. By so doing,

[28] The choice of this term will be made clear later on in the chapter, more precisely in the section "Gradually Unveiling the Inaccuracy of Hegemonic Stereotypes about Native Authenticity".

Zitkala-Ša therefore managed to go beyond "the inherent egotism of most self-representational texts" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 12) through the use of "a collective Native voice telling the 'common' story of a people" (Susag, 1993a, p. 20). This is why she may be enumerated among those "autobiographers of collective movements" (Nixon, 2011, p. 23) who have been admirably able to "draw on the form's intimate energies while also offering the reader a social depth of field" (Nixon, 2011, p. 26).

What is more, the collective scope of Zitkala-Ša's writing suggests the deeply political nature of her three essays. First of all, by relating "the wrongs she had witnessed and experienced" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 44) as a Native person living in the United States at the turn of the 20th century, Zitkala-Ša was trying to denounce a form of "violence discounted by dominant structures of apprehension" (Nixon, 2011, p. 16), therefore challenging the hegemonic "politics of the visible and the invisible" (Nixon, 2011, p. 30). Secondly, and maybe most importantly, these stories do not just focus on what young Zitkala-Ša (and Native people in general) have had to suffer because of the US hegemony's genocidal and ethnocidal practices. Quite on the contrary, a substantial portion of the narrative actually revolves around Native resilience by showing how, once empowered by "two sets of cultural resources" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 11), both Native and white, Zitkala-Ša manages to fight back against US dominant discourses "with every tool of white society she ha[s] mastered" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 194), as well as through her Native heritage. The very existence of her writings proves that she must have finally found a way to "manipulate her biculturality to her advantage" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 25), so as to demonstrate to her readers that Native people should not to be regarded as mere victims, akin to the stereotype of the "Vanishing Indian", but rather as "active agents in history, innovators of new ways, of Indian ways, of thinking and being and speaking and authoring in this world created by colonial contact" (quoted in Chiarello, 2005, p. 24).

III.1: Evolution

III.1.1: Finding her Mission: Zitkala-Ša's Double Heritage and its Conversion from an Obstacle to a Resource

Zitkala-Ša was thus able to intervene with her own, Native and female voice within the hegemonic set of discourses of her time. She did so by using a language, English, which "historically identified the valid speaking subject as white and male" (Paniccia Carden,

1997, p. 58) and a practice, writing, which she used "as a revisionist force, to deconstruct the prevailing imperialistic mythologies" (Kumamoto Stanley, 1994, p. 65) surrounding Native people. As a matter of fact, while this set of dominant discourses tends to posit Natives as "powerless victims of the clash between two cultures" (Susag, 1993a, p. 3), Zitkala-Ša's life and writing proved that new, "reconfigured Indian identities" (Littlefield, 2004, p. 329) could be embraced by herself and her contemporaries so as to "contradict the myths of powerless victimization, language inadequacy, and feminine impotence" (Susag, 1993a, p. 21) crafted by the US hegemony. As brilliantly pointed out by Mary Paniccia Carden (1997, p. 68):

> [Zitkala-Ša's] intervention in the American literary tradition serves to subvert definitions of the Indian woman as a silent and abject 'squaw.' This Indian woman is not silent - she publishes her essays in *Atlantic Monthly*. She is not abject - she attacks American notions of the benefits of assimilation and challenges and manipulates stereotypes of Indian identity to represent Indianness to a white audience.

However, it should be noted that "Zitkala-Ša's ability to transcend cultural conventions" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 12) by means of her resourceful biculturalism was far from innate. In point of fact, before she eventually managed to employ her mixed heritage in favour of herself and her people, she had to live in "an unfortunate space between the 'neithers' and the 'nors,' located somewhere on the borders of white and Indian worlds" (Enoch, 2002, p. 129) throughout her adolescence, as testified in her semiautobiographical essays.

Indeed, in the final part of "The School Days of an Indian Girl", Zitkala-Ša poignantly evokes the negative effects that her life of "transition and cultural dislocation" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 23) had on her once she returned to Yankton after her first stay at White's. During these "four strange summers" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97), Zitkala-Ša "oscillates between two pain-filled worlds, unable to achieve comfort in either" (Cutter, 1994, p. 35). Alienated from both the Native world of her infancy and the white world which had falsely promised her a better future by means of assimilation, Zitkala-Ša describes the dire consequences of her "displacement, (de)culturation, and acculturation" (Susag, 1993a, p. 3) as follows: "[d]uring this time, I seemed to hang in the heart of chaos, beyond the touch or voice of human aid" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97).

Feeling "[p]sychologically and spiritually unmoored" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 43), Zitkala-Ša desperately tries to find a safe place for herself through two specular rides,

representing the two worlds she feels barred from. First, she rides her brother's pony in an attempt to conform to the stereotype of the wild Indian riding across the prairies: "[w]ithin this vast wigwam of blue and green I rode reckless and insignificant" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 98). Once she notices that this attempt of hers to fully identify with her traditional Native heritage has failed, she decides to opt for a second, radically different ride: "I rode on the white man's iron steed[29]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 100), meaning that she has decided to go "east to school once more in her quest for an education and a place where she feels right" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 150).

Her choice to go back to White's reflects her need of "running away" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 100) from Yankton, which clearly has come to be perceived as a sort of prison. A similar prison imagery, however, can also be found in the depiction of Zitkala-Ša's years at White's, Earlham and Carlisle. For instance, the "constant clash of harsh noises" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89) young Zitkala-Ša resents while at White's makes her "securely tied" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89) to an "iron routine" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 95) which will eventually become "impossible to leave" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 96) once she is totally entrapped by the assimilationist system. What is more, Zitkala-Ša explicitly describes her room at Carlisle as a "small white-walled prison" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111) in which she is to spend her days in utter isolation, just as she did during college, when she "hid [her]self in [her] little room" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 101). In other words, throughout her youth, Zitkala-Ša feels imprisoned in the torturous limbo of "her divided loyalties between worlds" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 27).

However, it is precisely during this trying period that she also starts "actively testing the chains which tightly bound [her] individuality" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97), as she would do throughout her adulthood. A prime example of her early attempts to assert "the rebellion within [her]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 94) occurs during her first stay at White's, when she is "sent into the kitchen to mash the turnips for dinner" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93) as a punishment for "some misconduct" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93). Immediately before relating this episode, the author informs her readers that "[w]ithin a year [she] was able to express [her]self somewhat in broken English" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93) and that "[a]s soon as [she] comprehended a part of what was said and done [at White's], a mischievous spirit

[29] Here, Zitkala-Ša is making reference to the image of "the iron horse" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 85) missionaries had used to lure her into the train which would later bring her East towards her white, assimilationist education.

of revenge possessed [her]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93). This focus on her increasing English fluency and the oppositional stance she can hope to adopt by virtue of it proves that "[o]nly by understanding one's enemy could one resist and create sovereign space for alternative values" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 155). Zitkala-Ša effectively manages to do so by bringing to the next level the order to mash the turnips by "overzealously obeying her superiors' commands" (Chiarello, 2005, p. 22): "the order was, 'Mash these turnips,' and mash them I would!" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93). Indeed, Zitkala-Ša does not stop once the turnips are ready to be served, as implicitly requested, but instead continues to mash them, thus "work[ing] [her] vengeance upon them" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93) until she eventually breaks the jar which contained them.

As brilliantly argued by Barbara Chiarello, "[t]his act of defiance can be seen as the template for reading Native American literary resistance" (2005, p. 22). Indeed, just like young Zitkala-Ša "took the wooden tool that the paleface woman held out to [her]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93) to mash the turnips, so will an older Zitkala-Ša take up her pen, once again provided by her white educators, and use it for ends which had not been envisioned by them. Moreover, just like she brought her oppressors' order to the next level, so will she convert her imposed literacy into subversive literature, therefore finding a way to "use dominant literary practices against the grain of their cultural dictates" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 217). Finally, just like she managed to break the jar containing the turnips, so will she destroy "linguistic boundaries that were meant to restrain her" (Chiarello, 2005, p. 22) by "consciously exerting linguistic control in order to overthrow linguistic domination" (Spack, 1997, p. 31)[30].

A long time would pass before Zitkala-Ša managed to follow the lead of this early, seemingly irrelevant, yet deeply meaningful, act of rebellion. Indeed, before she could fulfil her "dream of vent for a long-pent consciousness" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112), Zitkala-Ša did risk ending up like those powerless Native victims the US hegemony insisted on representing. Feeling imprisoned both on her Native reservation and in the

[30] Usually, minority writers tend to maintain a conflictual relationship with the English language, since the latter is perceived as "an ambivalent tool – both [a] sign of oppression, and the means of escaping it" (Cutter, 1994, p. 37). Zitkala-Ša, on the contrary, assumed a quite straightforward stance with respect to her use of English. In fact, she was convinced that "a language belongs to whomever uses it" (Spack, 1997, p. 26), as she claimed during a public speech of hers, on the occasion of which she stated that: "Language is only a convenience, just like a coat is a convenience, and it is not so important as your mind and your heart" (quoted in Hafen, 1997, p. 40).

white educational system she has chosen to stay in, Zitkala-Ša is to be found sitting in the exact same defeatist attitude years apart: after her first stay at White's, she "sat stony, with a bowed head" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 100) in her mother's house, just like she would do years later while at Carlisle, where "[a]lone in [her] room, [she] sat like the petrified Indian woman of whom [her] mother used to tell [her]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112).

And yet, though her twofold alienation had been keeping her seated and seemingly defeated for a long time, Zitkala-Ša would eventually find a way to literally stand up, as well as to stand up for herself and her people. This is testified by two fairly distant, yet deeply connected, passages, placed towards the endings of "The School Days of an Indian Girl" and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians", respectively. While still enrolled at Earlham, Zitkala-Ša "walked alone with the night to [her] own little room" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 102) as if she wished to disappear. Years later, once ready to resign her post at Carlisle so as to create a new future for herself, Zitkala-Ša may finally manage to "walk again amid the crowds" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112), so as to be seen and heard rather than withdraw as she did when she still had not found her ultimate mission: that of making "her bicultural education culminate in her focusing her energies on behalf of Indians" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 24).

III.1.2: The Evolution of the Relationship between Zitkala-Ša and her Mother

Zitkala-Ša's progression from suffering because of to "exploiting her biculturalism" (Spack, 1997, p. 39) may better be traced by focusing on the evolution of her relationship with her mother. The latter is the narrative's deuteragonist and is actually the very first character to be introduced, even before the protagonist, at the beginning of "Impressions of an Indian Childhood". In fact, after having briefly evoked the reservation landscape this first essay is to take place in, the narrator recounts how "[her] mother came to draw water from the muddy stream [of the Missouri] for [their] household use. Always, when [her] mother started for the river, [Zitkala-Ša] stopped [her] play to run along with her" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68). From these few lines, the reader may already infer that Zitkala-Ša's mother is a respectable hard worker and that Zitkala-Ša is very fond of her, to the point that she prefers following her mother while she accomplishes her duties rather than keeping on playing. Hence, this very first image is already sufficient to suggest that, especially in this first essay, one of Zitkala-Ša's main objectives was that of

"reconstruct[ing] the image of the American Indian woman" (Spack, 1997, p. 38) in the eyes of her mostly white, and probably mostly prejudiced, readers.

As a matter of fact, at the time when Zitkala-Ša was writing, the hegemonic discourses circulating in the United States (and beyond) posited Native women as "degraded squaw[s]" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 221), that is, as "an affront to the 'cult of true womanhood'" (Spack, 1997, p. 27). Zitkala-Ša denies this assertion by relating the love and care her mother always bestowed upon her while she was a child. During Zitkala-Ša's reservation infancy, her mother was indeed a major source of comfort. In point of fact, before coming into contact with the white world, "Zitkala-Ša's day revolved around her mother" (Kunce, 2006, p. 75). The narrator recalls how, as a child, she wanted to stay "[c]lose beside [her] mother" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 74) as much as possible, and "was afraid to go very far from [their] wigwam unless [she] went with [her] mother" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 82). This Native woman therefore represented Zitkala-Ša's "most powerful source of love and acceptance" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 67).

What is more, she also constituted a role model Zitkala-Ša tried imitate so as to become in her own turn an active, cooperative member of the Native community she was originally meant to live with. Indeed, Zitkala-Ša recalls how she used to observe her mother's accomplishments "[w]ith a proud, beaming face" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 73) and, though she writes years later, she still commends her mother's selfless generosity, claiming that everyone could be "sure of [Zitkala-Ša's mother's] hospitality" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 70). Hence, throughout this first essay, Zitkala-Ša depicts her mother's values and way of living as admirable, therefore opposing the most diffused stereotypes about Native American women. She corroborates this perspective by depicting other Native women whom she also perceived as a major source of inspiration during her Yankton childhood. This is especially the case with her aunt, whom she was "very fond of" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 81), and her older cousin, Warca-Ziwin. Focusing once again on the act of carrying water from the river to one's own household, as she already did when introducing her mother, Zitkala-Ša writes about her cousin (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 69):

> My grown-up cousin, Warca-Ziwin (Sunflower), who was then seventeen, always went to the river alone for water for her mother. Their wigwam was not far from ours; and I saw her daily going to and from the river. I admired my cousin greatly. So I said:

> ‘Mother, when I am tall as my cousin Warca-Ziwin, you shall not have to come for water.
> I will do it for you.’

It is clear, then, that young Zitkala-Ša wanted to become part of this network of cooperation among women, a network whose power may be further inferred from the positive effects of the interactions between Zitkala-Ša’s mother and aunt: “[i]t was during my aunt’s visit with us that my mother forgot her accustomed quietness, often laughing heartily at some of my aunt’s witty remarks” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 81). What is more, a similar kind of mutual assistance may be found beyond the limits of Zitkala-Ša’s own biological family. Indeed, on the reservation a whole kinship system has been established, whereby all members of the tribal community act as if they were part of a sole family. This is proven, for instance, by how Zitkala-Ša refers to an old man whom she is not biologically related to as “an old grandfather” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 78) while he, in his turn, addresses Zitkala-Ša by calling her “my little grandchild” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 78).

By following her mother’s example, Zitkala-Ša tried to learn how to become a worthy member of this large kinship system. Her relationship with her mother therefore may be considered “the center of a larger kinship network of relatives and friends” (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 155). Moreover, this “human community is understood as part of a larger one, ‘all the relations’—plants, animals, and elements—of the place” (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 155). Hence, thanks to her close and nurturing relationship with her mother, young Zitkala-Ša could benefit from a deep connection with all the members of her tribal community as well as with nature. The latter even seems to acquire maternal traits when the narrator makes reference to “the lap of the prairie” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 75) shortly after having recalled how her younger self “pillowed [her] head in [her] mother’s lap” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 72) and “nestled into [her] mother’s lap” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 72). Zitkala-Ša, her mother, the tribal kinship system and nature are therefore closely interconnected from a Native perspective.

This is the reason why Zitkala-Ša, once back from her first stay at White’s, feels as if she were irremediably disconnected not only from her own mother, but also from the whole tribal kinship system and even from nature itself: “[e]ven nature seemed to have no place for [her]” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97). This is indeed a chain reaction whereby Zitkala-Ša ends up losing her mother, her mother’s people, and her motherland. Even her mother tongue seems to be threatened, as suggested by the first occurrence in which Zitkala-Ša

seems to feel the need to translate into English a Native expression: "'Oh, han!' (Oh, yes)" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 98). These words are uttered by an old Native man who, in conformity with the norms of mutual aid required within the Yankton kinship system, tries to help Zitkala-Ša when he thinks she might be in danger. In fact, when he sees her riding recklessly after a coyote, "[a]t once uneasy for [her] safety, he had come running to [Zitkala-Ša's] mother's cabin to give her warning" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 99). Though the old man had been acting in Zitkala-Ša's best interest, the young girl, now estranged "from her proper place in a kinship network of mutual care" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 155), does not feel gratitude for him: "I did not appreciate his kindly interest, for there was an unrest gnawing at my heart" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 99). This "unrest" is related to Zitkala-Ša's "feelings of belonging nowhere" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 150), provoked by her still unreconciled double heritage.

In such a troublesome situation, even her mother, who had been Zitkala-Ša's major source of comfort during her Yankton childhood, is no longer "capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97). This proves that "literacy [has] exact[ed] the price of a shattered mother-daughter and familial bond" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 226). Unable to "claim the only home she had ever known" (Susag, 1993a, p. 7), Zitkala-Ša ends up "cr[ying] in [her] mother's presence" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 99), making the latter feel deeply "troubled" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 99). Hers is the suffering of a mother who had been trying to hide her own tears from her daughter throughout the latter's childhood, just to see these same tears fall from the eyes of this very daughter. As a matter of fact, Zitkala-Ša's crying is "reversing and repeating her mother's refusal to share her grief with her young daughter [and] in both instances, the grief that distances them from each other is caused by contact with whites" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 67).

Indeed, Zitkala-Ša's mother "seldom wept before [her daughter]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 70) because she did not want to share with her the heavy burden of what white people had done to Zitkala-Ša's mother's family and community[31]. However, soon after Zitkala-Ša falls into the trap set for her by white missionaries, who lure her into an assimilationist boarding school, she is to shed all the tears her mother had been trying to hide from her. As a matter of fact, as soon as the young child leaves the reservation and

[31] These issues will be treated more in detail later on in this chapter, more specifically in the section "Gradually Unveiling the Inaccuracy of Hegemonic Stereotypes about Native Authenticity".

sees “the lonely figure of [her] mother vanish in the distance” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 86), her first “tears trickled down [her] cheeks” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 86). These tears will soon be followed by the “deep, tired sobs” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89) of her first night at White’s, where “[her] tears were left to dry themselves in streaks, because neither [her] aunt nor [her] mother was near to wipe them away” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89). This is precisely what Zitkala-Ša’s mother had already predicted while trying to dissuade her daughter from joining the white educational system: “You will cry for me, but they will not even soothe you” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 84).

Zitkala-Ša’s first departure from Yankton therefore creates a huge gap between herself and her mother, a gap which is to be further widened by her decision to go back to White’s and then apply for college. While her first step towards white education had been taken because of somebody else’s trickery, Zitkala-Ša’s subsequent continuation along the path of assimilationism is “voluntary and informed” (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 67). Indeed, the narrator describes it as an act of “deliberate disobedience” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 101), which provokes “[her] mother’s displeasure” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 100). Now that Zitkala-Ša has acted “against [her] mother’s will” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 101), this parental figure no longer functions as a safe harbour, but rather as an uneasy reminder of all that Zitkala-Ša has left behind her for the sake of her white education.

A prime example of this new function performed by her mother’s figure is to be found at the end of “The School Days of an Indian Girl”, when the narrator recalls that, while in her room at Earlham, “[i]n [her] mind, [she] saw [her] mother far away on the Western plains, […] holding a charge against [her]” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 103). At the beginning of the following essay, “An Indian Teacher Among Indians”, Zitkala-Ša is not ready to face this charge yet, since she feels that “it would be far too true to be comfortable” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 104). As things stand, “[her] pride kept [her] from returning to [her] mother” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 104). The beginning of this third essay is therefore set in total contrast with the opening of “Impressions of an Indian Childhood”, in which Zitkala-Ša was eager to follow her mother wherever she went.

While the relationship between mother and daughter has radically altered, what has not changed throughout the series is Zitkala-Ša’s mother’s searing indictment against “the fraudulence and violence of the ‘paleface’” (Lukens, 1997b, p. 145). Indeed, Zitkala-Ša’s

mother has no qualms about describing white people through such derogatory terms as: "a sickly sham" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 69), "the heartless paleface" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 70), "white robbers" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 109) and "white rascal" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 110). Moreover, she is not afraid of denouncing their shameless hypocrisy, as demonstrated by such affirmations as: "Their words are sweet, but […] their deeds are bitter" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 84) and "[i]t is this same paleface who offers in one palm the holy papers, and with the other gives a holy baptism of firewater. He is the hypocrite who reads with one eye, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and with the other gloats upon the sufferings of the Indian race" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 110).

Towards the end of "An Indian Teacher Among Indians", when briefly back to Yankton while working as a Carlisle recruiter, Zitkala-Ša is expected to answer her mother's accusations towards those same white people her daughter has chosen to live among. However, at this point of her life, Zitkala-Ša still feels burdened, rather than empowered, by her biculturalism, and is thus "silenced and incapacitated by the demands of competing cultures" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 71) which have both been shaping her worldview. In a few lines, Zitkala-Ša reiterates her inability to find a voice with which to express herself: "I found no words with which to answer satisfactorily. […] Again, though she stopped to hear what I might say, I was silent. […] I did not move my lips" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 109). It is clear that, since "[n]either culture, by itself, can adequately account for her self-expression" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 23), Zitkala-Ša is caught in a silent limbo.

In order to escape from it, she would desperately need to find a way for "[h]er Indian nature [to] be coupled with her Anglo experiences to generate her autobiographical voice" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 24). This voice will be finally found thanks to two curiously non-vocal sources of inspiration: Zitkala-Ša's mother's rebellious gesture and her hybridized dwelling. As for the former, Zitkala-Ša describes it as follows (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 110):

> She sprang to her feet, and […] she sent a curse upon [the white people who have come to occupy Yankton] who sat around the hated white man's light. Raising her right arm forcibly into line with her eye, she threw her whole might into her doubled fist as she shot it vehemently at the strangers. Long she held her outstretched fingers toward the settler's lodge, as if an invisible power passed from them to the evil at which she aimed.

Immediately after this scene, an ellipsis brings Zitkala-Ša back at Carlisle, but this time she is ready to denounce the white crimes she can witness in a bolder manner than ever

before, just as if she were trying to make her mother's "invisible power" visible and audible. She effectively writes that "[her] mother's stories of the encroaching white settlers, left [her] in no mood to strain [her] eyes in searching for latent good in [her] white co-workers" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111) and that "[a]t this stage of [her] own evolution, [she] was ready to curse [just like her mother] men of small capacity for being the dwarfs their God had made them" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111). Zitkala-Ša therefore seems to have found a new path for herself, namely, the personal mission of denouncing the "extreme indignities" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 91) she and her people have to suffer because of white encroachment and imposed assimilation.

As to the means to be used in order to fulfill this new mission of hers, Zitkala-Ša can once again count on her mother as a source of inspiration. Once back at Yankton as a Carlisle recruiter, Zitkala-Ša enters her mother's "cabin" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 108), where she can see "a checkered oilcloth" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 108) and two windows "curtained with a pink-flowered print" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 108). These typically white artifacts are the result of Zitkala-Ša's mother's "compromises" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 108) with a white culture she still does not approve of. The narrator further points out that her mother "meant always to give up her own customs for such of the white man's ways as pleased her" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 108). This conscious adoption of selected white ways, however, does not imply that her mother has renounced her Native identity.

Quite on the contrary, her very dwelling, however influenced by white culture (the very fact that she is living in a log cabin rather than in a wigwam is self-explanatory) is still replete with a deeply indigenous essence connecting this abode with nature. For instance, "[t]he sod roof was trying to boast of tiny sunflowers" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 108) and "[t]he rains had soaked the earth and roof so that the smell of damp clay was but the natural breath of such a dwelling" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 108). The hybrid nature of Zitkala-Ša's mother's house therefore proves that "occupying an 'Indian' subject position does not always mean being traditional" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 11). Quite on the contrary, "Indians are […] allowed to change, and still remain real Indians" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 6).

Once she gains this awareness, Zitkala-Ša can finally manage to "combin[e] her bicultural resources to produce a new type of Indian, one that exceeds the prescriptive roles offered Native American women by either culture" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 1). Zitkala-Ša shall no

longer have to choose between her Native and white cultural heritages, but will rather integrate both sets of cultural resources so as to write "a text that stitches red and white together" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 25). Indeed, her "revolutionary writing […] reveals that she is not a pure 'specimen', not just a product of a Sioux culture, nor just a product of a Christian culture. She is a creator of a new culture that combines her two ever-changing worlds" (Spack, 1997, p. 39). This might ultimately allow her to find "a satisfying and empowering sense of selfhood" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 71) and to make the suffering and resilience of her people finally heard through the means she has been endowed with by her white education. This combination of the multiple components of her own identity forms the basis for her essays, and will continue to influence her fight for the Native cause later on in her life, as testified by a letter she wrote to Montezuma more than one year after the publication of her *Atlantic Monthly* series, where she affirmed: "I am going to try to combine the two [cultures]" (quoted in Enoch, 2002, p. 119).

Ultimately, Zitkala-Ša may have become "unable to return to her mother's or Nature's womb – a reassuring and protective space of a nostalgic past" (Kumamoto Stanley, 1994, pp. 67-68), but this is not what she would need now that she has found a way to integrate her bicultural heritage. Quite on the contrary, such a space would now prove limited and limiting for a self who is claiming independence from the confines of both cultures. Consequently, "while she cannot replace what she has lost, [Zitkala-Ša] may be able to stake out her own claim to a space of respite" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 72) in which to express "her hybrid heritage, her multiple selves" (Kumamoto Stanley, 1994, p. 68).

This new space might be described as "an interstitial, 'in-between space,' a space that can provide, as Homi Bhabha has noted, a new terrain for initiating 'new signs of identity'" (Kumamoto Stanley, 1994, p. 67). In time, Zitkala-Ša has therefore managed to turn her biculturalism from an obstacle to a resource for her self-formation and self-expression. While in the course of her three semiautobiographical essays, her divided allegiance to the Native and Euro-American worlds made her feel "homeless and heavy-hearted" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 101), by the end of the narrative, Zitkala-Ša's "sense of cultural dislocation [finally] gives her the opportunity for relocating and reconceiving cultural identity" (Kumamoto Stanley, 1994, p. 68) to her own advantage.

Throughout this "record of loss and recovery of identity" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 61), Zitkala-Ša's mother has been playing an ever-changing, yet always pivotal role. In the first essay, she is depicted as an unquestioned role model and as a source of love and reassurance. After her daughter starts and then voluntarily pursues her assimilationist education, Zitkala-Ša's mother becomes a symbol of regret, the ultimate incarnation of all that constitutes the reservation world Zitkala-Ša now feels barred from because of the chain reaction triggered by the loss of her mother. Finally, towards the very end of the series, Zitkala-Ša's mother's recourse to strategic hybridity stimulates her daughter to find a new, hybrid voice for herself ,which may account for "a self that thwart[s] reductive interpretations of her life and writing" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 230), a self who is now ready to live independently from her mother and to voice her denunciation of white genocidal and ethnocidal practices without the need of "plac[ing] her critique in her mother's voice" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 64), as she did throughout the series.

III.2: Connection

III.2.1: Reaching out to the Reader

There is a reason why, for the vast majority of the narrative, Zitkala-Ša delegates to her mother the fieriest attacks towards white society. Indeed, "[i]f Zitkala-Ša were to document in first person the unfortunate history of conquest, her Euro-American readers might be outraged by the first chapter and discontinue reading" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 10). This is why, "[r]ather than alienating her reading audiences through direct criticism, [Zitkala-Ša] relies on the indirect speech of her mother" (Carpenter 2004, p. 10). Such a strategy is thus meant to represent Zitkala-Ša as "a non-hostile Yankton who cultivates a gentile civility" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 11) towards the mostly white readers of the *Atlantic Monthly*, whose "'genteel sensibilities' might [make them] refuse to purchase a journal that opens their eyes to America's decidedly indelicate Indian policy" (Chiarello, 2005, p. 15). It is therefore clear that Zitkala-Ša is keenly "mindful of her white audience" (Fisher, 1979, p. 233) and knows that if she "wants to tell her horror story [about the crimes against humanity committed by the US hegemony] while still appealing to her Anglo audiences and obeying the outlined conventions of civility, she needs to be indirect" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 24).

What is more, Zitkala-Ša demonstrates her skills of "calculation in administering effective counterattacks" (Kunce, 2006, p. 74) against the US dominant discourses not only by exploiting her mother's voice, but also by making sure that her mother's interventions are arranged in an escalation which may finally lead her white readers to "view themselves from an outsider's oppositional perspective" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 218). This may be observed in the juxtaposition between Zitkala-Ša's mother's advice "[d]on't believe a word [white missionaries] say!" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 84), uttered in the first essay, and the one she offers towards the end of the last essay, "[m]y daughter, beware of the paleface" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 110). Indeed, her first piece of advice is discredited by the very narrative voice, which still has to keep "attuned to her audience of mainstream Americans" (Hafen, 1997, p. 31): "I wondered how mother could say such hard words" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 85). This is the perspective of a young child who still has not left her idealized Native reservation, and therefore does not know either about the "unjustifiable frights and punishments" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93) she will eventually have to suffer while at White's or about "the wrenching upheavals of dislocation and white encroachment" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 159) her whole community has had to undergo. Once she (and, consequently, her readers) has become aware of all these violations, Zitkala-Ša's mother's second exhortation, strategically set near the closure of "An Indian Teacher Among Indians", will acquire a profound significance and also invite readers to reconsider Zitkala-Ša's mother's previous words, which were not that "hard" after all.

Hence, once Zitkala-Ša's readers become familiar with the author's perspective and life experience, they are inevitably led to "reconsider the so-called benevolent practices of Americanization through her eyes and her voice" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 62). Indeed, Zitkala-Ša's suffering is rendered in such a "real and vivid" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxix) manner, that by the end of the narrative her readers are "left with a choice: ignore [their] country's crimes or constructively engage them" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 159). If they were to opt for the former option, their ignorance would be deliberate, and as such opposite to another type of ignorance depicted in the series: that of a "hard-working, well-meaning, ignorant woman" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97) working at White's. While this woman is certainly not evoked as a role model, she is nevertheless characterized by two redeeming qualities, and even her ignorance might act as an excuse for her mistakes. This is because her ignorance is not voluntary, unlike that of those readers who may decide to

live on as if they had never come in contact with Zitkala-Ša's written testimony. In other words, "[w]hile [Zitkala-Ša's] ignorant mentors can be forgiven for mistreating her, her informed audiences cannot" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 20). Moreover, while during her stay at White's Zitkala-Ša preferred to "suffer in silence" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 96), in the case of her semi-autobiography she has instead tried to make her voice heard so as to dispel the silence usually surrounding Native suffering and resilience. Her readers are therefore left with no excuse.

What is more, since "in giving voice to the silent we unavoidably give voice to the forces that conspire to effect that silence" (Owens, 2001, p. 24), Zitkala-Ša manages to "crack the code of Euro-American discursive power" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 225) by appropriating it so as to show its arbitrariness. Indeed, by "mastering, rather than rejecting" (Kumamoto Stanley, 1994, p. 68) the resources provided by her white education, namely the English language and Euro-American literary practices, Zitkala-Ša can both "communicate with and condemn Euro-American culture" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 223). She therefore manages to "gai[n] her audience's attention […] by using forms with which they would be familiar" (Cutter, 1994, p. 33) and which might evoke in their minds either the stereotype of the "Vanishing Indian" or the reassuring figure of the fully-assimilated Native student. However, once her readers feel safe enough to approach her literary contribution precisely through the formulation of these stereotypes, Zitkala-Ša, "[r]ather than mirror[ing] back to her audience its expectations of her as native informant or model student, […] turns a discomforting spotlight on the audience itself" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 229). Her readers are thus confronted with a Native woman transcending all boundaries defined by US dominant discourses, and are led to recognize the inapplicability of their "crude, childish notions of the [Native] other as an inferior" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 9).

This narrative therefore requires its readers to withdraw their prejudices about Native people (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxxiv). Arguably one of the most efficient manners for this goal to be achieved is that of "putting a human face on the wrongs done to Indians at the turn of the century" (quoted in Lewandowski, 2016, p. 40). This is precisely what Zitkala-Ša tries to perform through her characterization of her younger self as a girl whose feelings are those of an average human being. For instance, while depicting the traumatizing alienation she feels once back at Yankton for the first time, Zitkala-Ša describes this "deplorable situation" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97) as "the effect of [her] brief

course in the East, and the unsatisfactory 'teenth' in a girl's years" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97). By blending together her peculiarly Native boarding school experience with the mood swings which might be felt by anyone during their adolescence[32], Zitkala-Ša proves that she is not just "an Indian", but a human being like any other, and like her own readers.

What is more, while still stuck in her alienation once back at school, Zitkala-Ša feels one of the most basic human needs: that of finding "congenial friends" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 100) among her peers. Indeed, throughout her high-school and college years, she "pined for sympathy" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 101), the same feeling her writer-self would like to engender among her readers in order for them to "adopt a critical position similar to the author's" (Lukens, 1997, p. 143). This new perspective would help her readership better "see and hear [Zitkala-Ša's] pain" (Chiarello, 2005, p. 21), as well as that of her people, and this might lead them to try to do something in order to relieve this very pain.

Such empathy might also be elicited by a "subdued style" (Chiarello, 2005, p. 14). In fact, Zitkala-Ša knew that "to decry the atrocity [of white crimes] would have marked [her] as an enemy of the culture committing the atrocity" (Kunce, 2006, p. 74). This is why she tried to modulate her voice so as for it to be "resistive yet compliant" (Terrance, 2011, p. 624) with respect to the US dominant society she was trying to reach. A prime example of her quiet tone may be found in the following passage: "however tempestuous this is within me, it comes out as the low voice of a curiously colored seashell, which is only for those ears that are bent with compassion to hear it" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97). These few lines actually go beyond the mention of Zitkala-Ša's modulated narrative voice (her "low voice") and come to include various components of her mediation between different cultures and peoples.

First of all, "by identifying with a seashell that does not, by itself, produce sound" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 24) but rather provides an echo of the sea it came from, Zitkala-Ša may be trying to suggest that her narrative, just like a seashell, is trying to encapsulate the voice of the Native "sea", that is, of the tribal and/or pan-Indian community she comes from. Secondly, the characterization of this seashell as "curiously colored" might be interpreted as an implicit reference to the perceived exoticism of Natives, or to their racist

[32] This combination had already been foreshadowed by Zitkala-Ša's description of her younger self as "neither a wee girl nor a tall one [an adolescent]; neither a wild Indian nor a tame one [a Native person undergoing the assimilationist system of her era]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97).

definition as "red people"[33]. Finally, the fact that "the low voice" of this "curiously colored seashell" is reserved for "those ears that are bent with compassion to hear it" proves once again that empathy is necessary in order for readers to understand the humanity of Zitkala-Ša and her people and thus go beyond the usual, dehumanizing stereotypes about them. What is more, the fact that these ears need to be "bent" in order for them to access Zitkala-Ša's voice implies that a certain effort is to be put by her readership in order for Zitkala-Ša's narrative to become a successful communicative act.

As a matter of fact, all acts of communication, in order to be regarded as such, need their message not only to be produced, but also received and taken into consideration by someone else. This is why Zitkala-Ša's essays cannot hope to overcome linguistic and sociocultural boundaries unless its readers are prone to engage in a collaborative enterprise. This is the kind of effort which might enable the voice, perspective and humanity of a Native woman educated in a Euro-American world to reach her readers, and hopefully change their minds and hearts with respect to Natives.

III.2.2: Gradually Unveiling the Inaccuracy of Hegemonic Stereotypes about Native Authenticity

As previously argued, Zitkala-Ša was trying to communicate with her mostly white readership by adopting various strategies meant to grab their attention. Among these, her use of attributes typically related to Natives' perceived exoticism is also worthy of mention. For instance, while recalling her childhood spent on the Yankton Reservation, Zitkala-Ša mentions such elements as "painted cheeks" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 75), "painted faces" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 79), "broad white bosoms of elk's teeth" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 79) and "glossy braids" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 79). She was probably aware that these referents, associated as they were with a dominant conception of alleged Native authenticity, could intrigue her readers, who would believe they caught "a rare authentic glimpse into an exotic world" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 138). Her exploitation of "the American habit of loving its 'Indian'" (Shanley, 2001, p. 34) as an exotic and safely

[33] Zitkala-Ša hints at the absurdity of this racist categorization by associating the adjective "red" with two white people during the course of her series. The first one is a woman working for White's, who is described as having "red hands" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93), whereas the second one is a "trusty driver" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 107) who carries Zitkala-Ša from a train station to Yankton, and whose "leather neck" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 107) is of a "reddish tan" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 107). The narrative voice further emphasizes this paradox by explicitly stating: "[t]hough I call him a paleface, his cheeks were of a brick red" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 107).

distant source of entertainment can be also observed in the characterization of her own childhood self (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68):

> I was a wild girl of seven. Loosely clad in a slip of brown buckskin, and light-footed with a pair of soft moccasins on my feet, I was as free as the wind that blew my hair, and no less spirited than a bounding deer. These were my mother's pride, - my wild freedom and overflowing spirits.

Through this initial description, Zitkala-Ša provides her readership with "the romantic 'primitive' Indian childhood of their dreams" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 144). Indeed, she describes herself as "wild", wearing exoticized attire and close to natural elements such as "the wind" and animals such as "a bounding deer". This might therefore be considered an epitome of the dominant "construction of the Indian type" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 4) as childish, carelessly free and closer to the animal realm, that is, to an inferior rank in the evolutionary ladder. And yet, though Zitkala-Ša might initially seem to conform to dominant discourses about "Indianness" through this characterization of her younger self, what she is actually trying to achieve is far more complex than her readers might expect.

As a matter of fact, she is actually trying to momentarily wear a mask which might make her be perceived as an innocuous "simple Indian, consistent with primitivist stereotypes" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 10). This stratagem may make her voice seem safe enough to be listened to, and therefore let her reach her Euro-American readership. As cleverly observed by Louis Owens with respect to this strategy (2001, p. 17):

> [this] mask is one realized over centuries through Euro-America's construction of the 'Indian' Other. In order to be recognized, and to thus have a voice that is heard by those in control of power, the Native must step into that mask and *be* the Indian constructed by white America. […] In short, to be seen and heard at all by the center […] the Native must pose as the absolute fake, the fabricated 'Indian'.

Zitkala-Ša therefore resorts to this mask in order for her voice and perspective to be accepted by her average readership. What is more, she further relies on stereotypes about Natives based on "the Romantic idealization of the natural and simple" (Murray, 2001, p. 84) by portraying her Yankton childhood as "a seemingly idyllic state of harmony" (Fisher, 1979, p. 231). For instance, she evokes how she could find "joyous relief in running loose in the open" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 75) together with her friends, just as if they were "little sportive nymphs on that Dakota sea of rolling green" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003,

p. 76). These images may seem to locate these children within a sort of timeless, dreamlike and unproblematic Native idyll where they may live cut off from the course of history. These children, however, are actually living on a reservation, that is, on a limited space resulting from federal politics of extermination, displacement and confinement, a space characterized by "undernourishment, material scarcity, and a decline in population" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 9). Hence, rather than being a safe harbour unaffected by the passing of time, Yankton actually is the result of "two centuries of massacres, diseases, and deprivations brought on by settler colonialism" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 136).

As a matter of fact, though at first glance "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" may seem to be set within a sort of Native idyll, Zitkala-Ša actually drops a few subtle hints meant to undermine this initial impression. For instance, the very first referent mentioned in the essay, "[a] wigwam" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68), might at first seem to meet Euro-American expectations about alleged Native authenticity, and would therefore sound reassuring. However, this wigwam is not made out of buckskin, as would be prescribed by Native tradition, but rather "of weather-stained canvas" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68). This immediate juxtaposition of a typically Native abode, the wigwam, and a typically Euro-American fabric, canvas, amounts to a disquieting oxymoron in the eyes of the average *Atlantic Monthly* reader, because it implicitly signals that this reservation might not be as exotic, timeless and authentic as expected.

This sneaking suspicion is further fuelled after just a few lines, when the narrative voice refers to the river crossing Yankton as "the Missouri" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68) rather than as *Mni'so'se* (Carpenter, 2004, p. 5), its original Native designation. The nagging doubt that this Native world might have already been contaminated by a white presence is also instilled by the characterization of Zitkala-Ša's mother. Indeed, after a laconic physical description, this woman is immediately depicted as "sad and silent" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68), with lips "compressed into hard and bitter lines" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68) and "shadows […] under her black eyes" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68). She, however, does not want to let her daughter know about the reason for her misery, as it might be read in this passage: "I clung to her hand and begged to know what made the tears fall. 'Hush, my little daughter must never talk about my tears'; and smiling through them, she patted my head" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68).

Actually, this is not the only occasion on which Zitkala-Ša is denied an answer to her inquiries. In fact, one evening, while sitting among some elders who are narrating traditional Native legends, Zitkala-Ša notices "a tattooed star upon the brow of [an] old warrior" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 72) and "two parallel lines on the chin of one of the old women" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 72). Since these tattoos are "a puzzle to [her]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 72), little Zitkala-Ša tries to ask the old woman about their meaning. The woman's response, however, is evasive: "they are signs, - secret signs I dare not tell you" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 72). It is clear, then, that a gap exists "between [Zitkala-Ša's] grasp of cultural signifiers and that of her mother and of the older members of the tribe" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 62). This gap is further emphasized later on in the essay, when Zitkala-Ša admits that she has never been able to hear the voices of her dead ancestors, as the elders on her reservation manage to: "[t]hough I had never heard with my own ears this strange whistle of departed spirits, yet I had listened so frequently to hear the old folks describe it that I knew I should recognize it at once" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 80).

The fact that a significant portion of the traditional knowledge system shared by her Native elders is precluded to Zitkala-Ša "disrupts her presentation of herself as a Sioux subject" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 63). Indeed, Zitkala-Ša is "a child of the nineteenth-century reservation system" (Susag, 1993a, p. 6), and as such she never really experiences a wholly traditional Native lifestyle untouched by white intervention. In other words, "[this] story specifically challenges the narrator's previous identification as a wild Indian child. Zitkala-Ša is born after the relocation, so her persona cannot pretend Anglos did not influence her until her eighth year" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 9). This means that even before she was sent to White's, Zitkala-Ša had already been experiencing a hybridized lifestyle, setting her apart from the "authentic" Native experience her readers might have hoped to catch a glimpse of. Hence, after representing herself as the exotic, wild Indian child par excellence so as to please her readers, Zitkala-Ša actually undermines this very stereotype from within by "prevent[ing] readers from keeping the Indian trapped in a state of timelessness" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 5). In fact, her experience is not timeless, but deeply influenced by the history of "displacement, confinement, and genocide" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 9) her tribe has had to undergo and adapt to.

Hence, the whole concept of pristine Native authenticity Zitkala-Ša has initially been resorting to is progressively subverted in the course of the narrative, proving once again

her awareness that discourses such as hers, which "contest core assumptions, must find a way to connect to mainstream foundational beliefs before embroidering a new design upon them" (Chiarello, 2005, p. 8). And so, after having tricked her white readers into thinking that they would be provided with a glimpse on an authentic Native world, Zitkala-Ša reveals instead that the "authentic Indians" they were so fond of had already ceased existing. Indeed, the new generations of Natives "were no more young braves in blankets and eagle plumes, nor Indian maids with prettily painted cheeks" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 99), since they had eventually become "civilized". Indeed, "[t]he young men wore the white man's coat and trousers, with bright neckties. The girls wore tight muslin dresses, with ribbons at neck and waist" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 99).

As for the older generations, those who have fought "former wars" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 79) have now become "toothless warriors" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, 79), and though they still "sat proudly erect on their horses" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 79), their slow pace could be compared to that of "old women" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 79). This demonstrates that the Native generations around whom the US hegemony has been framing its discourses are soon to be succeeded by deeply hybridized new generations of Natives such as Zitkala-Ša's. These young people, far from conforming to dominant expectations of alleged Native authenticity, carry out instead "an interfusion of cultural practices" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 5) which demonstrates that "Native American cultures are not static or exclusive" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 9) as claimed by US dominant society. Consequently, Zitkala-Ša's narrative reveals to its readers that "Anglo conceptions that stereotype the Indian as antithetical […] are inadequate and inaccurate for framing modern Indians such as [Zitkala-Ša]" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 9).

Another stereotype which is proven to be mistaken from the beginning of the series is the one linking Native people to insensitivity and/or passivity. This biased characterization is based on a misinterpretation of Native people's use of silence, which is much more frequent than it is the case with Euro-American habits. In this respect, what Zitkala-Ša wants to demonstrate is that "[r]ather than denot[ing] a lack of activity, silence means action" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 20) and that "Indians are never unemotional stoics; they merely appear that way to people who are unable to evaluate their silence" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 20). This might be why Zitkala-Ša depicts her mother, ultimately the moral authority of these essays (Bernardin, 1997, p. 221), precisely as often silent. While her

"taciturn and frequently sombre demeanour" (Kunce, 2006, p. 74) might at first seem incomprehensible to Zitkala-Ša's readers, they soon are to discover that this woman is carrying "an unspoken history of devastation" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxiii) as a personal (as well as collective) burden. By hiding her own suffering and worries from her own daughter, Zitkala-Ša's mother is thus trying to make her live a "free-spirited childhood" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 151), notwithstanding all the hardships the Yankton community actually has to face while confined on a reservation. This is why her silence, far from being a manifestation of passivity, is instead the conscious decision of a mother who is actively trying to "protect [her] child's space for free play and imaginative expression" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 151). Hence, all the "action and emotion contained in and expressed by these silences dispel the myth of the stoic Indian" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 20) by substituting to it the figure of a loving mother doting on her little daughter.

III.3: Reversal

As observed in the previous section, by gradually revealing that " the idyllic traditional Sioux life [she] has been describing is a fiction" (Spack, 1997, p. 31), Zitkala-Ša makes use of a shrewd "strategy of subversion and inversion" (Kumamoto Stanley, 1994, p. 65), meant to undermine her readers' expectations by proving how inaccurate they may be. This strategy is further developed when she appropriates and reverses three hegemonic discourses: Christian religion, white education's claimed focus on individuality and civility and the white (anthropological) gaze.

III.3.1: Revising the Bible: Zitkala-Ša's Fall from an Already Postlapsarian Eden

As previously argued, Yankton Reservation is not the Native idyll readers might expect, but rather a "dying oasis" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 40) which has already been severely affected by white intrusion. At first, however, readers might be tricked into thinking that Yankton might be considered a pristine Native location because Zitkala-Ša describes it by "using structural elements found in Eden: a fertile land with a river, an innocent state, and a single dictum from a creator figure – her mother commands that 'my little daughter must never talk about my tears'" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 5).

Such a careful construction of a seeming Native Eden may suggest that "Zitkala-Ša's use of 'Edenic' imagery [was] highly self-conscious" (Cutter, 1994, p. 34) and aimed at "revers[ing] the Indian/white binary commonly deployed by fundamental Christianity"

(Carpenter, 2004, p. 7). Indeed, by "locat[ing] Indians in the Garden of Eden, [Zitkala-Ša] displac[es] the old Puritanical image of the Indian as agent of Satan" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 7). This role is actually played within the narrative by white people, who are therefore implicitly connected to the biblical figure of the serpent. This association is to be observed on the occasion of the two falls from grace hinted at during "Impressions of an Indian Childhood".

The first fall from grace has already occurred before Zitkala-Ša's birth and has led to Native people's confinement on a white-created and white-imposed reservation. Zitkala-Ša's mother, "[w]ith a strange tremor in her voice" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 69), poignantly describes how Euro-Americans have forcibly deprived Native people of their original mother country: "[w]e were once very happy. But the paleface has stolen our lands and driven us hither. Having defrauded us of our land, the paleface forced us away" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 69). In other words, having been "tricked by the serpent-like Anglo through an unspoken event, the tribe was expelled from the land by which they defined themselves" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 8). This implies that Yankton is already a postlapsarian Eden and that after the intrusion of the paleface/serpent, it might no longer be possible for a pristine Native Eden to be actually regenerated.

In fact, this first fall from grace is to be followed by yet another fall, once again caused by white people acting as the biblical serpent. While the first fall concerns the Native community in general, the second one is more closely connected with Zitkala-Ša's own personal history. Indeed, Zitkala-Ša "positions herself in her story of genesis" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 6) by cleverly "draw[ing] on biblical motifs to upend the temptation of Eve in her own experience" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 40). Though readers have become aware that Yankton is an already postlapsarian Garden, to young Zitkala-Ša, whose innocence has been carefully defended by her mother, it still represents a heaven on earth. What is more, "[i]n Zitkala-Ša's paradise, her mother presides as God" (Kunce, 2006, p. 75). Indeed, just like Adam and Eve's Edenic experience was based upon their worship of the Christian God, "[i]n her 'prelapsarian' existence, Zitkala-Ša's day revolve[s] around her mother" (Kunce, 2006, p. 75). By "casting her mother as God" (Kunce, 2006, p. 73), Zitkala-Ša is actually operating a major reversal of white Christian tradition, as well as of other hegemonic discursive systems. Indeed, since "her god is Indian, female, and human

[…], Zitkala-Ša simultaneously unsettles the foundation of racism, patriarchy, and theological hierarchy" (Kunce, 2006, p. 76).

Another considerable inversion effectuated by Zitkala-Ša within her narrative is related to the two white missionaries who have come at Yankton to recruit pupils for White's. The seventh and last section of "Impressions of an Indian Childhood", "The Big Red Apples", precisely deals with their arrival, and opens with the following sentence: "[t]he first turning away from the easy, natural flow of my life occurred in an early spring" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 83). Through these first few lines, a threatening atmosphere is already set, whereby readers might infer that they should keep alert to whatever is to follow. Moreover, soon after this first implicit warning, "two paleface missionaries" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 83) are introduced as belonging to "that class of white men who wore big hats and carried large hearts, they said" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 83). The brief remark "they said" acts as a distancing device suggesting a discrepancy between the missionaries' self-proclaimed nature and objectives and their actual "intention to remove and change Indian children forever" (Susag, 1993a, p. 17) through manipulation. Hence, readers can get to understand that "the overt generosity of the missionaries" (Susag, 1993a, p. 17) is in fact just a "gracious facade […] covering their heart(less)ness and the means to cause suffering" (Susag, 1993a, p. 19).

However, though readers already know that these two missionaries will be "the agents of [Zitkala-Ša's] traumatic separation from her mother" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 221) and Yankton, Zitkala-Ša herself is still unaware of this, and therefore unable to recognize their trickery. Just like Eve had been tempted by the biblical Serpent through its exploitation of her desire for the Tree of Knowledge, so do the two missionaries, aided by "a young interpreter" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 84), manage to manipulate Zitkala-Ša's young psyche by arousing her fascination for a new forbidden tree: "the great tree where grew red, red apples" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 84). These apples are not just a quite clear reference to the biblical forbidden fruit, but might also be claimed to implicitly convey a further shade of meaning. Indeed, as pointed out by Cathy Davidson and Ada Norris, "[t]he apple also links [Zitkala-Ša's] tale of temptation and seduction with the lure of assimilationism: the apple is red on the outside, white on the inside" (2003, p. xxx), and may thus be interpreted as an allusion to the ultimate goal of assimilationism, namely that of making "red people" (Natives) acquire a white sense of identity.

Eager to roam among "the orchards of the East" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 84) so as to "reach out [her] hands and pick all the red apples [she] could eat" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 84), young Zitkala-Ša, just like Eve, "is tempted by the forbidden fruit of this world, for she longs to know" (Cutter, 1994, p. 34) more about the East. This world has been deceitfully depicted to her as a "Wonderland" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 84), "a more beautiful country than [hers]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 83) by the missionaries. As a consequence, Zitkala-Ša decides to follow them, not heeding her mother's advice: "[t]his was the first time I had ever been so unwilling to give up my own desire that I refused to hearken to my mother's voice" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 85).

As a matter of fact, Zitkala-Ša's mother would rather have her daughter "[s]tay with [her]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 84) on the reservation, but she finally has to let her go East because she recognizes that this would be the best opportunity for her daughter to develop the knowledge and skills she will eventually need to survive in an increasingly white world: "my daughter […] will need an education when she is grown, for then there will be fewer real Dakotas, and many more palefaces. This tearing her away, so young, from her mother is necessary, if I would have her an educated woman" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, pp. 85-86).

Zitkala-Ša's mother lets her daughter undertake her journey into the white world because of two main reasons. Firstly, just as God did with Adam and Eve, Zitkala-Ša's mother also wants her daughter to rely on her own free will (Kunce, 2006, p. 76). In fact, before communicating her final decision, she summons Zitkala-Ša to ask her whether she is truly convinced about going East: "my mother called me to her side. 'My daughter, do you still persist in wishing to leave your mother?' she asked" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 85). Secondly, she knows that letting her daughter take part in the assimilationist system is "necessary", because they no longer belong to a truly Edenic Native world, but rather to a postlapsarian Eden which has already proven to its inhabitants the need to adapt to a new, modern world heavily influenced by white people. This awareness therefore creates a connection between the first and second falls from grace featured in this narrative: indeed, Zitkala-Ša is led to fall precisely because she has already been living in a fallen world.

Though it is clear that she has been left with virtually no other choice, Zitkala-Ša's mother strongly resents sending her daughter to a boarding school, because she is well aware that "[her] daughter must suffer keenly in this experiment" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 86).

Compatibly with her role as God, "[Zitkala-Ša's] mother is represented as a nearly prophetic voice of truth" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 145): her daughter is indeed to "suffer keenly" the very moment she actually leaves the reservation, after having pleaded so eagerly for this to happen. In point of fact, she still "was happy" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 86) while walking besides her mother towards her new adventure into the white world, but as soon as she is definitively separated from this reassuring parental figure, "a sense of regret settled heavily upon [her]. [She] felt suddenly weak, as if [she] might fall limp to the ground" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 86). Just like Adam and Eve, Zitkala-Ša comes to realize the full significance of what she could benefit from only after renouncing it, and therefore "experiences a keen sense of a fall from the 'Edenic' realm of the mother" (Cutter, 1994, p. 35) to "the hard, desolate world outside the gates of a Sioux Eden" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 65). Unfortunately, just like in the Bible, "[o]nce you leave Eden, there is no going back" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 41), as confirmed by Zitkala-Ša's own words: "[n]ow the first step, parting me from my mother, was taken, and all my belated tears availed nothing" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 86).

All in all, Zitkala-Ša's choice to adapt the Christian trope of the fall from grace twice in her first essay allows her to "us[e] Christian motifs against their creators (white men) to critique the destruction of Native American culture" (Cutter, 1994, p. 34). What is more, by adopting this strategy of reversal, she might have wanted to challenge "America's […] idyllic self-portrayal as the biblical Promised Land" (Chiarello, 2005, p. 18). In point of fact, while the dominant discourses circulating in the United States tend to represent this nation as the only possible location where heaven on earth might come true, Zitkala-Ša subverts this self-praising depiction by describing "a harsh and fallen American world" (Cutter, 1994, p. 34) whose dire conditions are to be regarded as a consequence of white colonialism. As brilliantly argued by Ron Carpenter (2004, p. 8):

> Zitkala-Ša's veiled implication is that all Americans are already fallen since neither Indians nor Anglos can claim a 'chosen' or innocent status […]. Each culture loses a central tenet of its respective self-identification in the expansion west. Yanktons lose more than just land; they lose their symbiotic connection to the land as well as the perception that they are privileged inhabitants. Euroamericans lose their 'innocent' status as they become imperialists who commit genocide in order to occupy the land. As a consequence, no group can view America as a sacred garden or themselves as the chosen people.

The United States as a whole has therefore become a postlapsarian Eden, just like Yankton. This fall has been brought on by Euro-Americans' colonial practices, and might never stop, unless these genocidal and ethnocidal policies are abandoned.

III.3.2: Contrasting Native and Euro-American Educational Systems

Of prime importance among these policies was the assimilationist educational system set in the United States towards the end of the nineteenth century. This educational project was "explicitly aimed at making 'white men' out of Indians" (Havighurst, 1957, p. 107) by "breaking down students' nascent understanding of themselves" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 28) as Native individuals through a systematic annihilation of "their supposedly inferior cultures, religions, and languages" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 10). The boarding schools carrying out this project were therefore practicing "a form of violent cultural erasure" (Enoch, 2002, p. 124) which testified the deeply colonial ideology lying at the basis of this whole educational enterprise.

Indeed, "the attempt to destroy a people's history and language figures centrally in destroying or subduing that people, in replacing one worldview with another if outright genocide is somehow unpalatable or impractical" (Shanley, 2001, p. 26). The colonial undertone of this assimilationist mission may be discerned, for instance, from the words of John Fitch Kinney, a white man working at Yankton on behalf of the US federal government. In 1887, he touted (quoted in Lewandowski, 2016, p. 11):

> Education cuts the cord which binds [Indians] to pagan life, places the Bible in their hands, and substitutes the true God for the false one. Christianity in place of idolatry, civilization in place of superstition, morality in place of vice, cleanliness in place of filth, industry in place of idleness, self-respect in place of servility, and, in a word, humanity in place of abject degradation.

By constructing his claim around eight[34] different, yet deeply interrelated dualisms, Kinney clearly relies on the foundational colonial binary set between alleged white civilization and alleged Native savagery. In particular, what was thought to be missing among Native people in order for them to "become 'refined, educated, cultured beings' who would eventually bear the title of American citizen" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 10),

[34] These dualisms are: true God/false one, Christianity/idolatry, civilization/superstition, morality/vice, cleanliness/filth, industry/idleness, self-respect/servility and humanity/abject degradation.

was the partaking of "the American ideology of individuality, independence, and self-reliance" (Enoch, 2002, p. 128).

Indeed, Native people were claimed to be too attached to their tribal community, and thus unable to assert a truly unique, individual identity. Zitkala-Ša, however, refutes this allegation by "assert[ing] that the Indians' relationship to the tribe does not mean that they are bereft of an individual identity, but that white culture's worldview refuses to see the real individual identities of Indians" (Enoch, 2002, p. 130). This claim is substantiated by the comparison she draws between the tribal and white forms of education she has received in her life. Indeed, what ultimately emerges from this comparison is that, "[i]n contrast to the cultivation of Zitkala-Ša's individuality in her Indian community, the off-reservation school only restrained and impeded her development" (Enoch, 2002, p. 128). This evidence therefore undermines Richard Henry Pratt's assertion that "the Indian must leave the tribe to become educated as an individual" (Enoch, 2002, p. 130), proving instead that Zitkala-Ša's individuality was treasured and nurtured throughout her Yankton childhood.

Indeed, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" largely revolves around "the humane childrearing practices among the Sioux" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 143). What is especially praised by the author about her Yankton education is that it made her feel "strongly responsible and dependent upon [her] own judgement" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 74). In fact, within the tribal system, children are already regarded as "responsible, dignified members of the community" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 150) who shall therefore "share the responsibilities as well as the rewards of the kinship network" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 157). This Native view greatly differs from the general white opinion, according to which children could start to "contribute as productive citizens of the nation once they became adults" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 156) and not before. In contrast to this white belittling of children, "Zitkala-Ša depicts her childhood self carrying out responsibilities as a member of her kinship network and in turn receiving respect from adults" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 157) whenever she tries to "exercise decorum, generosity, and a general regard for others" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 157).

A major instance of this tendency is related in "The Coffee-Making" episode, centered on young Zitkala-Ša's attempt at honouring the rules of hospitality of her tribe by trying

to “serv[e] refreshments to a guest all by [her]self” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 78) while her mother is away. Since this is the first time she has ever tried to make coffee, what she ends up serving to her guest is “worse than muddy warm water” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 78), offered “with the air of bestowing generous hospitality” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 78). Since “the law of [Native] custom […] compelled [him] to partake of [Zitkala-Ša’s] insipid hospitality” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 79), the guest “sipped from the cup” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 78), making the child feel “proud to have succeeded so well” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 78). Once Zitkala-Ša’s mother comes back and is informed by the guest about what has happened, the two adults laugh together, but “neither [her mother] nor the warrior […] said anything to embarrass [Zitkala-Ša]. They treated [her] best judgement, poor as it was, with the utmost respect” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 79). This episode therefore proves that Native “[a]dults recognize that children are still learning how to exercise their kinship responsibilities, and thus react with kindness to their mistakes” (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 158), so as for children not to feel discouraged and continue to adhere to the rules of the kinship system they are already expected to follow.

By serving coffee to her guest, Zitkala-Ša tries to “play the part of a generous hostess” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 78), so as to “do her best to live up to the standards of her mother and the community” (Lukens, 1997b, p. 144). As a matter of fact, that of impersonating the role they were supposed to assume within their tribe was a frequent practice among Native children. As narrated by Zitkala-Ša herself (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 75):

> I remember well how we used to exchange our necklaces, beaded belts, and sometimes even our moccasins. We pretended to offer them as gifts to one another. We delighted in impersonating our own mothers. We talked of things we had heard them say in their conversations. We imitated their various manners, even to the inflection of their voices.

These impersonations are actually carried out by children as a form of free play, just like their search for “sweet roots” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 75) and “a stalky plant under whose yellow blossoms [they] found little crystal drops of gum” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 75). It is important to notice that, through this type of free play, these children “not only freely express themselves but also learn valuable lessons by practicing cultural activities such as gift giving and storytelling” (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 148), as well as subsistence gathering. Hence, contrarily to US hegemonic depictions of “wild” Indian children wasting their time by playing all day long, Zitkala-Ša is actually trying to demonstrate

that Native children can learn how to "perpetuate the culture of [their] tribe" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 145) precisely through this "playful interaction with the natural world" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 144) and among themselves.

What is more, Native children's upbringing is far from limited to playing. Quite on the contrary, "[w]hile [Zitkala-Ša's] mother allows ample time for free play […] she also gives significant attention to educating her daughter through direct instruction about social customs, stories told by herself and other adults, and lessons in beadwork" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 149). The latter are a prime example of how Native children are educated to become "simultaneously free and responsible" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 157). For instance, while Zitkala-Ša is allowed to opt for "original designs" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 74) and colour patterns of "[her] own taste" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 74), she also has the responsibility "to finish whatever she beg[ins]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 74), and therefore has to determine by herself how to manage her work sessions. This obviously enables her to acquire a noticeably high degree of independence from a very young age.

Moreover, her learning process also requires a lot of patience and perseverance, two qualities usually denied by white detractors of Native education. As a matter of fact, Zitkala-Ša recalls that "[i]t took many trials before [she] learned" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 74) how to do her beadwork properly and that anytime she managed to master a given technique, "a harder lesson was given [her]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 74). Her learning process is therefore organized on the basis of a carefully predetermined sequencing, and this further demonstrates that nothing is left to chance in Native education. This is further confirmed by the fact that Zitkala-Ša "should not do much alone in quills" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 75), which are poisonous sharp points, "until [she] was as tall as [her] cousin Warca-Ziwin" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 75). This limit has been imposed so as to ensure Zitkala-Ša's safety, which is of prime importance in the eyes of her mother and community. Indeed, in the very first scene featuring both mother and daughter, Zitkala-Ša's mother is depicted while "watch[ing] [Zitkala-Ša's] every movement" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 69), therefore making sure that her daughter might express herself in a safe environment. This contradicts hegemonic misrepresentations of Native parents as "child-like Indians who exercise no discipline at all" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 151).

All in all, Zitkala-Ša's depiction of her Native education "emphasizes the humanness and effectiveness of such community discipline" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 145). Indeed, since she was always treated as "a dignified little individual as long as [she] was on [her] good behaviour" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 74), Zitkala-Ša managed to develop "a self-policing behavior" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 17), whereby she could "exercise [her] personal freedom and creative expression" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 154) while still fulfilling her commitment as a member of her tribal community. Her personal experience may therefore suggest that Native children tend to be "educated in a nurturing way that does not hamper their free spirits" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 156) and provides them with "greater knowledge, greater agency, and a greater part in society" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 156) than is the case with white education. Overall, then, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" seems to "suggest that American Indians are better at nurturing their children" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 139) than their Euro-American neighbours.

The very first section of the following essay, "The Land of Red Apples", seems to confirm this suggestion. This essay effectively opens with Zitkala-Ša's first travel on a train together with seven other Native children. On this occasion, the rude behaviour of the white passengers dashes the Native children's vain hopes about their new life in the Euro-American world: "[w]e had anticipated much pleasure from a ride on the iron horse, but the throngs of staring palefaces disturbed and troubled us" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 87)[35]. White people's shameless gawking at Native children is all the more disconcerting for Zitkala-Ša because it blatantly violates one of the main moral tenets professed by her mother, who "taught [her daughter] no fear save that of intruding [her]self upon others" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68). It is clear, then, that these white people's behaviour must seem "outstandingly rude, according to the manners [Zitkala-Ša] has been taught as a Sioux" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 147). This might be why the narrator dwells on this scene by detailing every single gesture of these white, nosey passengers (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 87):

> children who were no larger than I hung themselves upon the backs of their seats, with their bold white faces toward me. Sometimes they took their forefingers out of their mouths and pointed at my moccasined feet. Their mothers, instead of reproving such rude curiosity, looked closely at me, and attracted their children's further notice to my blanket. This embarrassed me, and kept me constantly on the verge of tears.

[35] The term "iron horse" is used to make reference to the train carrying Zitkala-Ša to White's.

This is actually the first of (too) many occasions on which Zitkala-Ša is treated as a mere object of entertainment rather than as a human individual worthy of respect. This might be observed, for instance, during the same train voyage, when the missionaries start "tossing candies and gums into [the Native children's] mist" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 88). While this action amuses Zitkala-Ša and her peers, from an external vantage point, it might resemble the gesture one would perform while feeding some zoo animals.

Zitkala-Ša's dignity is further offended soon after she enters White's for the first time. In fact, while still bewildered by this alien environment, she perceives "two warm hands grasp[ing] [her] firmly" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 88), and before she actually realizes what is happening, she is "tossed high in in midair [by] [a] rosy-cheeked paleface woman" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 88). While the latter is probably well-meaning and intends her gesture to "loosen the child up and make her feel more at ease in her new surroundings" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 147), she is nevertheless treating Zitkala-Ša as if she were "a wooden puppet" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 91), and the child strongly resents this: "I was both frightened and insulted by such trifling. […] My mother had never made a plaything of her wee daughter" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 88). Both the stares on the train and this failed attempt to comfort Zitkala-Ša are condemned by the narrator on the basis of their divergence from the norms of respect upheld by her Native community.[36] Indeed, throughout this series of essays, a comparison is set between the nurturing educational environment Zitkala-Ša could grow up into while at Yankton and the "corrupt and corrupting environment of the boarding schools" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 155).

This contrast is symbolically rendered through the juxtaposition of "Yankton silence with the harsh noise of the Institute" (Carpenter, 2004, p. 18), especially as far as the different sounds of Native and white footwear are concerned. In fact, Zitkala-Ša, who usually "crept noiselessly in her soft moccasins" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 86), is utterly distraught upon hearing "[t]he noisy hurrying of hard shoes upon a bare wooden floor" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 88). This contrast is so stark that it is expressed by relying on three different

[36] What is more, both actions may be claimed to carry a deeper and more general meaning. Firstly, by gawking unabashedly at Native children, these white passengers are clearly infringing their privacy, personal space and dignity, just like "settlers, government agents, and Christian enthusiasts" (Susag, 1993a, p. 19) have been doing for centuries with Native people in general, leading to major "territorial and cultural losses" (Susag, 1993a, p. 19). Secondly, the white woman's seemingly sympathetic gesture might instead be interpreted as "an analogue for the attitude of whites who would […] make playthings of Indians or attempt to assuage their own guilty consciences by bringing them into a situation of wardship" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 147). These two episodes therefore recall two major forms of intrusion perpetrated by white people to the detriment of Natives: territorial conquest and assimilationism.

binaries: the auditory difference between “noiselessly” and “noisy”, the antithetical textures of the “soft moccasins” and “hard shoes” and, finally, the divergence between the slow movement conveyed by the verb “crept” and the fast movement implied by “hurrying”. What is more, both sentences are almost identically repeated just a few pages later: once again, Zitkala-Ša depicts herself while “walk[ing] noiselessly in her soft moccasins” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 90) and evokes “[t]he annoying clatter of shoes on bare floors” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89). And yet, though the narrator has placed much emphasis on the contrast between these two types of footwear, Zitkala-Ša is soon depicted while “[creeping] up the stairs as quietly as [she] could in [her] squeaking shoes” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 91). This brief glimpse of her changing attire, shortly preceded by the analogous sentence “my blanket had been stripped from my shoulders” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 90), subtly reveals how the little child “finds herself consistently violated at the hands of the school’s missionaries, who attack every aspect of her personality and culture” (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 41).

This ethnocidal process reaches its apex when missionaries decide to cut Zitkala-Ša’s and the other newly-arrived Native children’s “long, heavy hair” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 90). Such a prospect is appalling from a Native viewpoint, because “[a]mong [these] people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, 90). Though Zitkala-Ša tries to hide, she is eventually discovered, “carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 91) in order for her hair to get cut. Hence, “[t]he violence of this initiation rite into white life” (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxxi) is both physical and psychological, and unfortunately prefigures the daily abuse Zitkala-Ša will have to undergo while at White’s. Immediately after the cutting of her hair, Zitkala-Ša recites the major violations she has already suffered during her journey into the Euro-American world: “[s]ince the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward’s” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 91).

And yet, though white cultural violence already seems to have reached its climax, readers are to discover that the most lethal weapon possessed by the boarding school to the detriment of its pupils is its “iron routine” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 95), namely “a dehumanizing process that numbs the Indian children’s spirits” (Carpenter, 2004, p. 19) through “a set of arbitrary rules that limit the children’s freedom for no concrete purpose”

(Lewandowski, 2016, p. 41). Just as the contrast between the Native and white worlds had been signalled by the juxtaposition of Native silence and white "bedlam" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89), so does Zitkala-Ša resort to yet another auditory image in order to symbolize this iron routine: White's constantly ringing bells. The first time Zitkala-Ša hears "[a] large bell [ringing] for breakfast" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89), she describes "its loud metallic voice" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89) as "crashing […] into [Native children's] sensitive ears" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89). The shock she feels at hearing this new sound, however, needs to be overcome as quickly as possible, as proven by the rapid succession of bells following the first one through the same meal: "[a] small bell was tapped […] a second bell was sounded […] and then a third bell was tapped" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 90).

By substituting Native children's agency and spontaneity with a "strict and draining script" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 154) whose frantic pace is dictated by ever-present ringing bells, "the school's 'iron routine' […] denies the autonomy, respect, and individual attention" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 41) Native children could benefit from while on their reservations. What is instead required of them while in the assimilationist system is military rigour. As a matter of fact, during her first day at White's, Zitkala-Ša observes the other girls "marching into the dining room" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 90) as if they were a line of soldiers. While she might feel surprised by this view, especially because of the "stiff shoes and closely clinging dresses" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 90) these girls are wearing, this is an actual prefiguration of what will soon become of Zitkala-Ša herself. Indeed, she immediately has to join this line of marching girls, and before she even knows it, she, too, finds it "next to impossible to leave the iron routine after the civilizing machine had once begun its day's buzzing" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 96). Consequently, once she has "tumbled out upon chilly bare floors back again into a paleface day" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 96), she has no choice but to "trudg[e] in the day's harness heavy-footed, like a dumb sick brute" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 96).

This last characterization signals how White's is gradually converting its Native pupils into walking stereotypes. Indeed, by feeling like "a dumb sick brute", Zitkala-Ša seems to incarnate the popular effigy of the Native passive drudge, whereas her self-depiction as "a mummy for burial" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97) fully resonates with the national myth of the "Vanishing Indian", constantly on the verge of death, if not dead already. Hence, while advocates of this assimilationist system insist on the necessity for Native people to

be educated according to Euro-American tenets in order for them to become unique and worthy individuals, Zitkala-Ša assumes the opposite stance. As a matter of fact, what she demonstrates through her writing is that Euro-American education "was not what enabled her to develop her individuality; instead, the school compromised and constricted it" (Enoch, 2002, p. 128), to the point that eventually "[t]he altered subjectivity projected onto her by the school leads her to a state of mis-recognition" (Terrance, 2011, p. 623).

Indeed, "[f]rom her Yankton perspective, [Zitkala-Ša] has been treated like an object, a plaything, a coward, and a herded animal" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 154), rather than as "the dignified little individual" she felt to be thanks to her mother's love and respect for her. What she writes about the ultimate effect of her Euro-American education is that "now [she] was only one of many little animals driven by a herder" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 91). This last sentence is peculiarly compelling, not only because it evokes the school's erasure of its pupils' individuality ("only one of many"), but also because it equates young Natives with "little animals", as if they had lost not only their individuality, but even their very humanity. In fact, even before she reaches White's, Zitkala-Ša has already begun to feel "as frightened and bewildered as the captured young of a wild creature" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 86) the very moment she left her reservation.

This, then, is what the Euro-American educational system actually amounts to: a "dehumanized and dehumanizing environment" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxxi) ultimately leading Zitkala-Ša to lose her childhood self, a much cherished and respected identity which had been carefully nourished by herself, her mother and her tribal community. All in all, after having witnessed Zitkala-Ša's confrontation of the two educational systems she was raised into, her readers should have been led to understand that "traditional Indian childhoods—and the communities that nurture them—ought to be protected, supported, and looked to as a model rather than demolished in the name of so-called civilization" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 156).

III.3.3: Shifting the (Anthropological) Gaze

The afore-mentioned association of Native people with animals ("one of many little animals driven by a herder") was remarkably widespread within US hegemonic society, and was also shared by the de-facto founder of the boarding school system, Richard Henry Pratt, who explicitly "compared his education of Indians to domestication of wild fowl"

(Lewandowski, 2016, p. 10). His denigrating attitude towards his own Native pupils becomes apparent when he tells Zitkala-Ša, who now works for Carlisle, that she is going to be employed as a recruiter by using such words as: "I am going to turn you loose to pasture" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 106).

However, Zitkala-Ša cleverly manages to subvert his offense towards her people by appropriating a rhetorical strategy which is typical of white anthropology: that of rephrasing one's speech to make it more comprehensible to the target readers. Indeed, she comments on Pratt's assertion by writing: "[h]e was sending me West to gather Indian pupils for the school, and this was his way of expressing it" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 106). By mediating Pratt's speech for her readers, Zitkala-Ša astutely places him "in the position of outsider-who-must-be-translated" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 69), a position usually occupied by Native people whenever treated as an object of study by anthropologists. As a matter of fact, throughout her narrative, "Zitkala-Ša turns the field of anthropology on its head" (Spack, 1997, p. 25) by proving that any culture, when observed from an outer perspective, might result incomprehensible and seemingly absurd. In order to prove this, Zitkala-Ša "compels her readers to view American culture from her oppositional perspective" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 229), which is the viewpoint of a child who has never directly experienced the Euro-American world she has been lured into.

By "show[ing] [her readers] this new world through the child's fearful eyes" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxx), the narrator turns white cultural referents into "puzzling things" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 92). For instance, the stairs she has to climb for the first time at White's are described as "an upward incline of wooden boxes" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89). This depiction features "an anthropologist's acuity in dissecting a foreign culture" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxx). By reading such a description of their own cultural referents filtered by the external viewpoint of a Native child, Zitkala-Ša's readers may feel estranged from their own, Euro-American world (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxx) and therefore start to judge it from an unprecedented perspective. This might also help them reject the US hegemony's claim of absoluteness.

Zitkala-Ša's attempt to undermine from within some of the tenets of the white world culminates when she manages to "turn the rhetorical tables on the religion and medical practices of white people, two areas in which 'civilization' pretends superiority to tribal

‘superstitions’” (Lukens, 1997b, p. 148). She accomplishes this twofold purpose by narrating a peculiarly grievous episode: the death of a friend while at White’s, most probably caused by the missionaries’ “cruel neglect of [Native children’s] physical ills” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, pp. 96-97). While standing by her friend’s deathbed, Zitkala-Ša can observe “the open pages of the white man’s Bible” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 96) “[a]mong the folds of the bedclothes” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 96). This image powerfully suggests how useless Christianity may be with respect to a Native child’s affliction.

An analogous amount of uselessness is to be observed soon after, with reference to “the one teaspoon which dealt out, from a large bottle, healing to a row of variously ailing Indian children” (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97). Through this vivid depiction of carelessness, “[t]he supposedly advanced medical science of the whites appears to be no more than a patent remedy, misapplied to a wide variety of ailments” (Lukens, 1997b, p. 149) and thus unable to prevent the “poor health conditions” (Littlefield, 2004, p. 326) so tragically common among Native children attending boarding schools. Both Christianity and white medicine are therefore denied their alleged absolute power by Zitkala-Ša’s testimony. Indeed, the white missionary presiding over Zitkala-Ša’s friend’s deathbed “is not the Indian girl’s savior, but an accomplice in her murder” (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 41). In fact, this woman’s slack medical care towards her Native pupils and her attempt at imposing her own religious creed have led Zitkala-Ša’s friend to a premature death. The worst thing is that this white missionary shall never have to pay for this.

While Zitkala-Ša’s “most damning charge against the white missionaries is their inattention to the Indian children’s physical ailments” (Lukens, 1997b, p. 149), her narrative is overall replete with other instances of the “crude and barbaric behaviors” (Enoch, 2002, p. 127) these so-called educators tend to exhibit. Indeed, White’s is evoked as “a place of disrespect, degradation, and violence” (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxxi) which greatly differs from the nurturing educational environment Zitkala-Ša could benefit from while still on her reservation. For instance, as far as physical violence is concerned, while Zitkala-Ša “does not experience any violence at the hands of others in her Yankton community” (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 146), she is to witness the unmerciful beating of one of her Yankton friends only “[a] short time after [her] arrival” at White’s (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 92).

Indeed, because of a linguistic misunderstanding, Zitkala-Ša's friend is brutally beaten by a white missionary: "[w]ith an angry exclamation, the woman gave her a hard spanking" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 92) and "the woman meant her blows to smart, for the poor frightened girl shrieked at the top of her voice" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93). The depiction of such an unjustified use of violence might "put[…] [Zitkala-Ša's] reader into the position of having to judge harshly the very culture of which the reader is a part" (Davidson and Norris, p. xxx). After the woman lets the pupil go, Zitkala-Ša delivers her own judgment on the scene she has just witnessed by stating that "perhaps it occurred to [this woman] that brute force is not the solution" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93). This remark implicitly "suggest[s] that whites, rather than their Indian wards, required enlightenment in the values of civilization" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 37).

Hence, by demonstrating that "brute force", usually associated with "Indian savages", is instead exercised by a white missionary, "Zitkala-Ša disrupts readerly expectations of a 'wild' Indian finding civilization in the East by repeatedly highlighting the brutality and hypocrisy of Euro-American culture" (Bernardin, 1997, p. 218). Indeed, Zitkala-Ša manages to "reverse the common script that figured Indians as savages and white people as civilized" (Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 153) from the very first moment she enters White's and is told by an older Native pupil who sees her crying: "[w]ait until you are alone in the night" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89). This brief piece of advice already prefigures that Zitkala-Ša will have to suffer greatly while in the boarding school because of the "white savagery" (Enoch, 2002, p. 126) she will have to face, "but no one [will come] to comfort [her]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 91) as her mother used to.

Hence, this narrative proves that "movement into the boarding schools marked a devolution for native children, both in terms of their own joyful agency, and in terms of the civility of the society they were engaged in" (quoted in Suhr-Sytsma, 2014, p. 153). Consequently, by "arguing that she not only came to school a cultured and civilized child, but also that it was during her boarding school experience that she suffered the 'extreme indignities' of a savage and cruel white culture" (Enoch, 2002, p. 126), Zitkala-Ša completely discredits the self-proclaimed merits claimed by the supporters of the Euro-American, assimilationist educational system.

What is more, Zitkala-Ša not only "documents the aberrations of white culture" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xxx), but she also exposes the shameless hypocrisy used to cover them up. Indeed, the narrator concludes the afore-mentioned beating scene by reporting that "the woman hid away her half worn slipper, and led the child out, stroking her black shorn head" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93)[37] as if nothing had happened. In an analogous manner, while working for Pratt years later, Zitkala-Ša can notice that "the educational system at Carlisle was not what it projected itself to be" (Enoch, 2002, p. 133), as explicitly denounced in the following passage concerning the controversial outcome of a federal inspection (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111):

> a man was sent from the Great Father to inspect Indian schools, but what he saw was usually the students' sample work *made* for exhibition. I was nettled by this sly cunning of the workmen who hoodwinked the Indian's pale Father at Washington.

Carlisle's self-depiction as a successful educational system is thus an outright deception. Indeed, among the white people employed by this institution, Zitkala-Ša mentions "an opium-eater holding a position as teacher of Indians" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111), as well as "[a]n inebriate paleface [who] sat stupid in a doctor's chair, while Indian patients carried their ailments to untimely graves" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111). What unifies these two unworthy individuals, alongside their gross incompetence, is their intention of making easy money out of their non-education and wholly inadequate medical care of Native pupils. Indeed, Pratt himself, defined by Zitkala-Ša as "a Christian in power" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111), provides as the sole justification for the presence of this opium-eater the fact that "this pumpkin-colored creature had a feeble mother to support" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111), whereas in the case of the inebriate doctor, "his fair wife was dependent upon him for her daily food" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111).

By "expos[ing] the hypocrisy and injustice that she witnessed as a teacher at Carlisle" (Enoch, 2002, p. 133), Zitkala-Ša proves that white people might decide to engage in the assimilationist system not because they truly believe in the racial uplift ideology espoused by Pratt, but just because of their selfish greed: "I slowly comprehended that the large

[37] Ironically, though this missionary might try to deny what she has just committed by "hid[ing] away" her instrument of beating and "stroking [her pupil's] head", the fact that this very head is "shorn" is bound to remind readers of another act of violence perpetrated by White's educators, namely the utter violation of Native students' cultural pride represented by the cutting of their hair.

army of white teachers in Indian schools had a larger missionary creed than I had suspected. It was one which included self-preservation quite as much as Indian education" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111). In fact, Zitkala-Ša even mentions a so-called teacher who directly expresses his distrust of Pratt's assimilationist mission as he "tortured an ambitious Indian youth by frequently reminding the brave changeling that he was nothing but a 'government pauper'" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 111). This man's words, however, sound almost ludicrous after Zitkala-Ša's denunciation of the merely pecuniary reasons for white people's choice to become Carlisle "educators". Hence, while this teacher might wish to belittle his Native students by referring to them as "government pauper[s]", he is actually depicted in his own turn as a sort of "Indians' pauper" who should thank his Native students for giving him the opportunity to get a job in the first place.

Zitkala-Ša is therefore reversing the hegemonic "Native wardship" ideology, as she does by referring to those white people who have come to further invade the already limited territory occupied by Yankton Reservation: "[her mother] told [her] about the poverty-stricken white settlers, who lived in caves dug in the long ravines of the high hills across the river. A whole tribe of broad-footed white beggars had rushed hither to make claims on those wild lands" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 110). By proving that the white encroachment of Native lands is animated by a lack of resources on the part of Euro-Americans rather than by any alleged "civilizing mission", Zitkala-Ša further undermines the Euro-American set of dominant discourses. Moreover, by resorting to such derogatory terms as "[a] whole tribe of […] beggars", usually attributed to Natives, Zitkala-Ša once again manages to appropriate the US hegemony's linguistic resources so as to "turn them around to signify back on white culture" (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 61).

This shrewd strategy of reversal is also adopted by Zitkala-Ša towards the end of the narrative, when she recalls the "many specimens of civilized peoples" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112) visiting Carlisle classrooms as if they were there to take a look at some zoo animals (here again, the association between Natives and animals re-emerges). These white "specimens" are described in their mutual difference: "[t]he city folks with canes and eyeglasses, the countrymen with sunburnt cheeks and clumsy feet, forgot their relative social ranks in an ignorant curiosity" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112). From this depiction, it may be inferred that the white gazer has been turned into the person who is now gazed at, and vice versa. In fact, after having been gawked at even before reaching

White's, Zitkala-Ša seems to have finally "gained the power to 'see,' and under her gaze the 'civilized peoples' become the 'specimens' to be studied" (Spack, 1997, p. 25) in place of Natives. Zitkala-Ša has therefore managed to change the direction of the anthropological gaze during the course of her narrative.

During these three essays, readers may witness not only Zitkala-Ša's reversal of the white anthropological gaze, but also a change in direction of her own eyes. As a matter of fact, the movement of Zitkala-Ša's eyes does reveal much about her inner state. For instance, when she is unabashedly gawked at by the white passengers on her first train to White's, Zitkala-Ša reacts by sitting "perfectly still, with [her] eyes downcast, daring only now and then to shoot long glances around [her]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 87-88). She therefore has to restrain her burning curiosity because she "resent[s] being watched" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 87) so insistently by others. Indeed, by coming under the unwanted scrutiny of the white, intrusive, colonial gaze[38], Zitkala-Ša "becomes suddenly and starkly visible, situated as 'other' by a foreign system of meaning" (Paniccia Carden. 1997, p. 65) within which she is paradoxically posited either as a fascinating source of entertainment because of her difference from the Euro-American world, or as a flawed subject to be reformed precisely because of this same difference.

While the first characterization is exemplified by the intrigued reactions of the train passengers, the second one might be observed during Zitkala-Ša's first breakfast at White's, when she is still not used to the institution's "eating by formula" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 90), whereby every meal is to be preceded by a prayer. As a consequence, she is admonished by the gaze of one of the missionaries. Zitkala-Ša records this episode as follows (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 90):

> I heard a man's voice at one end of the hall, and I looked around to see him. But all the others hung their heads over their plates. As I glanced at the long chain of tables, I caught the eyes of a paleface woman upon me. Immediately I dropped my eyes, wondering why I was so keenly watched by the strange woman.

As it might be observed, both as a source of entertainment and as a soon-to-be-reformed subject, Zitkala-Ša feels compelled to react in the exact same manner, namely by turning

[38] This experience might be regarded as analogous to the one described by Frantz Fanon in his ground-breaking masterpiece *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), when he recounts how being seen as a monster in the eyes of a child is what finally makes him "burst apart" (Fanon, 1952 [2008], p. 82): "the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up" (Fanon, 1952 [2008], p. 86).

her eyes downward, so as to evade the undesired scrutiny of the white gaze. Another occasion on which she feels scrutinized by somebody's glance occurs when she is shown "a picture of the white man's devil" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 94) by one of the boarding school's "educators", who frightens the child by telling her that "this terrible creature roamed loose in the world, and that little girls who disobeyed school regulations were to be tortured by him" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 94).

Zitkala-Ša feels so threatened by this creature that it even ends up appearing in one of her dreams. Not by chance, in Zitkala-Ša's account of this dream, the devil's eyes are the physical feature which seems to have impressed the young girl the most: "his glittering yellow eyes were fastened upon me" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 95). The intrusiveness of the devil's glance might also recall the trespass on Zitkala-Ša's own privacy and sense of identity the white passengers on the train committed by shamelessly gawking at her. However, while on that occasion Zitkala-Ša had surrendered to the traumatizing power of the white gaze, this time she is ready to react in a different, more assertive manner. Indeed, after waking up from her dream, Zitkala-Ša "took [her] revenge upon the devil" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 95) by picking up the book featuring its threatening image and by "scratching out his wicked eyes" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 95) with "a broken slate pencil" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 95). With this gesture, which might be argued to "foreshadow her future as a writer" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 149), Zitkala-Ša therefore manages to actively react to the menacing white gaze.

She will eventually succeed in doing so also during her college years, while surrounded by "the scornful and yet curious eyes of the students" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 101). While during this period she usually tries to pass unnoticed, she still decides to seize an important occasion for visibility by participating in the Indiana State Oratorical Contest as Earlham's representative. In this circumstance, the white gaze Zitkala-Ša has to face has greatly augmented in scope with respect to her previous experiences, as she is met with "a vast ocean of eyes" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 102) while performing her speech. And yet, after her readers have repeatedly observed her in the act of averting her eyes from the overwhelming white gaze, they now can read that she is finally able to keep her eyes steady. Indeed, Zitkala-Ša manages to sail this "vast ocean of eyes" by "gleam[ing] fiercely upon the throngs of palefaces" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 103) and thus compelling them to sit "hushed and unprotesting as she rigorously overturned every prevailing

national narrative of America" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 25). Once able to determine by herself the direction her own eyes should take, Zitkala-Ša might thus try to turn the direction of her readers' eyes as well, so as for them to finally see the history of the United States from a new, deeply (and yet not only) Native perspective as Zitkala-Ša's.

III.4: Symbols of Nativeness, Whiteness and Ambivalence

As it could be observed in the previous section, in Zitkala-Ša's narrative, even a seemingly insignificant detail such as the direction of one's own gaze might convey deep shades of meaning to be inferred by the reader. This is also the case with some recurrent images such as the wind, the concept of inner fire, the four seasons and the telegraph pole.

III.4.1: Wind and Fire: Living on Against All Odds

As already mentioned, Zitkala-Ša's mother is a figure of prime importance within this series of semiautobiographical essays. Her Native name, Tate I Yohin Win, literally means "Reaches for the Wind", and therefore incapsulates a natural element which is, not by chance, frequently present throughout the narrative. What is more, Zitkala-Ša's perception and depiction of the wind and its effects changes through time in conjunction with the evolution of her relationship with her mother.

For instance, while Zitkala-Ša still lives on Yankton Reservation before leaving for the Euro-American world for the first time, she seems to be experiencing a symbiosis with the wind, as suggested by her "long black hair blowing in the breeze" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68). Indeed, during these first years of her life, "the child physically knows this power that whispers to clouds, roars around mountain tops, and drives her spirit" (Susag, 1993a, p. 11). Her relationship with the wind is so close and unquestioned that Zitkala-Ša even comes to directly identify herself with this natural element: "I was as free as the wind" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 68), she claims. Zitkala-Ša's symbiotic relationship with the wind mirrors her inseparability from her beloved mother and, by implication, from the Native world in general. Through this narrative device, Zitkala-Ša therefore manages to "affirm the continuity between the Wind, her mother, and herself" (Susag, 1993a, p. 11).

This virtuous circle, however, is interrupted by her first departure to the Euro-American world. During the hard time Zitkala-Ša spends at White's, "the absence of wind from the Eastern boarding-school landscape demonstrates the significant loss of power [Zitkala-Ša] and thousands of other Indian children must have felt when separated from

families and home" (Susag, 1993a, p. 11). Indeed, the wind is no longer mentioned throughout Zitkala-Ša's account of her first stay at White's until the very end of it, before she is to come back to Yankton. However, when this natural element is eventually referred to, it is no longer associated with Zitkala-Ša's effectively lived experience, but rather with her memories, thus further underlining how the wind is a prerogative of the Native natural and mental landscapes: "[p]erhaps my Indian nature is the moaning wind which stirs [my memories]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97).

The connection between the wind and the Native world is further emphasized when Zitkala-Ša comes back to Yankton for the first time. In fact, when she decides to go for a horse ride, "[a] strong wind blew against [her] cheeks and fluttered [her] sleeves" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 98) and "rolled off in long, shadowy waves" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 98) among "the tall grasses" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 98). However, as previously noted, this horse ride is an attempt to overcome Zitkala-Ša's profound alienation by means of recovering a Native heritage and way of living she no longer feels she belongs to. This attempt, however, is not satisfying, as Zitkala-Ša does not manage to restore her close relationship with the wind, her mother, and the Native world in general.

This estrangement from her previous mode of existence seems exacerbated when Zitkala-Ša comes back to Yankton years later, this time as a Carlisle recruiter. Once again, the distance she feels from the Native dimension is symbolically rendered through the "recurring image of personified Wind" (Susag, 1993a, p. 11). Indeed, Zitkala-Ša records that, as she got off her train, "[a] strong hot wind seemed determined to blow [her] hat off, and return [her] to olden days when [she] roamed bareheaded over the hills" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 107). However, the wind's attempt to greet Zitkala-Ša and make her feel at home does not succeed, since the protagonist "stood on the platform in deep solitude" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 107), unable to feel connected to this natural element and all it stands for. What is more, the wind's attempt at depriving Zitkala-Ša of her hat, which stands as a symbol of Euro-American culture, would be a denial of what has now become a major component of Zitkala-Ša's own ambivalent identity and heritage, and as such would not "solv[e] the problem of [her] inner self" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112).

Indeed, what Zitkala-Ša would need at this point in her life would be to convert her own ambivalence, the result of her hybrid upbringing, into a fruitful resource rather than a

source of shame and remorse. As previously observed, an unexpected source of inspiration for this inner change of hers is found by Zitkala-Ša during her stay at Yankton as a Carlisle recruiter. In fact, when she pays visit to her mother's log cabin, what she finds out is that her own mother, who until then had been characterized as the ultimate incarnation of the Native world, has decided to engage into a hybridized way of living, as symbolized by her new abode.

What strikes Zitkala-Ša is that this cabin, however hybridized, is still connected with the ever-returning Native wind: though it may not be entirely comparable with a traditional wigwam, in which "the cool morning breezes swept freely" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 73), it is still possible to hear "the moaning of the wind in the corner logs" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 109) and the roof is replete with "tiny sunflowers, the seeds of which had probably been planted by the constant wind" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 108). Hence, this image of natural resilience helps Zitkala-Ša to understand that she, too, might "bend without breaking" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 106) to the undeniable influence Euro-American culture has exercised on her, and that by embracing her own ambivalence rather than rejecting it, she, too, might plant new seeds, connected to her Native heritage, into the Euro-American culture she can now get access to and benefit from.

All in all, Zitkala-Ša's connection with the wind has followed the path of her relationship with her mother, going from an unquestioned symbiosis through a phase of separation and subsequent estrangement finally overcome by the realization that the ambivalent heritage and identity Zitkala-Ša has long rejected may represent the perfect occasion for her to reappropriate her own Nativeness and the wind's "power to move spirit and memory" (Susag, 1993a, p. 11). By retrieving her Native pride and heritage, Zitkala-Ša might finally couple them with her Euro-American cultural resources, so as for this Native wind to metaphorically blow out of her writing and shake the consciences of her audience.

Zitkala-Ša thus feels as if she has lost the power of the wind while being involved in the Euro-American, assimilationist educational system. The same happens with respect to another recurring image, namely, her inner fire. The latter is mentioned for the first time towards the beginning of "Impressions of Indian Childhood", when the narrator describes her childhood self as "keenly alive to the fire within" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 69) her, also defined as "[her] spirit" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 69). Once again, Zitkala-Ša can benefit from

an unproblematic symbiosis with this spiritual power of hers up until she is lured into an assimilationist system which risks depriving her of her previous Native resources. For instance, when her long hair gets cut by missionaries, Zitkala-Ša explicitly mentions that "[she] lost [her] spirit" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 91), just as if her inner fire had been definitively extinguished.

And yet, some faint spark of it must have survived under the ashes. Indeed, this inner fire of hers seems to be reignited even before Zitkala-Ša finally feels reconciled with her own ambivalent heritage and identity. In fact, while still at White's, she already reacquires, though momentarily, the "fire in [her] heart" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 93) when she rebels against her punishment by mashing the turnips as ordered, but by going beyond the limits implicitly set by her "educators", to the point of destroying the jar containing the turnips. This appropriation of white tools for the accomplishment of her own purposes makes Zitkala-Ša feel as if she were once again driven by that same inner fire which had been guiding her while still on the reservation. This kind of strategy, based on hybridity, is therefore the one Zitkala-Ša may try to adopt so as to retrieve the spirit she thought she had lost once and for all.

Another prime example of her ability to subvert some of the main tenets of Euro-American culture precisely through this very culture's resources is the speech she holds during the Indiana State Oratorical Contest. As a matter of fact, even before she actually starts speaking, she can already feel her inner fire gradually reigniting as a response to the racist behaviour of her audience: "[t]he slurs against the Indian that stained the lips of our opponents were already burning […] within my breast" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, 102). What eventually provokes an even "deeper burn" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, 102) is "a large white flag, with a drawing of a most forlorn Indian girl on it [and] words that ridiculed the college which was represented by a 'squaw'" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, pp. 102-103). This flag is a visual reminder of the discursive constraints usually imposed upon Zitkala-Ša and her people so as to belittle them. And yet, when Zitkala-Ša's speech gets awarded, "the white flag dropped out of sight, and the hands which hurled it hung limp in defeat" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 103), therefore proving that she has succeeded in retrieving her inner fire so as to convert her burning anger into a fiery rhetoric overcoming any ideological constraint her audience has been trying to impose on her.

III.4.2: The Four Seasons and the Telegraph Pole: Going Beyond Pain

While Zitkala-Ša is animated by an inner fire, the white world she has to face is instead connected with ice, fire's opposite. A prime example of this association occurs during her Yankton childhood, when she is given "a little bag of marbles" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 82) by some white missionaries. "[O]n a late winter day" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 82), while walking along the icy river with her mother, Zitkala-Ša "notice[s] for the first time the colours of the rainbow in the crystal ice" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 83), and this view immediately makes her think "of [her] glass marbles at home" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 83). With respect to this connection, it might be argued that "[t]he image of ice at the heart of the marbles, the only emblem she has for the missionaries, prefigures the cold heartlessness she will later experience at their hands" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 146). Indeed, when "[w]ith [her] bare fingers [she] tried to pick out some of the colours [in the ice], for they seemed so near the surface […] [her] fingers began to sting with the intense cold, and [she] had to bite them hard to keep from crying" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 83). Zitkala-Ša's gesture and its negative consequences seem to prefigure the pain she will undergo because of the temptation she will fall into, lured by the missionaries' promise that "the nice red apples are for those who pick them" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 85). Just like the colours of the ice "seemed so near the surface", Zitkala-Ša will believe the white world's red apples to be within her reach, only to discover that it all was just an illusion.

It should be noticed that the episode concerning the glass/ice marbles is introduced by the following words: "I have few memories of winter days at this period of my life, though many of the summer. There is one only which I can recall" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 82). Indeed, throughout the narrative, the Native world is connected with summer and the white world with winter. For instance, while recalling her Yankton childhood, Zitkala-Ša writes that "[m]any a summer afternoon a party of four or five of [her] playmates roamed over the hills with [her]" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 75). Analogously, the period she spends on the reservation after coming back from White's is described as "four strange summers" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97) and her journey to Yankton as a Carlisle recruiter is a "midsummer's travel" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 106). On the other hand, the very first day she spends at White's is immediately characterized as "a bitter-cold one; for the snow still covered the ground, and the trees were bare" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 89).

What is more, such a cold, wintry imagery does not only refer to the white landscape, but even to its people. For instance, the train passengers gawking at Native children have "glassy blue eyes" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 85), where the adjective "glassy" recalls Zitkala-Ša's glass/ice marbles, a woman working at White's has a "small, tired face […] coldly lighted with a pair of large grey eyes" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 96), and Zitkala-Ša's fellow students at Earlham are depicted as "a cold race whose hearts were frozen hard with prejudice" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 101). Not only does this coldness strengthen the connection between the white world and winter, but it also hints at the lack of empathy and human warmth Zitkala-Ša has to face while away from Yankton. In point of fact, the remark that "[d]uring the fall and winter seasons [she] scarcely had a real friend" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 101) epitomizes the twofold significance of white coldness in this narrative.

And yet, though the winter season might seem the most severe and sterile period of the year, seeds are actually waiting under the white snow for a new spring to bloom in, just as Zitkala-Ša waits for "the spring term" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 101) to deliver her ground-breaking speech at the oratorical contest. Zitkala-Ša does even more than that: already during her first winter at White's, she and her friends "play[…] in the snowdrift" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 92) by "fall[ing] lengthwise in the snow […] to see [their] own impressions" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 92). This image might be argued to prefigure how Zitkala-Ša will try to mark her own "Impressions" (here referred to the title of her first essay) on the white pages of the *Atlantic Monthly*, as well as, hopefully, on the cold hearts of her white readers; just as she did as a child on the white snow.

Indeed, Zitkala-Ša aims at eliciting her readers' empathy by showing them "the humanity and value of her tribal community" (Susag, 1993b, p. iv). She therefore "serves, through her writing, as a link between the oral tradition of an indigenous tribal culture and the written tradition of the literate colonizers" (Kumamoto Stanley, 1994, p. 65). While she eventually manages to act as "a powerful communicator in a new medium on behalf of her people" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 151), this achievement of hers is the result of a very painful period of personal and cultural crisis, overcome only after years of existential despair: "[t]he melancholy of those black days has left so long a shadow that it darkens the path of years that have since gone by" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 97).

Within her essays, Zitkala-Ša encapsulates the polyvalent essence of this "wounded communication" (Cutter, 1994, p. 40) within a potent symbol: the telegraph pole. This symbol gets mentioned for the first time during Zitkala-Ša's first train journey to the Euro-American world (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 88):

> [c]hancing to turn to the window at my side, I was quite breathless upon seeing one familiar object. It was the telegraph pole which strode by at short paces. Very near my mother's dwelling […], some poles like these had been planted by white men. Often I had stopped […] to hold my ear against the pole, and, hearing its low moaning, I used to wonder what the paleface had done to hurt it.

First of all, it should be noted that, to young Zitkala-Ša, the telegraph pole is a "familiar object", since she could find "some poles like these" "[v]ery near [her] mother's dwelling". This further confirms that Yankton Reservation has already become a postlapsarian Eden in which Zitkala-Ša might already come in contact with some Euro-American cultural elements. What is more, while on the one hand young Zitkala-Ša does not manage to "hear with [her] own ears [the] strange whistle of departed spirits" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 80), therefore proving that she is not fully connected with the past of her Native community, on the other hand she is perfectly able to listen to the telegraph pole's "low moaning", meaning that she is already inclined to live in a new kind of Native world, which is inevitably influenced by a significant white presence.

In this scene, the "low moaning" of the telegraph pole seems to denote pain, since, by hearing it, Zitkala-Ša "wonder[s] what the paleface had done to hurt it". An analogous sensation of suffering is evoked towards the end of the third essay, when the narrator presents her final "Retrospection" to her readers. At this point of her narrative, Zitkala-Ša identifies with the miserable telegraph pole she had been listening to while at Yankton and observing during her first journey to the Euro-American world. Indeed, she describes herself as "a slender tree […] uprooted from [her] mother, nature, and God […] shorn of [her] branches, which had waved in sympathy and love for home and friends […] [t]he natural coat of bark which had protected [her] oversensitive nature […] scraped off to the very quick" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112). In such conditions, she does resemble "the denuded trees, transformed into lifeless telegraph poles" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 41) of her infancy: "[n]ow a cold bare pole I seemed to be" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112), she exclaims. It is as if the coldness of the white world had finally triumphed over her spirit,

thus depriving her of the lifeblood she would need to grow as a healthy tree. Such lifelessness is due to her still unreconciled double heritage and resulting hybrid identity, the cause of her sense of uprootedness and alienation. Zitkala-Ša is so desperate that she even comes to wish "[her] heart's burdens would turn [her] to unfeeling stone" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112).

And yet, this bleak, disheartening final assessment is to be followed and counterbalanced by a much more hopeful perspective. This change in attitude is expressed by making reference, once again, to the image of the telegraph pole. Indeed, while its "low moaning" had been initially interpreted as a sign of discomfort, it actually represents a powerful form of long-distance communication, granted by electric impulses. In what is arguably the climax of this concluding passage, Zitkala-Ša brings this "electric metaphor" (Lukens, 1997b, p. 151) to the next level: "I seemed to hope a day would come when my mute aching head, reared upward to the sky, would flash a zigzag lightning across the heavens" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112). Not only would Zitkala-Ša rear her head, and consequently her eyes, "upward to the sky", after having kept them downcast for so long, but she would also "flash a zigzag lightning", as she effectively does by managing to be published on the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly* so as to fulminate against white people's "semblance of civilization" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 113). Her perspective is indeed sent "across the heavens" as if it were a "little sky rocket" (quoted in Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xviii), an image Zitkala-Ša herself resorts to in a 1901 letter to Montezuma related to her nascent career as a published writer.

Zitkala-Ša's interpretation and representation of the telegraph pole therefore evolve from a symbol of pain to an effective means of communication. This progression closely mirrors her own inner change. Initially, her hybrid education had led her to a discouraging condition of inner disruption and twofold alienation from both the Native and Euro-American worlds. However, she later manages to understand that her long-rejected ambivalent nature may be instead a perfect opportunity for her to move "in, out, around, and between worlds" (Davidson and Norris, 2003, p. xiii), thus acting as a means of communication, just like the telegraph pole. This is why her definition of her Carlisle Native pupils as a "small forest of Indian timber" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 113) might be read

in a more positive light than is usually done[39]. Indeed, these Native students certainly have to undergo a troublesome experience while at Carlisle, yet there is no reason why they should not manage to turn the white cultural resources they have been imparted into weapons for the fight for Native rights, dignity and pride Zitkala-Ša also engaged in.

This series of semiautobiographical essays might therefore be argued to close with a hint of hope, therefore opposing the Native tragedies usually crafted by the many authors buying into the tragic trope of the "Vanishing Indian". Indeed, towards the very end of her narrative, Zitkala-Ša gets "a new idea" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112), namely "a new way of solving the problem of [her] inner self" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112). Though she does not state what her new idea is (Paniccia Carden, 1997, p. 71), she lets her readers know that, thanks to it, she is now ready to change her life and create a new future for herself, by herself.

This is why she "resigned [her] position as teacher" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112) at Carlisle, ready to embark upon "the long course of study [she has] set for [her]self" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112). After this declaration of intent, the narrative shifts back to Zitkala-Ša's past: "[n]ow, as I look back upon the recent past" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 112). As for her future, "[t]he unwritten conclusion of this narrative is Zitkala-Ša's thirty-five-year long crusade to gain political and economic rights for her people" (Cutter, 1994, p. 41). Hence, after having exclaimed, in a moment of utter despair, "[l]et us not look for good or justice" (Zitkala-Ša, 2003, p. 109), Zitkala-Ša will instead do this for the rest of her life.

[39] What follows is an example of how this expression might be negatively read: "[n]o longer a healthy tree, Simmons is 'a cold bare pole… planted in a strange earth' – much like the row of identical telegraph lines that flew by the train window on her first trip east at eight years old. Pratt's young wards, 'a small forest of Indian timber,' are headed for the same fate" (Lewandowski, 2016, p. 43).

Chapter IV: Mourning Dove and the Value of Hybridity

IV.1: Cogewea's Identity and Love Struggles: Mixed Feelings about her Mixed-Blood Status

IV.1.1: Dealing with a Double Biological and Cultural Heritage

"Of mixed blood, was Cogewea" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 15): this is how the novel's eponymous heroine is first introduced to the readership. Through the use of an anastrophe, the character's status as a mixed-blood is thus mentioned before her name. This peculiar word arrangement therefore seems to give priority to the protagonist's biological heritage (and subsequent social standing) rather than to her own individuality. Hence, this figure of speech might suggest that even before actually getting to know about a given person's subjectivity, there would be a general propensity to frame this very person within some preconceived, stereotypical social category. Indeed, immediately after this first introduction, Cogewea is evoked as "a 'breed'! – the socially ostracized of two races" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 15), once again proving the pre-eminence of others' perception of her as yet another "'breed' girl" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 16), rather than as the unique individual readers will soon discover her to be.

Indeed, already during her infancy, Cogewea appears to be "[u]nlike other children" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 16). She spends the first years of her life together with her two sisters, Julia (the oldest) and Mary (the youngest), under the care of their Native mother's mother, the Stemteemä. The latter has decided to bring up her three mixed-blood grandchildren because their mother died "when [Cogewea] was but a small child" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 15), whereas their white father, "Bertram McDonnald, had followed the gold rush to Alaska" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 15), thus willingly abandoning his own children "for the glitter of gold" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 83). The Stemteemä imparts to her granddaughters a traditional Native education which is praised as "devoted" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 16) and fruitful, managing to endow the three sisters "with good health and vigorous constitutions" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 15), as well as "with bounding vitality" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 16). This traditional education also features some

prescribed limits which, however, are repeatedly exceeded by young Cogewea, who seems able to do so because "the blood of her white father allows her to escape some of the rules that govern Native relationships to the natural world" (Hendel, 2006, p. 66). A prime example of this tendency of hers is represented by the following excerpt (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 16):

> Cogewea […] was own-headed and at times wilful. She could ride well and made long strolls into the bordering mountains. These runaway-trips were not unattended with danger and consequently were a source of considerable solicitude on the part of the old grandparent. Unlike other children, the repeated warnings that *Sne-nah* would catch her, had no effect. Contrary to all precedent, the little 'breed' defied this dreaded devourer of children by extending her rambles farther and still farther into the luring wilderness.

Cogewea therefore "challenges the limitations set up for her by Okanogan culture" (Hendel, 2006, p. 79) so as for her to acquire more freedom than would be prescribed. These acts of self-affirmation make it possible for her to transcend essentialization and be perceived as a unique, "self-reliant" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 18) individual with whom it might become possible to empathize. Indeed, "[i]nsisting on Cogewea's subjective status does important work, as her oppressed female and Native American positions serve to obscure any sense of subjectivity" (Narduzzi, 2008, p. 70) within the hegemonic set of discourses circulating in the United States.

Cogewea's emancipation from the limits which would be expected from her within the Native community is carried on during her adolescence. In fact, after she falls from her horse because a serpent on the side of the road has scared it, Cogewea addresses the "rattler" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 25) as such: "my grandmother would not hurt you. But *I* am *not* my grandmother! I am not a full-blood – only a *breed* – […] and that breaks the charm of your magic with me. I do not fear you!" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 26). After this declaration, Cogewea effectively kills the serpent, thus proving once again her propensity to go beyond Native tradition.

And yet, by the age of twenty-one, the time-frame in which the novel is set, Cogewea's independence and self-assurance seem to be stifled. After having "graduated with high honours" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 16) at Carlisle, the coronation of nine years of Euro-American assimilationist schooling, Cogewea has moved to "the Horseshoe Bend Ranch" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 15), set on the Flathead Reservation and owned

by her older sister's white husband, John Carter. While on this ranch, Cogewea is allowed to live as freely "as all range riders" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 24) do and manages to "command [the riders'] respect as but few women of her blood could command it" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 17). At first glance, then, she still seems as free from her socially prescribed boundaries as she was during her childhood, acting "with the same daring confidence which had characterized her younger days of mountain riding" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 17).

However, deep inside, Cogewea is starting to resent "the profound liminality of mixed-blood identity" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 490). Indeed, while before she could claim her double heritage as an opportunity to go beyond prescribed limits, she now feels that this same "mixed heritage prevents the comfort of a unitary identity" (Karell, 1995, p. 463) her two sisters have instead managed to achieve. As a matter of fact, while "Julia […] has chosen to assimilate into the dominant culture through marriage to a white ranch owner; and Mary […] has chosen to live with her grandmother in the traditional Indian way" (Brown, 1989, p. 52), Cogewea, who is "[s]ignificantly […] the middle child" (Brown, 1989, p. 52), has preserved "her difference from essentialized understandings of both Anglo- and Native American identities" (Karell, 1995, p. 463).

This decision of hers has led to a major confusion as to "[w]hat the future [had] in store for her" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 17). Unable to choose between or fruitfully reconcile "the mutually exclusive destinies entwined in her mixed identity" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 497), the novel's protagonist feels insecure and disoriented: "Cogewea could not understand herself. She could find no place in life. Her mind burned with an undefinable restlessness. Her longings were vague and shadowy" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 22). Such a deep personal crisis has been triggered by her contact with the white world, since "[h]er assimilationist education has made her chafe at the social restrictions placed on her as a mixed-blood" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 497). These limits have been imposed on her, as well as on mixed-blood people in general, by a set of hegemonic discourses[40] diffusing "the culturally dominant view of the half-blood as outcast" (Kent, 1999, p. 49),

[40] These are just two instances of what could be read about mixed-blood people on the newspapers of the time: "[the mixed-blood is] the meanest creature that walks" [*Great Falls Tribune*, 16 July 1885] (quoted in Lukens, 1997a, p. 413) and "[the mixed-bloods] prowl on the outskirts of civilization" [*Fort Benton Record*, 17 October 1879] (quoted in Lukens, 1997a, p. 413).

that is, as an individual with "no place in society and, by inference, no right to exist" (Kent, 1999, p. 48). What is more, not only are mixed-blood people "maligned" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 41) by the dominant white society, but they also tend to be rejected by Native communities because of a "fear […] that [these] half-breed births embodied the death of Indian peoples and tribal consciousness" (Brown, 1988, p. 4).

Cogewea is well aware of this double exclusion, which she poignantly describes as follows: "we [mixed-bloods] are between two fires, the Red and the White. Our Caucasian brothers criticize us as a shiftless class, while the Indians disown us as abandoning our own race" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 41). In light of such social ostracism, Cogewea is no longer confident while "looking to the future" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 16), for she fears that it will not be determined by her personal merits, but rather by "the narrow limits of her prescribed sphere" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 22) as a person of mixed ancestry: "[s]he had struggled hard to equip herself for a useful career, but seemingly there was but one trail for her – that of mediocrity and obscurity. Regarded with suspicion by the Indian; shunned by the Caucasian; where was there any place for the despised breed" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 17). From these lines, it can be inferred that "Cogewea's cultural status […] makes her vulnerable" (Hendel. 2006, p. 67), troubled and pessimistic.

The disorientation related to her uncomfortable "dual status" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 497) also emerges when she has to "choose between two suitors: the loyal, trustworthy, responsible, half-breed Jim; or the villainous, plotting, opportunist Densmore" (Brown, 1989, p. 51), a white man. Indeed, it might be argued that Cogewea's "responses to romancing […] chart her competing allegiances to the mutually exclusive social identities represented by the two men" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 489). This implies that Mourning Dove has managed to use the typical Western trope of romantic rivalry in order to deal with the identity struggles of her mixed-blood heroine, a character who would instead have been denied any personal depth by the popular Westerns of the time.

Hence, this romantic plot should not be regarded as the core of the novel, but rather as a narrative device selected by the author to investigate her heroine's "search of identity and purpose" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 416). In fact, Cogewea "is less caught up in choosing the right man than in sorting out a meaningful identity for herself represented by those two

choices" (Brown, 1989, pp. 51-52), namely the illusion of living in the Euro-American world with Densmore or the opportunity of affirming her own mixed-blood identity through her marriage with Jim.

IV.1.2: Cogewea's Inability to Notice Densmore's True Nature and Intentions

Towards the end of the novel, Cogewea eventually manages to "find the middle road that will afford her the amenities of [Euro-American] civilization without compromising her traditional [Native] beliefs" (Fisher, 1981, p. xix). However, before achieving this reconciliation of her double heritage, she feels that "[i]f permitted, [she] would prefer living the white man's way to that of the reservation Indian" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 41) and that "[her] white blood calls to see the world" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 253) existing outside of the ranch. As a consequence, in order to gain access into the white world of her assimilationist education, Cogewea initially "attempts to try out the possibilities of her white heritage through marriage to a white man" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 417), Alfred Densmore, an Easterner who has reached the West "for adventure and money" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 81), convinced that "[t]here must be wealth somewhere in this new country – mines of it among the Indians – requiring only brains and strategy to possess" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 84).

Densmore is to stay on the Horseshoe Bend Ranch together with Cogewea and the ranch's cowboys for quite a long time, because he has been injured during a prank pulled on him by Jim and the other riders. Because of yet another prank, Densmore gets convinced that Cogewea is a rich heiress, and animated by "[h]is sordid dream of wealth" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 254), he tries to lure her into marriage, possibly through the "tribal marriage ceremony" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 136) he gets to know about and wants to resort to so as for the rite not to be recognized by Euro-American law. Indeed, his decision to opt for a traditional Native rather than Christian ceremony aligns him with "a pattern of tribal marriages between Anglo men and Native women whose illegality under U.S. law fuelled a history of abandonment and betrayal" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 496).

It should be also noted that "Densmore's insistence upon an Indian marriage ceremony is a reminder of the ignominious way white men have deceived Indian women by devaluing their rituals as much as they devalue the women themselves" (Fisher, 1981, p. xix). Indeed, Densmore has no respect for Cogewea. He does not value her as an individual of

her own worth; instead, he persistently tries to belittle her, as if she were nothing other than a mere walking stereotype, a "wild Brownie" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 90) who/which "[a]s a game […] affords amusement" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 90) but "is no mate for a gentleman of the upper society" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 81), unless she has "strings to a good mine" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 81). The very fact that Densmore is actually trying to despoil "a squaw" of what he believes to be her wealth speaks volumes about his blatant hypocrisy. This seriously challenges both his claim to be a well-off gentleman, "[a] scion of the ancient house of Densmore" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 87) and his misrepresentation of Cogewea, clearly aimed at distorting reality to his own advantage, though he would never admit it.

A major instance of Densmore's self-serving refusal to go beyond his own, limited and limiting standards with respect to Cogewea occurs towards the beginning of his stay at the ranch, when he catches himself being "half in love" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 81) with her. As soon as he realizes that he has started to see Cogewea in a romantic light, Densmore tries to hypocritically deny his own "weakness" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 81) by accusing her of having "cast a spell over him - a dangerous spell" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 81), therefore misrepresenting Cogewea through the widespread trope of the "Devilish Indian". He further tries to downplay his own feelings for her by claiming that "she only takes [his] fancy" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 81) and that she, like any non-white woman, could be "alright as [an] object of amusement and pleasure, but there it must halt" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 81). Densmore's objectification of Cogewea does not halt when she actually reaches him amid his hypocritical and denigratory musings. Indeed, he immediately perceives her as an "exquisite living picture" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 82), that is, as a mere incarnation of the myths surrounding Native and mixed-blood people, rather than as a unique individual.

Interestingly, though, his objectification of the girl takes an unexpected turn as he compares her to the following items: "[a] wild flower unscathed by sun-blight or frost – a ruby unflawed – a jewel worthy of any setting" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 82). The first object featured by this succession, the "wild flower", may be conventionally understood within the stereotypical conceptualization of Natives as "closer to nature and therefore lower on the evolutionary ladder" (Hendel, 2006, p. 81). Such a symbol would

thus seem suitable to be associated with Densmore's wilful misrepresentation of Cogewea as a "wild, tawny girl of the range" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 81). And yet, the following image, "a ruby unflawed", which still belongs to the natural realm but arouses the interest of white people, acts as a link between the "wild flower" and its reversal, "a jewel worthy of any setting", that is, a symbol of white refinement which would deny Densmore's attempted belittlement of Cogewea.

Indeed, Densmore seems to realize that, in his mind, he is figuring Cogewea as gradually admitted within the white realm he wants her to keep barred from. This might be why, after this rapid succession of metaphors granting Cogewea's ascent in his own biased perception, he dismisses his thoughts by stating "[b]ut after all, she was a *squaw*, while he was of an altogether higher cast" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 82). And yet, even after having "brushed aside all feelings kindred to love [Densmore] gazed at her with a fascination ill becoming one of his superior breeding" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 82). In this scene, then, Densmore's hypocrisy is betrayed by his gaze.

As a matter of fact, throughout the narrative, Densmore's eyes often convey what he might wish to hide so as for his plans to be realized. This might be inferred from his very first physical depiction: "[h]e was a medium sized, rather handsome man of about thirty four, light complexioned, thin lipped and with a cold, calculating grey eye" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 43). From this early passage, the reader may already notice that Densmore's eyes are the mirror of his soul and can therefore reveal his true nature and intentions. Indeed, the cowboys on the ranch do manage to read his eyes: Jim warns Cogewea against Densmore by telling her "I don't like his eyes and I don't think he's meanin' right by you" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 201), whereas Celluloid Bill, the rider who has convinced Densmore about Cogewea's alleged wealth, remembers that "his eyes went wide like sascers when I tol' him how th' gal had th' kale" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 268). But it is the Stemteemä, "[a] close reader of character" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 101), who immediately understands Densmore's true nature. Indeed, after having seen him only once, she already tells Cogewea that Densmore's "eye speaks the lie" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 103), and that all he might want from her is just "pleasure and riches" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 103), an assessment which will prove all too true.

Unfortunately, Cogewea seems to be the only character (together with her sister Julia[41]) who is unable to read Densmore's eyes. Indeed, the scene in which the Stemteemä immediately grasps the Easterner's true nature is described as such: "[a] covetous light had come into Densmore's eyes, which escaped the notice of Cogewea. But not so with Stemteemä" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 101). The main problem resides in the fact that Cogewea has been blinded by "that there polished manner of his'n" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 51), that is, by Densmore's gentlemanly behaviour. His are the "good manners" Cogewea has learned to appreciate during her nine years of white schooling, the same "good manners" often used by white people to uphold their civilizing rhetoric in the face of their rather uncivil behaviour. Cogewea has unfortunately fallen for Densmore's deceiving manners, and when the Stemteemä warns her that his "eye lowers dark with evil" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 104), she defends him by stating "I have never heard him utter a word that could be termed ungentlemanly" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 104). Such a declaration amply confirms what the Stemteemä has just told her in the course of the same conversation, namely that "[Densmore] is blinding [her] with false words" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 103).

Cogewea will eventually recognize that she "was blind" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 278) only too late, when she has already agreed to elope with Densmore, who has not met the Stemteemä's approval and has consequently convinced Cogewea to marry in secret. He has almost forced her to comply with this decision, as it may be inferred from the girl's "[i]ndecision and anxiety" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 255), two feelings which are "altogether different from those supposedly of the happy bride-to-be" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 256). Cogewea's apprehension is further aroused by Densmore's demand that she should give him her own gun. When questioned about such a bizarre request, Densmore offers the implausible excuse that the weapon "might get [Cogewea] hurt" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 259), just as if she were a "little girl" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 259) incapable of looking after herself. Such belittlement takes on an ominous patriarchal undertone when Densmore refers to Cogewea as a "conceited young lady" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 259) and to

[41] Indeed, Julia, the oldest, assimilated sister, "favored the Shoyahpee [white man], despite the innumerable warnings of the grandmother" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 245). On the contrary, Mary, the youngest, most traditional sister, has grasped in her own turn Densmore's duplicity and "could not like this Shoyahpee, with his smooth tongue and beguiling smile" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 157).

himself as “head of the family” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 259) who, as such, is “supposed to handle the purse” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 259). This expression makes implicit reference to his intention of despoiling Cogewea of her alleged wealth.

Upon discovering, shortly after, that no such wealth actually exists, Densmore casts all his deceiving good manners aside, making Cogewea wonder, “[w]as this polite and polished Shoyahpee, after all, a mere adventurer, a gross money hunter?” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 263). This is effectively Densmore’s true nature. After having “openly robbed” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 263) Cogewea of the considerable sum of money she has brought with her for their elopement, he even resorts to brutal violence, “dealing [Cogewea] a blinding blow in the face […] sh[aking] her viciously” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p.263) and then once again “jerk[ing] her rudely about [and] supplement[ing] [a] vile epithet with another brutal blow in the face” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 264). Only at this point can Cogewea finally read Densmore’s eyes, as the people around her at the range had already managed to do.

What she sees is that “[h]is eyes [are] those of the murderer” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 265), and indeed Densmore had already been planning about how to get rid of Cogewea once and for all: “[a] light marriage ceremony – acquirement of property title – accidental drowning while pleasure boating – fatal shooting accident while hunting – sudden heart failure” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 254). What is more, far from being an honest gentleman, Densmore himself reveals to be a consummate criminal: “[y]ou can always depend on a desperate man doing desperate things and perhaps if the truth was known you would find that I have not been too squeamish on other occasions” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 264).

Fortunately, Densmore does not kill Cogewea, but instead abandons her in the middle of a wood, tied to a tree. Before leaving with her money and broken heart, he vilifies her one last time through yet another objectification, by comparing her to a “statuette in bronze with a wild-wood setting” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 265) and therefore exercising both “physical and representational violence” (Holton, 1997, p. 73) against her. On the occasion of this awful turn of events, Cogewea finally learns about the “hellish duplicity” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 266) of Densmore, who has vented “[a]ll the venom of his perverted nature” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 265). The Stemteemä had actually

warned Cogewea about this venom from the very first time she met Densmore, by telling her grandchild that "[h]is tongue is forked; his breath is poison" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 104), just as if he were a treacherous serpent.

Indeed, throughout the novel, Densmore is referred to as a "dam' snake" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 229), a "coiled rattlesnake" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 248), a "forked tongued Shoyahpee" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 249) and "a snake [which] crawls in the grass with poison fangs […] lurks by the bubbling spring to strike with blight the heart of the confiding Indian maiden [and] hides in the darkness to catch her unaware" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 250)[42]. This recurrent image of Densmore-as-serpent finally reaches its apex when the Stemteemä, guided by Native spirits, dreams of Cogewea "struggling in the grasp of a frightful monster – a human serpent whose eyes were the glitter of gold (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 270-271), with the last detail referring to "the one god of [Densmore's] ambition" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 84): wealth.

As a matter of fact, throughout the novel Densmore has been driven by his "greed for Cogewea's land and money" (Brown, 1989, p. 52), an attitude which implicitly resonates with a more general "proprietary orientation within an economic system in which women, land, and resources are commodified and exploited" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 418) by white men. The fact that Densmore is such a "material predator" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 499) is further emphasized by his comparison with various predatory animals (other than the snake) such as "the hawk" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 104), "the blood appeased cougar" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 248), "[t]he eagle" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 250), "a vulture" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 271) and "a white-skinned coyote" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 278). On the contrary, Cogewea is often compared to prey animals such as "[t]he young bird" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 104), "[t]he young doe" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 248) and "the fawn" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 250). This relationship between Densmore-as-predator and Cogewea-as-prey is corroborated by an explicit reference to Densmore as "feeling secure of his prey" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 235). Generally speaking, it might be argued that Densmore's predatory attitude with respect to Cogewea's alleged resources

[42] Densmore truly "hides in the darkness" as if he were a snake: before asking Cogewea to elope with him, he is depicted while "coming from the shadows" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 251).

could be an implicit reminder of "the malevolence of colonial destruction" (Narduzzi, 2008, p. 68). Colonialism, Mourning Dove thus seems to suggest, is often induced by a greedy search for wealth rather than by the alleged noble motivations usually advanced by the colonial discourse, just as Densmore is motivated by "his dream of golden wealth" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 262) rather than by any sincere feeling towards Cogewea.

IV.1.3: Building a New, Mixed-Blood Future

Indeed, Densmore's declared feelings for Cogewea are far from genuine. On the contrary, Jim is animated by a "deep and honourable love" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 282) which would deserve to be requited. However, Cogewea will not accept the hand of the mixed-blood foreman up until the very end of the novel, when she eventually marries him. This union would not have been foreseen by Cogewea herself, who, at the beginning of the novel, is "coquettishly blind" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 19) to "the true emotions in [Jim's] strong impulsive bosom" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 19). On the contrary, all the other people on the ranch have already grasped Jim's true feelings for her, as demonstrated by "the knowing glances of the other riders" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 19). Just as in the case of Densmore, then, everybody but Cogewea manages to understand the real motivations of her two suitors before she does. This is why, taken by surprise by Jim's first attempt to declare his love for her, Cogewea does not even let him finish, by exclaiming: "Don't Jim! Please don't spoil every thing by being foolish! I love you as a big brother and let it go at that" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 30). After this first refusal, Jim's chances to win Cogewea's affections seem to become even slimmer upon Densmore's appearance. Indeed, at one point, Cogewea feels like she "could almost love [Jim] – but for the white man who had come so strangely into her life" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 116).

And yet, her ruinous love affair with Densmore will unexpectedly provide the perfect occasion for Cogewea to understand that Jim, rather than "the polished stranger" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 108), is the true gentleman on the H-B ranch. Initially, one of the main deterrents against an eventual union between Cogewea and Jim is the fact that Jim's education, "limited to indifferent reading and writing" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 19), renders him "hardly the social equal of the Carlisle maiden" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 19). In fact, during her rather long period of Euro-American

schooling, Cogewea "seemed to imbibe knowledge" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 16) and was therefore made to appreciate white "good manners", one of the main tenets of white alleged civilization. It should come as no surprise, then, that at first Cogewea feels more drawn to Densmore, a "[r]efined" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 137) man who "lift[s] his hat politely" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 45), is "particular about his dress" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 137) and "never [eats] with his knife" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 137), rather than to Jim, "a rough nugget" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 19) who, to the eyes of Densmore, and white society in general, can be no more than a "low-bred rope thrower" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 117).

And yet, in time Cogewea starts to realize that Jim's "rugged, uncultured exterior [is] offset with a well meaning heart" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 116), the very opposite of the "*black-heart*" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 260) that "[t]oo many of the so-called *white* men are afflicted with" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 260). Densmore, too, belongs to the latter category. Indeed, a close comparison between Densmore and Jim reverses the usual racial hierarchy set by hegemonic discourses by revealing that the white Easterner is the real savage, whereas the mixed-blood Westerner is an admirable man of strong principles. For instance, as previously observed, Densmore cajoles Cogewea into giving him her gun during their elopement, because he wants to make sure that she might have no opportunity for self-defence. Cogewea replies that she would rather have both guns since, were Jim to chase them, he would be "too manly to ever shot an unarmed man in any personal altercation" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 260). The contrast between Densmore, who wants to take advantage of an unarmed young woman, and Jim, who would never attack a rival unless set on equal terms with them, could not be more evident.

Cogewea's two suitors greatly differ also as far as physical contact with her is concerned. On the one hand, Jim refrains from it when he notices that it would not meet with Cogewea's approval: "Jim felt that he would like to take her in his arms, but he was well aware that such action would be resented. He repressed this impulse" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 28). His respect and patience will be ultimately rewarded when Cogewea decides to marry him. By then, she is ready to accept and reciprocate Jim's affectionate physical contact: "he slipped an arm about the yielding form […] nestling her head on his deep chest like a weary child" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 283). On the other hand,

Densmore insistently tries to hug or kiss Cogewea even though she tries to make him understand that, to her, this brash approach amounts to a series of "importunities" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 255): "[h]e attempted to embrace her but she held him off" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 251), "[h]e drew her to him and essayed to implant a kiss on the enticing lips, but she shrank away" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 253), "he again unsuccessfully attempted to kiss" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 254).

Densmore clearly has no respect for the girl's physical boundaries. The same goes for the Stemteemä, whose "word […] has been *law* to [Cogewea] all [her] life" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 251) but is instead depreciated by Densmore as if it were "the idle prattle of a childish and ignorant old squaw" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 249). Densmore further shows his disregard for the woman who "had been both father and mother to [Cogewea]" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 32) by calling her an "accursed she-savage" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 249), a "root eating old squaw" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 249) living in a "beggar's hovel" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 249). Densmore's vehement disapproval of the Stemteemä is counterbalanced by the old Native woman's ill opinion of the Euro-American "wily plotter" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 253), about whom she declares: "I hate him as a snake" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 250). In fact, the contrast between the two characters may be defined as "an almost anti-magnetic repulsion" (Holton, 1997, p. 73), which might remind readers of the tension felt by Cogewea while choosing between the traditional Native world of her grandmother and Densmore's luring Euro-American world.

Cogewea's final choice, however, is to try to "synthesize the two divergent cultures" (Brown, 1989, p. 52) by marrying Jim, a mixed-blood man, and therefore recognizing "her half-blood identity as viable and central to herself" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 418). Indeed, by marrying a mixed-blood man who works as a foreman on a white-owned ranch but has not forgotten his Native heritage, Cogewea "carves out a new position of bicultural identity in reaction to the nineteenth century portrait of the half-blood as social outcast" (Kent, 1999, p. 48). What is more, Jim, unlike Densmore, has totally deserved to win the girl's heart. Indeed, after having found her tied to a tree and beaten by the Easterner, Jim has brought Cogewea back home on the H-B ranch and, most importantly, "[h]e ha[s] never intruded on her sorrow, as much as he love[s] her" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 281), thus proving once again to be the true gentleman of the story.

After her misadventure with Densmore, Cogewea finally becomes able to value "Jim's many considerate attentions, his unselfish protective care for her […] and the chivalry of his coming to her rescue" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 281). Hence, her marriage with such a commendable man amounts to a happy ending which is further enhanced by Cogewea's unexpected inheritance of a quarter million dollars by her white father, who had made a fortune by managing a gold mine in Alaska. By opting for such a satisfying denouement, Mourning Dove clearly "rejects the standard tragic ending for the half-blood" (Kent, 1999, p. 48). In fact, mixed-blood characters were usually represented as tragically "suspended between [the Native and Euro-American] worlds and members of neither […] in popular fiction by white authors" (Kent, 1999, p. 48). Quite on the contrary, Mourning Dove's mixed-blood heroine ultimately "rejects this life of alienation and despair depicted by so many white authors" (Kent, 1999, p. 48) by deciding instead to "perpetuate the half-blood's existence in the future of American civilization through [her] marriage bond" (Kent, 1999, p. 49) with Jim, another person of mixed ancestry and cultural heritage. As a consequence, the novel contributes to reconceptualize the figure of the mixed-blood as "bicultural rather than outcast" (Kent, 1999, p. 59).

During her early broodings about her mixed-blood status, when she still felt hopelessly "torn between Native American and Anglo-American cultures" (Karell, 1995, p. 453), Cogewea thought of her social category on such terms: "they were just a go-between people, shut within their own diminutive world" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 41). After all the vicissitudes narrated in the novel, Cogewea's (and the readers') perspective may eventually change, so as for her status as a "go-between" person to be interpreted as "a new form of empowerment" (Hendel, 2006, p. 66), while the "diminutive world" she inhabits may become "a permanent space, an American homeland chosen by [Cogewea and Jim]" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 411): the H-B[43] ranch. In the course of the novel, this ranch effectively emerges as "the logical locus of the half-blood world, a liminal space where intersections occur and mixed heritage is tolerated, even fostered" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 416). Indeed, the ranch is the "safe place" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 416) where, contrarily to what would happen in the rest of the United States, "James LaGrinder can be foreman

[43] The fact that the name of the "Horseshoe Bend Ranch" is often abbreviated as the "H-B ranch" may be significant, since these two letters effectively are "the initials of 'half-blood'" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 416).

over all the hired hands, mixed-blood and white […] Cogewea can test the social, intellectual, and spiritual limits of who she is" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 416) and "Mary and the Stemteemä are free to hold closely to Okanogan tradition" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 416).

And yet, this very ranch is also "a monument to the appropriation of Native lands" (Hendel, 2006, p. 82) by Euro-Americans. As a matter of fact, this ranch is a white possession "constructed on allotted Indian lands" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 31), the Flathead Reservation, and as such it has taken its own part in "the process of western settlement and displacement of native peoples" (Hendel, 2006, p. 82). What is more, this ranch has also altered the animal life which could be previously observed on these lands. Indeed, the horses kept in the main corral are described as "poor frightened animals" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 51) and the living room of the main dwelling is decorated with "buffalo, bear and mountain lion skins [and] several antlers of deer and elk" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 31)[44]. Such pieces of furniture are literally "markers of the conquest over the wilderness" (Hendel, 2006, p. 82). The most potent symbol of this process of white encroachment is "the mounted head of a mighty buffalo bull" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 31) hanging above a bookcase and implicitly testifying the attempted eradication of traditional Native lifestyle (represented by the buffalo bull) in favour of white "civilization" (symbolized by the bookcase). Cogewea herself is not indifferent to the expressive power of this symbol, since she "never looked upon this trophy without a pang of regret" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 31).

Hence, the ambivalent nature of the H-B ranch, where Cogewea and Jim decide to live together, may suggest that the novel's "hopeful ending leaves Cogewea in a somewhat mixed position" (Hendel, 2006, p. 88). As a matter of fact, "[d]espite its semblance of freedom, the H-B ranch is confined within the Flathead Reservation, which is hemmed in by surrounding Anglo settlements" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 497). This spatial confinement may hint at the social confinement (Bernardin, 1995, pp. 502-503) mixed-blood people have to endure because of their stigmatization by both the Native and Euro-American communities. Indeed, the fact that the life possibilities of mixed-blood people are "limited in the same way that the landscape they inhabit has been fenced and settled" (Hendel, 2006, p. 88) is mentioned by Cogewea herself: "[w]e despised breeds are in a zone of our

[44] The worst of it is that "[i]nstead of serving a useful purpose, all of these items serve merely as decoration" (Hendel, 2006, p. 82) and thus stand for a futile sacrifice of wildlife.

own and when we break from the corral erected about us, we meet up with trouble" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 283). Jim actually tries to read this situation in a more positive light, by implicitly referring to the ranch as their love nest: "S'pose we remain together in that there corral you spoke of as bein' built 'round us" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 283). And yet, there is no denying that "Cogewea and Jim's chosen corral – mixed-blood marriage and the H-B ranch on the allotted Flathead reservation – provides an ambivalent space of self-containment" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 503), meant to defend them against "the ongoing threats to bicultural identity from both full-blood Indians and from Caucasians" (Karell, 1995, p. 464).

Hence, this ending, however centered on the well-deserved happiness of Cogewea and Jim, resists the temptation of sugar-coating and, instead of hiding the "unhealed rifts" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 503) of US society, it "foreground[s] the unresolved status of mixed-bloods within Native and Euro-American communities" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 502). By so doing, Mourning Dove makes sure that her readers are not provided with a consolatory narrative, assuaging their consciences. Instead, they should admire Cogewea's and Jim's ability to "call for space and self-respect, denied to half-bloods by both sides of their heritage" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 416) and feel ashamed that they may not have contributed "toward a world in which tolerance and familiarity would replace the systemic racism that characterize[s] official life" (Bowering, 1995, p. 36).

The hegemony's indifference to Native and mixed-blood issues is underlined by Cogewea herself when, after hearing Densmore's claim that "[t]he public would not tolerate such conditions" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 145), she replies thus (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 146):

> [t]he great mass of people who have to struggle for existence, have not the time nor ability to investigate or fight other than their own battles. The wealthy, church-going Christians, have irons in the fire and are too busy with their prayer bribes […] to bother casting a crust to the under dog of an 'inferior' race. This leaves the businessman and politician a free hand with the 'Indian Problem'

Though *Cogewea*'s readers might belong to this indifferent white public, now that they have read about the unique personality, feelings and struggles of a mixed-blood heroine and surrounding community, they should realize that humanity overcomes all racial barriers set to grant white privilege, and let this awareness lead their future actions and

interpretations. As Cogewea herself puts it, “all mankind [is] in the same channel – only that some sweep over white sands and smooth pebbles, while others dash among jagged rocks and splintered-edged boulders” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 22).

IV.2: A Hybrid Past and Present Reaching into the Future

IV.2.1: Avoiding the Dangers of Blind Assimilation

The preceding section closed with the mention of a watery metaphor employed by Cogewea. Densmore resorts to an analogous figure of speech when he tells Cogewea: “the Pend d’Oreille [a river crossing the Flathead] has its birth far up in the mountains, but it does not remain there […] Bursting from its gloomy confines, it grows into a thing of magnificent grandeur, averting stagnation” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 160). What he is trying to convey through this image is his desire for Cogewea to quit her Native values and worldly wisdom. Indeed, it may be argued that “[a]t the very heart of *Cogewea* is the attempted assimilation of a [mixed-blood] woman by a representative of white civilization through seduction” (Kent, 1999, p. 52). It shall be noted that Densmore’s attempt almost succeeds. In fact, though Cogewea exclaims “*never* will I cast aside my ancestral traditions” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 160), she actually follows for some time the path of blind assimilation by choosing to “disregard all of the traditional signs that warn against her relationship with Densmore” (Hendel, 2006, p. 83).

First of all, she does not heed her own Native spiritual power. Cogewea is actually able to perceive when “[t]he spirits are callin’” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 138). However, when her own “Indian Spirit tells [her] that [she is] stepping wrong” (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 253), she nevertheless decides to cast this precious warning aside.

She does the same with the admonition offered to her by the spirit of the sweat house[45]. Indeed, while the Stemteemä is performing this ritual in a desperate attempt "to change the heart of [Cogewea], then being lured to a shadowy trail of sorrow by the deceiving Shoyahpee" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 244), Cogewea herself happens to pass nearby and hears "[a] spirit voice [which] seemed to whisper just at her side: 'Beware! Beware!'" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 244). Unfortunately, the girl dismisses this signal by thinking: "[i]t can *not* be true this old Indian belief in the sweat house […] there could be nothing in such an age-old superstition" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 244).

An analogous discrediting attitude towards anything "old" is ill-advisedly adopted by Cogewea as far as the advice of her grandmother, "the moral backbone of the story" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 498), is concerned. By leaning towards Densmore, Cogewea increasingly drifts away from her previous major point of reference, as demonstrated by how the two lovers always make sure to interact "out of ear shot of the tepee" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 251) the Stemteemä inhabits. Cogewea even comes to say to her grandmother: "[t]he wisdom of the Stemteemä is of the past. She does not understand the waning of ancient ideas" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 176). Densmore uses similar words when he claims that, since the Stemteemä "is very old" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 252), she must be "incapable of understanding modern ideas and the changing conditions as can a younger person whose mind is not burdened with a century of snows" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 252).

However, both Cogewea and Densmore underestimate the Stemteemä's ability to "determin[e] the motives of her pale faced visitor" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 102). Indeed, as claimed by the old woman herself: "[t]hat the snows have left [her]

[45] In *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography*, a collection of autobiographical and ethnographical writings by Mourning Dove, later collected and edited by Jay Miller and first published in 1947, it is claimed that "[t]he greatest of all deities among the tribes of North America was the sweat lodge" (Mourning Dove, 1947 [1990]). This ritual is then described in detail: "[d]uring times of affliction or troubles in life, the Indian always turned to the sweat lodge to make a prayerful appeal. […] Preparation for building a lodge included the choice of level ground at the edge of a water source with an intervening area for a fire to heat the stones. […] After the ground was levelled it was covered with long, straight, green branches. […] The framework was conical and usually had twelve poles stuck into the ground and bound together at the top in a smooth, rounded shape. The poles at the entrance were left oblong to allow people of any size to enter comfortably. The twelve supports of the lodge represented the twelve ribs of the Sweatlodge deity and of mankind generally. […] The covering was made of fir boughs, grass, bark, and dirt. […] To the left, inside the entrance, a pit twelve inches deep and fifteen wide was dug and the rim covered with flat stones. This was the basin to hold the rocks, after they had been heated in an outside fire […]. The heated stones were rolled into the sweat house by means of two forked sticks […] When all were in, the doorway was covered and the lodge left to heat up. Meanwhile, the person undressed and took a cold-water bath before entering the lodge with a pail of water […] used to sprinkle the rocks to cause steam to rise and fill the space. The Indian sang his song of praise to the deity and prayed between verses" (Mourning Dove, 1947 [1990]).

hair withered, does not bespeak a tottering mind or that the vision is less clear" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 273). The Stemteemä's eyes are effectively "as yet undimmed by years" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 104) and can let her "understand the good and the bad as traced on the face of every man" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 274). This is also the case with Densmore, whose true, "sordid character" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 247) is "written on the brow [and] in the eye" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 274) and is immediately grasped by the Stemteemä the very first time she sees him.

What is more, not only does the Stemteemä derive her wisdom from what she can physically see, but also from what she can "[see] in vision" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 270), thanks to her "guiding spirits [which] point [her] the trouble lurking along [Cogewea's] way" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 104). The fact that the Stemteemä displays "the light of prophesy on her brow" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 248) after having "consulted the spirits" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 248) clearly hints at "[t]he authority given to the grandmother and, by extension, to Okanogan cultural perspectives" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 501) in general.

Indeed, the Stemteemä demonstrates "the truth value and the power invested in traditional Okanogan ways of understanding the world" (Hendel, 2006, p. 83) by managing to understand her surrounding situation much better than the majority of white people, including Densmore, would ever think. In fact, while "[a]pparently unheeding, [the Stemteemä] discern[s] and underst[ands]" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 102) all that she needs to know about Densmore, thus proving very "keen witted" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 157). The Stemteemä draws her information by acting "[c]overtly" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 247), so as not to let her "seeming stoic indifference" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 247) betray the full scope of her powerful knowledge. In this, she resembles her traditional dwelling, the tepee, whose "seemingly frail structure" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 164) might appear inadequate to resist any extreme weather event, but instead provides shelter to the Stemteemä, her three granddaughters and even Densmore during a frightful tempest.

This tempest has actually been provoked by Densmore's disrespect to nature. While he and Cogewea were fishing together, he "sp[ied] a small land toad [and] with the end of his pole he mischievously turned it over and over" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 159).

By committing this impolite gesture to the detriment of a "poor little helpless" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 159) creature which had done him no harm, Densmore unintentionally disregards a traditional Native admonition. Indeed, as Cogewea explains to him, "Indians claim that if you place a frog on its back, it will cause a storm without doubt" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 159). Densmore dismisses this claim by replying that "it is too clear for rain" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 160) and then overtly demeans Native traditional knowledge by telling Cogewea: "I supposed that you were enough educated to know better than to believe all those ridiculous signs of your people" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 160). And yet, these "ridiculous signs" do prove true, and Densmore is to "leap to his feet in amazement" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 163) upon seeing that a tempest has indeed formed shortly after his mischief. This tempest may be subjected to a twofold interpretation. First of all, it testifies to "the potency of traditional [Native] knowledge" (Hendel, 2006, p. 89) and secondly, it proves that "[t]he landscape […] acts as an autonomous agent" (Narduzzi, 2008, p. 70).

Indeed, nature's agency emerges throughout the novel. This does not only apply to the animal kingdom, as in the case of the "super-intelligence" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 23) of Cogewea's "canine friend" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 23), Bringo, but also concerns the seemingly inanimate landscape. As a matter of fact, the mountains surrounding the Flathead Reservation often "beckon [Cogewea]" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 22) and even "[c]all to her as if she were a part of them" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 22). Cogewea is indeed deeply connected with nature, and in this she "claims her Native mother's people's relationship to the land and its non-human inhabitants" (Hendel, 2006, p. 66). She is effectively described from the very first pages as "a lover of nature" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 17) who "ha[s] a habit of talking to her dumb friends [which/who] seemed to understand" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 23).

Nature reciprocates Cogewea's respect and affection by "giv[ing] Cogewea messages" (Narduzzi, 2008, p. 66). In this, the moon plays a pivotal role. This heavenly body makes its first appearance in the novel while "peeping over the great Rockies" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 78). From this moment on, the moon is to observe and form its own opinion about the development of Cogewea's love affairs. In fact, it/he "appear[s] to frown his disapproval" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 254) of Cogewea's decision to

elope with Densmore, and on the contrary "appear[s] to smile" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 284) when the girl finally accepts Jim's hand.

Jim is regarded with approval by the Stemteemä as well, to the point that she addresses him as "my son" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 271) and tells him, "I like you and I trust you" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 217). The first time "he ingratiate[s] himself in the old heart" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 78) is when he spontaneously offers to the Stemteemä "a blanket of rare design" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 77). Densmore later tries to do the same by offering her the results of his successful hunting and fishing. And yet, though "the sportsman [did not] forego an opportunity of ingratiating himself in [Stemteemä's] favor […] the ancient woman received the gifts with […] doubtful gratitude" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 156). Such different reactions to these two men's offerings are well-founded. Indeed, Densmore is a "cold, calculating business man" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 81)[46] trying to appease the Stemteemä just to win her approval and, as a consequence, her granddaughter's hand. On the contrary, Jim has made his offer out of respect for the traditions of his Native heritage.

In fact, Jim "ha[s] not thrown aside the beliefs of his Indian forefathers, as had so many of the educated half-bloods" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 241-242). Both the Stemteemä and Mary, Cogewea's traditional younger sister, notice Jim's respect for Native traditions with pleasure. Mary is indeed very delighted by this, and when Jim volunteers to help her build a sweat house for the Stemteemä, she can finally "regard him as one of her own kind" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 241). Feeling more at ease in his presence, Mary decides to tell him her opinion about the risks of blind assimilation (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 242):

> This is the trouble, the *fate* of the average breed of today. They are encouraged to *try* forget their Indian ancestry, after they once learn the white man's books and ways. They banish the idea of old tribal customs and laugh to scorn that which was sacred to the generations past. Some of the Indian system is bad, much of it is good; but it must *all* give place to that of the Shoyahpee, who arrogantly proclaims that of philosophies, his alone is worthy of emulation.

[46] These two adjectives (cold and calculating) are literally the same ones which had been used to characterize Densmore's gaze upon his very first appearance: "cold, calculating grey eye" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 43).

Mary thus believes that Native and mixed-blood people's total disavowal of their own traditions amounts to "trouble". This standpoint is effectively confirmed by Cogewea's storyline. In fact, when the girl "mistakenly considers herself exempt from the cultural authority of traditional Okanogan beliefs" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 501) by choosing not to heed the multiple warnings provided by the Stemteemä, the Native spiritual realm and nature, she almost pays with her life. Her happy ending (however ambivalent, as previously observed) can be reached only when she opts for Jim, a man who has met the approval of the Stemteemä, the spirits and nature.

Both the spiritual and natural dimensions, which are inextricably interconnected from a Native perspective[47], effectively bestow their blessing on the mixed-blood couple through the potent symbol of the old buffalo skull Cogewea has kept intact on Buffalo Butte, her favourite spot on the Flathead Reservation. Towards the end of the novel, shortly before Cogewea accepts to marry Jim, the reader is confronted with the following scene: "[Cogewea's] eyes dropped to the old skull. She started visibly! *Could* she be deceived? A voice seemed to issue from its cavernous depths in the Indian tongue; a laudation of – '*The Man! The Man! The Man!*" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 283-284). Then, immediately after the marriage union is agreed on, Cogewea and Jim start towards the main dwelling on the ranch, and "as they turned to go […] Cogewea paused, gazing intensely at the grey skull – listening! She heard the Voice as it comes only to the Indian: '*The Man! The Man! The Man!*'" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 284). The spirits and nature thus suggest that Cogewea marry Jim before the proposal eventually occurs and then celebrate the formation of this union through the voice issuing from the buffalo skull.

It should be noted that this very buffalo skull, together with a "fragmentary arrow point" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 147) placed near it by Cogewea, are described towards the middle of the novel as "relics of an era gone" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 148). However, such a depiction is absolutely not fit to account for the voice of the skull, which contributes to advise Cogewea towards a better future. In fact, this image seems to suggest that Native traditions are not already perished, as the myth of the "Vanishing Indian" would seem to suggest. Indeed, they may instead live on beyond the past so as to "provide guides for ways to live and ways to recognize colonialist desires" (Hendel, 2006, p. 86).

[47] This interconnection is directly mentioned within the novel: "throughout all nature there was a recognized governing wisdom, most reverently and devotedly worshipped" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 132).

For instance, "[i]f only [Cogewea] had listened to the signs and had honored her grandmother's wishes, she would have known not to trust Densmore" (Hendel, 2006, p. 84). And yet, the almost fatal experience she lives because of the Easterner finally leads her to "a re-evaluation of the importance of such traditional modes of wisdom" (Hendel, 2006, p. 84), which she may now regard as precious and viable "sources of strength" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 415). Cogewea, like many of her contemporaries, had indeed come to entertain "her own doubts […] about the place of [Native] traditions in the modern world" (Fisher, 1981, p. xx). However, "[e]vents in the novel show these [traditions] to have power, to represent truths about the world and how to live in it" (Hendel, 2006, p. 82).

This is why a "link between lived modern experience and traditional ways of understanding the world" (Hendel, 2006, p. 89) should be created by Cogewea, as well as by Mourning Dove's readers, so as to allow the formulation of a potent, Native response to the challenges of the contemporary world. *Cogewea* therefore emphasizes "the necessity of making [Native] traditions a part of contemporary life" (Hendel, 2006, p. 82). As a matter of fact, "[i]f Cogewea were to leave behind the Indian part of her heritage, Densmore would subjugate her body and spirit to the fulfilment of his greed" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 418). In a similar manner, were Native and mixed-blood people to completely renounce their unique cultural heritage in favour of total assimilation into the Euro-American world (without the opportunity of ever taking part into it on the same level as their white educators), they would lose their pride and cohesion as a community, as well as the opportunity to create a present and future of their own accord, without the need to comply with each and every standard dictated by the white hegemony.

What is most important, Mourning Dove's intention of treasuring Native traditional heritage "is not meant to preserve a traditional American Indian culture that has since vanished but rather to establish the role of American Indians in the future of modern American culture" (Kent, 1999, p. 52). In other words, "*Cogewea, The Half-Blood* acknowledges the past as it also steps into the future" (Narduzzi, 2008, p. 64), therefore breaking the temporal barriers represented by those US hegemonic discourses which would relegate the "Vanishing Indian" to an irretrievable past only.

IV.2.2: Avoiding the Dangers of Alleged Authenticity

As observed in the previous section, "Mourning Dove counters [the] paradigm of the vanishing American directly. She rewrites this false perception by preserving [Native] traditions […] but also by suggesting survival in the future despite the threat of assimilation" (Kent, 1999, p. 51). Another discursive threat she tries to counter in the course of her novel is the "obsession with 'authenticity' […] characteristic of white outsiders' definitions" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 410) of Natives. Indeed, while depicting Native traditions, the author "attempts to counteract this bias toward the authentic" (Kent, 1999, p. 56) by proving that Native cultures have been adapting to the increasing white influence on Native communities for centuries, starting from the very first contacts between Natives and Euro-Americans. A major proof of this long history of Native adaptation is represented by the stories the Stemteemä narrates in order to give advice to those surrounding her, especially Cogewea. Indeed, "[e]ach of her stories […] reflects the adaptations the Okanogans have made throughout history" (Kent, 1999, p. 55). In the course of the novel, the Stemteemä narrates three stories: "The Dead Man's Vision", "The Story of Green-Blanket Feet" and "The Second Coming of the Shoyahpee".

The first story revolves around the prophecy of a resurrected medicine man. This figure is characterized as a prophet of biblical proportions. Indeed, his story may be considered analogous to that of Jesus Christ, as suggested by the following passage: "[o]n the third sunrise […] the dead man came back from the death-sleep" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 124). And yet, while Jesus Christ's was a message of hope, the medicine man must instead warn his people about a very bleak future, represented by the impending white invasion: "[w]hile I was in the clouds, I could see that which is moving towards you from the sunrise, […] surging in big herds like the buffaloes […] only more vast. Terrible it comes, and gathering force it sweeps the land like the cloud rack of death. [….] I saw a pale-faced nation moving from the sunrise; as many as the trees of the forest […] I saw the pale faces fighting among themselves for the possession of our lands. Their feet were drowned in human blood of war which thundered everywhere" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 125-126).

This fateful story is set "long ago […] in the time of [Stemteemä's] grandfather" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 122), before the first contact with whites, usually represented as the first-occurring alteration of a previously fixed Native "authentic" past.

And yet, contrarily to this widespread misconception, pre-contact Native culture is revealed to be already "dynamically changing, unstable, and multiply constituted" (Karell, 1995, p. 460-461) by the following passage: "[t]he tribe watched and waited for the coming of the pale faces, but it was many snows before they came. It was so long that the prophecy of the dead-man was almost forgotten. The younger generation began to think it untrue: only some *chip-chap-tiqul*[k] of the older Indians" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 127). Hence, a contrast between older and younger generations of Natives, caused by the constant evolution of their beliefs, could already be observed well before the implementation of white assimilationism. By describing Native past as already "complex and dynamic" (Kent, 1999, p. 59), Mourning Dove therefore "challenges the conventional discourse about the loss of a synchronic, authentic Indian past" (Kent, 1999, p. 59), by proving that "in reality these cultures never were fixed" (Kent, 1999, p. 55).

The reason why they tend to be misread as such is related to the hegemonic discourses which have created an effigy meant to surround and neutralize Natives' actual existence in the present and future, as well as past Native evolution. Indeed, this "nostalgic view of Native American life render[s] obsolete the native peoples who actually live" (Hendel, 2006, p. 72) on, and also denies Natives' ability to change after and before white intervention. Native adaptation has therefore been long denied as a viable option of Native survival in the past, present and future. Mourning Dove tries to counter this tendency by emphasizing "the diachronic nature of Okanogan culture" (Kent, 1999, p. 55) and consequently opposing "the synchronic view of a stable, authentic, primitive culture" (Kent, 1999, p. 54).

Indeed, the two stories narrated by the Stemteemä after "The Dead Man's Vision", namely "The Story of Green-Blanket Feet" and "The Second Coming of the Shoyahpee", do "reject the […] notion that there ever existed […] an 'authentic' past" (Kent, 1999, p. 53) as claimed by white discourses. These two stories may be considered two "different versions of the same cautionary story: the white man's deception and abandonment of Native American women" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 501), defined by the Stemteemä as "a wrong many times repeated" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 217) in the course of Native history. Cogewea would thus replicate a mistake already made by the Stemteemä's best friend, Green Blanket Feet, and the Stemteemä's aunt, Wan-na-ka.

This suggests that the threat of blind assimilation into the white world was already present during the Native, allegedly authentic past. Indeed, though after the end of Green Blanket Feet's story the Stemteemä claims that "[t]o [Native] women there came no shame" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 177), she almost seems to contradict herself by the end of Wan-na-ka's story, when she states: "[t]his is the end of the story […] of the shame of my aunt and her people" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 226). What is more, the descriptions of the two white men luring Green Blanket Feet and Wan-na-ka away from their tribal communities may also remind readers of Densmore. For instance, the white man who seduces Green Blanket Feet has eyes "afire with greed" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 166) and a tongue which, "like that of the serpent, [is] forked and false" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 170).

The mistake both girls (as well as Cogewea) commit is that of renouncing their Native identity, heritage and community in favour of a white man who has blinded them. Wan-na-ka even considers her husband "[her] white god" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 222). What they both derive from their union is tears and a broken heart: because of her husband's request to follow him East and leave her Native community, "tears visit [Green Blanket Feet's] eyes, the first since childhood" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 166). In an analogous manner, when Wan-na-ka is not allowed to follow her white husband going West, she "weep[s] as Indians seldom weep" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 225). Even after their misadventures, both women have become unable to lead a happy life within their own communities: Wan-na-ka is "never seen to smile or laugh" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 226) and "prays only for the coming of […] death" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 226), whereas Green Blanket Feet knows that "[her] heart is buried" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 176). Both stories therefore convey the same moral, explicitly mentioned by Green Blanket Feet: "[l]et the maidens of my tribe shun the Shoyahpee. His words are poison! his touch is death" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 176). Hence, rather than opting for blind assimilation, these girls should have stayed with their Native communities, "[w]here [they] are loved and will not be cast aside" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 223).

And yet, some details in these stories prove that the Native world of Stemteemä's infancy has already been altered by white influence. For instance, when she is captured by the Blackfeet, a rival tribe, during her flee from her white husband, Green Blanket Feet sees

"[t]he leader of the Blackfeet rais[ing] his gun" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 172), and Wan-na-ka's tribe has already been reached by a white missionary before the arrival of her future husband and his companion. This is why, once in front of these two white men, the tribe members try to "pray[…] of the little [they] remember[…] of the Black Robe's teaching" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 220)[48]. What is more, Green Blanket Feet's very name alludes to the white world, since it makes reference to a "Hudson Bay blanket" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 176) she received as a gift by her husband.

Most importantly, all three stories testify to hybridity because of the context in which they are told. Indeed, Stemteemä's listeners are four mixed-blood people with varying degrees of adherence to Native traditions (Cogewea, Julia, Mary and Jim) and a white man (Densmore). Hence, among these five listeners, there is not a single full-blood Native. Though the Stemteemä "know[s] that [her forefathers] would want [these stories] kept only to their own people" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 122), she is also aware that if she wants this knowledge to survive, she "must pass her stories on orally to those beyond the tribal circle" (Fisher, 1981, p. xxi). With respect to this, she says: "for me the sunset of the last evening is approaching and I must not carry with me this story" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 122).

An analogous attempt at reaching out to a non-Native audience might be observed during the Fourth of July celebrations held in a little town near the Flathead Reservation. On that occasion, a traditional Native war dance is held in front of a heterogeneous public including Natives, mixed-bloods and Euro-Americans. For the latter's benefit, "an interpreter" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 76) has been appointed to translate in English the explanations about this ritual provided by the old warrior leading the dance. The eighth chapter of the novel almost entirely revolves around a rather protracted anthropological description of this war dance. This was probably inserted by McWhorter in his attempt at turning Mourning Dove's work of fiction into an ethnographic report. This hypothesis seems to be supported by the fact that "McWhorter […] apparently plagiarized the section on Indian music in chapter 8 from Anna Hurst, a scholar of Indian music" (Fisher, 1981, pp. xv-xvi). What is more, this chapter also includes a passage

[48] The term "Black Robe" refers to the afore-mentioned white missionary.

which strongly opposes hybridization in favour of alleged Native authenticity[49]: "[s]ee those young men! Their slouchy '*traipsing*' tells of contact with the meaningless 'waltz' and suggestive 'hugs' and 'trots' of the higher civilization – a vulgarity – a sacrilegious burlesque on an ancient and religiously instituted ceremony. […] the Indian's dance is suffering in modifications" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 75).

And yet, these "modifications" have not been brought upon by "those young men" only. Quite on the contrary, "[t]he Chief of the Pend d'Oreille" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 76) wears "beads highly prized […] his grandfather had purchased with beaver skins from the Hudson's Bay Company nearly a hundred snows before" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 76-77). This detail may testify Mourning Dove's "effort to avoid essentializing tribal culture" (Kent, 1999, p. 57) by "reject[ing] the anthropological notion that there ever existed […] an 'authentic' past" (Kent, 1999, p. 53) totally unaffected by "modifications". This standpoint seems to be further confirmed by the gift the Nez Perce Chief has brought with him: "a splendid 'King George' blanket" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 77). Hence, rather than "suffering in modifications", Native culture has been surviving precisely through adaptation. Cogewea herself points out Native flexibility, opposing it to the rigidity of white discourses and lifestyle: "I think it quite easy for [Natives] to turn to the Shoyahpee's ways, compared to his qualifications to become Injun – honest Injun" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 160).

The war dance scene therefore proves how hybridity has been characterizing Native culture for a long time. What is more, the fact that this ceremony is held during a Fourth of July celebration, in front of a heterogeneous audience, suggests how the Western Frontier of the United States is in itself highly hybridized. Indeed, while "[m]ost frontier texts by Euro-American authors refrain from any mention of prior native inhabitants at all, or represent them as anachronistic markers of a past already lost in nostalgia" (Hendel, 2006, p. 68), Mourning Dove's novel conversely proves that "[t]he Wild West is not only filled with […] cowboys [but] is resonant with the lives and cultures of Native Americans" (Brown, 1988, p. 11).

[49] The question may arise as to whether it could be possible for a Native ceremony deliberately targeted at a white audience to be regarded as "authentic".

The frontier's hybridity is hinted at by various details scattered throughout the novel. For instance, "the little town of some five hundred inhabitants" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 39) near the H-B ranch is populated by "both whites and half-bloods" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 39) and on "[t]he outskirts of this reservation 'city' […] the cowboys and the 'breeds' play[…] monte with the tribesmen" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 39). In an analogous fashion, at the Fourth of July celebration, "the scene [is] enlivened by the silently stalking, gaudily blanketed Indian" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 61) and various riders "play[…] monte with [Natives]; a keepin' hid from the Government ossifers" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 78)[50]. Moreover, at a local "flour mill" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 257), "the toilers [are] both white and Indian" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 258).

It is clear, then, that Mourning Dove is attempting to "drastically revise the dominant Euroamerican understanding of the frontier" (Hendel, 2006, p. 65) as "a bygone place inhabited by romantic cowpunchers and stoic Indians" (Hendel, 2006, p. 76) by depicting it instead as "a real place where a collision of cultures can provide productive ways to renegotiate identity" (Hendel, 2006, p. 76). Hence, by "transform[ing] the cowboys and Indians of her Western into a cohesive community" (Humphreys, 2010, p. 32) characterized by intense cultural exchange, Mourning Dove manages to "expose popular cultural inventions about the West" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 498).

The inaccuracy of hegemonic discourses about the frontier is testified, for instance, by Densmore's "disappointment" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 43) upon reaching the West and realizing that "the writers […] had beguiled him" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 44). Indeed, "[f]resh from a great eastern city, [Densmore] had expected to see the painted and blanketed aborigine of history and romance; but instead, he had only encountered [a] miniature group of half-bloods and one ancient squaw" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 43-44). This leaves him wonder as to "[w]here were those picturesque Indians that he was promised to meet" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 48). His experience therefore proves that "what is called the Indian is the white man's invention and artifact" (Owens, 2001, p. 18). Indeed, the alleged Native authenticity anthropologists insist much upon is nowhere to be found on the frontier, and is even denied by "the

[50] This proves that the US Government does not manage to contrast hybridization.

centuries-old legends […] told […] by the Stemteemä" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 33). This implies that "the Indians are surviving and adapting, not simply vanishing" (Kent, 1999, p. 52), as the authenticity discourse would have it.

What is more, Mourning Dove suggests that this Native recourse to adaptation does not necessarily entail that they are renouncing their own traditional heritage in favour of blind assimilation into the white world. Indeed, as noted by Alicia Kent (1999, p. 59):

> [t]he key difference between adaptation and assimilation centers on the role of the past: rather than suppressing th[e] past as an assimilationist would […], Mourning Dove works to include elements of her past in her text as a way of writing her (and her tribe's) way into the future. Unlike assimilation, which denies the past, her model of adaptation is simultaneously based on reinvoking the old and weaving it together with the new in order to shape the future. She both roots herself in traditional culture and connects herself with modern culture.

Mourning Dove's frontier is therefore evoked as a site where Native full- and mixed-bloods may strive for "preservation of the past as well as adaptation to modernity" (Kent, 1999, p. 45), thus avoiding both destinies prescribed for them by the white hegemony, namely total assimilation or inevitable extinction. Such "supposition of compulsory whiteness for survival" (Kent, 1999, p. 50) is thus denied by Mourning Dove, whose very "vision managed to survive the intense pressure of narratives (and laws) that demanded she, as a Native American woman, should vanish or assimilate" (Hendel, 2006, p. 90). The path she and her heroine opt for is therefore that of strategic hybridity, that is, the "ability to adapt to change rather than submit to assimilation" (Kent, 1999, p. 42) or confirm the hegemonic trope of the allegedly authentic and vanishing Native. Through such an adaptive perspective, the frontier may ultimately be understood as "simply the introduction of yet another set of new conditions [for Natives], as was European invasion and colonization, to be interpreted and responded to by American Indian communities in deeply indigenous cultural terms" (Pickering, 2004, p. 117).

Adaptation shall not make a Native individual be perceived as less "deeply indigenous", as it may be aptly illustrated by coming back to Densmore's previously mentioned watery metaphor, the one he uses to lure Cogewea into the Euro-American world by trying to convince her that, like a river "[b]ursting from its gloomy confines" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 160), she should leave behind the Native component of her heritage and

individuality. However, Densmore's claim that a river needs to abandon its source in order for it to "grow[…] into a thing of magnificent grandeur" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 160) is actually preposterous. Indeed, as quipped back by Cogewea, though a river may flow far from its source, "it is no less water than when it issues from its rocky defiles" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 160), just like Native culture shall still be defined as such though it has incorporated elements derived from the white world. As a matter of fact, adaptation actually renders Native culture even more precious. Indeed, Densmore's metaphor does feature one valid point: the fact that a river may "avert[…] stagnation by constant action" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 160), just like Native people may "perpetuate tradition in the face of cultural disintegration" (quoted in Kent, 1999, p. 45) by allowing their own tradition to evolve thanks to cultural hybridization. Mourning Dive therefore rejects static readings of Native tradition. In fact, Natives' "500 years of survival in the face of colonialism" (Pickering, 2004, p. 118) would not be credible were it not for the existence of Native cultural evolution.

IV.3: Varying Reactions to Hybridity

IV.3.1: Choosing (Not) to Go Beyond Hegemonic Discourses: The Different Approach of White Characters to Non-White People and Perspectives

As it could be observed in the previous section, Densmore has decided to go West also because he was curious to witness the alleged Native authenticity he had been reading about in white-authored texts. Indeed, at the turn of the 20th century, "Native American life was viewed as a way of life that had already passed, one that could now be taken up to fulfill a need for leisure and escape within white culture" (Hendel, 2006, pp. 71-72). In an analogous fashion, the Western frontier, whose "American (imperial) mythology" (Narduzzi, 2008, p. 73) was based on the conflict between Natives and cowboys, was generally regarded as "a place for enacting a masculine fantasy of regeneration" (Hendel, 2006, p. 71), whereby "weary city-dwellers" (Hendel, 2006, p. 71) might regain a sense of lost freedom.

In fact, upon his arrival, Densmore claims that he "grew tired of the tameness of city life, and came out [on the frontier] hoping to secure enjoyment […] to rough it a while among Indians and cowboys" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 44). Another white character "struck by the American craze [and] drifting to the Flathead in quest of adventure"

(Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 152) is Eugene La Fleur, immediately renamed "Frenchy" by the H-B riders. He is "[t]he scion of a wealthy Parisian family" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 152) and as such "he command[s] wealth sufficient to buy, many times over, the ranch" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 188) he has reached in the hope of living his own frontier myth. He has indeed become "infatuated with the picturesque life of the riders so graphically depicted, and determined to become a 'real' cowboy" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 153). Both Densmore and Frenchy have therefore reached the frontier animated by the most widespread stereotypes circulating about it.

And yet, the two men soon have to discover that they were mistaken in their preconceptions, especially as far as the H-B ranch, in which many of the hired hands are mixed-blood people, is concerned. In fact, "the caricatured […] life of the American cowboy in conflict with the savage Indian […] is absent here, since the Indians are the cowboys" (Kent, 1999, p. 54). Because of their ignorance about the actual, deeply hybrid nature of the frontier, which is indeed "a site where cultures clash and identity must be renegotiated" (Hendel, 2006, p. 90), both Densmore and Frenchy "find themselves outsiders, the butt of all jokes, seen in the constant teasing of Frenchy and the nearly fatal game against Densmore" (Kent, 1999, p. 55). However, though he is initially "the brunt of many a rude joke" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 153) by the other riders, Frenchy actually undergoes a notable process of evolution which greatly differentiates him from Densmore. Indeed, while the former is eager to go beyond his preconceptions and learn as much as he can about the frontier and its people, whom he never disrespects, the latter remains a wilful prisoner of his own, hegemonic discursive barriers throughout the novel.

Indeed, Densmore is too arrogant to renounce his own stereotypes about the people and cultures he meets at the H-B ranch. This may be already noticed when Cogewea introduces herself by telling him her own name, which Densmore immediately terms "a very romantic name" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 49) and "a wood-land name" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 49). Such verbal choices suggest that he is judging the girl according to the hegemonic trope of the Indian as a romantic savage. What is more, when he actually tries to pronounce her name some days later, the result is a rather clumsy stuttering: "Cage – Cogewea" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 92). While this slip of the tongue might appear insignificant, the presence of the word "Cage" may actually hint at a deeper meaning. In point of fact, not only does Densmore want to snare Cogewea so

as to take over from her the wealth he thinks she possesses, but he also would like to trap her identity within the limits of his own stereotypes about mixed-blood people, "whom he had always understood to be the inferior degenerates of two races" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 48). Given his narrow-mindedness, it should come as no surprise that Densmore "could not fathom the 'forward' girl with the musical, though unpronounceable name" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 48).

Densmore's inability to understand Cogewea, which he explicitly states multiple times during the novel, is not due to the girl's impenetrability, since she is more than ready to discourse with him on the "conflict between the cultural narratives which frame their respective senses of history" (Holton, 1997, p. 70), culture and identity. What truly hinders Densmore from better comprehending Cogewea's perspective and personality is his unwillingness to actually listen to a viewpoint which might differ from his own. Indeed, whenever Cogewea voices the "facts that are never alluded to by the recording [hegemonic] historian" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 129), namely the "[t]rouble and affliction; dependency and thraldom" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 135) provoked by the white invasion of Native lands, Densmore refuses to give credit to her words. He either tries to change the subject or belittles her words, as it may be read in these excerpts: "I am not disposed to contend that point with you. There are more pleasant themes" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 136), "[t]his is nothing of interest to me" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 96), "[i]t is all 'bilk' to me" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 130), "[s]uch contentions are mere prattlings" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 133), "[y]ou are too broad minded for such antiquated ideas. Educated, you should put improbable concepts aside" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 144), and "the Easterner regarded his companion with open amusement" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 147).

One of the main problems resides in the fact that Densmore equates hegemonic historiography with "recognized history" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 129). Indeed, "Densmore speaks confidently, […] assuming the Euro-American colonial narrative to be identical to a divinely-ordained narrative of Human History" (Holton, 1997, p. 72). This is why he claims that "[t]he coming of the Mayflower was a spiritual light bursting on a darkened New World" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 132). To this, Cogewea replies by highlighting "the extermination which came hand in hand with this 'spiritual light bursting on a darkened New World'" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 134),

therefore proving that "the meaning of an event […] is not wholly determined by the event itself, but is secured by the larger narrative framework that situates it" (Holton, 1997, p. 72). Cogewea is indeed "acutely aware of the power of historiographical representation" (Holton, 1997, p. 71). During her musings, she "reflect[s] bitterly how […] [Natives] had suffered as much from the pen as from the bayonet of conquest; wherein the annals had always been chronicled by their most deadly foes and partisan writers" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 91-92).

Such biased historical narrative is precisely the one Densmore immediately resorts to in order to discard the Stemteemä's "authoritative oral counter-narrative to the official histories of conquest" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 501). In fact, what he states after having directly listened to the story of "The Dead Man's Vision" is that its featured events "seem to be no part of the chronicles" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 129) and that, as a consequence, the Stemteemä must be "mistaken" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 129). Cogewea replies to Densmore's assessment by trying to make him understand that any narrative about history is not an immediate, absolute account of what may truly have happened, but is rather the product of "a multi-cultural struggle to impose the legitimate definition of temporal reality" (Holton, 1997, p. 69). She tries to make him grasp this condition of relativity by inverting the roles historically held by the white and Native communities: "[h]ad a tribesman gone to your European homes with the ultimatum: 'Desert your heavy houses; come into the open and adopt our mode of life,' I am sure you Caucasians would have regarded him as an unreasonably brainless arrogant" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 144).

To this, Densmore replies: "Obviously the transition from savagery to the civilized state has been a stormy one for the Red man […]. Doubtless he endured some hardships […] but all that is compensated by his present day treatment" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 144). This answer features at least three main controversial claims. First of all, Densmore's mention of an alleged "transition from savagery to the civilized state" fully relies on the racist colonial binary positing Native people on a lower rank in the evolutionary ladder. Secondly, Natives' "present day treatment" is not so different from what they previously had to endure. Indeed, Cogewea informs Densmore that "the 'Indian Problem' [is] past and present" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 144), as proven, for instance, by "the death chant and wailing of the spirit Indian whose bones are being

disturbed by the homesteader's plow" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 147), proving that white invaders are infringing on Native peace even on reservations and in the afterlife. Thirdly, what Densmore dismisses as "some hardships" is actually a full-scale genocide. His belittlement of past Native extermination is analogous to his downplaying of the current mistreatment of Natives by the US government and population as "occasional mistakes" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 145).

Densmore effectively resorts to a recurrent pattern of "rhetorical conventions for bracketing violence" (Nixon, 2011, p. 14), including a wilful denial of the impact racism may have on the life perspectives of a mixed-blood girl like Cogewea: "[w]hy not relegate all racial differences to the discard of forgetfulness" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 136) and "[w]hy erect an imaginary barrier about your life" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 150), he rhetorically asks her. Racism could ever be defined as "imaginary" only by who profits rather than suffers from it. This seems to be the case with Densmore, "representative of a malign white culture" (Holton, 1997, p. 74).

As typical of the hegemony he belongs to, Densmore tries to posit the white status and viewpoint as transparent, so as for the "verbal illusion that sustains the primacy of an elite ruling class" (Humphreys, 2010, p. 49) to be perceived as absolute. Indeed, "[f]or Densmore, the transparency of his own cultural lenses cannot be doubted" (Holton, 1997, p. 72), and this is why he accuses Cogewea of "surveying the situation through colored lenses" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 145), just as if he were not doing the same. All in all, because of his a priori refusal to "broaden [his] notion of truth beyond the Western perception" (Kent, 1999, p. 57), Densmore keeps trapped within his own epistemological barriers. These coincide with "the line marking off the cultural other, a line that is at once epistemological and political" (Holton, 1997, p. 70), because determined by the discourses a given individual buys into. Densmore utterly fails to cross this line, and as a consequence, the hybridized life led on the Western frontier "remains simply incomprehensible to him throughout – a point of view without authority and thus a non-narratable set of events" (Holton, 1997, p. 73).

The same cannot be argued about Frenchy. Mourning Dove may actually have introduced this character "to dispute the ideology that race denotes behavior and morality. Like Densmore, Frenchy arrives in the West 'in quest of adventure,' but unlike Densmore, he

does not desire wealth at the expense of his mixed-race hosts" (Humphreys, 2010, p. 45). Most importantly, while Densmore is not willing to renounce his limited and limiting preconceptions, Frenchy is instead more than eager to directly learn about the frontier from those people actually inhabiting it, and therefore gradually to overcome his prejudices. His willingness to learn is reflected, for instance, by how he does not give up on riding: "[l]ike a child learning to walk; when thrown he got up, brushed the dust from his buckskins and was ready for another try" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 153). Frenchy, just like Densmore before him, becomes a "victim of Croppy" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 153), a peculiarly rebellious horse the vast majority of riders prefer avoiding. And yet, while after this prank Densmore refuses to have anything more to do with the H-B riders, Frenchy "was hurled half across the corral, but he came back smiling" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 153). The significant difference between Densmore and Frenchy is immediately noticed by Jim, who comments: "[i]t beats hell how that French guy eats dirt and keeps a goin' […] He ain't none like that there dood tenderfoot" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 153-154).

In time, Frenchy manages to overcome the hostility aroused by his initial ignorance about the frontier. Indeed, "[t]he boys soon learned to like Frenchy" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 153) and "Carter congratulated him on being a sport to the backbone" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 153). Not only does Frenchy manage to become an integral part of the "Horseshoe Bend family" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 42), but he also becomes able to respond to the many pranks pulled on him by the other riders through his own "retaliatory ruse[s]" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 212). Indeed, while at the beginning he did not even realize that "he was being duped" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 153), in time, Frenchy comes to understand and appropriate for himself cowboy humour, therefore gaining the "ability in coping with […] his tormentors" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 188). In this, his strategy may be argued to resemble the strategic hybridity adopted by Native authors profiting from the English language and Western literary conventions in order to advance the Native cause.

Frenchy has therefore been able to cast aside his initial ignorant stereotypes about the frontier in favour of direct knowledge of its inhabitants. His willingness to question himself may recall an episode occurring during Cogewea's infancy, when she still lived with her two sisters and the Stemteemä. Upon the coming of two young white men who

ask the three mixed-blood children whether the ice covering the river where they want to fish is sound enough to do so, the three sisters "pretend not to understand English" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 119) and thus do not tell the two fishermen that "[t]he ice [is] bad and that they would get drowned should they venture on it" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 119). This voluntary reticence on the part of her grandchildren provokes the anger of the Stemteemä, who scolds them as such: "what did you learn the language and books of the pale face for? They do no good unless you make use of them when needed" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 119). The Stemteemä, however, manages to save the day by using the little English she can master (and thus proving that even the older generations of Natives are already adapting to the white world). She decides to save the life of these two white strangers notwithstanding the prejudices they display toward Natives. In fact, "supposing that they [are] not understood" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p.119), the two fishermen "comment[…] on the dress and appearances of the tepee occupants" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 119) and then "laugh[…]" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 119) at the Stemteemä's "frantic signals" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 119) meant to warn and save them. However, once they manage to understand her, they display their gratitude by "often visit[ing] at the lodge after that" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 119) and thus proving able to overcome their prejudices.

The Stemteemä's willingness to save and then welcome into her own tepee these two white men suggests that her disapproval of Densmore is not due to a "strong racial antipathy" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 252), as claimed by Densmore himself, but to her ability to discern his real, sordid nature and intentions. Indeed, by the end of the novel, the Stemteemä must implicitly have agreed on Mary, one of her grand-children, marrying a white man: Frenchy. The latter has indeed proven worthy of the girl's hand by displaying an open-minded attitude, and is therefore granted his happy ending: "the 'Shy girl' had departed with her husband, Eugene LaFleur, a polished and wealthy Parisian scholar, on a honeymoon tour of Europe" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 285). The fact that Mary, the most traditional of the three sisters, has decided to marry a white, French man who must have also been approved by the Stemteemä demonstrates that, by crossing cultural barriers, meaningful human relationships may be established and developed notwithstanding social prescriptions.

What is more, the Stemteemä must have already bestowed her blessing upon another marriage of one of her three grandchildren with a white man. Indeed, the novel begins after Julia and John Carter, the H-B ranch owner, are already happily married, and the Stemteemä explicitly voices her good opinion of him by stating that "not many white men are true and good like John" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 217). John Carter is indeed "an extraordinary white man" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 416), "good natured and amiable" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 19) and with a "great, affectionate heart" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 19). However, such virtue and open-mindedness are hardly the norm among white society. Indeed, while it is true that "a few whites do try to uplift [Natives]" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 144), they are to "lose[…] social standing with [their] own race" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 95) if they do so, which testifies that the general attitude towards Natives by the white hegemony is far from positive.

One of the white characters within the novel who is ready to challenge Euro-American hegemonic social conventions in favour of the people whom he cares for the most, regardless of their social standing, is Silent Bob. Indeed, this cowboy from West Virginia is introduced with such words: "[t]rue as steel, he would fight for a friend" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 36) and during the novel he effectively does so for Cogewea. In fact, Silent Bob and Cogewea respect and appreciate each other, notwithstanding the racial divide which would prevent their friendship within the dominant US white society: "Bob understood her […] better than did any of his companions. He knew that the girl meant right, despite her odd, 'forward' ways. And Cogewea admired the droll Southerner" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 42-43).

Silent Bob's loyalty to and care for Cogewea is fully proven when he tries to save her from Densmore's trap. When Silent Bob learns from Celluloid Bell about the "huge joke" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 267) he and Rodeo Jack have pulled on the plotting Easterner, who is now convinced that Cogewea must be wealthy and thus wants to snare her, his voice reveals "a touch of concern" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 267), as do his "knit brow and […] firm set mouth" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 268). Once he has fully understood the high risk Cogewea is running at the hands of Densmore, Silent Bob "breaks the cowboy code of silence by telling Jim about Celluloid Bill's lie to Densmore regarding Cogewea's wealth" (Humphreys, 2010, p. 44). He therefore defies the social conventions to be observed on the range because "he care[s] […] for the girl,

whom he ha[s] learned to love as a close friend" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 268). This proves that Silent Bob truly is endowed with a "sympathetic bosom" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 268), animated by "a latent fire of amity" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 269).

When reproached by Celluloid Bill about breaking the silence code, Silent Bob reveals that he did so because he "like[s] th' little gal" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 272) and would "hater see her get th' wo'st of th' deal" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 272)[51]. Silent Bob's ability to cross any racial and cultural barrier by recognizing Cogewea's worth as a human being and by actively acting in her favour, in spite of dominant social conventions, should provide a good example to follow for the readers of the novel. Indeed, during Silent Bob and Celluloid Bill's confrontation, the former is defined as "that worthy" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 272), a praising denomination proving that his integrity and open-mindedness should be regarded as positive qualities by readers.

What is more, this is not the first occasion on which Silent Bob acts differently from what would be expected from him, a white man, by the US hegemony. Indeed, he is "well aware that he [is] assuming an extremely unpopular attitude" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 71) also during the first day of the Fourth of July Celebrations, as it may be observed in closer detail in the following section.

IV.3.2: The Two Races/Races: "Cogewea" in a Nutshell

Silent Bob's intervention in favour of Cogewea during the Fourth of July celebrations closes chapter VII. This whole chapter actually deserves to be analysed and commented in detail, since it seems to encapsulate some of the novel's main themes. Entitled "The 'Ladies' and the 'Squaw' Races", this chapter revolves around Cogewea's decision to "pose as both" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 59) a white lady and a "squaw" during the Fourth of July celebrations so as to try to win both horse races held for the occasion.

In order for her to be admitted to both competitions, she effectively has to "pose" by paying careful attention to her clothing. While she wears "[a] riding habit of blue corduroy" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 62) and "[r]ed, white and blue ribbons"

[51] This expression, voiced by Silent Bob with respect to Cogewea, evokes the girl's own musings about the general fate of Native people: "Cogewea reflected bitterly how [Natives] had had the worst of every deal since the landing of the lordly European on their shores" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 91-92). As a matter of fact, Densmore's "treachery in dealing with Cogewea suggests a much wider pattern of treachery disguised as destiny in the relations of the broader communities these characters represent" (Holton, 1997, p. 72).

(Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 62) during the ladies' race, she must instead "rent a buckskin dress" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 64) in order to pass as a full-blood Native woman. This rental is necessary because she has "no native costume" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 64), since she usually "lives the white way" (Brown, 1988, p. 4). As a matter of fact, once adorned "in full [Native] regalia, her face artistically decorated with varied paints" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 65), "the 'H-B' boys recognize[…] her only by the horse" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 65) she is riding. What is more, when she leaves the tepee where she has been dressed and made up as an allegedly traditional full-blood Native, "[t]he Indian children […] giggle[…] among themselves" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 65), therefore suggesting that such insistence on alleged Native authenticity is a white rather than indigenous prerogative.

Once she manages to comply with the visual standards associated with both categories of women, Cogewea can enter both competitions. By choosing to participate in both races, "Cogewea claims both the Native and Euroamerican sides of her heritage" (Hendel, 2006, p. 66). This "move suggests *she* is embracing her bicultural identity" (Kent, 1999, p. 49), or at least that she is trying to "test the boundaries of her socially circumscribed identity" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 498). However, these very boundaries prove extremely rigid. Indeed, the people surrounding her at both races are not willing to recognize and validate her bicultural identity and resources. In fact, when Cogewea enters the ladies' race, her main opponent, a white girl named Verona Webster, "stare[s] at her contemptuously and sp[eaks] in a voice loud enough to be heard by those standing near: 'Why is this *squaw* permitted to ride? This is a *ladies* race!'" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 63). To this "biting insult" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 63), further backed by Verona's companions, "unanimous that it [is] a gross outrage and that they should protest" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 63), Cogewea manages to snap a witty retort. However, she is no longer able to do so when, upon entering the squaws' race shortly after, "she is as spurned by the Indian women as she has been by the whites" (Fisher, 1981, p. xvii). Indeed, while on the track, she is "met with glances of hatred for the despised 'breed'" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 66), and a full-blood Native girl "turn[s] to her and sp[eaks] sharply in good English: 'You have no right to be here! You are half-white! This race is for Indians and not for *breeds*!'" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 66).

The fact that this full-blood Native girl can master "good English" is significant, since it further confirms that Native people, even full-bloods, have already been adapting to white culture. White people themselves, however, are so blinded by their own misconceptions about alleged Native authenticity that they take for granted that a Native person cannot understand, let alone speak English. In fact, this widespread delusion can be observed during a conversation Cogewea hears before entering the squaws' race (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 65):

> Supposing that [Cogewea] did not understand English, the judge turned to his companion with the remark: 'Some swell looker for a […] squaw, eh? Mighty good pickin' for a young feller like you. Wish I wasn't so badly married! I'd sure keep an eye out for her. […]' The young man's reply was of like sinister import, and then they began conversing in lowered tones. The girl's eyes filled with tears, as she turned away; brooding over the constantly light spoken words of the 'higher' race regarding her people[.]

Feeling burdened by "the incessant insults offered the Indian women by the 'gentlemen' whites" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 65) and "overwhelmed with [a] soul-yearning for sympathy" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 66) after having been rejected by "ladies" and "squaws" alike[52], Cogewea is "caught unawares" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 66) by the pistol shot signalling the beginning of the squaws' race. She thus starts running after all the other horses, but eventually ends up winning "leading by half a neck" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 67). This is actually her second victory for the day, since she has already triumphed in the ladies' race as well. On that occasion, "it soon became apparent that the actual contest was to be between the two mighty racers" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 63) Cogewea and Verona Webster. The latter, "maddened at the thought of being beaten by a presumptuous 'squaw'" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 63), actually tries to play dirty. Cogewea actively responds to Verona's unfairness, and by so doing she inadvertently hits the head of Verona's horse[53].

This event gives the white spectators and judge a specious pretext to invalidate Cogewea's victory, as Jim tells Cogewea immediately after the competition: "You're sure one gritty

[52] These are Cogewea's thoughts after having heard the Native woman's harsh words against her: "[f]or her class – the maligned outcast half-blood – there seemed no welcome on the face of all God's creation. Denied social standing with either of the parent races, she felt that the world was crying out against her" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 66).

[53] This is how the scene is depicted: Verona "swung her shot-loaded quirt, evidently designed at disabling Cogewea's bridle arm. But the Indian girl's quick eye enabled her to avoid the heavy swing, and as the next descended, she caught and wrenched the whip from the frenzied rider's hand. Enraged at the brutality of the assault, she struck with all her force, but the blow falling short, landed athwart [Verona's horse's] head" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 63).

little Injun, hittin' back at that there high toned white gal as you did. The 'H-B' boys are all glad! They saw what she done to you first and know who's in fault. But the white fellers a backin' the Webster hoss are breezin' trouble if the judge gives you the prize. They have the dough and that's what talks" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 64). This mixed reaction to Cogewea's triumph is quite telling. On the one hand, the H-B riders' honest acknowledgement of Verona Webster's cheat suggests that the H-B ranch truly constitutes a state of exception on the Western frontier, a place in which the worth of any individual is not predetermined on the basis of one's ethnic background. On the other hand, the white public's protests, voiced "in language more emphatic than elegant" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 67), concerning Cogewea's active response to Verona Webster's attempted trickery, may hint at a wider historical and discursive context.

Indeed, just like these white people are accusing Cogewea to be a cheater because she has not passively accepted Verona Webster's unfair behaviour, so the hegemony has usually characterized Native populations as blood-thirsty because they were actually trying to fight back against white invasion. Hence, though Euro-American society and Verona Webster have been "the flagrant aggressor[s]" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 136), this role is instead hypocritically attributed to those people actually trying to defend themselves, namely Native populations and Cogewea. What is more, such inaccurate and self-serving depictions of the course of events can be imposed and passed as "common sense" through the exploitation of one's own political and economic hegemony, as explicitly invoked by Jim's words: "[t]hey have the dough and that's what talks".

Another major instance of the US hegemony's biased deformation of reality occurs during a discussion held by Jim, the races' judge, Cogewea and a white man as to whether Cogewea should be assigned both prizes. Immediately after winning the squaws' race, Cogewea is told by Jim that she should personally go to the judge's stand to collect her prize of $25 (the fact that the prize for the ladies' race amounts to $45 is significant). Jim also informs Cogewea that the judge "is anxious to see [her]" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 67). However, since this is the man Cogewea has heard saying "[my wife] would raise a hurry-Cain if she knowed that I rather like some of the squaws around here" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 65), his interest to see her may be of a questionable nature. Indeed, once he realizes that "this breed girl [is] not the type he had figured" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 67) from the very moment when, "to the surprise of the

judge, Cogewea answer[s] his salutation in perfect English" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 67), "'[h]is Honour' […] cut[s] the conversation short by directing his assistant to pay her the prize money" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 67).

Cogewea points out that she should also be given the $45 for her victory at the ladies' race. The judge, who had not even realized that the winner of both races was actually the same person, defines Cogewea's request an "effrontery" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 67). Cogewea calmly replies to this accusation by stating the simple truth: "I won both of them" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 67). And yet, the judge refuses to pay her the money for the ladies' race, assigning it to Verona Webster instead. At this point, Jim intervenes in Cogewea's favour, proving once again how much her cares for her. He politely tries to point out to the judge that "[t]his here business should be settled fair" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 68). The judge, rather than providing any normative justification for his choice, tries instead to assert his authority by relying on racist tenets: "[n]o Injun can come around here and dictate to me in regard to judging these races" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 68). Indeed, his decision is completely based on his racial bias: "she is a *squaw* and had no right to ride in the *ladies*' race" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 68). By discarding Jim's rightful claim for justice on a racial pretext, the judge therefore demonstrates that he is not willing to initiate any equitable dialogue, since this would surely prove him to be wrong in his decision.

In order for his unfair behaviour to be kept hidden, the judge, lacking any rational argumentation, resorts to outright intimidation towards Jim: "'I would advise you,' he added in a menacing tone, 'to get away from here if you do not want trouble" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 68). The judge's harassment is backed by "a heavy-faced man […] with a group of followers" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 68) whose hand "rest[s] dangerously near his pistol's grip" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 69) and who tells Jim: "[i]f any low born *breed* is looking for trouble, he can now find it in sight" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 69). The threat of this white man is all the viler since he is accompanied by "his backers" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 69) and has chosen a strategic position, whereby "Jim [is] at a disadvantage, should there be gun-play" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 69). The judge and the white man's aggressive cowardice and hypocrisy are counterbalanced by Jim's unflappable composure and candid statement of facts. His "exasperating calmness" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981],

p. 69) greatly troubles his white opponents, who would rather impose silence on him so as for the injustice they are perpetrating to be kept unquestioned.

Faced with Jim's "stoical disregard" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 69) of the judge and the white man's offensive threats, the judge decides to resort to law enforcement (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], pp. 69-70):

> Addressing a stalky individual wearing a police badge of exaggerated dimensions […] he bruskly ordered: 'Here, Marshal, put the irons on this rider and lock him up as a dangerous character. He is charged with malicious interference with an honest distribution of race awards, by coming here armed and attempting intimidation of the program officials. There will be plenty of witnesses to make the complaint stick, and he can consider himself fortunate in spending a few months behind bars rather than dangling at a rope's end, which would have happened within a very few seconds had you not so opportunely arrived.' 'Slide down from that hoss, Injun[…]'.

This whole scene is a deplorable triumph of white hypocrisy and oppressive wrongdoing. Mourning Dove need not point this out explicitly, since the judge's words already speak for themselves. For instance, not only is his claim for "an honest distribution of race awards" clearly refuted by his blatant abuse of power, but the very term "race awards" may be perceived as ambiguous and thus be subjected to a twofold interpretation. Indeed, while these prizes would be meant to be assigned to the rightful winner of a given *race*, they are instead unfairly distributed on the basis of *race*.

A similar degree of brazen hypocrisy may be observed as the judge accuses Jim of "coming here armed and attempting intimidation", which is precisely what the white man with a heavy face has been trying to do. This white man would therefore be the one who should be punished according to the law. And yet, it is clear that these people are not willing to apply the principle of equality before the law[54] (as the white hegemony has usually not been willing to do throughout US history). Indeed, the fact that Jim risks being arrested for exercising his freedom of speech, allegedly one of the fundamental rights the US law should guarantee, speaks volumes about the legal double standard upheld in the United States.

[54] The lack of this principle in the United States is explicitly mentioned by Densmore towards the end of the novel: "[t]he law is of the white man's make, interpreted by the white man, made to talk by the white man's money" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981] p. 264).

The racial bias lying at the basis of Euro-American law is further confirmed by the policeman, who almost seems a farcical figure, with his "police badge of exaggerated dimensions". The policeman immediately takes for granted that Jim must be guilty and addresses him as an "Injun", therefore suggesting that he has formed his opinion on the basis of his own racial prejudice. By displaying such unfair behaviour, the officer is despoiled of his authority in the eyes of the reader. The same goes for white testimony, whose reliability is undermined by what the judge says: "[t]here will be plenty of witnesses to make the complaint stick".

This scene therefore acts as an implicit, yet searing indictment of "a social standard permitting the grossest insult and indignity to the weaker, with the most brazen impunity" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 65). The potential for denunciation of this chapter, however, reaches its apex in the following passage (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 70):

> Cogewea […] dashed the wadded bills which she had received [for the squaws' race] full in the face of the fuming judge, and vehemently broke forth: '*Take* your tainted money! I do not want to touch any thing polluted by having passed through your slimy hands! And, since you are distributing *racial* prizes regardless of merit or justice, pass it on to the full-blood Kootenai woman, who, like your white protegee, won second place only. She is as much entitled to it as is Miss Webster to the money which you are so chivalrously withholding from me.

First of all, Cogewea resolves the ambivalence related to the previously mentioned "race awards" by clearly defining them as "*racial* prizes", therefore exposing the racist ideology motivating the judge's decision (and the policeman's behaviour). This ideology acts "regardless of merit or justice" by confining targeted individuals within predetermined racial barriers meant to discard any manifestation of worth on the part of the representatives of any discriminated social category. One of these racial barriers is represented by the white hegemony's refusal to acknowledge in equal measure the two sides of a mixed-blood person's biological and cultural heritage. Indeed, the fact that the judge is willing to assign Cogewea the first prize for the squaws' race but not the one for the ladies' suggests that he wants to acknowledge only the Native side of her heritage. His attitude, however, is not an isolated case. Indeed, a widespread tendency during US history has been to categorize mixed-blood people as Native people only, therefore denying the Euro-American component of their ancestry. This may amount to an attempt by the white hegemony to "guard[…] their 'racial purity'" (Lukens, 1997a, p. 413).

This attempt, however, is thwarted by Cogewea's rightful assertion that if she is to be denied the ladies' race's first prize, the same should apply to the squaws' race, since she is as much Euro-American as Native. By rejecting both prizes in favour of integrity, Cogewea thus fully embraces and asserts her own hybridity, therefore proving that hers is a bicultural heritage. Her determinate negation of the typically colonial binary applied by the judge and the other involved white people therefore "provides a counter-narrative to hegemonic colonialist discourse" (Hendel, 2006, p. 86). Indeed, "[a]lthough disqualified by the judge, Cogewea disrupts the rigid racial and gender roles assigned to 'Ladies' and 'Squaws'" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 498) by proving that neither label may fully define and consequently confine her unique, hybrid identity.

The scope of her epistemological and political rebellion is immediately circumscribed by the sentence: "[t]he spiked-heel of might ha[s] as ever scored" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 70). And yet, this coercive imposition of white predominance has actually happened "at the cost of no inconsiderable amount of self dignity" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 70) on the part of the judge and his "gun-bestudded" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 70) henchmen. Indeed, while a few pages later Cogewea and Jim are depicted as "both well content despite the unpleasant episode of the races" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 78), the white men who have challenged them are to be found in rather different conditions: "[d]iscomforted by the withering disdain of Cogewea, and the burning contempt for their prowess by her companion, the pugnacity of the 'bunch' had suffered a most undignified backset" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 71).

Most importantly, these white men's dignity has been compromised not only in their eyes, but also from the reader's perspective. Indeed, Mourning Dove has let these men's own words and actions testify to their shameless hypocrisy, on account of which they should instead feel shameful. What is more, these men's unrighteous behaviour seems all the more deplorable when compared with Cogewea and Jim's integrity, as well as with Silent Bob's brave intervention in favour of his two mixed-blood friends. Indeed, towards the end of the chapter, it is revealed that "Silent Bob […] had unobserved moved to a point of vantage" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 70), in case a shooting were to occur. Once he sees Cogewea and Jim riding away from the scene, he "sigh[s] audibly: 'Mos' glad th' meller-dramy's over. I'd hater get all shot up an' my 'surance 'sessment unpaid; I'd hater miss a chanct of again skinnin' th' Kootenais'" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 70).

Silent Bob knows that his implicit reference to the violence exercised against Natives both in the past and present by the white hegemony is "likely to be resented" (Mourning Dove, 1927 [1981], p. 71), and yet he speaks up for his friends who have been so unfairly mistreated.

Silent Bob acts as such because, in time, he has managed to go beyond racial boundaries and is therefore now able to acknowledge, appreciate and eventually defend Cogewea and Jim's personal value. The two characters' individual merits (and deficiencies) effectively are vividly highlighted throughout the novel. Mourning Dove has therefore substituted the stereotypical figure of the "demonized 'half-blood' embedded in popular cultural and official memory" (Bernardin, 1995, p. 496) with complex characters endowed with their own, unique personalities and living through the doubts, troubles and personal triumphs which contribute to render the novel's heroine and deserving suitor easy to empathize with. What is more, not only has Mourning Dove avoided putting "romanticized, fetishized images in front of audiences" (Hendel, 2006, p. 72) as far as her Native and mixed-blood characters are concerned, but she has also opted for a rather heterogeneous range of white characters as well. Indeed, the negative qualities of Densmore, the judge and his henchmen and Verona Webster are counterbalanced by the positive example set by John Carter, Frenchy, Silent Bob and the two fishermen.

Hence, in front of such a variety of attitudes displayed by white people with respect to Native or mixed-blood individuals, *Cogewea*'s white readers may feel called upon to choose their own standing. Possibly, after having read this novel and its complex and detailed treatment of human character, these readers may try to make their own choice in the awareness that, contrarily to what may be implied by colonial, racist discourses, all human beings are unique individuals who shall never be reduced to the stereotypes related to their social category of belonging. By attempting to raise this awareness throughout her novel, Mourning Dove "relentlessly and courageously crosses boundaries" (Karell, 1995, p. 462), just like her heroine.

Conclusion

The title of this dissertation, "A Divided Self but with a Double Vision: Zitkala-Ša's and Mourning Dove's Authorial Experiences", is meant to evoke the personal evolution undergone by the two Native authors Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove and by their young female protagonists, namely Zitkala-Ša's semi-autobiographical self and Mourning Dove's mixed-blood heroine Cogewea.

The starting point of their personal growth is represented by the sorrow and uncertainties related to their "Divided Self". Indeed, because of their ambivalent upbringing, Zitkala-Ša (both author and protagonist), Mourning Dove and Cogewea initially feel unable to find their own place and voice within two seemingly irreconcilable sociocultural dimensions, namely, the Native and Euro-American worlds both authors and protagonists initially feel torn between and alienated from. And yet, this inner conflict of theirs is eventually solved thanks to the authors' and protagonists' "Double Vision", which derives from their hybrid identities and cultural heritages. Indeed, since these women are endowed with two sets of cultural resources, they manage to understand and eventually appropriate the main tenets of both Native and Euro-American epistemologies and axiologies. By so doing, they also try to bridge the gap created between the Euro-American and Native communities by centuries of (neo-)colonial discourses.

This aim may be achieved by helping readers realize that Native history, stories and people should not be kept entrapped by the geographical, political and epistemological barriers erected around them by the US hegemonic forces of (mis)representation. Indeed, these have been trying to deny both the unique identities of Native individuals and the political revendications of Native communities through the obliterating potential of such stereotypes as "the uncivilized savage", "the Vanishing Indian" or "the ward of the State", just to cite a few. In order to try to free Native individuals and communities from the heavy burden of these limited and limiting (mis)representations, Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove cleverly managed to evoke the very hegemonic discourses they had imbibed during their Euro-American educations in order to prove their inaccuracy and therefore refute the hegemony's claim for absoluteness.

In particular, both authors refute the two main future prospects formulated by the Euro-American hegemony with respect to Native people, namely, impending extinction or total

assimilation. They do so by advancing their own proposal for Native survival: an adaptive and inclusive evolution based on strategic hybridization. In this manner, Native people would be able to carry on their values, wisdom and traditions by adopting and adapting to their own needs any Euro-American cultural resource they may find helpful, without fearing to sacrifice their own sense of Native integrity. This attempt at strategic hybridization seems to have been rather successfully carried out by Zitkala-Ša, Mourning Dove and their young protagonists.

Most importantly, by writing their literary contributions in English, these authors have proven that Euro-American cultural resources are not necessarily destined to foster the binary, hierarchical and stigmatizing discourses developed by the (neo-)colonial hegemony as an ideological justification for their crimes and hypocrisy. Quite on the contrary, these very cultural resources may be employed to enable communication rather than impose silence, and to strive for integration and harmony rather than duality. They may even be resorted to in order to depict, celebrate and diffuse Native culture, as well as to help it evolve in order to face the challenges dictated by (neo-)colonialism.

In other words, thanks to their hybridity, Zitkala-Ša and Mourning Dove have managed to make their own voices heard precisely through the cultural resources which would have been supposed to silence them. While their voices might have been ignored or distorted by the majority of their contemporaries, their echo must have reached and animated the subsequent generations of fighters for Native rights. What is more, Zitkala-Ša's and Mourning Dove's own voices already were the result of centuries of fight by the Native community against the physical and representational violence of (neo-)colonialism. Hence, Zitkala-Ša's and Mourning Dove's literary achievements have contributed to carry on a precious Native voice trying to be heard within the US (if not even international) cultural and political debate. Their voices are still precious, and would deserve to be heard and leave their mark on our minds and hearts. This is why I would like to conclude my dissertation with Paula Gunn Allen's exhortation (1992):

> For Native people everywhere:
>
> may our voices be strong[.]

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Summary in Italian

Questa tesi nasce con l'intento di esplorare la maniera in cui le due autrici Nativo-Americane Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove abbiano provato, non senza difficoltà, a riconoscere, accettare ed infine sfruttare a proprio vantaggio la loro ambivalente, e proprio per questo feconda, identità personale e socioculturale ibrida.

Essendo entrambe le autrici vissute negli Stati Uniti d'America a cavallo del ventesimo secolo, esse hanno potuto conoscere in prima persona un'epoca definita "di transizione" per le popolazioni Nativo-Americane. Tale denominazione deriva dal tentativo, da parte della predominante (e prevaricante) popolazione ed amministrazione Euro-Americana, di indurre la comunità indigena ad abbandonare e sdegnare la propria eredità Nativa tramite assimilazione forzata. A tal fine, il governo federale ha tentato di mettere in atto diverse strategie, inclusa la fondazione di svariate "boarding schools", vale a dire collegi scolastici pensati per sradicare decine di migliaia di bambini e giovani Nativi dalle proprie famiglie, comunità ed abitudini quotidiane, nel tentativo di far procedere più speditamente la loro assimilazione. Sia Zitkala-Ša che Mourning Dove hanno frequentato suddetti collegi, nonché osservato i tentativi di assimilazione perpetrati nei confronti delle comunità Native finanche all'interno delle riserve, porzioni di territorio già risicate e stabilite a seguito delle politiche di sterminio adottate dalla popolazione Euro-Americana nei confronti della comunità indigena.

Eppure, nonostante e anzi grazie anche al processo di assimilazione cui Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove sono state sottoposte, queste autrici sono riuscite a sovvertire gli obiettivi prefissati dall'élite Euro-Americana. Infatti, tramite l'adozione ed adattamento ai propri scopi delle risorse culturali loro fornite dal sistema educativo statunitense, in particolare la lingua inglese e la pratica di scrittura letteraria, queste donne sono riuscite a preservare, celebrare e diffondere le proprie radici culturali Native, nonché ad affermare la propria identificazione personale e socioculturale ibrida, ovverosia afferente ad un bagaglio sia indigeno che Euro-Americano. In tal modo, Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove hanno potuto ricoprire il prezioso ruolo di mediatrici. Infatti, le loro opere letterarie sono indirizzate a far comprendere ed apprezzare al pubblico di lettori, prevalentemente Euro-Americani, il valore della cultura Nativa, la sua capacità d'evoluzione e soprattutto l'umanità ed unicità

di ogni singolo individuo, indipendentemente da qualsivoglia confine etnico e/o di genere stabilito dall'egemonia Euro-Americana.

Troppo spesso, le persone Native sono state ridotte ai confini epistemologici e politici dettati dagli stereotipi formulati sul loro conto. Spesso caratterizzati come selvaggi, pagani, esotici, e condannati ad un'imminente estinzione (se non addirittura già estinti), i Nativo-Americani spesso non sono approcciati come singoli individui, bensì come membri indifferenziati di una medesima (e stigmatizzata) categoria sociale. Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove hanno voluto opporsi ai limiti e danni causati da tale sistema di rappresentazione proponendo una prospettiva alternativa rispetto a quanto proposto dall'egemonia Euro-Americana. Infatti, concentrandosi sulla sensibilità personale e sull'identità culturale ibrida delle loro protagoniste, entrambe le autrici hanno potuto dimostrare l'inadeguatezza degli stereotipi vigenti. Peraltro, alcuni dei discorsi[55] che guidano l'opinione comune dell'élite Euro-Americana sono più o meno esplicitamente evocati nelle opere delle due autrici, ma strategicamente confutati all'interno delle stesse.

Tutto ciò può essere osservato in riferimento alle opere su cui si concentra questa tesi. Queste sono anzitutto i tre scritti semi-autobiografici di Zitkala-Ša, intitolati "Impressions of an Indian Childhood", "The School Days of an Indian Girl" e "An Indian Teacher Among Indians", originariamente pubblicati sulla prestigiosa rivista statunitense *The Atlantic Monthly* nel 1900. Per quanto riguarda invece Mourning Dove, ad esser preso in esame durante questa tesi è il suo romanzo *Cogewea, The Half-Blood: A Depiction of the Great Montana Cattle Range* (1927), un'opera ispirata ai Western diffusi all'epoca ma dedicata a personaggi e temi anche Nativi piuttosto che eminentemente Euro-Americani.

Per poter meglio comprendere l'innovatività di queste opere e la coraggiosa battaglia condotta dalle loro autrici al fine di scardinare alcuni dei pregiudizi vigenti all'epoca, sarebbe necessaria una conoscenza quantomeno generale del contesto storico ed ideologico entro cui si sono attuate le esperienze autoriali di Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove. Proprio per questo motivo, il primo dei quattro capitoli di cui si compone questa tesi è incentrato sulla storia dei rapporti fra la comunità Nativa e la società coloniale e neo-coloniale prima Europea, ed in seguito Euro-Statunitense.

[55] Termine da intendersi nell'accezione proposta da Michel Foucault.

Il capitolo si apre con una sezione dedicata alle circostanze ed effetti dell'arrivo e stanziamento dei primi coloni Europei nel continente Nord-Americano. Pur essendo tale territorio patria delle comunità Native incontrate ed ampiamente documentate dai colonizzatori Europei, questi ultimi hanno ipocritamente deciso di comportarsi come se il continente da loro appena scoperto spettasse loro di diritto. Nel tentativo di giustificare tale espropriazione di terre e risorse di appartenenza Nativa, i colonizzatori dell'epoca hanno sviluppato, imposto e diffuso un sistema ideologico basato sul presupposto che i Nativi Americani non potessero considerarsi degni abitanti e proprietari delle sopracitate terre e risorse. Tale argomentazione è andata a basarsi su tutta una serie di dualismi derivati dalla constatazione, deformazione ed esagerazione delle differenze socioculturali esistenti fra le comunità Nativa ed Europea. Tale sfruttamento della diversità reciproca fra le due culture ha così condotto ad un'ideologia stigmatizzante e posta a giustificare il tentato genocidio commesso dai colonizzatori ai danni delle comunità indigene.

Tale ideologia si è peraltro conservata anche in seguito alla fondazione degli Stati Uniti. Infatti, nonostante questi ultimi volessero andare ad ergersi in qualità di nazione posta a garantire il rispetto incondizionato dei diritti umani, ciò non si è affatto verificato nel caso dei Nativi Americani, ancora soggetti a politiche riconducibili al tentato genocidio, nonché strategicamente rappresentati come irriducibilmente diversi dalla popolazione Euro-Americana. Inizialmente, dunque, tali differenze erano dichiarate inevitabili ed incancellabili, in quanto impiegate come giustificazione per i crimini contro l'umanità commessi dall'élite Europea ed in seguito Euro-Americana. Eppure, proprio queste differenze vengono invece dichiarate presumibilmente risolvibili al volgere del ventesimo secolo. Infatti, una volta che gli Stati Uniti sono riusciti ad affermarsi come potenza credibile su scala internazionale ed le comunità Native sono ormai state obbligate a vivere recluse nelle riserve create dal governo federale, quest'ultimo si sente pronto ad avviare un processo di assimilazione che vada ad eliminare il bagaglio culturale Nativo in favore di un comune senso di appartenenza alla compagine sociale statunitense. Durante questo passaggio dal tentato genocidio al tentato etnocidio, il travisamento della cultura Nativa è rimasto essenzialmente inalterato.

Questo sistema di distorsione rappresentativa costituisce l'argomento principale della prima sezione del secondo capitolo. In particolare, viene posta attenzione alla tendenza, da parte dell'élite Euro-Statunitense, a concentrarsi su di una presunta condizione di

autenticità Nativa. Questa cosiddetta autenticità, stabilita soprattutto dagli studi antropologici condotti all'epoca, costituisce in realtà un artificioso pretesto per relegare il senso d'identità e la cultura Native alla sfera del passato, così da negare alle comunità indigene sopravvissute all'ingerenza (neo-)coloniale l'opportunità di perdurare con integrità nel presente e nel futuro. A causa di tale deformazione rappresentativa, l'opinione generale statunitense pare propensa a delineare due sole prospettive per i Nativi Americani dell'epoca: o la loro estinzione nel caso in cui avessero voluto continuare ad aderire pienamente al proprio stile di vita tradizionale, o la loro completa assimilazione e conseguente sopravvivenza grazie alla rinuncia delle loro radici.

Eppure, la biografia e le opere di Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove, su cui vanno a concentrarsi, rispettivamente, la seconda e la terza sezione del secondo capitolo, paiono negare l'ineluttabilità delle due opzioni sopracitate, ovverosia l'estinzione o l'assimilazione totale. Le due autrici avanzano infatti una proposta alternativa, ovverosia l'adattamento delle popolazioni Native tramite ricorso ad un bagaglio culturale ibrido, vale a dire dotato di risorse tanto Native quanto Euro-Americane. I limiti imposti dalla prospettiva dualistica e gerarchica tipica del colonialismo europeo e del neo-colonialismo statunitense vanno così ad essere trascesi dall'ambivalenza culturale delle due scrittrici. Tale feconda ambivalenza, tuttavia, è spesso stata fraintesa e/o negata non solo dal pubblico al quale le due autrici intendevano rivolgersi, ma anche da coloro i quali avrebbero voluto agire in qualità di loro benefattori, come nel caso specifico della collaborazione editoriale (se non addirittura autoriale) fra Mourning Dove e l'antropologo ed attivista statunitense Lucullus Virgil McWhorter. Non a caso, la seconda e la terza sezione del secondo capitolo non si limitano a fornire un breve prospetto delle biografie di Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove, ma vanno anche ad analizzare le reazioni prevalenti ai loro contributi da parte dei loro contemporanei.

In particolare, la seconda sezione si concentra sulla percezione di Zitkala-Ša da parte del suo pubblico e della critica. Zitkala-Ša era spesso apprezzata ed esaltata non tanto in virtù delle sue idee rivoluzionarie e delle battaglie da lei condotte in favore di queste, bensì a causa dello status a lei attribuito di tipico esemplare[56] di una comunità Nativa ormai da

[56] La scelta di tale termine intende ricondurre ad una specifica modalità di rappresentazione dei Nativi-Americani da parte dell'élite Occidentale, che spesso andava ad equiparare tali popolazioni al regno animale, così da porle in uno stadio inferiore dell'evoluzione della specie.

considerarsi prossima all'estinzione, e dunque abbastanza innocua da poter rappresentare una fonte di intrattenimento. Zitkala-Ša, consapevole del fascino suscitato dal proprio esoticismo agli occhi dell'élite Euro-Americana, ha in realtà cercato di sfruttare questa situazione a suo vantaggio, fingendo d'essere l'incarnazione ultima dei canoni di supposta autenticità Nativa, nel tentativo di catturare l'attenzione del suo pubblico e auspicabilmente guadagnare maggiore influenza politica, sociale e culturale.

Al contrario, come evidenziato nella terza sezione, Mourning Dove ha sempre cercato di distaccarsi dallo stereotipo dell'autentico esemplare Nativo. Eppure, ella rappresentava proprio questo agli occhi del sopracitato collaboratore McWhorter. Infatti, per quanto egli fosse sicuramente benintenzionato ed abbia effettivamente offerto un contributo essenziale per far sì che il romanzo di Mourning Dove fosse pubblicato, ciò non toglie che la sua concezione di cultura ed identità Native fosse inconciliabile con quella dell'autrice. Mentre infatti quest'ultima era convinta sostenitrice dell'opportunità, da parte delle comunità Native, di sopravvivere tramite progressivo adattamento, McWhorter era al contrario convinto, come lo era del resto l'élite Euro-Americana di cui egli stesso faceva parte, che la cultura Nativa cosiddetta "autentica" non avrebbe potuto resistere all'impatto esercitato dalle politiche genocide e/o etnocide degli Stati Uniti. Di conseguenza, nel corso del romanzo, sensibilmente modificato da McWhorter, vanno ad emergere due intenzioni autoriali radicalmente differenti, vale a dire la proposta di sopravvivenza futura tramite evoluzione culturale avanzata da Mourning Dove ed il tentativo di salvaguardia di un passato che si vorrebbe inalterato, e che invece già risulta ineluttabilmente perduto, da parte di McWhorter.

Eppure, nonostante il contesto storico esposto nel primo capitolo di questa tesi, e nonostante l'influenza degli stereotipi predominanti evocati nel secondo capitolo, Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove sono comunque riuscite a trasmettere il proprio messaggio di speranza, se non ai loro contemporanei, comunque ai propri posteri. Ciò prova dunque che la loro voce, fortemente a rischio d'esser soffocata in quanto Nativa e femminile, è invece riuscita a trapelare sia attraverso la riduzione di Zitkala-Ša a mero esemplare esotico ed affascinante, ma non certo politicamente e/o culturalmente rilevante, sia attraverso l'inopportuna ingerenza editoriale di McWhorter. Proprio per questo motivo, nonostante io avessi inizialmente previsto di porre i contenuti della seconda e terza sezione del secondo capitolo a conclusione della tesi, nella versione definitiva di questa

ho invece scelto di dedicare i due capitoli conclusivi alle opere e dunque alle prospettive di Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove, anziché al punto di vista del loro pubblico ed eventuali collaboratori. Obiettivo ultimo di questa struttura definitiva è il tentativo di lasciare "l'ultima parola", come si suol dire, a queste due donne forti e coraggiose, piuttosto che al complesso di stereotipi formulati dall'élite (neo-)coloniale che per secoli ha circoscritto ed esautorato qualsivoglia contributo politico e/o culturale Nativo.

Dunque, il terzo capitolo è dedicato ad una disamina dei tre scritti semi-autobiografici di Zitkala-Ša, già menzionati all'interno di questo riassunto; mentre il quarto capitolo si concentra sul romanzo di Mourning Dove *Cogewea, The Half-Blood*. In entrambi i casi, l'indagine di queste opere è stata condotta focalizzandosi principalmente sul graduale processo di riconoscimento, accettazione ed infine impiego vantaggioso dell'identità personale e culturale ibrida delle due giovani protagoniste, vale a dire il sé semi-autobiografico di Zitkala-Ša e Cogewea, una ragazza dal patrimonio culturale e genetico ibrido, essendo figlia di una madre Nativa e di un padre Euro-Americano.

Le due protagoniste vivono un percorso formativo ed interiore analogo. Infatti, dopo aver trascorso un'infanzia relativamente serena, caratterizzata da un'educazione tradizionale Nativa, entrambe prendono parte al progetto educativo assimilazionista, divenendo studentesse presso i collegi già menzionati in questo riassunto. Una volta tornate presso la loro casa originaria, entrambe le giovani vivono una profonda crisi identitaria e culturale, sentendosi alienate sia dalla comunità Nativa che dalla società Euro-Americana. Tale conflitto interiore va poi ad esternarsi nelle loro relazioni interpersonali. Mentre però l'evoluzione di Zitkala-Ša coincide con le trasformazioni verificantisi nel rapporto con la propria madre, i turbamenti di Cogewea sono invece riflessi dalla complicata gestione dei suoi rapporti romantici con i due, diversissimi pretendenti Jim e Densmore.

Per quanto riguarda il rapporto fra Zitkala-Ša e sua madre, tale relazione è di importanza capitale per la protagonista perché ai suoi occhi sua madre è l'incarnazione ultima della dimensione Nativa dalla quale Zitkala-Ša si sente esclusa in seguito al suo percorso di assimilazione. Effettivamente, durante la narrazione è possibile evincere la progressione da un rapporto (quasi) simbiotico fra Zitkala-Ša, sua madre ed il mondo Nativo ad una fase di allontanamento reciproco durante gli anni trascorsi dalla protagonista nel sistema educativo Euro-Americano; fase poi conclusasi con la constatazione, da parte di

Zitkala-Ša stessa, dell'adattamento intrapreso da sua madre in modo tale da rispondere alle sfide della contemporaneità in maniera ibrida. Proprio tale strategia andrà poi ad essere adottata da Zitkala-Ša stessa, che diviene dunque capace di interpretare il proprio bagaglio culturale ibrido come una risorsa anziché un ostacolo.

Un analogo cambiamento di prospettiva è intrapreso anche da Cogewea, nonostante i rischi considerevoli incontrati durante il suo percorso di formazione. Infatti, nel vano tentativo di entrare a far parte della dimensione sociale Euro-Americana, Cogewea cede al fascino di Densmore, spietato stratega Euro-Americano, e della più cieca assimilazione, rinunciando così alla componente Nativa della propria eredità biologica e culturale, rappresentata in particolare dallo stretto rapporto della giovane con la natura, la spiritualità indigena e sua nonna, Stemteemä. Cogewea si rende conto dei propri sbagli dopo aver rischiato la vita e perso una considerevole somma di denaro a causa di Densmore. Una volta ristabilito il valore della componente Nativa del proprio essere, Cogewea può finalmente riconoscersi ed accettarsi in quanto persona ibrida, come confermato peraltro dal suo matrimonio con Jim, anch'egli dotato di un patrimonio genetico e culturale ambivalente.

Dunque, sia gli scritti semi-autobiografici di Zitkala-Ša che il romanzo di Mourning Dove vanno oltre la tipica visione dualistica e gerarchica (neo-)coloniale, dimostrando il valore dell'ibridismo culturale. Tale condizione, accettata e sfruttata da entrambe le protagoniste dopo un periodo di sofferta alienazione, trascende i limiti imposti dai discorsi dell'élite Euro-Americana, che vorrebbe invece mantenere una netta separazione fra le dimensioni culturali Euro-Americana e Nativa, oppure annullare il patrimonio indigeno tramite totale assimilazione. Gli scritti delle due autrici, al contrario, non solo garantiscono la sopravvivenza dell'eredità Nativa, ma coniugano quest'ultima con le risorse culturali loro fornite proprio dall'élite Euro-Americana. Ciò rende chiaro come il processo di assimilazione cui queste donne sono state sottoposte abbia condotto a risultati antitetici rispetto a quanto previsto dall'élite Euro-Statunitense. Infatti, non solo le due autrici si sono rifiutate di abbandonare la propria eredità Nativa, esaltata nelle loro opere, ma hanno anche e soprattutto contribuito ad una proficua evoluzione di questa tramite l'adattamento di risorse culturali Euro-Americane che possano contribuire alla sopravvivenza della società e del patrimonio Nativi.

Inoltre, già all'epoca in cui Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove hanno vissuto e pubblicato le proprie opere, la comunità Nativa esistente era riuscita a sopravvivere a svariati secoli di invasione, genocidio ed etnocidio da parte della crescente popolazione Euro-Americana. Ciò implica che il processo di adattamento socioculturale basato sull'ibridismo, evocato ed esaltato nelle opere delle due autrici, fosse in realtà già in atto da secoli. Ciò viene peraltro suggerito da vari dettagli inclusi da Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove nei loro scritti. Infatti, le due autrici si sono premurate di evocare il topos della presunta autenticità Nativa, caratterizzato da staticità ed esclusività, al fine di contestarne l'applicabilità alla realtà dinamica ed integrativa delle comunità Native nel corso dei secoli.

Dunque, rifiutando sia l'assimilazione totale che la staticità e condanna all'estinzione legate al topos della presunta autenticità indigena, Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove sono riuscite a proporre una diversa concettualizzazione della storia, cultura e comunità Native. Nelle loro opere, infatti, il patrimonio Nativo viene dipinto nella sua capacità d'evoluzione e dunque nella sua potenzialità di sopravvivenza nel presente e nel futuro; due dimensioni temporali, queste, negate alla comunità Nativa da parte dei sistemi rappresentativi Euro-Americani. Inoltre, le due autrici sono state capaci di appropriare suddetti sistemi rappresentativi, plasmandoli in funzione dei propri scopi. Tutto ciò contribuisce dunque a corroborare il valore dell'ibridismo culturale, chiave di lettura adottata in questa tesi per l'analisi delle vite ed opere di Zitkala-Ša e Mourning Dove.